

Co-ordinator's Report

The Second KHOJ International Residency Programme

16th Feb to 27th March 2003.

Residency Coordinators:

Kristine Michael

Gigi Scaria

Participants:

- Barbara Weibel and Patrice Rouby, ceramic artists, France
- Gopal Kalapremi Shrestha, ceramic artist, Nepal
- Pablo Vargas Lugo, sculptor/conceptual artist, Mexico
- Simone Aaberg Kaern, video installation, Denmark with assistant Magnus Bejmar, Sweden
- Kristine Michael, ceramic artist, India
- K.P. Soman, sculptor, India

Preparations:

The preparations began a few months in advance. The studio space was cleared and cleaned after the previous residency, the terrace was water proofed as there was a leak, kitchen accessories such as an electric kettle, mugs, plates, and bowls were purchased, the white- washing of the entire building was done, the installation of a new telephone in the studio, and a wooden partition separating the main entrance and the ground floor studio was made for greater privacy. Once the residency began, the two new studios on the second floor had a wooden surface installed over the air vent.

At the office cum hostel, all the rooms were checked regarding cleanliness, all bedding laundered, the geysers in the attached toilets checked. Each room also had a copy of the latest KHOJ catalogue, the residency guidelines, lists of important phone numbers of KHOJ members, local contacts for art materials, internet, bus/auto rickshaw and taxi charges and routes, restaurants etc. along with a site map of the South Extension and Khirkee area to facilitate the artists. A program chart was made for the entire six weeks which informed the artists about the major events organized for them

This residency was planned as a sculpture and plastic arts one. Kristine lent 4 large wooden tables, some basic tools, basins, glaze materials etc and two raku kilns from her private studio for the use of the artists. The artists had already intimated which sort of clay they required and this was arranged earlier. Pablo wished to work with the marble craftsmen at Agra. We suggested that he try out the local Delhi craftsmen instead.

On arrival, a taxi was sent from KHOJ to the airport for each artist. Their rooms at the office were dusted and cleaned again for their arrival. The kitchens at the office and the studios were stocked with basic food items. The office assistant, Chandan, was informed as to when to expect the artists and to help them settle down.

As Barbara and Patrice were late entries to the residency, they lived at Kristine's studio apartment at Sarita Vihar rent free. This increased their commuting time and expense considerably but they had no complaints.

The following Saturday was an Open Evening for potters and ceramic artists from Delhi to come and meet the artists, as well as to see work

During the six weeks, most of the artists developed an interest in each other's work and techniques. The ceramic artists were very enthusiastic about helping and sharing with each other. Pablo also assisted with the firings whenever he was in the studio. It was unfortunate that as Simone's medium was different, this sort of sharing was missed out. Kalapremi even made a work based on the molded hands of most of the artists and friends with whom he had interacted.

Each artist was helped to display their works in their studios. Kalapremi made an iron structure for his hands. He painted the floor with red clay slip and Fevicol. He used seven of Kristine's wall pedestals for his individual work. Barbara and Patrice requested to have one wall to be repainted white as there were marks on it. They hired a carpenter to make a wooden tree structure for their tiles. Holes had to be drilled in the wall for hanging their seed pods, as well as fastening the tree column. They brought in a small quantity of sand to use at the base of the tree. Kristine brought in coal for the base of her installation. The fan in her studio was removed and reinstalled in Soman's studio. The fan hook was used to hang the butterfly installation. The carpenter was also used to construct the grid frame. Pablo used the floor to display his marble slabs as well as the table and walls for his drawings. His work table was retopped by a larger piece of plywood and painted white.

The works done by the Barbara and Patrice were inspired by the different languages and scripts of India. This was painted onto the seed pods reminiscent of the laburnum tree commonly found on every road in Delhi. Soman worked with the theme of "smell" as a sarcastic and humorous comment on the social system and its dirty politics. He presented his entire work as a beauty parlor installation where there were many small labelled bottles with different smells. Some of his bottle caps were made in the shape of different religious symbols. When you change the cap from one bottle to another the smell remains the same but the structure changes which constantly remind us of the meaninglessness of the political system and its power to exploit people.

Kristine made two hundred black and metallic glazed ceramic butterflies which hung from the ceiling in a mass around a 4ft high Venus Fly Trap plant which was constructed out of an altered male urinal with two washbasin pedestals on a bed surrounded by coal, giving the impression of a wild flower which traps flies as they hover over it. The sanitary ware was painted in the manner given to traditional pottery decoration for the table with the addition of gold lustre fangs. She transforms and anthropomorphs the industrial ceramic sanitary ware object as well as demystifying the hallowed traditions of blue and white pottery painting. The work deals with the complex nature of gender issues and human relationships.

Pablo's drawings were converted by marble craftsmen into inlay with semi precious stone onto marble slabs. This was facilitated by Gigi who accompanied him as translator on his visits. He could only show two of them on the Open Day because he was not satisfied with the finishing of the other two pieces. Perhaps this situation would not have arisen if Pablo had been more regular in his visits to the Chattarpur craftsmen and worked more closely with them. The language barrier could always have been overcome. After the Open Day, however, he found some more talented marble craftsmen in

Agra with whom he worked. This work consisted of a series of ten large circular plates of white marble with inlay drawings. This work was not publicly shown in Delhi. An important debate was postponed with Pablo on the issue of how Indian craftsmen are viewed as mere skilled hands and technicians by contemporary artists and not requiring any credit on the international art exhibition circuit. KHOJ would need to continue this debate with him when he returns to Delhi in December this year as a visiting curator for a Mexican art show at the Apeejay Gallery.

Simone and Magnus were initially planning to edit their Kabul footage in Delhi and present a video installation based on this work. Khoj had clearly stated through earlier emails prior to the residency, that it does not have high technology editing or computer equipment of its own and that it would be sourced for her through contacts in Delhi. These rental expenses would have to be paid by her. Continuous dissatisfaction was expressed with facilities and high rental prices in Delhi. Khoj also expected that new artistic work would be done in India based on the stimuli of working in a new cultural environment, or at the least that in some way the fact that she was in India after Kabul was built into the concept of the project. A lack of willingness to discuss the actual details of the project, except to hint at its mystery, importance and danger, led to a very sorry display on the Open Day. The only public reaction they faced at the Garhi presentation during the six week residency was taken in a non constructive and negative manner, which no one at the residency was able to break through. Simone's feedback regarding the arrangements provided by KHOJ has been noted for further discussion with the KHOJ group.

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