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23.6.2016

## **KHEL MEL WORKSHOPS (2015-16)**

### **A Report on Objectives, Achievements and Challenges**

#### **Introduction**

Art activism acts on its own—relying only on its own networks and on weak and uncertain financial support from progressively minded art institutions. This is, as I said, a new situation—and it calls for new theoretical reflection (Groys:2014)

This report is based on my experience of the process of planning and facilitating the Khel Mel Workshop series between 2015-16. It is an account of the basic structure, model, aims, methods, achievements and challenges that this art initiative met with. In addition the report brings together my own retrospective responses towards the motivation that backs such a creative endeavor, and what it means to be part of the process of its actualisation. I hope that the report not only describes the workshops in their intensity, but also raises pertinent questions with regard to the aesthetics of socially engaged art processes, the links between art and education as well as the experiment with folk art and craft forms, today, positioned within the larger paradigms of what staggered development constantly overlooks.

The report is structured in three parts; it examines the fundamental ideas for the Khel Mel workshop and what principles these shape into and then moves into a descriptive account of the methodology - including tools, model plan and other strategies adopted for the workshops. This is followed by key observations about the nature of the individual workshops going over the successes and challenges that stand out in retrospect.



*Workshop6: Children from Karm Marg with Terracotta Artist Uma Kaant.*

## **1. Ideology and Approach**

The Khel Mel Workshop series is based on the idea that creative and artistic learning environments can bridge borders which are otherwise hard to cross. It brings together school children of very different backgrounds - economically, socially and culturally, through the learning of particular folk art and craft forms. Drawing out new links between art, craft, education, participation, creative learning, cross-cultural communication, co-learning and teaching, I believe that this workshop series provides a rich space of constant experimentation.

Simultaneously, the series is also ideologically rooted within the understanding that there is an urgent need to bring the rich heritage of diverse folk art and craft forms into new dialogues with the present - how do we locate the old in the new? Can we innovate with tradition? Can craft and folk art be re-learned and inspire art creation for those who are not from the same community as the artists, today? What does preservation really mean? Do folk artists want to share their art practice? - are some of the many questions that come into play with this initiative.

Bringing these multiple perspectives together, Khel Mel is ripe with aesthetic potential, linking art and education, in the bridging of biases with which participants from divergent socio-economic background are separated from each other.

### Objectives

Though a lot depended on chance happenings, encounters and unforeseen changes - both positive and challenging, it was definitely important to have aims set out. Some of the objectives I can map out for Khel Mel were -

- Bridging biases between children of different socio-economic backgrounds to some extent over the workshop span.
- Forming an environment of creative and co learning.
- Working with folk art and craft forms innovatively and yet keeping intact the essence of the particular forms for the children to pick up.
- Having folk master artists mentor children for every workshop, opening up their worldview through stories and images from their communities.
- Having each child actually create an art or craft work by the end of the workshop, picking up some of the ways that the master artist creates. - Having as much interaction as possible in the short time, amongst the children and also between the children and master artist.

- Using icebreakers, easy theater and movement exercises and games to enhance the possibility of exchange and loosen up the space between participants and have fun!
- As facilitators, helping the process of exchange and being attentive to the needs of every participant (whether going to the toilet or not grasping what the master artist was demonstrating) so as to be holistic art educators and not just normative teachers.
- Trying to bring the work produced into some form of exhibition or publication at the end of all the workshops for the children, their families and organisations involved to see and celebrate.

## 2. Methodology

Structurally, the Khel Mel workshops center around collaboration and co-learning. Collaboration here has many layers and intersections. At the most rudimentary, it can be broken down to collaboration of two kinds - the first being between fields of knowledge - that of education, socially engaged art and folk art practices and the second being collaboration between different players involved within those arenas, at different levels of participation - children taking part, administration, organisations, NGOs, parents and guardians, facilitators, mentors, artists and onlookers amongst others. The rich multi layered interactions are closely knit into making the model of the Khel Mel workshops essentially a 'process based' one.



