Designers Meet Artisans

A Practical Guide

UNESCO

Craft Revival Trust

artesanías de colombia s.a.

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Foreword

The guru of the 'global village' concept, Marshall McLuhan, predicted in 1966 that *'in the future, the role of the craftsman will be more important than ever before'.*

Four decades later, there are some interesting signs sustaining this forecast: the growing awareness by the public and private sectors as well as regional and international cooperation agencies of the dual role of crafts in their blending of traditional skills and modern creativity, and in their economic and socio-cultural impact on sustainable development; and the increasing preference of the public for eco-friendly, handmade, quality products and the greater recognition of the very qualities that we take for granted in crafts—qualities of timelessness and permanence, the adaptability of artisans and their materials to changing needs, and, above all, the spiritual dimension of crafts. These favourable trends are, nevertheless, counterbalanced by some disturbing contradictions.

In today's 'global village', the artisan is, paradoxically, more and more disconnected from consumer needs and tastes. With the extension of markets and the spectacular growth of tourism, the traditional direct, personal contact between makers and users has been disrupted. The artisan can no longer assume, as in the past, the combined role of a designer, producer, and marketer.

Another global paradox is the increasing exigency of the consumer: the more choices, the more discrimination in choice. There is a growing market seeking out the unique and the authentic, the benchmark for authenticity being what is true to the artisan's cultural heritage. Globalization and the homogeneous products that have resulted from corporations developing global brands have, indeed, created a niche for creativity, innovation, and uniqueness. In this context, there is an increasing demand for well-applied design, much of which comes from the local culture itself and from the imagination and skills of creative artisans.

Hence the concerns expressed, across all geographical borders, by craft promoters and organizations for closer links between designers and artisans. Given the communication gap between producers and consumers, the designer is seen as an indispensable intermediate, a 'bridge' between the artisan's know-how and his knowledge of what to make. Innovative approaches to crafts can no doubt be triggered off by the introduction of design in various aspects, for example as regards the choice of alternative materials and appropriate technologies or the definition of new product lines.

However, if design intervention in crafts is most welcomed by some as a necessity (the mother of invention, according to the old saying), and an opportunity for new prospects, it is often considered by others as a threat. The reduction of the artisan's role to that of a mere producer subservient to the designer's influence, and the lack of reference to the cultural context in products designed for an alien, volatile market, are among the commonly expressed concerns. What is the nature of the loss and/or gain in the adaptation to market forces? How to adapt and/or modify existing products or create new products from local design motifs without obliterating traditions? Can there be a well-balanced and mutually beneficial interaction between designers and artisans?

This book aims to address these issues in an objective manner and clarify the scope, processes, and modalities of a proper design intervention in crafts. Its originality lies in a dual presentation of the experiences of two countries—Colombia and India—which have a particularly rich craft tradition; it offers significant case studies at two distinct levels, that of design students and of professional designers respectively. In the light of

converging lessons learned on the development of effective partnerships between designers and artisans, guidelines are proposed that can be relevant and applicable to a broad spectrum of the crafts sector worldwide.

A large part of this publication is devoted to craft exposure courses in the curriculum of design students' academic programme. Indeed, to ensure the success of long-term interactions, it is indispensable to first develop a meaningful alliance between design and crafts in formal training institutions. This approach is strikingly in harmony with that of the founder of the Bauhaus, Walter Gropius, who believed that the best training for a young designer should include courses to free his individual creative ability and give him a knowledge of a range of materials—stone, clay, glass, wool, wood, metal, and paper—for exploring three-dimensional forms easily. Beyond the necessary exposure to the medium used by artisans and to their environment, the selected case studies in different regions of India illustrate how interesting ideas and new intervention models can be developed for several purposes, whether for revitalizing a languishing craft or for developing new products to create livelihoods.

In the same spirit, the case studies from the Colombian Design Laboratory provide reflections and strategies for innovation in different trades practised by artisanal communities in various regions of the country through an interactive process respectful of their cultural identity. Crafts stem from a relationship between humans and their environment within their historical, cultural, and social contexts. This intimate relationship should be understood and respected by designers attempting to develop crafts. The most significant result of this experience led by Artesanías de Colombia is the opportunity offered to artisans to demonstrate their know-how in developing new products, which are distinguished both in the local and international markets because they represent a living craft tradition with a high design content.

Besides contributing to a strongly felt need in various geographical regions, *Designers Meet Artisans* complements UNESCO's initiatives during the past decades to provide decision makers and craft professionals in the member states with working tools for the advancement of the crafts sector. This practical guide is thus related to the previous ones, *Data Collection on Crafts* (1990) and *International Craft Trade Fairs* (2001) respectively, since any correct design intervention must be based on data collection, both quantitative and qualitative, and must have meaning in the marketplace. As Patrick Ela, Director of the Los Angeles Craft and Folk Art Museum, once rightly pointed out, *'Craftspeople create because they need to create; like all of us, they must eat. To overlook the inescapable need for economic development as well as technical and artistic development would be naïve.'*

It is therefore within UNESCO's global approach to the cultural and socio-economic role of crafts that this book is proposed as a working tool for decision makers, artisans, designers and design institutes, and craft NGOs. The ultimate aim is to help all those involved in the promotion of the crafts sector ask the right questions rather than to deliver unequivocal answers.

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SECTION I

Theoretical Issues in a Practical Debate

In looking for a fuller understanding of the role of design, we have to take note of:

- *Its direct relevance to the well-being and freedom of the artisan*
- *Its indirect role through influencing social change and*
- *Its indirect role through influencing economic production.*

Amartya Sen[1]
(Sen, 1999)

Artisanal products are those produced by artisans, either completely by hand, tools or even mechanical means as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the most substantial component of the finished product. These are produced without restriction in terms of quantity and using raw materials from sustainable resources. The special nature of artisanal products is derived from their distinctive features which can be utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, culturally attached and socially symbolic and significant.

— Definition adopted by UNESCO / ITC International Symposium
on Crafts and International Markets (Manila, Philippines, October 1997)

1 India-born economist Amartya Sen won the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1998. Professor Sen works in welfare or development economics. The Swedish Academy of Sciences has said that by combining tools from economics and philosophy, he has restored an ethical dimension to the discussion of vital economic problems. Professor Sen is currently at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States.

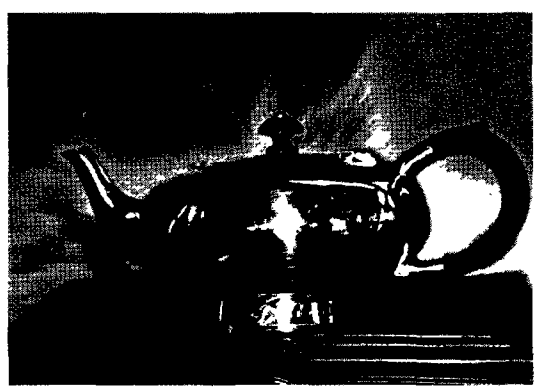
Theoretical Issues in a Practical Debate

The debate about design interaction/intervention between designers and artisans is, to put it mildly, fraught with diverse opinions and preconceptions. Indeed, even the question as to whether design intervention is at all a value-added and productive process is distinctly complicated by the fact that most artisans are not active players, either in spearheading change or in marketing. The actual players represent many different interest areas, some of them mutually incompatible, each one with a different focus on the aim of the design intervention.

For cultural historians, the preservation of traditions and contexts is of primary importance; for marketers, demand and supply chains and market trends are the determining forces; government officials and policy makers have specific concerns pertaining to the viability of the handicrafts sector, its impact in terms of employment, and its relative weight in the context of gross domestic product and foreign exchange earnings. These issues are complicated by considerations of the preservation of cultural and social heritage, leading to constant debates about policy interventions. The 'indigenous' nature of craft activities further embroils stakeholders in the debate about economic protectionism, indigenization versus liberalization, and creative variety versus mechanized standardization. And there is, of course, the immensely important question of tourism, in which crafts and artisans are located within the matrix of an evanescent picturesque, reminiscent of times, traditions and persons considered anachronistic in the 'modern' world.

It is thus hardly surprising that there are various answers to the core questions pertaining to the issue of design intervention. What is critical in the debate, however, is not an attempt to create a case for or against design intervention/interaction, but rather to explore the issues that confront the process as it exists right now, and to evolve methods of thinking and acting—guidelines, if we may—that contribute to making this process a meaningful interaction between artisans and designers. There is a need to address issues arising from this interface that are beyond the mere creation and reinterpretation of products in the context of new design sensibilities and inputs.

There are several questions that demand answers. Why do we need design intervention? What should be the role of a designer? How can interventions mediate between tradition and change? Should they be attempting to do so? What are the kinds of markets that have opened up to artisans through the medium of design intervention? Is design intervention a short-term intrusion into an artisan's design sensibility and life, or does it have a long-lasting impact on his or her artisanal creativity and work? Is it a process that adds value to the artisan's work, economically and in terms of creative inputs? Should all forms of intervention aim at a



holistic approach, including craft regeneration and self-sustainability, or is it meaningful to intervene with restricted aims, in which case the artisan is effectively treated as the equivalent of skilled labour, executing the designers vision. Should we instead be teaching artisans the formalized design process as set forth in design institutes?

There are various forms of advocacy and many forums that seek to address this array of questions. Our attempt here is to delineate the dominant themes as they have been developed and reflected upon by persons and groups involved actively in the debate. The thoughts and ideas we present here reflect the voices of artisans, activists, designers, students and design faculty, among others.

1.1. Interventions: The Whys

■ The Designer as a Bridge

At a time when globalization is linking areas spatially but disconnecting pasts and presents everywhere, the designer is an important mediator between discontinuous realities. *Designers are thus an interface between tradition and modernity, helping match craft production to the needs of modern living.* Crafts in the developing world remain mostly an activity cast in a predominantly rural matrix, whereas the market is increasingly urban, if not global.

> The designer has thus emerged as a critical intermediary whose function, ideally, is to bridge the communication gap between the rural artisan and the urban client. This is all the more important at a time when the artisan may no longer be a designer, producer and marketer rolled into one, as he was in the past. The situation has changed drastically and the artisan is usually not in direct, personal contact with the bulk of users, and thus is no longer attuned to the needs and desires of consumers. What has emerged is the mediating role of the designer, whose function is to bridge this gap.

In most traditional societies, design evolved somewhere in the interaction between the artisan and the patron or commissioner; a professional designer as a middleman between the artisan and the client did not exist. In traditional contexts, the artisan was usually familiar with the aesthetic and socio-cultural requirements of the client and designed an appropriate object accordingly. This system did not need the immediacy of a designer.

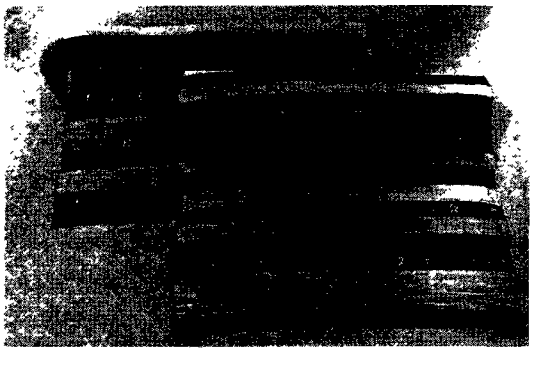
In contrast to traditional situations, in which the artisan was his own designer, and the aesthetic and the practical blended in a natural rather than an artificially imposed harmony, today most artisans are practising traditional skills with traditional technology, but at the same time vying with machines, deadlines, and a craze for imported fashions. They are increasingly faced with the problem of diminishing orders and are hemmed in by the competition. Their disenfranchisement has moved them further from their markets, both literally and figuratively.

Crafts thus need designers to bridge the gap and allow them to compete with the products and practices of modern industrialization. Planned industrialization has meant that in most cases the conventional client-artisan relationship has broken down. The increased distance compels the artisan to deal with and cater to a clientele whom he might have never seen, and does not understand or associate with. The artisan does not speak the same language as the client, both literally and metaphorically. This

has allowed a more competitive modern industry to hurt the artisan by offering comparatively cheaper products, thus further cutting into his market share. Modern industry is also more evolved in terms of advertising, marketing and distribution when compared with traditional craft sectors. Artisans thus need design intervention to compete successfully with the products and practices of modern industrialization.

Crafts have never been purely an artistic or aesthetic undertaking, supposedly existing in a bubble of creativity uncontaminated by material interests. Crafts are very much an economic activity, and the centre of the development process is marketing. The customer does not buy out of a sense of sympathetic concern for the artisan; the product must be competitive in price, pleasing in aesthetics, and efficient and useful in functionality. The product can only be marketable if it is attractive to the consumer, that is, if traditional skill is adapted and designed to suit contemporary consumer tastes and needs. Craft producers cannot be economically viable unless their product is marketable, and this is where design intervention plays a critical role in ensuring this viability, in matching technique with function.

One of the most pertinent questions in this debate is: Why do artisans with skilled traditions going back centuries need these outside interventions at all? The distortions and deterioration in craft traditions and practices caused by a great many interventions, however well intentioned, do give one pause. However, in principle, design intervention is valid if it is seen as a springboard rather than as a cage. Craft, if it is to be utility-based and economically viable, cannot be static. It must respond to changes in markets, consumer needs, fashion trends and usage preferences. *It is the role of the designer to interpret these changes, with sensitivity and understanding, to the artisans, who are removed from their new markets.*



■ Design as a Tool for Development

Several craft activists and interventionists also see design intervention as a 'problem-solving methodology' to be applied as a tool for development, essentially as a means of removing bottlenecks to viability and of easing the move from tradition to modernity. Design intervention can help evaluate past solutions in terms of contemporary needs, and help select and reject from tradition and modern experience.

Despite progress in communication technologies, there continue to be glaring gaps in awareness, information and exposure among artisans. Often artisans remain isolated and unaware of each other's ingenuity, of some useful skills that have been lost in one region that have been revived or are still in existence in other regions, of more efficient and productive techniques practised by other artisans, sometimes right next door to them. Owing to their inability to access information, many artisans with a certain skill set are not aware of products that they can make, modify, or easily develop to meet new needs. *Design intervention can thus help generate awareness among artisans of methods, materials, tools and processes that serve as value addition to their craft.*

> Design innovation once done effectively is a perennial asset. It can stimulate meaningful change in several ways, for example, by introducing cost-effective and sustainable technologies, decreasing dependence on variables like seasonality, improving the supply of raw materials, and attuning the craft to the market, thus making the craft more viable.

