



KALA RAKSHA
Preservation of Traditional Arts

KALA RAKSHA MUSEUM BASED PRODUCTS WOW THE SANTA FE INTERNATIONAL FOLK ART MARKET



KALA RAKSHA MUSEUM PROJECT REPORT 9 JULY- 20 OCTOBER 2012

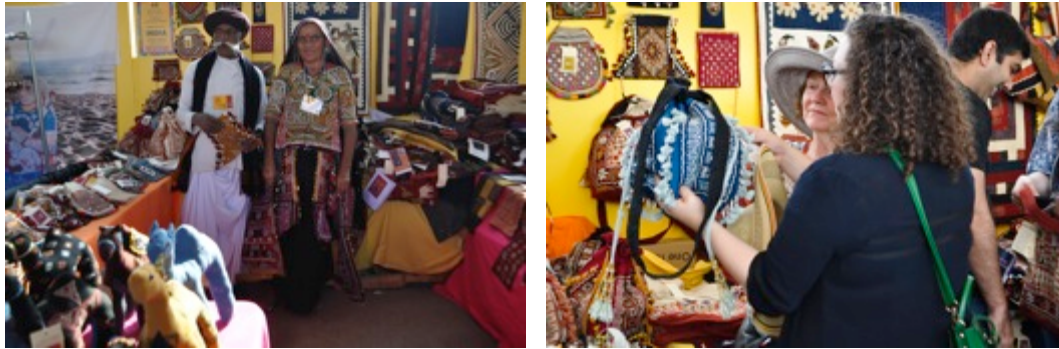
Since its inception, Kala Raksha has dovetailed the collection and preservation of traditional pieces with income generation. The Trust established an international quality Museum of textiles and related materials in 1997. Two features of this Museum make it unique. First, the Museum is based in the village itself. Artisans have access to and responsibility for it. Second, artisans were involved in all phases of the development of the Museum. They assisted in collection, were engaged in documentation, and consulted in the permanent exhibition. The Kala Raksha Museum successfully proves the mutual benefits of involving communities in presenting and utilizing their own cultures. The Museum is intended as a resource base for artisans, designers and researchers. Traditions embody the identity and heritage of a people. Increased appropriation of design intellectual property across cultures has resulted in a generic commercial *ethnic* look, as well as loss of knowledge of textile traditions. Kala Raksha's challenge increasingly is to innovate within traditions, and to tell the story that makes cultural integrity more valuable.

As Kala Raksha artisans develop contemporary designs based on the museum collections, they tell their own story, enhancing the value of their traditions.

Kala Raksha, Parkar Vas, Sumrasar Sheikh, Bhuj, Kutch 370 001, Gujarat, INDIA
tel. +91-2808-277237/277238 fax +91-2832-255500/250410

www.kala-raksha.org





SUCCESS IN SANTA FE AND BEYOND

This year, Kala Raksha's museum inspired accessory collection earned it the important opportunity to participate in the 2012 Santa Fe International Folk Art Market. This venue draws an enthusiastic crowd, which appreciates and purchases tradition-based products. Rabari artisan coordinators Lachhuben Raja and Rajabhai Pachan, traveled to Santa Fe, supported by a generous travel grant from Tata Power. The new products, consciously developed by Kala Raksha artisan interns, had cultural integrity as well as quality workmanship. Sales were excellent.



In Santa Fe, artisan representatives experienced the international market directly. Following, Kala Raksha conducted a three-week tour of five venues of workshops, lectures and sales. The tour benefited all of the artisans of Tunda Vandh and the greater artisan community. The entire Kala Raksha constituency earned from their education and efforts. Workshop participants learned an array of stitching techniques from Lachhuben, and worked on projects of their choice. Rajabhai created traditional motifs for them in machine embroidery. They chose the motifs from the workshop booklet provided by Kala Raksha. Lachhuben and Rajabhai's demonstrations and explanations instantly enhance the value of their work. Knowledge is appreciation!