*Workshop 1: Madhubani with artist Urmila Devi*

### Model

Having been involved to a small extent with these workshops in the previous years, I had some idea of how to draw out the model plan and put together ideas, tools and methods for the series at hand. However, thinking through it as the facilitator required a far more constructive role than I had played out before, which was both exciting and challenging. Like other process based socially engaged art initiatives, it meant a fine

negotiation between imagination and the reality of what was possible to achieve. Yet it was important to structure or map out the workshop plan as far as possible, as this series includes participants and artists for whom the engagement has a certain expectation and the time we working with was minimal.

**Duration** - Within the first few planning sessions during the summer, 2015, we decided that the series would consist of six workshops, each being two days long . We also decided that we would have one workshop a month (which in retrospect would have been ideal) from October, 2015 to March, 2016. The monthly schedule however was subject to major changes, and finally we held workshops from November to May, with one workshop each in November, January, February and May and two workshops in December. Each of the workshop days was about two and a half hours long, beginning a little past 2pm and ending by about 5pm. Our last workshop in May however was a one day intensive, from about 1pm to 5pm.

**Partnering NGO and school** - In terms of the basic structure of this innovative model, we thought of maintaining what had been previously practiced - that of having about twenty children for each workshop, half from an NGO or school supporting low income group students and half from public schools in Delhi. The age group of children was kept as being at slight variation between the two groups based on the findings shared by Both Naira Jansen and Charty, from previous workshops - that the children from public schools had a slightly more developed learning basis - so the call was for public school children from the age of 8-10 and NGO children from the age of 10-12.

We also decided that to build a consistent relationship with partnering NGOs or schools that support children from low income families, we would work not with six separate ones for six workshops but with two organisations, for three workshops each. Ideally, we imagined being able to work with each partner for three consecutive workshops, to build a strong relationship, however this was not possible due to various constraints.

The two partnering NGOs from which we had children participating for this series were - Karm Marg from Faridabad and Nirmal School from Central Delhi. Both these organisations have previously participated in Artreach activities and were more than happy to be associated again, when approached during the planning rounds. Having made it clear as to what the workshops would be composed of, where they would take place and the age group we would work with, deciding the set of children to participate was left entirely up to the organisation. We requested them to submit a list with names and ages of those participating, prior to the workshop.

**Venue** - A major structuring element for the workshops was definitely the space where they took place - that of the Crafts Museum, Delhi. With its terracotta horses, bell metal elephants, huts from different parts of the country and a section where crafts people

from various communities set up shop and also perform and sing, one is enfolded in manifold textures of craft and creation hard to find elsewhere.

For each workshop, we met the children directly at the Museum. We held three workshops under the large Banyan tree at the 'Village Section' of the Museum, two workshops at the amphitheater space and one, because it was too hot to be outdoors, within a hall next to the craft stalls. We also made good use of the open areas within the Museum to play games, take walks and have treasure hunts.

### Resources

**Materials** – Every workshop required some specific materials as per the nature of the art or craft form which was purchased after talking with the artist before their particular workshop, but apart from this we had a staple of materials running through the series. This included pencils, sketch pens, scissors, packs of white A4 sized sheets, crayons, poster paints in sets of 6 and other basic stationary. Key elements to this set was the stick on name tags which everyone put on before sessions and a soft throw ball to pass around for the initial name-game. We also had the three large ply boards which could be either put up against a wall or tree, so as to pin art work on, or laid on the ground to sit and use as a surface for placing papers. The one flex Khel Mel banner was pinned up on a tree or gate next to the spot where the workshop was being held; this attracted attention from visitors to the museum which had its pros and cons, discussed further on.

**Games** – In each workshop we began with movement games – a name game where through passing a ball we picked up each others names, a walking at different speeds game where when children came face to face with each other they had to shake hands and then a few drawing games, all brought together a lively spirit. The drawing games included making each other's portraits in pairs without looking down – leading to much amusement and also drawing in groups on the same paper. I think the point of having these was primarily to bring children into communication and break the ice. This worked especially well in the workshops where kids from very different backgrounds were present and language was a barrier - some speaking only English and others mostly Hindi. In such a scenario, the initial games and drawing exercises worked to establish an 'equality' and create ways of communicating which did not hinge on the otherwise cultured differences.