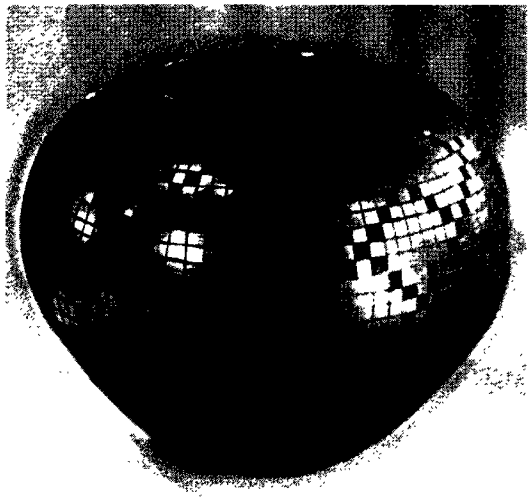
Design and development can also be viewed in a wider context. Often design is wrongly believed to be an activity of the urban elite, a

cosmetic treatment applied to make things more pretty. Design has an important role in ushering in economic and social change that *does not stop at creating a new or better product. Design also plays an important role in encouraging environmentally sustainable and economically viable models of craft activity, and helps in the empowerment of marginalized groups, especially in cases where income generation, social mobilization and community rehabilitation are needed.* Designers work as catalysts, whether intervening to involve hitherto excluded groups in craft activity, or in helping existing artisans deal with new clients through packaging, transportation, education and training.

■ Design Intervention for Preserving Cultural Resources

Several among those involved with revitalizing crafts, especially languishing ones, insist, and rightly so, that documents and monographs on crafts are an invaluable reference source—necessary for the development of crafts, for preserving memories, and for protecting copyright. They see as critical the need for motifs, designs and techniques to be documented and made accessible to more users. Most often, artisans cannot afford to maintain references close at hand, and hence they have never seen what their forefathers used to make. Their databanks are in their minds and at their fingertips. There is thus the very real danger of motifs, designs and traditions dying out due to change, underuse, or even the death of a specialized artisan or craft family/group.

It is not the artisans who have the resources to acquire and preserve the objects that are their heritage; it is not they who have access to museum collections and reference books. It is the designers and design students who have this access, and it is thus they who must be aware of and sensitively interpret the artisan's tradition. The critical need of the hour is to make references and research studies communicable and available to artisans whose needs are uppermost in this process.



The fact that many craft traditions are oral traditions makes documentation even more critical. In the absence of any documentation, oral traditions, once lost, can never be revived. It is a permanent loss. It cannot be overemphasized that for any design interaction to be effective, it is necessary to study the traditions and develop an understanding of the constraints and parameters within which artisans operate. *There is an imperative need to research, analyse, categorize, and document craft traditions so that this knowledge will be accessible to a wider audience.*

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) agreement under the World Trade Organization (WTO) have thrown up issues of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) ownership that cover crafts as traditional knowledge under the instrument of Geographical Indicators (GI). The efforts and initiatives of craft documentation need to take cognizance of the legal provisions and the nature of information that is required to enable such protection.

1.2. Interventions: Markets and Buyers

The need for intervention urged by supporters of the argument that today's artisans are making products for lifestyles remote from their own, and selling them in alien and highly competitive markets, brings into focus the debate about what kinds of markets should design intervention open up

for artisans. This question is critical since an important raison d'être for design intervention is that designers can assist artisans in either dealing with the 'alien-ness' of the new markets to which they are trying to cater (whether urban or export), or help them in redesigning their products to compete with new entrants into their existing local markets.

■ Design Intervention for Local Markets

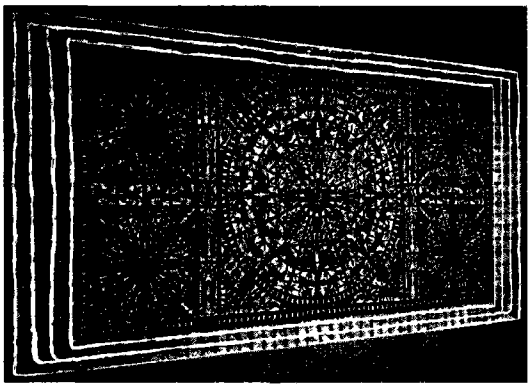
Questions have been raised about the idea of the 'designer as a bridge to alien markets'. A differing view instead is that intervention should be made with local markets in mind, not ephemeral urban and export markets. According to supporters of this idea, conventional design interventions have had no space to address the problems at the local levels with a view to making the products acceptable to the larger local market. While urban markets may provide artisans a breather for a short period, they remove them from known customers. Even the shifts they have to make in terms of colours, textures and patterns become meaningless as they now cater to ephemeral markets where fashions change with alarming frequency. An artisan may find that the market that provided him generous profits during one season will dump him unceremoniously the next season as trends and fashions have changed.

Adherents of this particular school of thought thus argue in favour of a form of design intervention that opens up organic local markets to artisans. Supporters of this viewpoint believe that it is a much better idea for designers to intervene and provide a design edge to the artisans' products in order to make them more competitive in the local market. A designer, if exposed to local conditions over a longer period, can learn to merge design experience and education with the needs of the local people, resulting in a far more fruitful and long-term collaboration. However, in the conventional design context, urban designers often interact with craft groups for short project periods, which is unfortunate. Further, they often have a defined repertoire of design inputs and aesthetics, usually limited to a certain type of clientele, which is emphatically not a mass marketplace one. These aspects need to change.

> The crux of the issue in this context is that design intervention must ensure a market demand far larger than what can be supported by an urban elite clientele. The intervention is not a viable one if artisans lose their larger local markets by changing their products in order to cater to very small markets at a distance. Design interventions have to focus on catering in the long run to indigenous markets. If design intervention makes artisans give up their traditional ways for an ephemeral elite market, they become completely dependent on the middleman/designer. When the middleman/designer moves onto something else, the artisan is left in the lurch. This intervention is thus a very temporary solution.

Design intervention has a responsibility; it cannot tamper with the artisan's training and creative vision with the purely aesthetic idea of developing his product for a temporary market. Further, notions that equate handicrafts with backward or primitive societies, and regard machine-made goods as being representative or symbolic of upward mobility and social striving by certain sections, have to be countered with fairly vigorous campaigning.

Thus, successful design intervention has to seek to regenerate local markets, which seem to be overrun with inexpensive machine-made goods. Organic markets are more dependable and less fleeting, temporary and ephemeral; they are also large and can sustain craft activity. The raison d'être of successful design intervention need not be to merely 'bridge' the gap between artisans and unknown markets but also necessarily to cover the broader context of design intervention needs to focus on re-establishing organic markets. Thus, a critical part of design intervention involves helping make the connections, encouraging the questioning of assumed notions of 'superior' and 'inferior', and of 'modern' and 'traditional'; it requires studying the tastes and preferences of local people and encouraging the continued use of indigenous and local craft products.



■ Design Intervention *vis-à-vis* Customer Sensitization

Sensitizing buyers is a critical aspect of design intervention. Several questions need to be answered before any intervention is undertaken: What do buyers buy? Why? Do they understand the value of what they are buying? Are they willing to pay for handmade products? The attitude that craft products should be inexpensive has to be changed. This is part of the value addition that design intervention should aim at, that is, ensuring better earnings and empowering the artisan communities towards achieving sustainable livelihood.

Linked with this are questions for the designer: Who is your client? Is it the consumer, who wants an exciting product at the most competitive price? Or is it the artisan, who needs a market for his product that is as similar to his traditional one as possible, so that it does not need alien design interventions or conflict with its social, aesthetic and cultural roots? Or is it the government/institution that funds the project?

1.3. Interventions: Artisanal Creativity, Tradition and Cultural Contexts

■ Artisanal Creativity

Most people agree that when design is reserved for a professional designer and craft is relegated to the artisan, the artisan is reduced to the status of a skilled labourer; most are emphatic about the respect that artisanal creativity should ideally command. *The critical question for design intervention is: Whose creativity is the final expression—the designer's or the artisan's?* Again, there is a near consensus that while designers have been taught to realize their own creative imagination, and are given the technical expertise and tools to do so, yet when working with an artisan they need to downplay their own individual creativity and instead facilitate that of the artisan.

Commercial work invariably leads to the division of design, craft and labour. It cannot be over-emphasized that artisanal creativity needs not only to be respected but also needs to be protected to prevent artisans from becoming the equivalent of skilled labour executing the design creations of professional designers.

Often artisans are asked to make what someone else tells them to make rather than being permitted to work from their own sense of aesthetics. Unthinking and insensitive forms of design intervention often separate elements of the craft and then juxtapose them in new ways. This disempowers artisans because it is done without any explanation of the means of access. Sensitive designers thus rail against forms of intervention that make 'design' and 'craft' into discrete—and mutually exclusive—categories. The purpose of a sample design range should be to inspire artisans to undertake their own innovations further, not stunt them into passive replication. *The ultimate skill of the crafts designer lies in making himself/herself redundant and unleashing the design creativity inherent in the artisan.*

Intervention should respect and attempt to encourage artisanal creativity. The designer should not over-design, or misguide, or cause harm to the creative inspiration of the artisan. Instead, he/she should keep the designing element to a scale that is attuned to that of the artisan, and try to see what the artisan is capable of and to what extent he can create for modern life with his own materials, techniques and vision. The

designer should thus not uproot the artisan from his own traditions, but instead gradually assist him in achieving self-confidence and self-reliance.

■ Artisanal Involvement

That the artisans need to be involved in every aspect of market research, design, production, costing and marketing, and also need to understand the adaptations and changes in the form, function, usage and sale of the product that they are making, is a form of intervention that has achieved a virtual consensus. Equally, there is a need for intervening agencies/designers to understand and study the craft(s), the product(s), and the market(s) that they are trying to enter in order to inculcate sensitivity towards the needs of the artisans, and also minimize the space for exploitative middlemen and traders. Many of the latter may have jumped on to the bandwagon of crafts production for short-term gains and quick sales, making the quick production of a cheap product their priority, resulting in the abandonment of many of the more intricate and unusual forms and skills.

Revitalizing a craft tradition includes skill upgrading, documentation, and revival of traditional motifs, designs, and techniques; introduction of new kinds of raw material; adoption of principles of costing, quality control, and production planning; and the introduction of effective marketing and promotional strategies.

> The philosophy should be to provide ideas and stimuli to encourage the emergence of creative and innovative product design from among the artisans themselves, to explain the rationale behind these, to develop a product range that incorporates different skill levels, and to keep product usage and price accessible to the widest market possible.

■ Change and Adaptation: Economic and Cultural Contexts

Is the objective to preserve a craft, or ensure the economic survival of the artisan? This is an issue that poses several conundrums, with many seeing economic and cultural viability as discrete options, sometimes to the extent that it is posed as a choice. Is the choice really as drastic as the question seems to imply? It is difficult to arrive at unequivocal answers. *However, few will deny the importance of interventions respecting contexts—cultural as well as socio-economic—and of exploring the possible outcome(s) of interventions in these contexts before initiating intervention.* It is culture that links a craft with the artisan; take that away, as in the case of 'external' design, and the link is broken. Therefore, outside intervention, unless carefully thought through, can effect irreparable decontextualization.

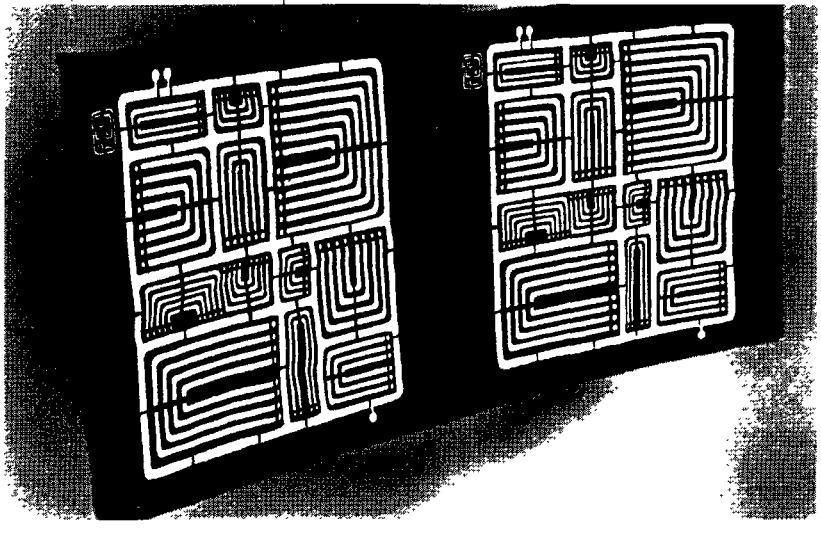
Most concur that there is a serious problem of designers who design things out of context. There is also a problem posed by those who plagiarize traditional designs and displace them, geographically, culturally, and functionally. Decontextualizing has severe repercussions, and while environments and periods can be mixed, this must be done judiciously and with great care. The problem with most modern designs is that both judiciousness and care are exercised in terms of economics, not creativity.

While there are no universal solutions, it should be emphasized that design interventions need to identify, preserve, and promote—and not efface—what is 'unique' to each craft.

> Cultural contexts are often integral reference points for a craft. They are not merely external adjuncts that can be dispensed with at will. A craft often emerges due to a cultural or social need, and it thrives as long as the need exists in the culture. Craft considered merely as constitutive of a technique and raw material is transferable; however, any craft is more than simply a technique and a raw material. The cultural context of a craft is not replicable, and taking a craft out of its culture objectifies it. It is imperative to remember that crafts production is not mechanical; each product is unique and one of a kind, coming out of the artisan's mind as an expression of his or her creativity, and representing a unique cultural identity and ingenuity.

The reason that traditional crafts are usually cited as examples of excellent quality and taste is that they have usually developed harmoniously in a particular context, evolving in response to the changing needs of a particular society, and are directly related to the values of the people of that society. *Insensitive interventions, especially when linked with insensitive technological change, can cause dramatic imbalances in the texture of a society, imbalances that cannot be easily corrected through traditional responses.* Particularly in the arts, the needs that shape content are not simply felt but also reflect varying cultural attitudes at different social and individual levels; some are felt in a fundamental way, others are felt on the basis of different kinds of experience and learning, some historical and some mythical. When a sudden intervention by new technology or industry takes place in a traditional society, the first casualty is cultural literacy. Traditional societies often find it difficult to absorb or cope with these interventions.

'Superficial intervention' has to be avoided. Clearly, we should recognize that this urban transformation of a product—that is, a shift away from its original use, which is based on a cultural and social need, to its use as an object by someone from almost a different world, and certainly from a different class—is just a superficial (and often irresponsible) adaptation of the product's use. The use of every product is governed by a complex semantics, which speaks more clearly and loudly, and expresses human relations and social status more efficiently, than words ever could. In unthinking intervention, symbols and meanings that are very important sometimes seem to have been deliberately discarded. This needs to change. *Products have semantics that are rooted in specific contexts; without the particular context, the semantic and an entire unspoken amalgam of history, culture, religion, ritual, tradition and thought are lost. In any craft, even if the form remains the same, differences in materials, colours, textures and finish speak of vastly different meanings.*



■ Change and Adaptation: Ritual Crafts

To preserve the validity of 'cultural contexts' in crafts, it is important to discuss separately the issue of ritual crafts, here understood as those used for a limited ritual and/or iconographic purpose, for a special ceremony. Does the craft remain a 'ritual' craft if people begin using it for decorative purposes that are not relevant to the context? Does the craft remain relevant if the cultural and ritual context that initially underlay it changes organically (the change may not be fostered by external intervention or be the fallout of an external intervention), making the craft irrelevant in the new context?

