

## **Project Report**

### **Khirkee Arts Education Program**

Art is important; it serves a vital function in society.

Unfortunately not everyone shares this perspective. Art is taken for granted more often than not and is seen by many as a self-indulgent way to while away time. But art does serve the greater good. Music, dance, theatre, visual art and everything above and beyond, below and in-between contribute immeasurably to making life worth living. Those of us fortunate enough to have had an exposure to the arts realize we are the richer for it.

The arts allow us to open our minds and senses; it encourages us to look at things in brand new ways. Art has the power to quite literally change the way we view the world. There is no one right response in art. This fosters subjective reasoning, a skill that is indispensable in the 'real world'. Put another way, art introduces us to a varied palette as an alternative (or at the very least an essential addition) to the monochrome black and whites. The arts help us form opinions, to react, to predict, once again, these are skills that help us live and think critically in the real world. It makes sense then to employ this potent force as early as possible and so make sure we, as society, reap the benefits.

Two words...Arts Education.

Some schools recognise the importance of arts education and some don't. Some have the funds to support it and some don't. The Gyandeeep School in Khirkee Extension is one of the better schools in the sense that they do have an art room and they do have art teachers. Yet there is a lot more to arts education than drawing from comics and cartoon figures.

A group of artists have taken up the challenge of completely revamping the arts curriculum and have been invited by the School to take the art classes for the students. The artists, Aastha Chauhan, Sanjay Sharma, Ram Bali Chauhan, Rohini Devasher and Sonia Mehra Chawla have been taking the newly instituted art classes twice a week every week for a month.

This new arts education project, supported by KHOJ, will work towards reinforcing ties with the Khirkee community and bringing an added dimension to learning that cannot be taught by any other means. Over the next few months the students will be encouraged to use their imagination, to hone their creativity and apply both practical and cognitive skills. Through active participation in art activities the children will develop creative problem solving skills and communicate thoughts and ideas in a variety of ways. They will learn teamwork, how to adapt to and respect each others' ways of working and thinking and most importantly, they will have a wonderful time!!!!

**Rohini Devasher**

*2005*

*August 2005*

We were approached by the principal of Gyandeeep School (local primary school);she wanted us to work with the children of the school. After negotiating time and classes we started taking weekly art classes for the school. We have taught them for three weeks now. The school is relatively small; the classes are only up to grade 7.

The first class was the initiation. Honestly were a little nervous at the sight of so many children. Most of the children made identical drawings of a house, flower, apple; mastered over hours of imitation, from the teachers original copy on the blackboard. So, we had to start by helping them to unwind and draw freely. We distributed newspapers for the first class and asked the children to draw on them. They were a little hesitant initially, but by the end of the class some of the drawings were exceptionally good.

The second class was dedicated to the basic shapes. We drew a line, a square, a circle and a triangle on a board and asked the children what all they could draw with the help of these basic shapes. The problem persisted, except a few, most of the children were drawing what they had been taught and, made to memorize like a math table.

For the third class we set up a projector and showed the children slides of various paintings/drawings of artists. The images were of what we can call child art. This produced great enthusiasm and great commotion at the same time. All in all the children enjoyed the slide show.

We take two classes per week, one for the juniors and the other for the seniors. More updates will follow each week.

**Aastha Chauhan**

*6th September 2005*

*September 2005*

*22nd-23rd September*

The KHOJ Studios displayed installations of architect Asim Waqif from Sept 18 to 25. Asim's work explores line and form in dynamic and exciting ways. It was the perfect opportunity to take the students out of their classrooms and have them explore art in a studio space. Asim's practice is based on a fascination with concrete shuttering structures and their 'jugar'-ness or their makeshift quality. Of the two installations on display, B A A N S quite literally explodes outward in the studio space. An intricate construct of bamboo and rope, it is an exploration of space, structure and a tension that is simultaneously physical and symbolic, while T E N S E is an experiment in tensile structural design that employs tension as a basis of erection. The laboriously crafted installations push the viewer to look at spaces from different perspectives. The installations are interactive and in spite of employing simple mechanics, they bear an intricate geometry. To say the students enjoyed themselves would be an understatement. As far as they were concerned B A A N S served to transform the space into a gigantic jungle Jim! Encouraged to climb, crawl and explore to their heart's content, the

children attention was also drawn to the play of line and the possibilities of structure and construction. The idea that children might actually learn better when they enjoy themselves was made manifest by the fact that they were able to articulate the role of line within the installations. After each student had a chance to explore the space, they were asked to think about the possibilities of line in nature and to look for lines in their immediate environment. From sticks, to jhadoos each child made a personal discovery and adventure of the impromptu show and tell. Next weeks classes will focus on expanding on this weeks exercise and encouraging the students to fashion miniature models with the building block of lines.