It was also useful to have these fun activities in between - as refreshers, or towards the end of the session when sitting and drawing started to get tiring. In one workshop we even had children from Nirmal school teaching us Khokho and organizing the game themselves. I think more of this - children taking lead, can certainly be encouraged within the workshop as they at once own the space without hesitation and become more confident in coming up with ideas.

The Treasure Hunt – We made a fresh treasure hunt chart by taking photos of murals and objects placed within the open area at the Museum – this included a part of the door engraving from Rajasthan, mural painting from Gujarat, a bell metal deer and elephant from Madhya Pradesh. Six of these colour photos were arranged on an A4 sheet and printed out. During the treasure hunt children were paired (preferable in every pair – one child from an NGO or school and one from the public schools) and together had to look for every object on the sheet and also tell us something about it – where it's from or what material it was made of.

Snacks – Sharing food together was not just a break but another way to bond as well – every session had a break in between with juice, cake and either popcorn or chips. We sat around the workshop area and shared this for about ten minutes. For children coming in from the NGO it was also an outing, like maybe very few others, which made the day even more special and I think eating and sharing food can be one of the strongest ways to bond across cultural barriers.

### **3. Nature of the Workshops**

As discussed above, for this series we held six workshops. These were all by different master artists representing distinct folk art or craft forms and bringing alive their world views through stories and conversation. Here I would like to briefly talk about the individual workshops that took place and the particular events, encounters and learnings from them –

#### Workshop 1 :Madhubani with Urmila Devi from Bihar ( 21, 22 November)

For this workshop we had ten children from Karm Marg participating and Urmila Devi, a middle aged Madhubani artist was the mentor. We met her a few days before the workshop and planned it out. As Madhubani is originally made on the walls of mud homes in Bihar, which are first coated with a mix of cow-dung and mud, we came up with the idea of coating thick sheets of paper with the same mix. The white hand-made paper was handed over to Urmila Devi and she had it prepared for the workshop. This idea worked really well to give a closer impression of the materials, textures and colors true to the art form.

At the start of the workshop Urmila Devi put a few of her art works on the ply boards, which we had selected when meeting her earlier. These were paintings telling stories of festivals of particular gods in Madhubani, and also representing the agriculture and village life there. A major component of the first of the two days was to 'see, think and wonder' with close observation of the works up (which was practiced through all the

workshops). This meant breaking up into two groups and looking at the artworks intently. As facilitators our role was to ask children questions about the art work we were looking at to ignite their visual imaginations – why is the sky pink, what is the fruit in this tree, is there a story in this painting, where are people in this cart going, what kind of paint is used here and so on. Children came up with their own questions and we noted these on a piece of paper.

We then regrouped and asked Urmila Devi questions to which she had some stories as responses, about the festival represented, names of the fruits, trees and gods etc. Having gone through this process of closely observing work and talking with the artist, we broke up the groups and handed out individual papers for children to make their own patterns, designs and elements from the work observed and with their original ideas. What was key to this process of making their own paintings, was that children had to use elements – patterns, symbols, figures, animals – as created by Urmila Devi. However, there was complete freedom in what they chose to make. During this time, Urmila Devi was asked to also demonstrate the making of simple animals and figures and repeated design elements such as in the borders of her work. If the children wanted to, they could go up to her at any point and ask her to show them something they want to make.



*Workshop 1: Madhubani with artist Urmila Devi*

This dialogic process of working built a friendly community during the sessions instead a competitive or teacher-dominated one. It also meant that each child was keenly focused on her/his own work without the pressure of matching up to some 'correct' result. On the second day session, children worked on a 'final art work' painted on the special paper prepared by Urmila Devi who told them how it was made. They made works of different sizes – book mark, card and larger. Each child got to take their art work home and also received a certificate of participation. Urmila Devi turned out to be very accessible and she too said that she had enjoyed the sessions.