The discussion is part of an 'aesthetics versus culture' dilemma, that is, when production shifts from a particular ritual purpose to a decorative purpose. A beautiful/aesthetically magnificent object may have no relevance today because rituals change and the culture or society shifts or evolves in a different direction. The solution perhaps is not to seek to recreate or freeze externally those rituals and practices that once underlay the craft but are extinct today, but rather to view the craft and the ritual elements separately. If the core of a craft is ritualistic, take away the craft element. If the ritual is of value it will survive; otherwise it will die. One cannot force a ritual to continue indefinitely; lifestyles evolve and change. Then ritual becomes an appendage and is no longer necessary. A change in cultural practices will naturally change the way in which a craft is viewed, that is, it is a natural process and it should evolve—as a living craft.

If the aim is only to preserve the tradition and the cultural context of a changing craft, then the best way to do so may be to set up a museum that captures the original craft and makes it available to the community as a reference—to show that it existed. However, in relevant instances, the transition from ritual craft art to functional craft need not be crass or commercial if done sensitively.

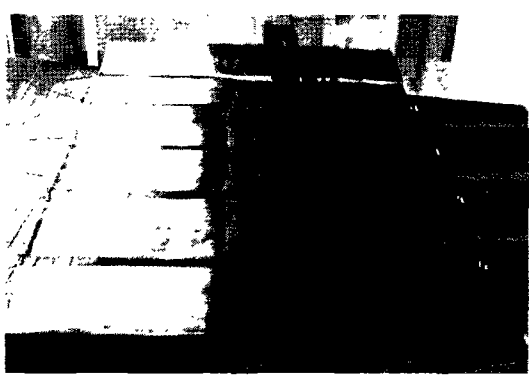
Interventionists need to think about how they can change the function and design and yet find an appropriate though perhaps radically different usage for a traditional craft through the process of understanding its design tradition and working within its parameters.

1.4. Interventions: Technology and Change

■ Contribution, not Contradiction

Hardly anybody now sees modernization or change per se as negative. Indeed, the need for introducing technological changes in certain contexts is emphasized by almost all. While questions about the nature and extent of change, especially technological change, remain, most people emphasize the need for an adaptive and integrative approach to change.

Technological improvement is critical in several aspects of craft production. Often craft products—especially those made by rural or tribal people—are dismissed out of hand as being made with outdated and outmoded mechanisms of production, with only short-term use possible. But in most such instances' it is the look of the product that causes the customer to reject it in favour of the machine-made, assembly-line, industrial alternative as the quality of the materials available to the artisans and used by them is inferior. *Improved materials often improve the quality and durability of a product even though the technology used to craft it may remain the same.*



Technology, however, cannot be imposed as an instrument for the craft sector to catch up with machine-made products. Most people concur that it is appropriate and adaptive technologies that are the most viable forms when it comes to introducing technological change. Broadly, appropriate technology can be defined as any technology that is suitable, that is, suitable to the context of a particular community, area, region, or country. It is an amalgam of skills, methods, techniques, appliances, and equipment that can contribute towards solving the basic socio-economic problems of the concerned community.

Thus, the test of successful technological intervention is whether it actually—in practice—solves problems without compromising the core of the craft.

Appropriate technology needs to be not only economically viable and technically feasible but it must also fit into the socio-economic fabric and environment of the local communities, and be capable of being adapted and further developed under local conditions. It is technology that can be achieved either by upgrading the traditional technology or scaling down modern technology, and is amenable to the use of non-conventional energy sources like biogas, solar energy and wind energy.

Appropriate and adaptive technologies have been confused with a rejection of 'modern' (read Western) technology and/or with exclusive reliance on 'traditional' (read primitive) technology. In this context, it is the labels that are incorrect. Traditional technologies need not be primitive in nature; they do not refer to an outdated type of technology. A technology that has proved its worth in an affluent environment or setting need not necessarily be found appropriate for an area where capital is scarce, levels of skills are low, running and maintenance costs of machin-

ery and equipment are high, and managerial and marketing abilities are not fully developed. In this case, imposed technologies may not succeed. Equally, advanced technologies may be completely appropriate to craft production if they fulfil needs such as removal of drudgery, promotion of safety, and adoption of processes that allow for more time for the application of hand skills.

The introduction of appropriate technologies as a part of design intervention can be extremely meaningful. Through the introduction of improved craft tools and simple machines, village artisans can greatly improve their performance and their finished products can compete well in the market. In terms of hardware, the equipment, tools, appliances and machines that are regarded as representing the introduction of 'appropriate technology' can be simple and comparatively inexpensive. They can be installed and operated with little training to the local operators, and their maintenance and repair do not pose any special problem. In the case of hardware of appropriate technology, it is either a result of upgrading traditional technologies, or is achieved by scaling down sophisticated modern technologies, or through innovations. The software of appropriate technology includes the application of knowledge, efficient use of equipment and appliances, training of personnel, suitable organizational structures for marketing, meeting the needs of credit, business management, storage and marketing, and distribution of the finished products. All of these factors are very important in the rural context, where transport and communication facilities are not well developed, maintenance costs can be high due to distances from industrial centres, and the replacement of parts is difficult for the operators. Appropriate technology is particular and specific to local conditions; that is its strength. There are many case studies documenting how technologically 'modern' hardware has failed miserably in real-time situations due to differences in socio-economic structures, prevailing social taboos, inhibitions, etc.

Appropriate technology offers several important solutions for the use of local resources; maintenance of an ecological balance; utilization of renewable sources of energy; removal of the drudgery of working with tools and techniques that are laborious, unsafe and time-consuming; transfer of new skills and technical know-how; development of local talent and ingenuity; preservation of socio-cultural patterns; and development of organizational, managerial and marketing skills.

It is essential to decide what we actually mean by the terms 'intermediate', 'appropriate' and 'adaptive' technologies. These should actually refer to technologies that show us the easiest, simplest, least expensive, but most efficient ways of dealing with everyday problems.

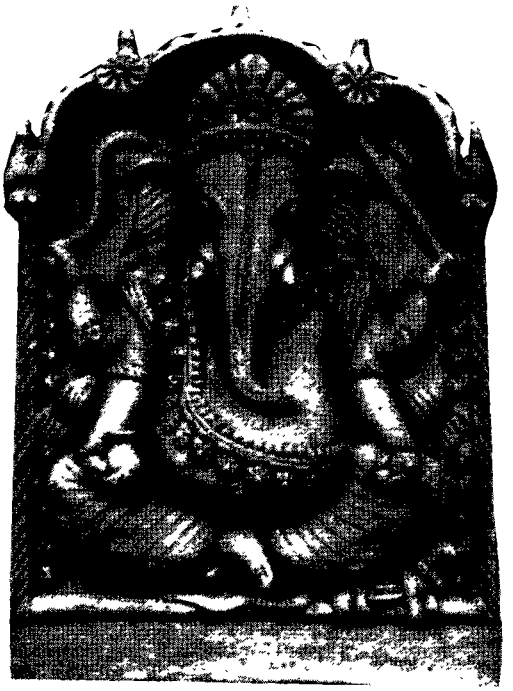
Such technologies are affordable as the commodities required are easily available and so are the skills needed for the job. All that is required is to move a step further in dealing with the existing storehouse of knowledge of traditional techniques and add this to twenty-first-century experience to improve on what has already been accomplished. But this addition should be a contribution, not a contradiction. Living crafts thrive on the basis of appropriate assimilation and adaptation, and traditional patterns are not the rigidly structured creations of individuals but the result of the collective experience of many generations.

The oft-posited dichotomy between 'science' and 'tradition' has succeeded in creating disdain for the richly diverse production processes that made a fine art of marrying local resources to local needs, local technology, local economics, and working within a local sustainability. To make modern technology work in an adaptive manner and be successful, there is a need to study and be sensitive to the integrative wisdom that is at the core of craft practices. These are issues that need careful thought.

Note: All illustrations in this section are by the courtesy of UNESCO. The products shown are winners of UNESCO crafts prize.

SECTION II

The Indian Context



What is the real significance of Handicrafts? No two are alike for each is a fresh creation. Standardisation is alien, in fact a negation of all that handicrafts stand for. Even the poorest enjoy a variety in the articles of everyday use where a special article was assigned for a particular use . . . All this broke the monotony which is perhaps the most deadening element in life . . . the sentiment of traditionalism alone cannot, however, take us very far in efforts to rehabilitate the Indian Crafts. The modern demand is for beauty as supplement to usefulness . . .

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay[2]
(Chattopadhyay, n.d.)

2 Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay devoted her life to working with Indian crafts. She headed the All India Handicrafts Board and the Indian Co-operative Union for more than twenty years. Hailed as the doyenne of Indian handicrafts, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay's contribution to the revival of Indian arts and crafts has been recognized nationally and internationally. She received the Watumull, Magsaysay and UNESCO Awards for her services in the cause of handicrafts, cooperatives and theatre. She was Founder Member of the World Crafts Council in 1964 and Vice President for Asia for several years, as well as the founder of the Crafts Council of India.

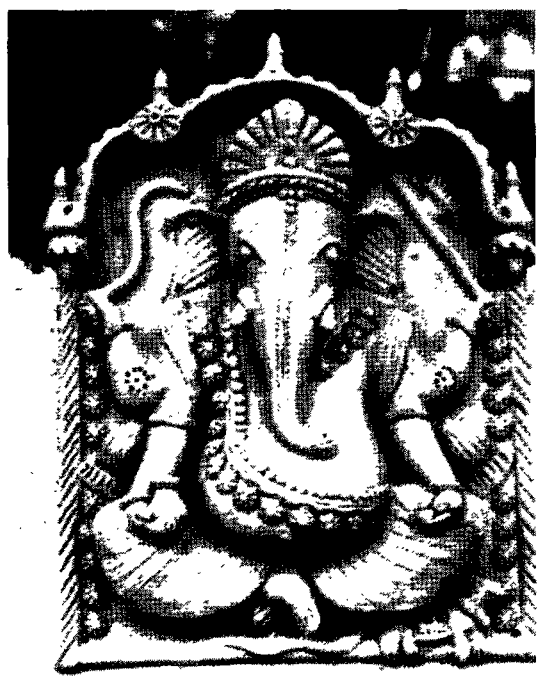
The Indian Context

2.1 Traditional Patterns of Artisanal Activity

■ The Jajmani System

For centuries, manufacturing activity in rural India has been done exclusively by hereditary artisanal castes bound to the dominant agricultural castes by traditional ties. This reciprocal arrangement between artisanal castes and the wider village community for the supply of goods and services was known as the *jajmani* system. It existed throughout the subcontinent, although it was more clearly developed in some areas such as Maharashtra than in others such as Bengal. Under the *jajmani* system, the lower castes produced goods for, and provided services to, the upper castes in return for a fixed payment. Those who provided the services or goods were the *purjans*, and their patrons were the *jajmans*. The *purjans*' clientele became their *jajmans*. The *jajmani* system was fairly flexible in that it combined features of subsistence and commodity production. Based on studies of nineteenth-century Maharashtra and Gujarat, scholars 'came to the conclusion that in the *jajmani* system were included mainly those kinds of work of the community artisans which were directly complementary to agricultural production'. But other goods were also produced by the same artisans for a separate piece payment. An important economic rationale for the prevalence of the *jajmani* system seems to have been the security it provided during times of scarcity, especially recurrent famines. For instance, it was observed, 'Those who, like the weavers in the Surat area during the 1630s famine, left the relatively secure shelter of the rural community to produce more gainfully for the market, were among the first to die of starvation whenever food became scarce.' *The productive activity of these artisans was not projected towards commodity production on competitive lines, but towards maintaining the community life of the village as a whole. In times of scarcity, it provided a buffer, absent in the case of cash transactions between producer and consumer.* (SRUTI, 1995)[3].

The breakdown of the *jajmani* system in most parts of India has led to changing relationships between user and maker and to changes in the understanding of the needs of the larger community, both semi-rural and urban.



Votive terracotta plaque from Molela, Rajasthan

Craft products are handicrafts items often made with the use of simple tools and generally artistic and/or traditional in nature. They include items of utility and objects of decoration.

– Definition adopted by the Government of India

The term 'handmade articles' hould be taken to cover those produced with or without the use of tools, simple instruments or implements operated directly by the craftsmen mainly by hand or foot.

Within the group of handmade goods, some such as handicrafts, often have identifying features such as: traditional or artistic features deriving from the geographical region or country of production; production by craftsmen working generally on a cottage industry basis.

3 *India's Artisans: A Status Report*, Sruti — Society of Rural, Urban and Tribal Initiative. New Delhi, 1995, p. 7

2.2 Contemporary Realities at the Macro Level

■ The 'Crafts Sector'

An issue that should precede all discussion about 'intervention' in the Indian 'craft sector' is the recognition that 'crafts' is not a homogeneous social and cultural activity or entity, and cannot be treated as such, especially for purposes of intervention. Without reducing these nuances to an exercise in pointillism, it is important to view issues and problems—and hence models and solutions—as being particular to specific crafts, regions, activities, communities, cultures and issues.

■ Cultural Diversity

Handicrafts and their regional setting are extremely complex. The variety is enormous, and artisans work with materials as diverse as metal, wood, clay, paper, glass, grass, reed, leather, and textiles, with enormous regional and individual variations within each group of specialization. There are a multitude of characteristics and situations, materials and processes, contexts and regional variations, each requiring a specific creative approach. We need to recognize that an approach that was valid and successful for one category might not work for another. Each sub-sector needs to be looked at independently.

■ Coexistence

Equally relevant when talking about 'crafts', craft production and intervention is the need to recognize the existence and parallel coexistence in India of isolated individual family units, craft clusters, home/cottage industries, and small-scale and medium-scale industries.

■ Migration to Urban Centres

In the Indian context, issues relating to the migration of rural labour to urban centres, unemployment and disguised unemployment are critical when viewing the need for interventions, as artisanal production cannot be separated from contemporary economic issues if sustainable inputs have to be provided. Propelled by loss of markets, loss of skill, or the inability to provide what the market requires, rural artisans have undertaken large-scale migration to urban centres in search of low and unskilled employment.

