

Project Report

Khirkkee Mural

The wall opposite KHOJ was in desperate need of a fresh coat of paint. Master ji, the owner of the two storey building was happy to let us paint it for him.

Master ji's request was -"I would like a freedom fighter or a landscape".

Most of the people on the street seem to like the Van Gogh, intrigued I asked why and one man simply said "Kyuki is mei jaan hai", which means- because it is the only one with life. So A Van Gogh was selected over all other landscapes and Gandhi was voted as the freedom fighter of popular choice.

The process of designing the mural has taken us longer than painting it would take. With a freedom fighter and a landscape and suggestions from Pooja, Subba, Hemant, Soham and a number of revisions of the design I have finally managed to create something that I hope everyone will enjoy. The two storey wall surface (approx 35 ft tall x 20 ft wide)will displaya Van Gogh landscape with a gi joe juxtaposed on it, on the ground floor andthe second floor displays a 100 rs note with Gandhi and list of gadgets that people said they would like to buy, if and when they had the money.**Excerpts from diary**

The wall is plastered and ready for action. Today we invited master ji's wife to draw the first stroke on the mural. The artists have completed the drawing. We got plenty of curious onlookers. I think the process of creating it and eliciting a reaction from the onlookers is more important than how beautifully it is executed. It's very exciting to just stand by and watch the reaction of the people. It is a sight to see 3 girls and 2 boys scrambling on tall scaffolding while attempting to paint.

The artists on mission are Sonia Mehra Chawla, Simrin Mehra, Sanjay Sharma, Rohini Devasher and Ram Bali Chauhan, all one time of the College of Art, Delhi. They all seem to be having a great time doing this. The initial fright of climbing the scaffolding disappeared once they started working.

We had quiet an audience today. Some of who actually sat through the whole day just watching the artists mixing colors, applying the paint and scurrying about. I chatted with a group. They work for the local contractor next door. They said they liked what they saw of the mural. Gandhi, they said was the best choice for a face on their street. I tried in turn to explain why 5 young people were hanging from scaffolding, painting away. One passer by enquired if it was an advertisement campaign of some sort, or if a politician was going to visit the street. When I tried to convince him that it was none of those he seemed almost suspicious of our harmlessness. We chatted with him for a while, he thought the mural was part of the government initiative to clean and beautify Delhi for the commonwealth games. "they will clean Delhi, alrightof all the poor not the poverty ...and they have to do this quickly.. before the commonwealth games." He gave us his blessings before he cycled off. I'd say the conversation went off well.

They are from Jharkhand, living and working in Delhi,

Almost all of them have left their families behind in the villages.

All RJD patrons,..... Lalu fans.

They all voted for him.

The other lot on the street- Pradeep Das Gupta (photographer-resident), the architects from BRB office, Ashok Lal (architect-resident) all think this is a great idea. The ripple effect of this mural will last a long while.

Sanjay has spent the whole day trying to get the portrait of Gandhi right. Every time he climbed down to look at the portrait from a distance he decided it was all wrong, so up he went and down again all day long. Sonia and Rohini have almost completed the lower level, enjoying the whole process of recreating Van Gogh on such a huge scale. Ram, a sculptor by profession has taken to the brush very well. All in all, it is a great team and the fact that we managed to complete most of it in one day, goes to show how well we work together.

Simrin has finally managed to climb right to the top of the scaffolding after ditching her phobia of heights. She had a little helper today, Laxmi- the daughter of a food vendor on the street. She enthusiastically picked up the brush and offered to help the artists.

Laxmi has developed a special bond with all of us, especially with Simrin.

There was an article in the newspaper about the mural and the journalist wrote about Laxmi's contribution. Her parent's were thrilled. "Never did we imagine that our daughter's name would appear in the newspaper", her father told me. He stroked the article in the newspaper lovingly, almost wiping the ink off with the sweat from his palm.