29th-30th September Lines, lines everywhere!!!

This lesson aimed at expanding the students' ability to identify and discuss the art element line. They learned that artists make many different kinds of lines. Last weeks visit to the Khoj Studios to see the work of architect Asim Waqif was used as the base upon which to build this weeks class. The students were asked to recall their experience of the installation and the manner in which line was used to fashion and construct.

Materials: Matchsticks, glue, paper. Lesson Objectives: Students: a) perceived, described and identified different kinds of lines in artworks and their environment. b) understood that artists use lines for different purposes c) created different kinds of lines with drawing tools and the matchsticks. d) Experimented and explored the materiality and medium of collage by sticking the matchsticks, paper onto paper.

Results: The students both junior and senior had a wonderful time. For the first time they stayed on beyond the duration of the class to complete their pieces. The junior students were incredibly open to experimentation, sticking and pasting with a wonderful abandon that was yet guided by an aesthetic. It was a joy working with them. The senior class was very receptive; each student took the lesson seriously and was eager to explore the new media with individuality and excitement. To begin with many were reticent to let go of their scales and pencils but they very soon went beyond the broad lesson guidelines and explored three dimensionality on the two dimensional paper surfaces. What began as initial cautious pieces developed very quickly into bold and dynamic works that combined drawing and collage.

### **Rohini Devasher and Aastha Chauhan**

*October 2005*

A month full of holidays and festivities so while classes were few and far between, we did make sure to make the most of them.

Classes this month focused on colour. Colour as a medium of expression, colour as form and colour as content.

Materials: Matchsticks, glue, paper.

Lesson Objectives:

Students:

1. explored colour as a medium of expression.

2. created different kinds of lines with drawing tools and the matchsticks.
3. Experimented further with the medium of collage by sticking the bits of brightly coloured cloth onto paper.

Results:

The results have been very encouraged, students are staying longer and longer at the lessons, sometimes staying after the class is over to complete the work.

The work of both junior and senior classes was wonderful. They quite literally took the material as far as it could possibly go. While some glued the cloth layer by layer, others folded, tore, cut and 'constructed'. The works that have been put up on the website are masterpieces in their own right and correct me if I'm wrong but I swear there's a Matisse in there!!!!!!

## **Rohini**

*November-December 2005*

To coincide with the KHOJ Nov-Dec International Artist's Residency focusing on Photography, we decided to do a photography workshop with the senior students of the Gyan Deep Public School. The workshop began with two days of the students photographing in Khirkee and was followed by a presentation of their photographs and a discussion led by artists-in-residence Sheba Chachhi and Gauri Gill.

*29th November 2005*

24 simple cameras + 24 enthusiastic children + volunteers from college of art all adds up to a grand time and great learning. Tried and tested right here at Khirki village. Highly recommended. Feel free to try it at home.

It has been one of the most rewarding classes ever. Today we worked with children from classes 5th and 4th. Five volunteers from college of art to help us., young photographers. Charu Monga, Sajeew Visweswaran, Mandakini Devi, Kartik Sood and Sandeep Kuriakose, Deepa and Sanhita. The children were divided into groups and each volunteer was given responsibility for 3 children. We asked the children to look for forms in nature. Circle, square, triangle. The children started clicking straight away, absolutely fascinated with the camera. We were very impressed with one student who patiently focused on the shadow of a window and said that squares are most part of our life

took the children to the Khirki mosque and on the street. On the terrace of the mosque the children got really excited to see all the geometric forms on the mosques, the round domes, the long pillars. They were on fire. I have never seen them so excited about any other workshop.

*30th November 2005*

Today we held the workshop for the children of classes 2nd and 3rd. To the younger lot we handed out the cameras and asked them to click whatever they liked off the street and of the temple. The priests were more than happy to have 24 young photographers on campus. The

children clicked the local shops and the temple compound. Some even chose models from their classmates and asked them to pose for them to click. Much to the amusement of the temple priest and this entourage.

We will now get the films transferred on cd and put on a slide show of what they clicked for them to see. We will also invite the artists in residence to for a discussion with us.

**Aastha Chauhan**