2.3 The Crises in Indian Crafts

> The crisis of 'traditional craft' in India is in many ways a crisis of value—given the processes of industrialisation and modernity sweeping across the country, craft is struggling to find a place—and price—for itself. What compounds the crisis is that 'craft' means different things to different people, and hence connotes different crises. Hence, any 'solution' must account for all these dimensions simultaneously, which is perhaps why no single initiative to support or revitalise craft has succeeded entirely (Lodya, 2003).[4]

■ Disappearing markets is one of the most pressing issues facing Indian crafts

There has been a dramatic shift in consumer choice from artisanal goods to factory-made products. Articles made from traditional vegetable-tanned leather have been edged out by those made from chrome leather; hand-woven cotton fabrics have lost out to mill-made synthetic textiles; plastic, china

Lac bangle making, Rajasthan

4 Arvind Lodya is a faculty member at the Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology (Srishti), Bangalore, Karnataka, India.

and glassware have wiped out the market for earthenware. To some extent, this is due to a larger variety of goods becoming available in the market, leading to the shrinking of the market share of artisanal goods. *However, the extent to which consumer choice has shifted away from artisanal goods cannot be explained only on the basis of the plurality of choice.*

■ Some Reasons for the Declining Market for Artisanal Goods

1. *Aggressive marketing and advertising strategies used by the organized industrial sector,* which have greatly influenced consumer choice. Also linked to this are the large investments made in product and design development, and market research carried out to understand and mould consumer psychology. Such strategies are predicated on gigantic budgets that run into millions of rupees, which are now absolutely inconceivable for the artisanal sector.
2. *The economies of scale* inherent to the factory sector result in the mass production of goods of uniform quality at prices with which artisanal products cannot compete easily.
3. *Various financial incentives, benefits, and relief package* are extended to encourage the organized sector *to set up industries.* In comparison, very little is available to the artisanal sector.
4. *Preferential access to credit, raw material and infrastructure* is also extended to the organized sector. This is in stark contrast to the treatment accorded the artisanal sector, where surveys have repeatedly revealed that the major handicaps faced by artisans are lack of capital to purchase good-quality materials in bulk, scarcity of raw materials, and absence of infra-structure in the way of worksheds, power and storage space. The absence of electricity inhibits artisans from in-vesting in electric tools and equipment, and from upgrading their technology.
5. *The preoccupation with the small but lucrative urban and export markets* has diverted energies and resources that could other-wise have been invested in building up local and sustainable markets for artisanal products.

Manipuri weaver

■ Technological Obsolescence

Technological advancement has been largely oriented towards modernization and the organized factory sector. This has given the factory sector an edge over the artisanal sector in terms of efficiency and quality of output. Modern technology has enabled machines to imitate even the most intricate designs that were once the exclusive domain of artisans, developed and perfected over centuries and passed down from generation to generation. The failure to develop technologies appropriate to the artisanal sector is a result of our dependence on Western technologies, which are essentially capital intensive. The lack of investment in indigenous technological research and development (R&D) has only aggravated the problem.

■ The Crisis of Livelihood

Historically, craft was what 'industry' is today—the production of a number of everyday utilitarian objects for regular consumption. In the pre-industrial age, this was essentially and necessarily a localized

An artisan is a producer of a product that is handmade, and involves a skill that is not part of a mechanical chain of production.

An artisan is a skilled producer working primarily with his/her hands to make articles of daily use.

Artisans are people who craft items/products or provide services, of both utilitarian and decorative value, using their hands and traditional implements/tools.

— SRUTI, 1995

An artisan has attributes of two kinds, essential and incidental. Only an individual who displays all the essential attributes is considered an artisan.

The essential characteristics of an artisan are as follows:

- *He/she makes goods, and/or provides services to others.*
- *He/she uses his/her own skills and labour for the purpose.*
- *He/she makes goods and provides services which use traditional skills, that is, skills that have been historically associated with a particular artisanal activity even though they may have been adapted over time to evolving technologies, materials and products.*

The incidental characteristics of an artisan are as follows:

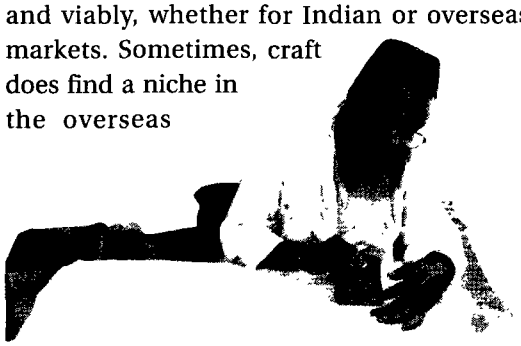
- *He/she is self-employed in the sense that such a person enjoys the whole produce of his/her own labour, or the whole value, which is added to the material upon which it is based.*
- *He/she functions individually, or at a household level.*

– SRUTI, 1995

phenomenon; communities of artisans would use locally available material and produce utilitarian products in localized designs, and these were consumed by local populations. Craft products have been gradually but markedly undermined by mass-produced goods of better 'value' (in terms of the price—performance equation) made in remote factories. Traders started to dominate the local markets, edging out the historic designer—manufacturer—trader communities, rendering their knowledge and skill, acquired over generations, virtually useless. The crafts, as with other products and services, have been a victim of imitation made possible by cheaper technology that has cut into their markets.

■ The Crisis of Viability

By and large, traditional crafts have been totally marginalized by cheaper and more attractive mass-produced substitutes from the modern industrial/market model. The very rare instances of 'authentic' crafts finding an audience that is willing to pay a viable (read 'high') price for them are mostly confined to art galleries, museums and boutiques. In some cases, the formal aspect of craft remains popular, but this has led either to a severe decline in workmanship/quality in order to remain attractive to audiences looking to buy, or it has been appropriated by non-authentic methods of creation and manufacture (such as Chinese replicas of traditional Indian embroidery that have flooded the markets at far lower prices). There are few instances where traditional craft has 'contemporized' itself successfully and viably, whether for Indian or overseas markets. Sometimes, craft does find a niche in the overseas market, but this is subject to the fluctuations and vagaries of style and fashion, and hence it is seldom a reliable livelihood option. Some exquisite forms of craft are simply dying out.



Ajrakh block printer, Gujarat

■ The Crisis of Valuing Craft as Cultural Wealth

When a craft dies, it is not only the artisans and their business that dies; with it also dies an entire history, a cultural identity, a legacy, a tradition. This is a central area of concern for those involved in this sector, that is, the need to mine this wealth in an equitable and responsible way, and feed it back into the mainstream as well as the community (sourced from interview with Lodya, 2003.)

2.4 A Reassessment

The need to re-evaluate and reassess is tremendous. *Design can no longer remain isolated from this larger context. Design interventions have to grapple with the baseline questions as much, or perhaps even more, than they have to seek meaningful formats for interaction and intervention.* Ashoke Chatterjee[5] raises some important points in this regard: 'Where are we now and where are we going on this whole issue—fifty years later? Who has benefited? What have we learned? How do we balance the gains and the losses of the last fifty years? These questions need answers.'

Given the force of national and global economic trends, it is time to rethink the role of the artisanal sector in the Indian economy, and put it on the national agenda. If, as the trends indicate, this sector can only survive in pockets, then the nation's resources would be better spent in identifying and strengthening those pockets. To the extent this results in the unemployment of large numbers of artisans outside such pockets, a national initiative is required to reorient their skills and rehabilitate them. For, craft skills built up over the centuries are an important national resource that cannot be jettisoned as dead weight.

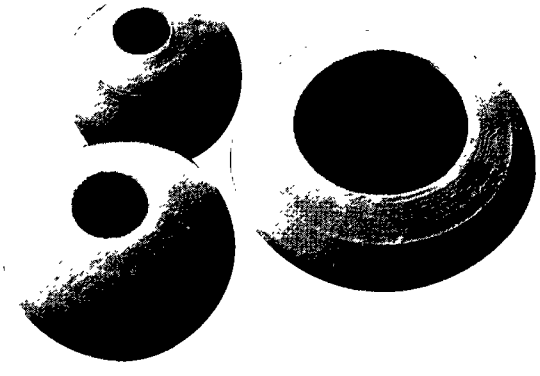
– SRUTI, 1995

5 Ashoke Chatterjee is President, Crafts Council of India, and was Executive-Director of the National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India.

Note: All illustrations in this section are by the courtesy of the Craft Revival Trust.

SECTION III

Case Studies: The Indian Initiatives



Case Studies: The Indian Initiatives

People and communities cannot be replicated, but learning can be extended.

– Ashoke Chatterjee

In India, students of design institutions—as part of their core curriculum—interact with artisans and professional designers to forge linkages with the crafts sector. An analysis of the partnerships between designers and artisans is critical as an aid in assessing and stocktaking.

An analysis of past interactions often helps in creating learning and encouraging evaluations of past solutions and shared experiences in terms of current needs and issues.

It must be recognized at the very outset that every situation is unique, and that each partnership between designer and artisan/artisan community requires special handling. It is dangerous to assume that there are universal solutions. Replications are often not valid, as one cannot recreate communities, environments and situations; hence one cannot possibly expect to replicate the outcomes of projects. However, through the study of past interventions and learning from shared experiences it is often possible to extrapolate an outcome.

Faculty–student interaction

Learning from failures is often as, if not more, important than learning from successes. The circumstances behind failures and the reasons for setbacks need to be studied in great detail and analysed with care to see what and why something went wrong.

The case studies in this section have been organized according to broad categories rather than by region, or by product, or by generic craft, as our overarching theme is the study of the thought processes that emerge or are employed in different situations and circumstances. The scope of these case studies is representative and illustrative, not encyclopaedic; it consists of a select juxtaposition of work that illuminates the roles played by intervening agencies, be they designers, design students, developmental agencies, or sponsors.

3.1 LIVELIHOOD RESTORATION AND DESIGN INTERVENTION MODEL: CLUSTER / MULTIPLE-VILLAGE APPROACH FOR DISASTER RELIEF AND REHABILITATION

3.1.1 Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), Care India, and National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), New Delhi

- Project Head: Professor Jatin Bhatt, Chairperson, Accessory Design Department, NIFT, New Delhi
- **Faculty:** Associate Professor M.M.S. Farooqi; Assistant Professor S. Sanjeeve Kumar; Assistant Professor Arvind Merchant; Associate Professor Ameresh Babu

- **Students:** 29 students, 7th Semester (1999–2002), Accessory Design Department
- **Artisans:** 200

Background

In response to the massive earthquake that devastated north Gujarat in end January 2001, CARE India, an international development organization that works with underdeveloped communities for social and economic upliftment, along with FICCI, approached the Accessory Design Department of NIFT requesting that its students and faculty work alongside them in an intervention effort among the affected communities. This was the first time that CARE India had involved itself in design intervention in rehabilitation work. The artisan communities based in the Kutch area in north-west Gujarat had lost their means of livelihood, coupled with broken business linkages. The affected communities were in need of income-based work aimed at all levels and varieties of available skills.

As Jatin Bhatt, Chairperson, Accessory Design Department, NIFT states in his Report:

'Not often do institutions like NIFT take up such a commitment where everything is unsettled and people are least likely to respond to the routine arguments of design and product development, training, capacity building, etc.'

The Cluster-village Approach

As CARE India and FICCI had, in principle, adopted thirty villages in the blocks of Bhachau, Anjar and Rapar in the Kutch area for relief and rehabilitation work, the NIFT project initiative had to operate among these villages. A dialogue was established with residents of the many severely affected craft communities. *The prioritization for the selection of villages was carried out; it was based on various criteria, including the craft practised, relief measures already in place, craft potential, scale of damage, and employment potential, among others.* The study of craft traditions practised in these villages included turned-wood lacquer products, copper bell making, embroidered leather craft, terracotta and pottery, knife making and the textile crafts (including embroidery, block printing, woodcarving, and tie and dye).

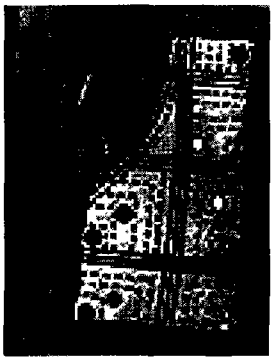
The 'Design and Product Development' component was managed by the faculty of the Accessory Design Department. It covered topics such as design direction, planning and structure; operational details; management and coordination of new products; and market development.

After an extensive study of twenty-six villages, NIFT started work in five villages in and around the Anjar block. Pottery at Khedoi and Chandrani, embroidery at Jharu, Chandrani and Ratnai, and knife making at Nana Reha and Mota Reha in the Bhuj block were identified as the focus areas for the project.

Project Aims/Brief

The disaster had hurt the sustainability of traditional and cultural artisanal capabilities and the resultant commerce. In addition to the basic survival needs of the local people, which needed to be restored through relief operations and reconstruction, the issue of *restoring livelihoods through supporting and strengthening local capabilities* was also considered important for long-term rehabilitation. The NIFT intervention was aimed at creating opportunities for artisans in the Kutch area for ensuring *sustained income and employment through skill, process and technique enhancement, training, design and product development, and an exploration of potential market avenues.*

Earthquake devastation



New developments in embroidery

1. All design, training and development approaches were envisaged with the intention of building on the existing capabilities of traditional skills **to ensure that the temporary breakdown of infrastructure and networks did not take away the artisans permanently from their traditional craft occupations.** As the artisan communities were in need of immediate income-based work, the need to earn a livelihood would most likely draw them to labour work and unskilled occupations.

2. Simultaneously, the effort focused on **evolving new capabilities** in materials, processes and skills, and their application in new products that had the potential of reaching beyond the existing markets.

■ Methodology / Inputs

1. Preliminary Activities

- **Knowledge:** The first NIFT team that visited the region concentrated on getting to *know the larger reality within which craft existed* in the area, the inherent conflicts and dynamics of local politics, as well as on trying to *find and pair up with an experienced and capable NGO partner* before community mobilization was initiated, thereby satisfying the need to maintain an effective dialogue with all the communities in order to initiate activity.

- **Database:** An assessment of existing skills, capabilities, capacities and the potential for introducing new knowledge, skills, materials and techniques was undertaken, and a database was compiled on the region, crafts and artisans.

- **Possibilities:** After the initial visit and preliminary assessment of potential, the NIFT team *brainstormed extensively about the possibilities* of exploring village communities, skills, materials, crafts, product applications, and project structure and approach. The need to compensate the artisans for their investment in time and effort, and the importance of ensuring that the focus remained not only on product development but, more critically, also on the enhancement of the capabilities of the artisans, were taken into consideration. NIFT envisaged a critical need for **wage compensation** to the artisan communities to ensure their sustained and involved participation in, and commitment to, the project activities.

- **Partners:** Recognizing that NIFT as a design institute was not the best-equipped organization to undertake the task of social mobilization, which was a critical factor in the success of any initiative under the prevailing conditions, CARE India was asked to **identify a local NGO to undertake this responsibility.** This was necessitated by concerns that the sustenance of the intervention required a local body or agency that would provide continuity and effective operational leadership in the future. It was also to avoid duplication of effort and prevent possible confusion in the minds of the local artisans. Hence, it was vital that the NGO should be involved in the project from the early stages. As this did not materialize, however, NIFT had to initiate the project on its own. Bhatt believes that one of the reasons why the collaboration with an NGO did not work out was because 'design is more often perceived . . . to be [aimed] towards product as a final outcome and [is] rarely seen to be a major contributor towards process enhancement leading to larger community mobilization and capacity building'. The early hesitation of the community in joining the project was eventually overcome through interaction with the project team once work began. At the end of six months, over 200 artisans were involved in the project.

2. Overall Design Strategy and Direction

- As the project focused on different crafts and places, it was found that each area was characteristically different from the others in terms of skill levels, product development, material requirements, infrastructural needs and prevailing market networks.