### Workshop 2: Sanjhi with Ajay Kumar from Mathura (12, 13 December)

This workshop we had ten students of Nirmal school participating and a few children from public schools in Delhi. Sanjhi master artist Ajay Kumar was the mentor for this workshop. Sanjhi is a form of fine paper cutting with special scissors and is originally used to decorate temples of Krishna. Though we felt that using scissors would be tricky for the children, we decided to go ahead and work with bolder drawings so that it would be easier to cut.

This workshop was much more about technique than stories as all the work that the artist brought were individual trees, birds, animals or Radha-Krishna depictions. On the other hand what was key to this session was learning how the cutting actually happened – first a drawing was made as a stencil, so that when parts of the paper were cut out, the whole would hold together. After drawing, the scissors had to be pushed in gently and cut with while turning the paper at the same time. Though a few of the participants in this workshop were really young, around age eight, and we were initially apprehensive, the workshop saw all fear completely go away as each worked ever so carefully and managed to make complete cut out works by the second session.

The artist too was caring and had to at different points work with almost every child individually to show them the unique way of holding the scissors and turning the paper at the same time. I think this process marked a meditative learning with the input of a highly skilled craft which would otherwise be thought of as being too 'adult' for children but shows that children are actually capable of learning-by-doing a lot more than they are allowed to.

### Workshop 3: Katputli with Pooran Bhaat from Katputli Colony Delhi (December 19,20)

For this workshop we had children of Nirmal school participating. This was by far the most intensive workshop for several reasons; Katputli – a Rajasthani puppet making form, required several materials and putting these together meant sourcing from several markets – wooden balls, scarves, wool, special glue, long needles and fabric paints. The master artist and his team in this case helped with sourcing some of the material like the special wooden balls for the heads of the puppets.

I was keen on having this workshop so as to invite in the mentor artist Pooran Bhaat, whose renowned experiments with puppet making and skills as a storyteller I had experienced before. Pooran Bhaat, now in his late fifties, led this workshop with a team of three other younger members of his community. As it was winter we had this workshop at the amphitheater space which also built a slight theatricality to the session.





*Workshop 3: Kathputli with artist Pooran Bhaat.*

Pooran Bhaat along with his team performed for us in the beginning of the workshop – bringing out two different wonderful puppets – one which was a fat dwarf and kept rolling over, and the other which could turn into a prince or a princess depending on how it was held. Along with the puppets, one of the artists played a dholak and another played a traditional metallic mouth organ. The performances had very clear narratives, and it completely enveloped us in its magic. Since the performances are based on stories, we broke up into two groups and spent a good share of the first session making stories, with each participant having a character in the story. Though this was an ideal process for a longer workshop, in retrospect it took just too long and finally we did not have time to really play out those stories once the puppets were created. It might have been better to simply adopt individual characters and go ahead with making those as puppets.

The puppet making part itself was mostly on the second day – there was material quite literally flying all over the place, cloth, bits of string, wooden balls, paints spilling – definitely a modern artist's studio! Pooran Bhaat was very skilled and able to, with his assistants, help each child create a two foot tall string puppet that could actually move its cloth limbs – all in two days. However, he was also a dominating figure and a little hard to plan anything with. His behavior with children was also a little more authoritative and rough, and especially one child came to the point of crying because of the way he teased her on not working. At this point I realized that the artist, however much I respected, had also to be instructed when not following the basic ethics of our co-learning model.

#### Workshop 4: Patachitra with Jyoti Ranjan from Orissa (23,24 January)

For this workshop as well we had Nirmal school participating and about 5-6 other children from public schools. We had Patachitra artist Jyoti Ranjan mentoring the workshop. The mix of different backgrounds was probably the most marked at this

workshop as a diverse set of children – some only speaking either English or Hindi, and coming in from very different parts of the world, were taking part.

