



KALA RAKSHA
Preservation of Traditional Arts

KR MUSEUM COMPLETES RENOVATION OF EXHIBITION GALLERY

**KALA RAKSHA MUSEUM
PROJECT REPORT 28 MAY - 25 AUGUST 2011**



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. One aim is to revitalize traditions in contemporary ways through the museum's inspiration.

RENOVATION OF EXHIBITION GALLERY

Renovation of the Museum Exhibition Gallery was completed in July 2011. National Institute of Design exhibition designer Mayank Loonker designed and installed the panels and objects. Kala Raksha coordinators Lachhuben and Rajabhai created the life sized doll mannequins and camel.

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The exhibition introduces the viewer to the concept of embroideries as languages, and guides him/her to understand traditional embroideries in their cultural context through key questions.



What did the embroideries express? Why did women embroider?



How did they use embroidered pieces? What are embroidery styles?



How else did women decorate themselves?

An LCD screen extends the exhibition with unlimited flexibility, and enables interactive programs in the gallery. Kala Raksha seeks a film maker to produce a brief introduction to Kala Raksha's work for the gallery. Current films that can also be shown include *The Kala Raksha Story*, *Needlecraft*, *Artisans Design!* And *Tanko Bole Chhe (The Stitches Speak)*. Renovation was funded by the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Government of India, and the DCH will be officially open the new gallery on 6 September. Our museum presentation is more appealing than ever. Added to the freshly painted campus, this will make winter 2011-12 the ideal time to visit Kala Raksha!

VISITORS AND RESEARCHERS

During this period, four groups of five to twenty people each, and eighty individual tourists visited the museum. Our visitors came from the UK, USA, Australia, France, Germany, Mumbai, Delhi, Jaipur, and Ahmedabad.

Noted guests included Anshuman Saikia, from UTV Bindass, M. Oumar Diop from the African Union Commission, Rekha Udit, from Womens International Network, New Delhi. Twenty students from the National Institute of Fashion Technology Mumbai came with their faculty, and a group of artisan and staff from SEWA Trade Facilitation Centre, Ahmedabad visited.

Although we do not yet have a way of tracking visitors to our online museum, we have received many compliments on the site, and some research inquires. Our second online exhibition: INNOVATION: REPURPOSE, RE-INVENT, RECYCLE, received many compliments and good wishes.

RESEARCH

Research for Kala Raksha's book on Kutch embroideries continues. The book will highlight the Kala Raksha Museum collections. During this period, researchers working on Ahir and eastern Kutch embroideries utilized our collections and library extensively, as well as conducted field work.

Kimberly DaCosta, a student from Srishti School of Art Design and Technology began her diploma project with Kala Raksha in July 2011. She is working on recycling and "up-cycling" of waste materials. She began with a study of quilts in the Kala Raksha museum collection and research in our library.

KALA RAKSHA VIDHYALAYA ARTISAN DESIGN INTERNS

Two phrases we hear all too often are: "We want something that is not so *ethnic*" and "We want to take the skills and make the work *contemporary*."

To us this sounds like people who want to like craft, but then again want to eliminate its character. Craft **IS** ethnic! It is hand art, the expression of an ethnic culture. Ethnic is precisely its character and its beauty. This is not to say that craft should not change. Traditions always evolve. The challenge that Kala Raksha has taken is to update traditional objects to fit contemporary life, without eradicating their essential identity.

The good news is that at Kala Raksha the products with cultural integrity- that draw their strength from their ethnic traditions- are the ones that have lasted in the market!



"Tradition" by Kuverben

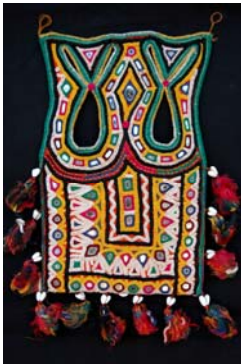


"Moonlight on Snow" by Monghiben



Rann of Kutch by Varshaben

In May, the third group of Kala Raksha Artisan Designer interns made a collection of stunning Art to Wear jackets for the American market. The jackets combined traditions studied in the Museum with new concepts. The collection was purchased by the Peabody Essex Museum shop in Salem, Massachusetts in June.



R-249 Rabari Batuvo



R-8 Rabari kothaliyo



R-105 Rabari batuvo



MM-37 Maru Mehval batuvo



Varsha embroiders a batuvo

The next intern collection is motivated by application to the 2012 Santa Fe International Folk Art Market. In August, Lakhiben, Monghiben, Kuverben, Jivaben and Varshaben all studied *kothalo*, *batuva*, *gadi*, and *bokani* in the collections of the Kala Raksha Museum and began creating purses, bags, cushion covers and table runners based on the objects. We are confident that it will be a winning collection.



ADDITIONS TO COLLECTIONS

In the June 2011 disbursement from Global Giving, the Kala Raksha Museum received \$230. This was utilized to accession a collection of six Ahir embroideries that will support the research on our embroidery book. Four new books were accessioned in this period, including a gift from Thomas Seligman, Director of the Iris & B Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts in Stanford California, who was so inspired by the ornament collection in the Kala Raksha Museum that he plans to return to Kutch to work with Kala Raksha in documenting Rabari ornaments. An out of print copy of **Dowries from Kutch** was also gifted to the Museum library.

THANKS TO 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 can not 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 rich resource.

Global Giving has enabled us to realize our first goal in expanding our collections and installing our second virtual exhibition! 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 Global giving website is easy to navigate. It makes giving so much easier,”
Maryann Sadagopan, Global Giving donor.

THE NEXT PHASE

We look forward to finishing the Heritage Collection samples and submitting them to the Santa Fe International Folk Art Market. We are also excited to complete the field work stage of our book on Kutch embroidery traditions and begin editing for publication with a highly respected publisher. \$795 would enable the final research to be carried out.

As the priority for accessions shifted to support research on Ahir embroidery, the two small collections of objects identified earlier: an additional collection of Eastern Kutch embroidery, and a collection of women’s blouses are still on our wish list. These are valued at RS 10,650 (\$242) and RS 18,700 (\$425) respectively. Having renovated our Museum Exhibition, we wish to revise our catalogue, which will make the exhibition information available to interested people throughout the world. \$1,000 would make publishing a new catalogue possible.