However, the broad objectives were to explore ways in which the artisans would be able to strengthen and diversify their capabilities and also to retain a larger portion of the value of their respective supply chain with qualitative value addition. The design strategy and the objectives outlined were as follows:

1. Product and design development
2. Skill and capability enhancement

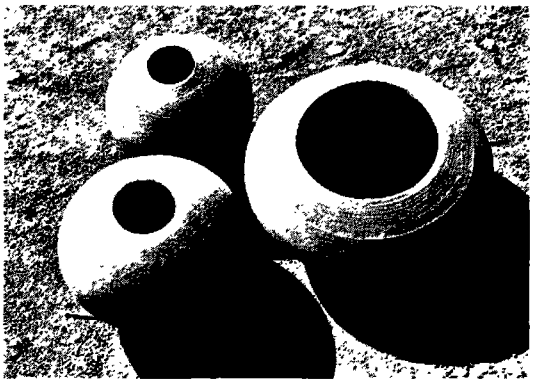
The potential for market and business linkages was explored by NIFT and Care India. The products were showcased on two occasions in New Delhi and Ahmedabad with the aim of inviting initial feedback from consumer groups. The key apprehension was about realistically gauging the true capabili-ties of the craft communities of delivering products possessing the requisite quality and consistency within the specified schedules.

The project focus being the creation of fresh opportunities for the artisans and ensuring sustained income and employment through skill enhancement, training and product development, it was essential to assess existing skills and capabilities. Strategy grouping of the nature of skills available had to be done to draw upon possible skill induction as well as to identify new product possibilities. Right through the various initiatives, NIFT advocated a holistic, cohesive and intensive approach to bring about overall and visible changes in the capabilities and mindset of the artisans.

- Jatin Bhatt

■ Objectives for Product and Design

- Improve the overall quality of the existing products through refinement of processes and materials in use.
- Develop design extensions of the present product line to include a greater variety and a wider range for both utilitarian and non-utilitarian use.
- Develop a range of products that offer a higher perceived value with the existing skills and capabilities, thereby enhancing earnings resulting from the investment of time and skill.
- Exploit market niches offering distinctly higher value realizations for the product.
- Create demand commensurate with the immediate and medium-term production potential given available artisanal strength and production capacities.
- Create product differentiation across functions, uses, styles and material combinations as well as customization based on buyer/consumer needs.
- Recognize, and incorporate ways of overcoming, various inherent limitations of raw materials, material sourcing, design and product interpretation capabilities, processes and skills, thus aiming towards achieving a more concerned and informed response in new products by the artisans immediately and in the future.
- Identify the need for, and set up, equipment, processes and specialized machinery as an additional platform for enhanced variety and quality.
- Create a spirit of collective thinking and contribute to the process of product development by incorporating metaphors and terminology drawn from the artisans' personal, emotional, social and cultural milieu.
- Create an understanding and appreciation among artisans about specialized markets, products, pricing, quality, consumer needs, etc.



New developments

Student–embroiderer interaction

■ **Objectives for Training and Artisan Exposure**

- Increase knowledge of technical communication through a visual format to enhance issues related to precision and quality.
- Adopt correct and effective methods of using precision instruments to improve general quality and consistency.
- Incorporate information- and technique-based inputs concerning materials and processes to encourage adoption of appropriate methods for better results.
- Seek exposure and orientation to new markets where new products may be positioned.
- Seek exposure to alternative industry types and manufacturing processes in order to explore possible avenues for expansion and feasible new ventures.
- Create better understanding and appreciation among artisans about specialized markets, products, processes, pricing, functionality, application potential, quality, product communication, consumer needs, industry, scales of production, etc. through first-hand exposure, hands-on training, and consistent dialogue during the process of product development.

Keeping in mind the overall project strategy of design, training and development, specific strategies needed to be developed for each craft area. Within the overall context, the development of products, skills, capabilities and capacities were outlined for all degrees and varieties of available skills in the specific craft areas.

Design Inputs in Embroidery, Patchwork and Quilting

- **Location:** The project initiative involved artisans skilled in embroidery in the villages of Jharu, Ratnal, and Chandrani in Anjar block, Kutch, Gujarat.

■ **STEP 1:**

Assessment, Identification of Problems/Issues, and Determining Anticipated Results

1. **Analysis of the Existing Situation:** The following observations were found critical for *assessing the nature of work and prevalent skills*:
   - The craft was practised by Rabari women, all of whom had major household responsibilities. They pursued the craft when free from domestic household work.
   - The craft was not perceived as a vehicle for potential income generation on a sustainable basis. Products were mainly for self-consumption; little was sold commercially. Women rarely moved out of the region for reasons of trade and commerce. Some Rabari women often leave their homes for six months at a stretch to graze their camels but interact little during this outing.
   - The craft offered a significant degree of self-expression within the framework of community aesthetics. The styles and motifs varied among the communities of the Rabaris, the Ahers, the Muslims and the Darbars.
   - Varied levels of embroidery skills existed within a group. Learning started at a young age.
   - The receptivity to applying skills on new fabric materials was initially low,

but did indicate the possibility of development. The critical under-standing of finishing techniques and detailing was not very good.

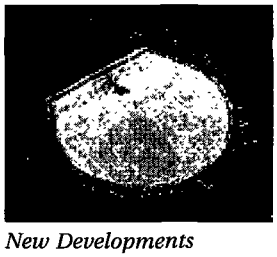
- To maintain consistency and replicability, the entire embroidery process was broken down into several stages, such as composition, transfer of design, selection of appropriate material, final embroidery and finishing, for which the required skills were not easily available.
- Only some of the women knew the process of construction and tailoring required for making utilitarian textile products.
- Very few families owned the sewing machines required for product conversion. Some of the machines were hand-operated, limiting the product application to simple stitching, unlike the foot-operated machines, which allow better control while leaving both hands free.
- There was a lack of understanding of subtle differences in colours, motifs, and proportions as demanded by urban and export markets.

2. **Determining Specific Objectives:** In view of the assessment, **specific objectives** were determined for this area within the scope of the project:
   - All women artisans involved in the project must be able to *generate enough skill-oriented work* for themselves without having to resort to lowly means of income-generation like physical labour.
   - Artisans should be able to *upgrade their existing skills while simultaneously acquiring new skills* like stitching and product construction.
   - Artisans should be trained in assessing quality standards wherever applicable together with acquiring *critical judge-ment on how to achieve the required quality.*
   - Artisans should be exposed to the *different varieties and qualities* of embroidery, patchwork and quilting available in the market.
   - Artisans should have an *understanding of the supply-chain functioning* in their respective craft areas.
   - The development of the artisan's skill in *visually interpreting a design* is necessary for the comprehension and execution of new design ideas for product development and order implementation.
   - The *skills required* in carrying out the production of new designs need to be *divided among each group,* so that they become self-sufficient, with little or no external inputs or processes required.
3. **Achieving Anticipated Results:** As the existing market for the embroidery craft was saturated and overcrowded with many conventional and contemporary products, new product applications needed to be visualized with the aim of acquiring a vantage position in the market with the improved and additional skills of the craftswomen.
   - Develop innovative product ideas involving new fabrics and materials inspired by current themes based on the design forecast.
   - Envisage product possibilities based on new skills.
   - Upgrade and diversify the skills of artisans by equipping them with sewing machines and knowledge of constructing simple products.
   - Enhance quality standards by adopting better techniques and an improved knowledge base of fabric and yarn dyeing, embroidery using knotless stitches, transfers and consistent repetition of designs.

■ **STEP 2:**

Development of Skills, Capabilities and Capacities:

Skill-enhancement programmes and training modules were developed in consultation



New Developments

with experts, and many were conducted by them. Some of these were conducted before the Design and Product Development process began, a few during it, and the rest after the prototypes were developed.

Module 1: Print-making and Print-transfer Techniques for Embroidery

- **Objective:** To develop infrastructure for and skill base of individual artisans, and to sensitize artisans to the importance of better quality standards and attention to detail.
- **Methodology:**

A series of exercises was conducted:

a) Composing precise design layouts on paper by using simple paper-folding techniques to achieve symmetry and balance.

b) Transferring the design from paper to transparent plastic sheet by tracing it correctly.

c) Converting the plastic sheet into a stencil using perforations over the composition.

d) Transferring the design on to the fabric using the stencil.

Module 2: Braiding Techniques

- **Objective:** To develop infrastructure for and skill base of individual artisans for braiding techniques, and to sensitize artisans to the importance of better quality standards and attention to detail.
- **Methodology:**

A series of exercises was conducted:

a) Teaching two basic techniques: round and flat braiding, and using silk and cotton cords.

b) Teaching finishing techniques for braided cords.

c) Demonstrating the use of the above in bags as shoulder straps and handles.

Module 3: Stitching

- **Objective:** To familiarize artisans with pedal-operated sewing machines, and to train them to achieve sufficient speed required for quality production of small products.
- **Methodology:**

A series of exercises was conducted:

a) Operating the sewing machine to achieve pedal coordination and control.

b) Stitching practice on paper over different patterns to achieve better control.

c) Stitching practice on textiles with different kinds of folds.

Module 4: Pattern Making and Construction of Simple Products

- **Objective:** To develop knowledge of and skill in pattern making and cutting for construction of simple products like draw-string and sling bags.
- **Methodology:**

A series of exercises was conducted:

a) Pattern making and cutting according to specifications about dimensions and styles for a simple bag.

b) Understanding the different elements of a given product.

c) Understanding the different raw materials and their use in a basic product category.

d) Understanding assembly and overall construction with details of finishing.

■ **STEP 3:**

Inputs in Terms of Design, Product and Skill Development

1. *Simple embroidery and motifs* were used to make up for the low skill level and to generate cost-effective products. This

enabled the craftswomen to understand the end product in relation to the market. The main challenges were to introduce the craftswomen to a commercial mindset and encourage them to adopt a consistent way of working. The objectives of the project were to encourage the craftswomen to work professionally and inculcate in them an eye for quality. The inputs on fashion trends and new product lines helped the *women understand the relevance of the product in terms of the market.*

2. The factors that led to the creation of the collections were an understanding of *colour combinations*, the *design sense of the craftswomen* and an introduction to new product ideas. The craftswomen participated in the design process while understanding and relating to the product. Their ingenuity resulted in further *product variations.* They experimented with colours, motifs and fabrics, so that the final product embodied their aesthetic expression.

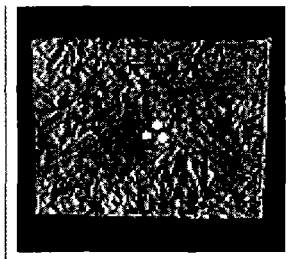
3. The craftswomen were made conscious of the *importance and potential of high skill levels in the market.* The effort here was on making craftswomen self-dependent by ensuring that the product completion was done by them, for instance, by finishing scarves with embroidery stitches instead of machine stitches. The idea of quality standards and incorporating straight lines in their work was an alien notion to the craftswomen. Adopting this concept brought about a whole new look to the embroidery, which the women understood and appreciated. Encouraging them to use their machine skills and to make their own embroidery patterns resulted in better-constructed products. They were introduced to the idea that higher quality standards result in better returns, offer newer avenues of growth and lead to increased market demand.

4. *Minimalist and simple embroidery* was given emphasis for developing cost-effective products like gift wrapping. *The objective of working on paper was to break the association of embroidery with cloth.* Embroidering on paper initially proved a challenge; later mastering this skill became a matter of pride for the craftswomen. The folding and joining of pieces of embroidery into three-dimensional forms found application in a number of products.

5. Another *new product concept* was patterns employing metre-long strips, which found application in product lines such as bags and belts; these were also sold as yardage. The project focused on increasing quality standards and output vis-à-vis time invested.

6. The craftswomen were introduced to netting as a material, which encouraged them to *look beyond* the stiff material that they used traditionally, and also as an exercise in skill extension.

7. *Educational materials* like books on traditional embroidery, diaries and embroidery-teaching kits aimed at creating fun-filled learning were introduced. These materials increased awareness of the craft's potential and excellence, and reinforced the work spirit amongst the craftswomen.



New developments

■ New Product Development

A wide range of products was designed and executed.

1. Embroidered patches that could be converted into products like bags, pouches, runners and table covers were developed. Placement of patterns, colour highlights and embellishments in the application of these patches in the end product were considered. These cost-effective products were developed using a relatively low skill level.

2. Mobiles, stuffed toys, bells, paper coasters and carpet slippers offered scope for ingenuity and product variation.

3. To encourage the craftswomen to work professionally, inputs about fashion trends were used to create a collection of mufflers and scarves aimed at the upper

segment of the urban market. The product completion was done by the craftswomen themselves, using embroidered stitches rather than machine stitches.

4. The market was widened by developing embroidery strings that could be adapted for use in jewellery, bags, Christmas decorations, upholstery and lampshades.

5. Embroidery on paper for packaging precious gifts helped break the association of embroidery being applied to cloth alone. Though this proved a challenge initially, mastering this new technique went on to become a matter of pride for the craftswomen.

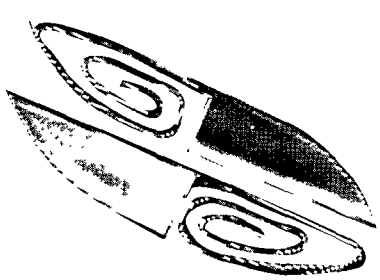
6. A collection was created by folding and joining the areas of embroidery into three-dimensional forms using traditional stitches and colours. Products like charms for bags, key chains, mobiles, bookmarks, paperweights, pen accessories and Christmas ornaments were created.

7. Products such as quilted covers for tiffin (lunch) boxes, hot-water bottle covers and tea cosies employed both machine stitches and hand embroidery.

8. Personal accessories like sling bags and mirror frames with traditional motifs designed specifically for urban markets provided a new marketing avenue.

Design Inputs in Metal Knife Craft

Location: Knife making was the main focus of the metal craft practised in the villages of Nana Reha and Mota Reha, Bhuj block, Kutch, Gujarat.



New developments

■ **Background**

Being one of the areas severely affected by the earthquake, most artisans here had suffered significant damage to their homes and workshops, making it difficult to carry out normal business activities. Additionally, Anjar, the leading market and business link for Nana Reha, was greatly affected, resulting in a temporary collapse of enterprise. At the commencement of the project, most skill-oriented work in the village had come to a halt, and artisans were forced to take up alternative means to earn their livelihood.

■ **STEP 1:**

Analysis of the Existing Situation

- The craft process was divided into specialized tasks, with individuals and groups attending to each job. Artisans and groups were recognized for their individual specialized skills rather than for making the complete product from start to finish. These skills included the casting of basic components, forging and shaping of components, assembling, grinding, buffing and finishing.

- Most individual artisans would bring in orders and then distribute the work according to the specialized skills required, while simultaneously contributing their own inputs.

- Most processes in use were found to be basic, indicating scope for technical improvement and quality upgrading.

- The raw materials used were sourced locally; knowledge about the quality and variety of raw materials available in outside markets, or their suitability for specific products, was lacking.