Patachitra paintings from Orissa is an intricate and fine painting style mostly used for religious depictions of Oriya gods. Unlike the Patachitra from West Bengal, it is not bold figures nor does it have secular narratives. For this workshop, the artist showed us work that he has made as well as similar depictions made by his family in the previous generations – we observed the differences in these as the older paintings actually had far brighter colors. The paintings across generations depicted the major gods of Orissa and stories of their lives. The difference of color between old and new works that the artist showed us brought about a discussion about natural colours and the more modern paints.

While making their own art work, children closely observed the many motifs and patterns that had been used, especially in the borders. The master artist himself, though ready to demonstrate and help was not so experienced and a little unsure of how to explain or what to draw out as demonstrations for the children. However, with facilitator interventions, and plenty of visual stimuli, the children were creatively engaged across the two sessions. A concern during this workshop for me was the dominance of Hindu religious paintings as inspiration; though paintings of divinity is not per se problematic, if this, such as large portrayals of calendar style Shiva-Parvati become the dominant paintings in a form that originally was not meant for this, then it calls for some finer attention into not just the style but the changing themes. In such cases, a conscious choice must be made to have a diversity of themes and also keep as much to secular or folk stories rather than modern religiosity which has entered the practice and dominated it, maybe for its easier marketability, since those are far easier to locate in everyday life as it is and eclipse the diversity of folk narratives.

#### Workshop5: Bhil Painting with Geeta Bariya from Madhya Pradesh ( February 26,27)

For this workshop we had children from Karm Marg participating . This workshop had possibly the most inspiring of our artists. Geeta Bariya had married into the adivasi community of Bhils in Madhya Pradesh who have developed a contemporary folk art form, with a mix of modern inspirations. This form made on paper has colors, motifs and patterns resembling aboriginal Australian art but at the same time has come to be adopted into telling stories closer to the Bhil community life. However, as Geeta explained later on to us, women rarely come out with the painting form and for her to do so was a step up for all the community women. It was therefore a unique experience to be part of Geeta's courageous artist journey. During the workshop, Geeta displayed large colorful art works filled with line and dot patterns depicting animals that connect with trees and others that look half human. The participating children in this workshop at once picked up the striking pattern forms, spent time practicing these and then

incorporating them in their work. As it was difficult for them to make the patterns with paint, most used sketch pens or color pencils for this session. Geeta was very approachable and took charge easily of explaining, demonstrating and showing children different ways of drawing or making the patterns. She did leave the workshop space a couple of times in between though as there were customers at her stall that she wanted to deal with.

#### Workshop 6: Terracotta with Uma Kaant from Orissa (22 May)

Our final workshop was in the middle of summer and we decided to keep it as a one day intensive session instead of the regular two day sessions. We had terracotta animal making and pottery for this session with artist Umar Kaant from Orissa showing children how to turn balls of clay into fish and turtles. At the start of the workshop we gathered at Uma Kaant's stall and saw all his creations - fish of many different sizes, pots, birds, cats, turtles of varying dimensions and other objects.

We then moved into a newly constructed hall next to the stalls, where we could spread out with the clay and get to work. Uma Kaant worked along with the children - first doing something to his own clay, then showing, then asking them to repeat. He was slow and concerned that all children manage to follow the details right from making a ball of clay into a real round ball. With the a process such as clay work, just feeling the textures and slowly molding things can be very gripping and as the workshop moved on children started making objects of their own imagination as well. Towards the end, Uma Kaant showed every child how to work on the potters wheel, letting them try to make a pot in turns. Though no successful pots turned out, just trying this out and understanding a little of what it takes to work with clay, is a learning process.

#### **4. Observations**

Though spread across a longer duration of time than planned, the aim of having six intensive workshops was met over this period and the relationships with our various collaborators – at the Crafts Museum, Karm Marg NGO, Nirmal School, other participating students from public schools and the six master artists – was positive. It is of course a near impossible task to lay out quantitative measures for how successful this series was – yet it might be asked as to how far it met its own objectives, and how far it met the expectations of the various collaborators and participants. Here I would like to take note of key achievements and challenges of this series and bring in relevant observations of my own on the same.