A program was held at the Fowler Museum, on the UCLA campus, a leading museum of ethnography. It holds an important collection of embroideries from Kutch, collected in the mid 1970s by Vickie Elson, who published her research on the collection as **Dowries of Kutch**, in 1979. Barbara Sloan, Associate Director, Center for the Study of Regional Dress, invited the Kala Raksha team to conduct a "Textile Roundtable" program for the Fowler Textile Council. About 30 textile enthusiasts joined us for several hours. We examined a selected of Kutch embroidered textiles. It was a rare treat to have two Rabari artisans as well as a textile scholar discuss the objects. We compared current work with work of three decades past, and discussed current trends and issues.



Kala Raksha also conducted four trunk show sales in addition to workshops. Response was excellent, nearly doubling Kala Raksha's Santa Fe earnings. The philosophy of these shows can be summed up in the slogan of the fair trade shop Fabric of Life, in Edmonds: "Do Good; Feel Good; Look Good."

The tour was a resounding success. At the Santa Fe International Folk Art Market, having a really robust and varied sampling of clients in a short time gave important market intelligence. Other trunk shows similarly provided direct and immediate feedback with clients from different regions. The intimate experience of another culture will enhance our ability to design for those markets.



In our workshops, participants gained an increased appreciation of the creativity and skill of traditional artisans as they could not have in another way:

"I will never look at handmade things in the same way again. I have a completely new appreciation of hand work. I understand the personal quality," Lori Harris, Los Angeles.

"I have Attention Deficit Disorder. I really think that this experience helped me learn to focus in a new way," participant from the Seattle workshop.

Finally, the earnings were literally rain in an impending drought. Summer is always a time of slow sales in India, even while we are producing for the winter sales season.



CONTINUING EDUCATION INTERN INSPIRATION

We now have a clearer idea what people like and that went directly into refining products and developing new ones. Understanding target markets is the most essential aspect of successful designing. Lachhuben planned a refinement of one product in the plane back to Mumbai. Drawing on our museum objects to create new collections, Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya graduate design interns got straight to work creating samples for next year's Santa Fe Market application.

ACCESSION OF NEW COLLECTIONS

Since the last report, the Global Giving disbursement was received. The excellent exchange rate enabled us to accession seven of eighteen home quilts earmarked in March. As rural cultures change more rapidly that could be imagined, Kala Raksha is very happy for the opportunity to document and preserve Kutch textile traditions.



VISITORS AND RESEARCHERS

During this period Kala Raksha hosted workshops for students of the prestigious Maret School of Washington DC., an American quilters group, two Scottish artist residents of the ReSide project, and three international researchers exploring the importance of telling the stories of sustainability in art. All utilized the Museum as well as working with Kala Raksha artisans.



BOOK RESEARCH

Research for Kala Raksha's book on Kutch embroideries, which will highlight the Kala Raksha Museum collections, resumed in August. Three contributors are hard at work. With the rapid modernization of Kutch villages, we realize that this is probably the last chance to glean information from the heritage held in our Museum collections. Aging artisans now struggle to place the work we show them. Our creative team has captured critical information that will make an invaluable contribution to the field. We have established a deadline for the manuscript for January 2013.

THANKS TO GLOBAL GIVING!

Again, our report follows a Global Giving Bonus Day, and again we are happily grateful. On 17 October Kala Raksha Museum received donations totaling \$750, which will be matched by Global Giving. Kala Raksha Trust is self sustaining in its income generation work- a feat not even attempted by many non-profits. However, the earnings from our income generation cannot cover the costs of expansion of The Kala Raksha Museum, which is the core of our sustainable, authentic work. Generous donations from our supporters enable us to add to our collections, and host projects that utilize our resource.

Global Giving has enabled us to reactivate our museum work. We thank Global Giving donors for your support, and welcome financial contributions as well as ideas for ways to reach out and share our holdings with interested people.

THE NEXT PHASE: NEW ACCESSIONS TO BE FINALIZED



The next Global Giving grant disbursement will allow us to accession objects of special relevance to the embroidery book research as well as more of the home quilt collection. Collections of traditional women's blouses and work from Eastern Kutch have been earmarked. As research progresses, we will be able to make the best selection of new accessions.