- The finishing processes and techniques in use were found to be of poor quality due to absence of infrastructure and lack of knowledge on the part of the craftsperson.

- The quality levels of products were determined largely by the product prices offered by local traders. Poor returns were related directly to quality due to lower

expectations on the part of both traders as well as consumers at whom the products were targeted.

- The artisans did not use any precision-measuring tools nor were they familiar with the nomenclature of measurement and technical communication.
- The artisans were complacent about consistency and quality in dimensions, finishing, sizes and materials. Issues relating to the need for precision, and the importance of maintaining consistent sizes and contours for drilling holes, emerged as significant areas requiring further action.

■ **STEP 2:**

Determining Specific Objectives

In view of the assessment made, specific objectives were determined at two levels:

- *Improve the overall quality* of existing products by refining the processes and materials used.
- *Develop design extensions* of the existing product line for increased variety and offer a product range of utilitarian and decorative items.

■ **STEP 3:**

Determining Anticipated Results

- Develop the skills of technical communication in a visual format.
- Develop correct and *effective methods of using precision instruments.*
- Provide *knowledge and encourage adoption of techniques, materials, and processes* like sand-casting, grinding and polishing to upgrade products.
- Expose artisans to new markets.
- Expose artisans to alternative industry types and manufacturing processes to indicate the possibility of market and product extension and new venture direction.

The initial capability assessment of the metal artisan community revealed that there was a distinct product-based identity within the craft and that there existed well-organized systems of production and marketing. But at the same time it was also apparent that infrastructural resources required definite improvements in the fundamental techniques and processes currently in use.

■ **STEP 4:**

Development of Skills, Capabilities and Capacities

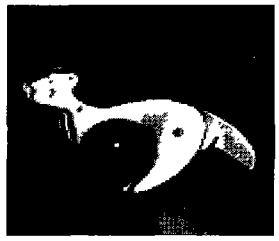
Skill-enhancement programmes and training modules were developed in consultation with experts, and many were conducted by them. Some of these were conducted before the Design and Product Development process began, a few during it, and the rest after the prototypes were developed.

Module 1: Technical Communication

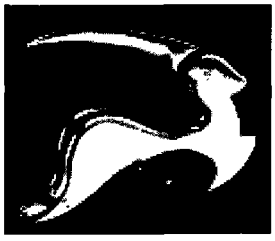
- **Objective:** To introduce the concepts of measurement, proportion, precision and consistency, and the interpretation of product drawings and photographs into three-dimensional products.
- **Methodology:** The exercises were built around learning to use simple measuring instruments and interpreting scale drawings in flat view and perspective into three-dimensional models.
- **Conclusion:** The artisans learned the effective use of scale and basic forms, details such as symmetry and proportion, and specifications such as material and surface ornamentation. They were able to read the measurements, to interpret three-dimensional forms and to make master patterns.

Module 2: New Processes and Finishing Techniques

- **Objective:** To provide orientation in products, materials, processes and finishing techniques in the commercial context of a small-scale production unit.
- **Methodology:** The artisans were taken to well-established, commercially successful units in New Delhi and Moradabad, a



New developments



New developments

city near Delhi famous for its metalwork, where they interacted intensively to understand issues of skills, infrastructure and market management.

- **Conclusion:** The exposure helped in generating an information base about infrastructure costs, types of equipment and machinery available, production set-ups and pricing.

Module 3: Sand-casting Process

- **Objective:** To emphasize the importance of precision, consistency, quality and safety in the sand-casting process.
- **Methodology:** The training workshop was conducted by a team of experts in Nana Reha. The team first observed the existing systems and processes prevalent in the village, discussed existing problems and issues, and worked on the solutions through demonstration and implementation by the artisans. The issues related to general working conditions, lighting, making and finishing of masters, sand mixing, moulding techniques, maintenance of tools and equipment (including masters and mould frames) and safety measures. These were discussed and supported through demonstration and implementation by the artisans.
- **Conclusion:** The adoption and implementation of these inputs benefited the artisans by providing them with new platforms of development.

Module 4: Assembling, Grinding and Finishing the Knives

- **Objective:** To organize an orientation session on the need for precision, consistency and quality in assembling, grinding and finishing the knives.
- **Methodology:** The training workshop was conducted by a team of experts in Nana Reha itself. The team observed the systems and processes prevalent in the village, held discussions on existing problems and issues, and worked out solutions through demonstration and implementation by the artisans. The issues related to the assembling, riveting, grinding and finishing of masters, grinding techniques, maintenance of tools and equipment including masters, and corrective measures employing indigenous materials and methods. These issues were discussed and substantiated through demonstration and implementation by the artisans.

■ Product and Design Development Inputs

- A number of product lines were designed and executed.
- A range of products was developed combining the skills acquired, design inputs and the skills of the craftspersons.
- An in-depth study of the different ways of handling knives while cutting fruit, vegetables, etc. was conducted; the research findings became inputs into the design process. The different styles of handling knives were categorized and their various functions described; these were applied to each design.
- The highlight was the effort to combine various materials like brass, acrylic, stainless steel and wood in order to increase the perceived value of the final product. The craftspersons were introduced to previously unexplored materials like leather, wood, bamboo and horn.
- Emphasis was laid on the importance of quality inputs like the finishing details of the product and the need to maintain standards as per the design. Stress was laid on making well-finished knives that require minimum processes and less time.
- The production of knives made full use of the unique technique of hand forging and tempering, which further strengthens carbon steel.
- The project focused on the need to break away from conventional flat forms and instead manufacture products involving turning, bending, twisting, etc. Diversifi-

cation of the existing product range led to the manufacture of products that could be associated with, and extended from, knives to tin piercers, creasers, can cutters and cork openers. New finishes were explored and introduced in an effort to maintain the constancy of the product's forged character. With each product, the artisans were faced with the challenge of designing the spring mechanism for the folding blade.

■ **Product Development**

1. Conventional flat forms were extended to forged products involving turning, bending and twisting to produce tin pierces, creasers, can cutters and cork openers with raw finishes.

2. The artisans who were traditionally used to crafting single knives for sale now produced sets of knives with specific functions for urban kitchens. Two sets of meat-cutting knives with hand-forging and a post-forging technique—tempering, which strengthens carbon steel—were developed.

3. Knives were differentiated according to usage and design features, such as those used for cutting stationery; hunting knives with leather, bamboo and horn handles; kitchen knives with wooden handles; and butter knives, all completely crafted in metal.

4. Travel knives were designed and customized keeping in mind the requirements of travellers. Foldable knives for a craft-conscious market and single-piece knives for decorative purposes were also developed.

An attempt was made to handle bigger volumes while maintaining a consistent standard of quality. Higher standards of quality were developed and maintained by making minute improvements and refinements in the products.

The collections were designed to meet the requirements of specific target groups like art and design students and travellers.

Design Inputs in Terracotta and Pottery

Location: The two villages identified for terracotta design intervention were Khedoi and Chandrani in the Anjar block of Kutch, Gujarat. Both villages had different levels of existing skills, employed different techniques and raw materials, and produced goods of different quality. The skill levels identified in Chandrani were of a slightly lower degree than those found in Khedoi. The equipment and processes used in both villages were basic. In both villages, the potter communities were not at all well off, being at the mercy of low and inconsistent market demand except during the festival season.

STEP 1:

Assessing the Existing Infrastructure and Skills of the Craft Area

The craft was season specific; most work took place during the warm and dry months, and stopped almost completely during the monsoon.

The existing product range was marketed mainly within and outside the local villages.

The work increased substantially during the festival season, when urban markets in nearby towns were targeted.

Each village had its own speciality in terms of products and skills.

The craft was mostly practised within a family set-up, with specific roles assigned to individual members.

Women performed the less skilled tasks of preparing the clay and painting the finished products, while men did the more skilled tasks of throwing, beating and forming of the main products.

Overall, it was found that artisans were poorly equipped; they lacked infra-structural facilities, tools and storage facilities.

The artisans lacked a sound technical knowledge base in subjects like clay qualities and firing techniques.

New developments

The artisans were not conversant with the use of any measuring tools. It was generally observed that almost all terracotta artisans did not use any measuring or finishing tools.

STEP 2:

Specific Skill, Design and Product Development Objectives:

1. **Improving Production Processes and Skills**
2. **New Product Development Improving Production Processes and Skills**

Raw material: *The existing methods of clay preparation were laborious, time consuming and lacked technical finesse. Since the quality of the product depended on the quality of the raw material, the effort was to educate artisans about more effective methods of clay preparation and also to build the basic infrastructure required.*

- **Use of appropriate tools and equipment:** Simple tools were introduced. Most were indigenously developed, and their usage demonstrated. The use of these tools raised quality standards and ensured consistency and detailing in production.
- **Firing of finished product:** The existing methods of firing in both villages were extremely basic and non-technical, resulting in inconsistency and a large amount of breakage. Significant work was required to demonstrate better kiln technology, and the artisans were informed about the intricacies of the firing processes.
- **Introduction of new production techniques:** Since the artisan community possessed different individual levels of skill, uniform training for all did not seem appropriate. Suitable work opportunities needed to be explored depending on individual skill levels. Techniques such as slip casting, press moulding and mould making were introduced, which required lower skill-based inputs and facilitated bulk production.

New Product Development

Based on the background assessment, it was decided that the product development approach should aim at bringing the women and the lesser skilled artisans into the forefront rather than having them play a secondary role.

■ **STEP 3:**

Skill-enhancement Programmes and Training Modules

Module 1: Technical Communication

- **Objective:** To emphasize the importance of precision and consistency, and to teach the ability to interpret simple two-dimensional drawings into three-dimensional products.
- **Methodology:** The exercises were built around learning to use simple measuring instruments and interpreting scale drawings in flat view and perspective into three-dimensional models.
- **Conclusion:** In the end, the artisans had learned the effective use of scale, gained an understanding of units of measurement (centimetres, millimetres and inches), and were able to apply these to three-dimensional forms.

Module 2: Throwing

- **Objective:** To acquire knowledge of and master technically correct throwing techniques.
- **Methodology:** A master craftsperson[6] worked with the artisans and demonstrated basic throwing techniques like centring over the wheel, raising of even-thickness walls and lifting off from the wheel with minimum intrusion.

6 A master craftsperson is an artisan who has been awarded recognition for his/her work by the President of India.

New developments

- **Conclusion:** Though all artisans possessed the skills of throwing, the technically correct method helped them in achieving a better and consistent throwing quality.

Module 3: Slip Casting

- **Objective:** To introduce a mass-production-based method for artisans possessing lower degrees of manual skills.
- **Methodology:** The input organized at a professionally managed, large-scale unit in New Delhi was coordinated by a ceramic designer. The artisans were given a demonstration of the entire process, and then performed it themselves under supervision.
- **Conclusion:** The input provided a very new and interesting platform for most artisans to take up a new technique useful in general mass-production-based situations. Some artisans desired to take it up further and incorporate it into their work.

Module 4: Exposure to Studio Pottery

- **Objective:** To provide a live case study of a small-scale commercial-production pottery unit.
- **Methodology:** The artisans visited a well-established, commercially successful pottery unit run by a master potter in New Delhi and interacted intensively on issues of skill, infrastructure and market management.
- **Conclusion:** The exposure generated information on infrastructure costs, types of equipment and machinery available, production set-ups and pricing.

Module 5: Clay-preparation Techniques

- **Objective:** To refine the quality of raw materials and provide more convenient methods of clay preparation.
- **Methodology:** This workshop imparted training in constructing clay-preparation pits at village sites. This was followed by a demonstration of its functioning, with sufficient clay prepared in each village, and a comparison made between the clay-pit quality and the old clay quality.
- **Conclusion:** This method reduced the women's workload as it required less manual work. The clay prepared was also more appropriate for manufacturing new products requiring better finish and consistency.

Module 6: Clay Testing

- **Objective:** To test clay strength and determine its suitability for various processing methods and products.
- **Methodology:** This workshop, conducted by a professional ceramic designer, demonstrated methods by which clay quality could be judged and its suitability determined for processes such as throwing, beating, etc.
- **Conclusion:** Though most artisans understand, either intuitively or through experience, clay quality and its appropriateness for various processes, the input provided a more rational way of approaching the issue.

Module 7: Kiln Construction and Firing Techniques

- **Objective:** Construction of a technically correct kiln designed to save energy and ensure consistent quality.

- **Methodology:** A master potter from New Delhi was invited to demonstrate kiln building at Khedoi and Chandrani villages. The workshop was attended by all the potters from both villages. A kiln of moderate capacity was built using local resources. It was tested, and the results compared to existing products fired by the old technique for quality. Convinced of its efficiency, many potters expressed an interest in constructing their own kilns.

■ Inputs of Design, Product and Skill Development

A number of product lines were designed and executed. One of the main considerations here was the need to bring women and the less skilled artisans into the mainstream. Four different product lines based on skill levels and infrastructural facilities available, or being developed, were worked on. Products especially geared towards the skilled potter were also developed.

1. **Decorative toys and souvenirs:** These product lines were developed with the aim of *encompassing mainstream involvement of women artisans* and others who were in the process of learning the craft. The themes for development were based on the local culture and the immediate surroundings.

Exhibition of pottery products

2. **Decorative tiles:** Terracotta tile production, being partially skill oriented and partially mechanized, was considered a potential option in *providing work for the lesser-skilled artisans.* As a mass batch-production-based activity, it could be used when orders were low.

3. **Beaten pots:** This product line was based entirely on existing skills and methods. The exercise was aimed at *expanding and exploring the traditions of skilled artisans* who were already well acquainted with the technique.

4. **Slip-cast products:** This direction was relatively radical and was conceived with the aim of *extending the craft skills* into a partly semi-industrial direction, involving both skilled and unskilled workers. It was introduced so that in instances of increased demand for standard products, the slip-casting technique could be used to hasten speedy production while simultaneously guaranteeing quality. Being a new technique in the villages, it was also likely to draw the attention of totally new participants, with the possibility of its emerging as an independent line of work as well.

■ New Product Development

The new product lines developed included an assortment of toys based on folk characters designed to be used as decorative pieces; painted closed terracotta forms much like pebbles on a river bed, with enclosed tiny clay bells to create sounds; intricate cutwork lamps for use during festivals; slip-cast pottery products for contemporary homes such as small containers, bottles, vessels, tiles, votive holders and decorative pots.

An Analysis of the Project: Results, Achievements and Follow-up Activities

1. Over 200 artisans partnered the effort of the Accessory Design Department faculty staff, students and external experts. Bhatt gives credit to the 'resilience' of the people in dealing with the vagaries of life and being such effective partners.

2. Some of the achievements include introducing new methods, processes and know-how, and inculcating knowledge through actual applications.
3. The project invested over 3,500 man days, making it one of the more intensive involvements of high-level professional capabilities in design. The quality, earnestness, commitment and time investment are indicative of the genuine concern and desire on the part of the team members to contribute to the rehabilitation process.
4. One of the visible outcomes of the intervention was a distinctive range of products catering to high-value, small-volume market niches that had the potential of generating better returns for the artisans within their available skills, techniques and materials.