## Achievements

- During the preparation phase for the workshops there was a series of administrative meetings to gain permission for the workshops as the Crafts Museum is a government regulated institution and has its own bureaucratic organization. I think this was well handled though it took constant communication from our part to actualize the permissions.
- The Crafts Museum itself was established to not only have a space for folk artists and crafts persons to set up shop, but also for them to be able experiment and innovate with their crafts, reach out to others in the city, have dialogues, share their knowledge and skill with those interested. Over time, the space has become much more like a 'theme park' and a commercial area to buy craft/folk artifacts. I therefore think that the Khel Mel workshops intercept this change and open up the possibility for there to be engaged learning, experiment and conversations over the craft form and with the artist. Through doing these, the space of the Museum is rejuvenated and so is the dynamic relationship with the artist, who is otherwise left 'on display' just like her/his objects. In this regard, socially engaged art practices need not continuously create 'alternative spaces of their own' but can be successfully inserted even within bureaucratic frameworks, creating original propositions as 'micro-utopias' within the present (Bourriaud:2002).
- The relationship with the partnering Nirmal School and Karm Marg NGO was strong and from the response that children and those coming with them as volunteers, it met up to their expectation of learning that the workshops were designed for.
- Between the facilitators there was healthy communication which created an environment for openness during the workshop and also a keen attentiveness towards what each child's needs might be.
- We made use of innovative learning tools such as the 'see, think and wonder' exercise at the first session of each workshop, the ice breaker movement games and the treasure hunt. These definitely built bridges between the children and all of us, adding a fun element throughout the workshops.
- A conscious effort was made to not have our folk artist work only as an artist but as a mentor – sharing knowledge, skill and stories and being directly engaged with the children while we facilitated their engagement in various ways. The sharing of stories and their own world view, especially in the workshops such as the Madhubani, Bhil and Kathputli ones where the artists readily communicated and had rich folk narratives to share, built a deeper understand of the art form for the participants. At a larger level, this knowledge sharing can come to question the distinction between folk stories and 'facts', beliefs and truth – for the children. It also intrinsically breaks a class and language barrier of the idea of who a contemporary teacher or artist is as all our mentors were Hindi speaking

and from remote rural regions of the country, sharing their unique culture, upbringing and ways in which they themselves picked up their skillful creative practices.

- Though not every workshop had participants from public schools, the ones that did – Sanjhi, Bhil and Patachitra – had definite communication across cultures with the children painting together, sharing material and playing games together. During the treasure hunt they came together beautifully, holding hands and running around to locate objects on their hand out charts. As facilitators, we made sure that all instructions and stories being shared were translated into both languages so that there was no feeling of exclusion.
- The key learning process that this series has in mind did actualize in that each workshop was a process of ‘learning by doing’ and the mentor artist used demonstrative teaching as a primary form of communication.
- The workshops were non competitive and instead gave children the confidence to slowly focus entirely on their own paintings or crafts and come up with original ways of applying the patterns or techniques shown by the artist. It was wonderful to see how over the course of the second session in each workshop, children would at some point be completely immersed in their creation process, and start to really feel happy showing us what they’ve come up with. The workshops therefore successfully inspired confidence and the environment to focus on the work at hand without feeling the continuous pressure to achieve some pre-decided end.
- I think the way the workshops were planned out in their use of time – over the two sessions – was planned to an optimum use of time, on most days. This meant that we have enough time to observe the artist’s works, talk to her/him, work on their own art work, have food breaks and play games. We also made sure that children arrive on time and that we wind up before the museum's shutting hour at 5pm.
- The self learning mode of working, where every child was free to experiment with the materials and particular art or craft form for that workshop meant that we had a wide variety of art work produced in every workshop. At the end of each workshop, every child had at least one art work of their own – paintings, puppets or terracotta animals – to take back along with a certificate of participation.

