

Artist Statements :-

Brendan Jamison

Immediately drawn to the architecture of the building, I began plans for some site-specific artworks. This is a realm I have wanted to explore for many years but have never been offered a venue to extend my practice into this area. With the knowledge that the artworks I would produce could not travel home with me, my thinking patterns became liberated from a previous state of mind where I would surround the artwork with a sense of long-term preservation and preciousness. This time I could concentrate solely on the idea through ephemeral pieces that would survive only through photographic documentation.

In the first week, the other resident artist, Vasudha Thozhur, described her community art project that she had been working on for the past 4 years with teenage girls who had been deeply traumatised by the Hindu-Islamic riots of 2002. She explained how her exhibition at KHOJ would be a presentation of the work produced during this project and invited me to respond to some of the pieces the girls had created. I set in motion plans to create a series of wool creatures based on images the teenagers had embroidered onto curtain material.

The third week of the residency saw the completion of the four site-specific artworks and the beginning of the wool creature sculptures for Vasudha's project.

In the fourth week I concentrated on interior site-specific works which would complement the exterior interventions. Entitled "An Other World", my final exhibition comprised of 7 elements: red column, blue railing, yellow ladder, red bridge, orange circle, yellow diagonal & blue and orange window frames. This installation was coupled with the two wool sculptures "Four-Legged Creature" and "Creature on Wheels".

Vasudha Thozur

This art project, in collaboration with HIMMAT involved working with six adolescents

(Shahjahan Sheikh, Tahira Pathan, Tasleem Kureishi, Rabiya Shiekh, Rehaana Sheikh and Farzana Sheikh) who lost several members of their families in the carnage at Naroda Patiya, Ahmedabad, on the 28th of February 2002. It examines the role that art practices can play in a collective trauma such as that which gripped Gujarat that year, and addresses a range of issues from personal loss to displacement, and the possibility of mobilization and economic revival through the use of the visual language.

In terms of methodology, the focus is on process rather than a pre-determined outcome, and further the recording of the process through painting, writing, and the digital media, as an archive against forgetting, and the creation of a context – specific resource.

The residency at Khoj more specifically supports the compilation of the output, and looks at ways of presenting/exhibiting process through an experiential rather than a documentary perspective.

HIMMAT

Himmat is a self-sustaining women's collective initiated by those affected in the 2002 Gujarat Carnage

Himmat was formed and named so by the women of Naroda-Patiya, Ahmedabad – a year after they lost their husbands and other near and dear ones in the communal carnage. This initiative was started in Vatwa – an area on the outskirts of Ahmedabad where the survivors were relocated. Himmat was gradually embraced and strengthened by the other (mostly single) women of Vatwa. Compelled to earn for their families but refusing to bow down to the exploitative wage system of the market – these women chose to work on their own terms, their own space, their own time and under their own name 'Himmat' (Courage).

Himmat tailors pure cotton & khadi (hand spun cotton yarn), which has been block-printed and dyed with natural colours by artisans from Kutch, Gujrat. Besides its own product, Himmat also runs a fabrication unit which fulfills stitching orders in bulk. This income generating enterprise is non-funded and is run by the women themselves.

Through 'Himmat' the women learnt and honed their sewing, stitching and embroidery skills. To live a life of dignity, they learned to read and write. To tell their story they learnt to paint. To never be left behind they learnt to cycle. But most importantly, through 'Himmat' they have explored new friendships & shared moments of sheer joy.

Himmat is a commemoration to this very spirit which refuses to be buried as a "victim" and in effect to the goodwill and energy of all those individuals who never let the women feel alone. Through this journey we were enriched by innumerable others - other small groups such as ourselves, by artists and artisans, by those who seek a healthy environment; by those who celebrate diversity, by those who believe in non-violence, in self-reliance and in community work.