The project has resulted in the following achievements:

- Understanding and appreciation of objective nomenclatures of communication through the interpretation of drawings, sizes and proportions.
- Recognition to some extent of the importance of maintaining consistency in dimensions, finishes, details and scales.
- Requirement of quality in materials, assembly, processing, textures and looks.
- Understanding of the need for different styles and aesthetic requirements in product treatments for goods manufactured for local markets versus urban/contemporary markets.
- Understanding of the need for quality in raw materials, details, tools, equipment, assembly, dimensionality, form characteristics and related aspects as different requirements for contemporary markets.
- Appreciation of, and initial feel for, aesthetic and form paradigms of restrained adornment as well as minimalist visual treatment as opposed to excessive and elaborate work.
- Recognition of higher-value realization potential through restructuring of skill application as well as market and product shift.
- Requisite openness and confidence in involving hitherto-unknown expertise inputs at various levels of product and process enhancement.

Questioned about the development of the artisan as a pair of skilled hands rather than as a creative individual, Bhatt explained that the artisans, having been exposed to newer products and preferences, now had the freedom to create across different aesthetics, and had actually started to do so.

'What has been achieved is not only a new paradigm in products but also, to a great degree, a genuine insight and feel amongst the artisans about what characterizes this new dimension of aesthetic possibility from the point of their own skills and techniques.

Design has found a meaningful position as well as appreciation as it is perceived as a process capable of effective intervention in such situations. More importantly, designers are perceived as having expertise in thinking through the complexities of developmental concerns, capacity building as well as community mobilization, which is beyond being seen as only concerned with visual aesthetics.'

– Jatin Bhatt

Follow-up

What happened after NIFT left the scene? The follow-up in Madhapur town in January 2002, which lasted more than eight days, was attended by over 200 artisans; they exchanged ideas and explored further possibilities with thirty design students of NIFT and seven faculty members.

Lessons from the NIFT Interaction

■ Pre-intervention

- It is essential to have a thorough and objective study, analysis and evaluation of the existing scenario concerning the skills, techniques, materials, processes, practices, knowledge, limitations, social and cultural dynamics, trade practices and linkages, economic well-being and aspirations, as well as initiative and responsiveness of the craft communities.

■ During intervention

- It is important to establish links and rela-

tionships with the artisan communities; this calls for accessibility of the team representatives, accompanied by wit and humour, along with funds and logistical support. It is also important to constantly evaluate the artisans' responses to and feelings about new ideas and innovations, and to gauge the extent of their understanding and acceptance of new concepts and techniques.

- Sustained dialogue and focused interaction aimed at building a proactive and involved relationship around the different aspects of crafts based on the opportunities available. Identification of responsive, open-minded and influential representatives from craft communities for building on possibilities that have immediate and long-term implications.
- Developing a minimum common ground for initiatives at the level of processes, materials, product ideas, uses and functions, and their potential both in terms of saleability as well as increased earnings.
- Exploring potential avenues of product development that create a higher-value perception based on market opportunities.
- Emphasizing the need for intensive and purposeful product development, which calls for many artisans operating within their skill levels and the available equipment with a high level of motivation that impacts on both the process and the outcome.
- Constant evaluation and redefinition of design ideas, product concepts, and intended outcomes through a process of idealization, exploration, sampling and prototyping, while keeping in mind factors such as quality, consistency, materials, processes, finishes and finishing, consumer and market segments, costing, value perceptions as well as anticipation and planning for the entire supply chain within the prevailing reality.
- Induction of new skills, insights, exposure and capabilities that enhance the artisans' flexibility, work practices, processes and comfort levels.
- Creating a minimum visible presence based on continuity and qualitative interaction with craft groups.
- Maintaining product specifications, indicative component and material lists, indicative prices, time investment and related details with each process.

Artisans and their newly designed products

■ In the future

The following issues need to be addressed in order to realize a mature, independent and proactive responsiveness initiated through the intervention:

- Provide entrepreneurial motivation for the younger generation of artisans to manage their own activities, needs and operations by regularly holding workshops, seminars, interactions and exposure sessions.
- Create insights into and appreciation of the supply chain and the different stages of value realization with the objective of retaining a larger share.
- Enhance processes, equipment and tools, as well as increase requisite skills and knowledge, that will increase productivity, consistency and variety.

- Mobilize craft communities to adopt collective and ownership-based structures, capable of self-governing and possessing self-evolving potential.
- Inculcate capabilities for sourcing raw materials, undertaking specialized processes and incorporating inputs with a critical commercial sense.
- Create an understanding, appreciation and application of supervisory as well as quality-assurance capabilities as a system, attitude and knowledge that responds to contemporary norms in best market and consumer contexts.
- Increase awareness and sharing of the learning and experience amongst larger groups to increase the number of beneficiaries.
- Develop forms of long-term patronage; seek sustained support from government as well as non-government agencies to fund activities of a collective nature catering to larger interests such as marketing, trade events, etc.
- Pursue multi-layered market positioning with product/pricing strategies designed to exploit various levels of skill applications, and which will sustain the increased participation and economic security of beneficiaries.
- Adopt a distinctive image/brand for the initiative that leverages the unique characteristics and features of the craft communities and their products both in socio-cultural as well as ethno-contemporary contexts.
- Ensure the sustained involvement of and inputs from various experts and institutions to achieve the above objectives.
- Adopt a pragmatic exit strategy that encourages collective ownership, and therefore responsibility, as well as controls all activities, based on commitments from the craft communities involved in the process of decision making, in both the areas of risks as well as benefits.
- Create the requisite understanding of and engender insights into contemporary market opportunities in the form of products, uses, functions, occasions, consumer values, and related aesthetic and style preferences within which the craft communities have to find their niche.

3.2 SUSTAINED STUDENT INITIATIVES: BRIDGING PRODUCT AND DESIGN DEVELOPMENT TO CREATE LIVELIHOODS

3.2.1 Weaving Peace in Bongaigaon, Assam A Project by the Action Northeast Trust (ANT)

- **The Project**: Weaving Peace
- **Design Student**: Smitha Murthy, Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology, Bangalore, Karnataka
- **Location**: Bongaigaon, Assam
- **Duration**: Six months: May to November 2002
- **Sponsor**: The ANT (The Action Northeast Trust)[7]

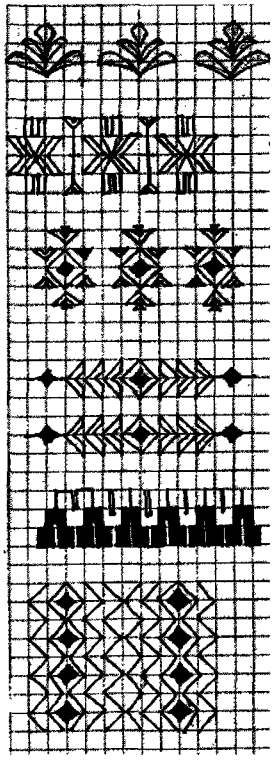
■ **Background**

The work of the ANT, based in the small refinery town of Bongaigaon, in lower Assam, is concentrated on two levels—direct intervention among village communities, and as a resource organization involved in capacity building and training of other development organizations and socially committed youth. The ANT has programmes running in about thirty villages located in thirty gram panchayats, all of which are within cycling distance from Bongaigaon.

■ **About the community**

The Bodos, a tribal community in Assam, have been involved in a political struggle

7 The ANT, a registered charitable trust, was set up with the mandate to work towards development in the north-eastern region of India.



Motifs chosen

against the Assamese for the last two decades. The ethnic conflict has been exacerbated by the erosion of farming land of the tribal community by the main rivers, thus leading to a struggle for resources among different communities.

Many landless families survive on the men's daily wages and the sale of vegetables by the women at the local *haats*, but neither of these is a reliable or steady source of income. Reaching the markets takes much time and energy, as the women have to walk many miles.

Almost all Bodo women can weave, as the craft is passed from generation to generation. As weaving is a household activity, every home has a throw and fly-shuttle loom. Traditionally, the women wove textiles for themselves and their families in their spare time. Using acrylic yarn, which was easily available, the women wove items such as the *dokhna* and chaddar, a traditional unstitched garment about 50 inches wide and 3 metres long, which is draped from the chest to the ankle and is tied above the chest and at the waist.

■ The Mission

Women weavers, especially those from landless families, needed a market to transform their weaving activity into a significant source of steady income. This required a market that appreciated handwoven products. This also called for product diversification and adaptation of colours and designs to suit customer preferences, a risk that individual landless weavers were unable to take.

It was hoped that through this project the women who otherwise supplemented their family income by selling vegetables would be able to secure a steady source of income.

■ Objectives

The project was called Weaving Peace.

- To promote the traditional weaving craft of rural Bodo women with the aim of creating a significant and sustainable source of livelihood by design and market intervention.
- To enhance and build a positive image of the Bodo people by promoting their rich weaving tradition to counter the current public image of them as militants.

■ Methodology

The methodology and the process to be followed to achieve the objectives were left to the designer.

Phase 1

An attempt was first made to spread the idea behind the Weaving Peace project to the residents of all the villages involved. Textiles woven by weavers of other states were shown to the stakeholders. This boosted their interest in the project. The idea of urban people wearing and using textiles woven by them fascinated the Bodo women the most.

Simultaneously, the designer, Smitha Murthy, undertook a thorough research study into the variety of traditional motifs, colours, raw material, and the origins and stories connected with the creation of each motif. With this knowledge in hand, the acceptability of traditional motifs and colours for a probable market was identified and studied. Documenting the traditional motifs and designs of the Bodos in order to create a reference point for future development became an ongoing process throughout the project.

A number of villagers and people dealing with different issues relating to the Bodos were consulted in order to gain information and understanding about them and their society.

Phase 2

The designer studied and learned the weaving technique practised by Bodo women so that developments could be demonstrated on the loom rather than being conveyed verbally or through drawings. While she was there at the request of the ANT, the designer nevertheless had to gain the trust of the weavers and establish her own equation with them. In her own words, she was completely paralysed due to the language barrier.

The process began with Smitha Murthy communicating first with the men of the commu-

nity, establishing her credentials and gaining the confidence of the women. What helped was the fact that she was from Bangalore, where many of the Bodo children were studying. She ate and drank whatever they offered, anxious not to give offence. She won the villagers' respect when they saw her daily struggle to commute 30 km. on a bicycle to reach their communities as well as her willingness to learn the weaving technique and make the prototypes—and all this without knowing their language.

Phase 3

After studying the old heirloom *dokhnas* and chaddars, four main motifs that the weavers were familiar with were chosen; these were mixed and matched to create new designs. The traditional colour palette was retained because it was closely identified with the community. Each of the five traditional colours—ranging from lemon yellow, orange to deep red—had its own significance and its own local name.

The borders used were traditional, and were applied on both striped and plain cloth. Experimentation was carried out with uneven borders, and different patterns were created using the same warp.

Phase 4

Sampling Stage: Four months

A beginning was made with five weavers in one village using cotton yarn. This was difficult as the cotton yarn frequently broke and faded more easily when compared to acrylic or synthetic yarn, to which the weavers had grown accustomed. The cloth was woven slowly. The women were paid for their time and effort, receiving an amount that was much higher than that paid to other Assamese weavers.

Phase 5

The initial products developed were unstitched textiles like shawls, stoles and scarves, which helped the weavers adapt to further developments and which also initiated them into commercial weaving for a distant market. The warps were planned in such a way that they could be turned into skirts and garments similar to those worn by Manipuri women, a people with whose culture the Bodos are familiar.

The next stage was the production of garments; prototypes of the stitched and completed products were made, including jackets and skirts. This excited the women, who admired and tried out each garment. However, the production of ready-made garments was a different matter altogether, and it was imperative to find somebody close by. Eventually, a boutique in Guwahati, Assam that could undertake the stitching of the garments was located.

Phase 6

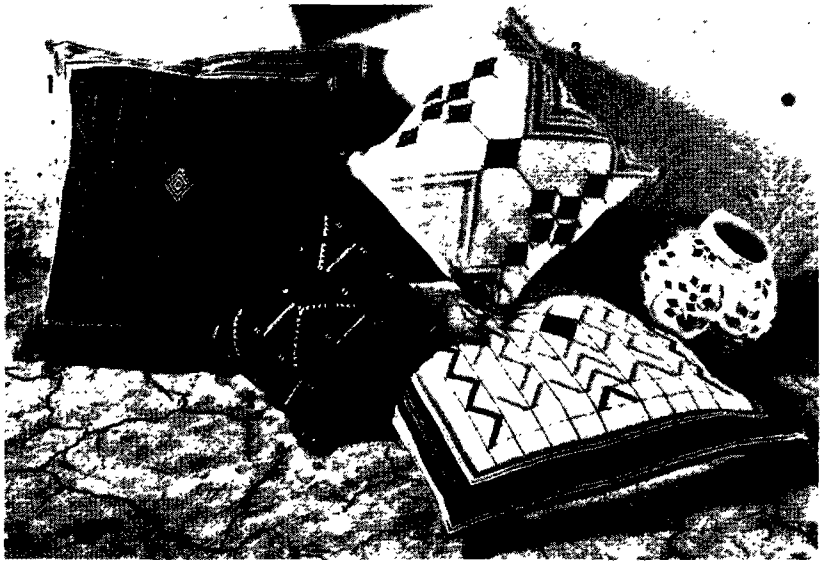
The textiles and products were exhibited and sold at Nature Bazaar, an exhibition organized by Dastkar in New Delhi in November 2003. The products received a very good response.

Phase 7

The designer, Smitha Murthy, returned to work with the weavers after her graduation.

'It didn't take me much time to realize that my involvement with the ANT and its weaving programme was not going to end with my student project, and that just giving them a range of designs and prototypes was meaningless. A more continuous support was required, and therefore I extended my support as a designer even after my graduation.'

Weaver at work



New developments

In Retrospect

Today, when I look back at the journey we began, when we started sampling with five weavers to the 130 weavers that we support today, I feel that the one big achievement has been that women now see weaving as a steady source of income and not just as a leisure activity. There has been great appreciation for the designs and textiles from consumers, and I see great potential ahead.

The weavers are now registered under a different name—*Aagor*—and have formed a managing committee of their own. I would, however, call this project truly successful when I see the women running this weaving programme successfully on their own.

I hope the day is not too far when people will identify the Bodos as the creators of classic textiles with vibrant colours and intricate weaves, and not just as people fighting for their rights and land.

– Smitha Murthy

3.2.2 The Weavers of Phalodi, Rajasthan

- **Design Student**: Kunjan Singh
- **Institute**: National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), New Delhi
- **Location**: Phalodi, Rajasthan
- **Period**: 1996
- **Duration**: Six months
- **Sponsor**: Urmul Marusthali Bunkar Vikas Samiti (UMBVS),[8] Phalodi, Rajasthan

■ Background

Phalodi, a small town four hours from Jodhpur, in Rajasthan, is the head office of the Urmul Marusthali Bunkar Vikas Samiti (UMBVS). Phalodi is located at the midpoint of the weaving villages, which are spread around it within a circumference of about 40 km. UMBVS runs one of the more successful income-generation programmes in the state; they have been working with traditional *pattu* weavers in the villages. The traditional craft of *pattu* weaving involved making blankets and shawls in locally available wool, ornamented with beautiful extra-weft patterns. These traditional patterns were supplemented by design inputs and the use of cotton, merino wool and tussore silk yarns. The product range was extended to include apparel and furnishings.