### Challenges

- A key challenge for the workshops is of how to have an equal participation of children from public schools so as to meet the framework of cross cultural interaction. For half the workshops in this series we only had children from the

NGO and low income supporting schools, which meant that though the workshop itself went well we couldn't possibly have the larger aim of bridging boundaries. Additionally, when only one set of children come in from one institution, their familiarity level with each other is already high and there was more distraction between them than in the workshops where we had children from different backgrounds.

- Though the Crafts Museum is an inspiring location for the workshops, it does tend to get distracting due to the huge number of visitors who are interested in what the workshop is about. This was especially the case during the winter months – peak visitor season – and it meant that one facilitator needed to continuously talk and respond to curious onlookers.
- Though the communication with the artists we worked with was overall well handled, in the case of Pooran Bhaat, as discussed before, the issue of ethical responsibility of how to treat the students came up. This meant that though the artist was treated with complete respect, he too had to be checked when being overly authoritarian towards particular students.
- A challenge in some of the workshops, especially where the artist was younger and relatively more shy or not so comfortable with Hindi, like in the case of Patachitra artist Jyoti Ranjan, was of how to communicate more of the artist's worldview – stories, village life, how they learn their skill and the festivals etc. that are important to them instead of him only demonstrating skill.
- Finally I also feel that there was a possibility for more comprehensive documentation of the workshop process as well as the works produced during each, through photos, interviews, notes and videos. This would also have worked well to meet the aim of having an exhibition or publication or other deliverables around the course of this series of the Khel Mel Workshops.

## **Conclusion**

It would prove contrary to claim that initiatives such as this actually remove or visibly distort prevalent inequalities even within the participatory group; on the other hand, the process must be considered for what it *does* achieve, and not against larger socio-economic changes that are needless to say urgently required. I do feel that a constant pressure on socially engaged art initiatives is to match up to the work that activists, NGOs or even government social programs and policy making set out do. This however is based on a false assumption. An initiative such as the Khel Mel Workshop is centered on a very different approach, but with a similar concern; yes inequalities exist and yes marginal art/craft practices and their practitioners deserve more recognition - but the outcome here is a slow paced involvement in the very process of creating, where during creation, ideal exchanges take place. This leaves small yet long lasting impressions on

those involved. I do believe, that though changes and processes of this sort are hard to map and quantify against the high thresholds of social betterment, they can open up imaginative spaces of transformation which go a long way.

At points during the workshops I would find myself wondering how and why families or the NGO from the lower income group take the time and effort out of their busy and often difficult lives, to come drop and pick children from the workshop. Do they think it is relevant? Is it out of pressure from the heads of the school or NGO we have collaborated with? Do they think having certificates would prove useful academically later on? Whatever the answer maybe - whoever came with the children seemed very happy to do so - in conversations with parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters and NGO staff who at different points came along and sometimes even stayed for the duration of the workshop - they expressed their own keenness for their children to make the most of the activity and learning happening during the workshop. They were eager to know when the next workshop or series would be. This constantly affirmed my belief, that the workshops were not just 'fun' but a learning process, much like what is expected out of regular education, and actually far more holistic.

Within the Khel Mel workshops a definite indication of having participated within a creative process was that each child had complete and original art work at the end of their workshop. However in this process the making of artwork was definitely instrumentalised for, on the one hand communication across class and other socio-economic differences that would otherwise not take place and on the other hand the experiment with folk art and craft forms. I think the aesthetic proposition forming here, which at once also challenges normative art/social change practices, is that creative transformation can take place in the opening of *impermanent* spaces through the gathering of particular individuals, ideas and activities. When this is repeated over time, it leads to leaps in imagination, communication and creation and also in a radical rejuvenation of the site itself, all of which would not be possible if the task at hand was to meet a predetermined end result. I think that the workshops therefore worked well in creating such a space of creative experiments at various levels.



Workshop1: Rani with her work at the Madhubani workshop with Urmila Devi.

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