■ Brief

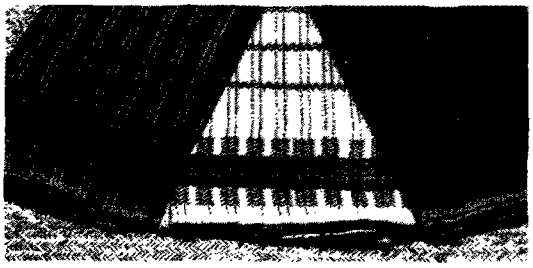
- To work on three design collections, covering home furnishings, apparel design and woollen jackets for men and women.
- To document the craft.
- To document the organizational structure and working practices.

■ Methodology

Phase 1: The Field Experience

- The first week was spent in the field as an orientation exercise to learn about the organization, the field and the development programmes. After that the process of developing design concepts began. The samples designed were made in the training centre by five weavers, supervised by the training master. The designer followed up the weaving and translated the designs for the weavers.
- Kunjan Singh worked on a collection of

8 UMBVS was established in 1991as a society of weavers.



Final weaves

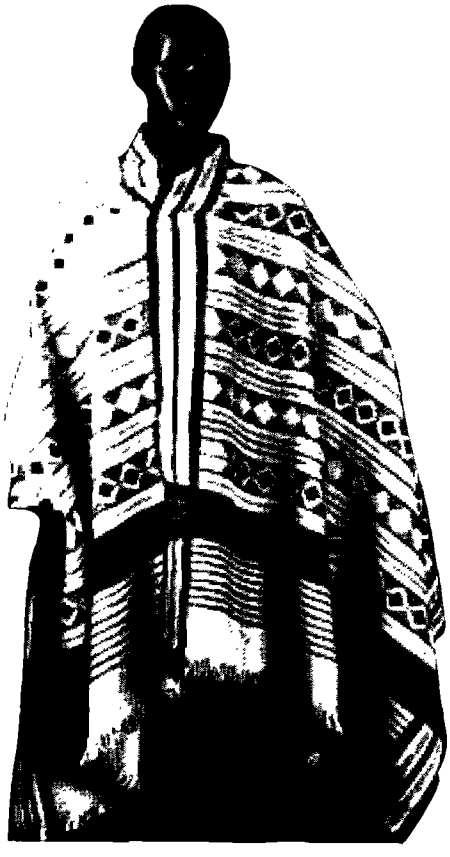
woollen and cotton jackets, kurtas, bedcovers, a home furnishings collection and saris. The saris, jackets and big-width bedcovers were part of the new product range.

- A fly-shuttle loom was introduced for the weaving of bedcovers in a single piece; this was done as market research has shown that buyers do not like joints. The most challenging task was weaving two sari samples in 2/60's yarn, as such a fine warp had never before been used by the weavers.
- 'There were many apprehensions, arguments and discussions while these samples were being made. The weavers would challenge Kunjan Singh about the technique and its possibilities, but gradually everyone settled down to work with each other and weave the new designs. What also helped was receiving positive feedback from visitors, who really liked the new products and this encouraged the team.'

Phase 2

- Kunjan Singh decided to return to Urmul after graduation, and was employed as a full-time designer.
- There was a lot of frustration as month after month the old designs were put into production as there was a fear of change. Kunjan Singh visited Delhi for two exhibitions with the old designs and stock. After receiving negative feedback, she became persistent and insisted on working with new designs and new colours. As she observes, 'This was a very difficult exercise as new weaving rates had to be established, and the weaving managers were very apprehensive about starting the new designs in their villages as they would be held responsible for the rejects.'
- At this point, Kunjan Singh and her team decided that she would have to go into the villages and check the new designs while they were being woven on the loom and help clear any design-related doubts or problems at that stage itself. The new look began showing up slowly in the stock and at exhibitions. The response to the new products was very good. However, there was one problem; there were some products for which the costing done was not right, and this affected sales.

> I kept doing some amount of new designs, but later my concentration was mainly on production and marketing. I went for a lot of exhibitions and marketing trips for which we took the new products and got orders for them along with some new colour combinations from the buyers. We had a lot of orders, and slowly the weavers started accepting the new designs.
>
> – Kunjan Singh



New Developments

'There were, of course, some products that the weavers refused to make. The men could not understand why anyone would wear short kurtas. They also did not want to make 'small items'. They initially refused to cater to the younger people and do a range of kurtas that college students would be interested in buying, but when they saw them selling so well they did think about it and finally started making them two years later. Another problem I had was with kurtas having three-quarter sleeves. The weavers could not understand the purpose of these sleeves. They felt that kurtas should have full sleeves, or half sleeves, or should be sleeveless. We made a couple of sleeveless kurtas, and they were a total sell-out. The difference was that now they trusted me and gave me the freedom to experiment with products even if they, the weavers, were not confident about it.'

The Learning Experience

It takes a lot of persistence to work with artisans and make them understand design and to establish a rapport with them. One has to extend this beyond one's work, be it eating together or singing with them. It is not like working in a formal office environment. I would say that making samples and designs is the easiest part of the whole exercise. The more difficult task was puting them all into production and actually marketing them.

– Kunjan Singh

3.3 LIVELIHOOD INTERVENTION: NGOS AND DESIGNERS

3.3.1 The Potters of Aruvacode, Kerala

- **Location:** Aruvacode, Kerala
- **Period:** March to September 1993
- **Design:** Jaya Jaitly, Project Director; K.B. Jinan, Chief Designer; Vishaka, Technical Designer; Ulasker Dey, Technical Expertise; Regional Design Technical Centre, Bangalore.

New developments

■ **Background**

Aruvacode, a small village near Nilambur in north Kerala, was well known for its highly skilled potters. About one hundred families of the traditional potters continued to follow their family trade of making pots, household utensils and other objects. However, a scarcity of clay, firewood and other raw material, the influx of cheap industrial substitutes coupled with a lack of demand for the finished product led to a sharp decline in the economic and social status of the artisans, resulting in dire poverty. By 1993, many of the potters had taken to distilling liquor, while the women turned to prostitution.

For the revival of this languishing craft and the dignified survival of the potter families of Aruvacode, an intervention was undertaken by Dastakari Haat Samiti, an NGO.[9]

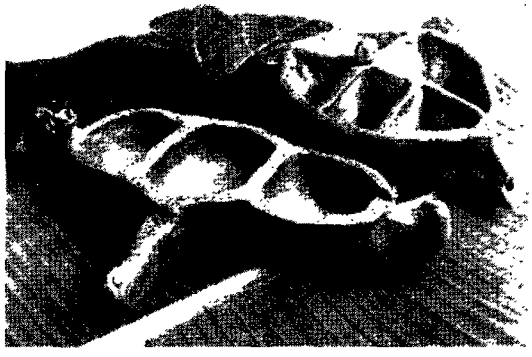
■ **Objectives**

- To build a relationship with the concerned artisans, villagers in general, local organizations, administrators and local bodies.
- To train traditional potters to diversify their product range.
- To link technological and design improvements to a marketing system that would eventually result in higher incomes and an improved status for the village.

Phase I

- **Two systematic surveys** were conducted on the socio-economic conditions of the potters. The initial survey on literacy, sani-

9 Dastakari Haat Samiti, an NGO headquartered in New Delhi, is a federation of craftspeople.



New developments

tation and other facilities, occupations, etc. was conducted by the YWCA.[10] This was followed by the second survey, conducted by the Dastakari Haat Samiti. In this survey, each of the ninety-seven potter families in Aruvacode was interviewed. The information obtained included the history of the Nilambur block and the reasons for the decline and degradation of the community. The survey also revealed the desire of the community to rid itself of the social stigma that was attached to them.

- It took many visits to Aruvacode before the project was formally initiated, in March 1993. Each visit was a step forward in confidence building, identification of mutual interests and establishment of trust.

Process

The potter families (that is, those who had remained potters even after struggling with various difficulties over the years) were the first conduit for the intervention. The intervention included open community discussions, visits to households to identify levels of skill and motivational meetings for women seeking to involve them in training and production. **The aim was also to explain the project to the people and to select those members of the community who could be of help in the running of the project.** Identification of a site to erect the shed, kiln, and tank, arrangements for the use of local facilities, and short- and long-term gains were also discussed to ensure openness and democratic functioning. Regular Saturday meetings were initiated as a forum for interaction, to encourage initiative and leadership, to impart a sense of autonomy, to solicit the active involvement of the artisans in the running of the project, and to encourage a sense of ownership and responsibility. Thirty-minute meditation sessions formed part of the meetings; this was an important step in a community whose members, due to poverty and insecurity, were always close to discord.

■ **Establishment of Facilities**

- The shed—made of mud brick, bamboo and coconut thatch—was designed to accommodate sixty people and their work objects. (The plot was rented from a potter.) It was conceived as the **centre for other projects and community activities.** Clay tanks and a kiln were also constructed close by.

- A new source of clay was found, which was located at a distance of 15 km., unlike the previous source, which was located at a distance of 50 km.

■ **Training**

- **The potters were first exposed to books on design and terracotta and a few product catalogues** to give them an idea of other design possibilities in clay, that is, what people in other cultures liked and the various products that people used.

- Learning about the principles of geometry and geometrical design, with patterns drawn without instruments, helped the artisans understand the geometrical details of their work.

- The potters were taught to recognize the potential and importance of colour.

- During this period, S.K. Mirmira of Bhadrawati Gramodaya Sangh organized a meeting to examine the difficulties faced by potters. Some Aruvacode potters along with K.B. Jinan participated in the meeting to discuss their problems and find

10 Young Women's Christian Association

solutions along with potters from other parts of the country.

- Working tables, boxes for transportation and storage, and clay-modelling tools were made available. Electric potters' wheels were ordered.

The children of the community were always at the project site, drawing, creating in clay, playing with the created pieces, and offering suggestions. They added a new dimension to the activities, and infused a fresh wave of enthusiasm among the potters. During the two-month-long summer vacation, all the children in the village joined the project. They were considered trainees during this period. Films, field trips, puppet shows and story-telling sessions were part of their training.

The women trainers were good at creating circular objects. This shape was easy for them as the food they cooked was often circular in form. Once they made the connection with clay, they were able to relate to the work and developed their own style while continuing to greatly improve their skills. They were then introduced to figurative work, coiling and pinching methods, and bead and jewellery making.

- **The focus was on making two kinds of pottery—functional and decorative:** The trainees were first made familiar with and confident about using clay. They were encouraged to observe nature and draw inspiration from it. The emphasis was on giving them the confidence and ability to create, and not just imitate. They were encouraged to make their own tools as the situation demanded, and to use objects from their environment as tools. They were encouraged to design and create according to their own aesthetic instincts, to make mistakes and ask questions.
- The trainees initially had a problem since they were not being taught according to the method that they had expected. However, they soon began to enjoy the innovation. *Gradually, the emphasis shifted from form to finish. Their autonomy in conceiving, executing and taking care of the objects increased. Their increasing confidence in their own ability to handle clay began to be reflected in the execution of bolder ideas.* The designers made objects alongside, and this was also an important source of learning. Firing and arranging wares in the kiln were also made part of the training. Some objects were fired black.
- **The focus of the training in the later stages became more market oriented:** The trainees were encouraged to define the use of packaging, understand the drawbacks involved, and analyse packaging problems before making the objects. This was important as the potters had never packaged their products for long-distance sales before. Old cardboard cartons were bought from shops and recycled, with the wares first packed with hay.
- **Towards the end, the training became more product oriented:** The trainees selected six to seven items for production, and it was decided that four days would be spent on these, one day on the tiles and one day on creative work. The trainees later became involved in production work. By then, each had specialized in a different area. Participation in exhibitions was an opportunity to test the new designs and learn about market needs.

■ **Interaction for marketing:**

- **The local sales outlets at Nilambur were not affected by the new products** as they dealt with the demand for traditional pots used for storing water, cooking and growing plants. This demand continued to be met.
- **Other sales options were explored:** Calico, Richer and Vernacular, the nearest cities, offered good markets. Other potential markets located at a further distance were also considered—Coimbatore, Mangalore, Chennai and Bangalore.
- **Four kinds of markets existed:**

  1. The local market for traditional and existing products with minor changes if necessary. However, the economic returns were not satisfactory.

2. Bigger towns in Kerala, where the prevailing aesthetic sense was oriented more towards a machine level of finish even though the product was actually hand made, less decorative and not very expensive.
3. Larger cities like Bangalore and Chennai, where the market was aware of the product and the work could be priced higher.
4. The export market was also a possibility.

Products were designed for all these markets: The trainees were initiated into the concept of design development, taking into account the needs of different market segments. Architectural tiles, lampshades, products for the kitchen and garden, for office and for storage were made. Materials that added value like thread and metal ornaments and objects like ornamental bowls were also introduced. About seventy new products with about hundred variations were developed.

Participation in handicraft exhibitions in Coimbatore, Bangalore, Nilambur and Ernakulam

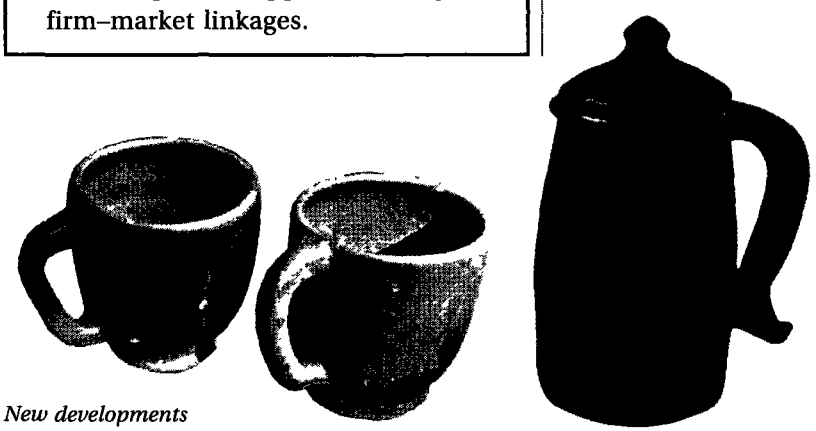
- **Aim:** To change local public opinion in these cities about the potters' village. It was necessary to communicate to potential customers that a great deal of creative and useful work was being done at Aruvacode and that the villagers sincerely wanted to change their way of life.
- Efforts were made to seek state government support for long-term and regular marketing. A huge private exhibition was held in Bangalore, where sales were very good. Contacts were made with architects and private shops to seek orders.

The Mock Shop

- Towards the end of the programme, when a fairly large and impressive range of products had been created, an impromptu mock shop was set up. The idea was to create a consciousness of the customer–artisan exchange and to generate awareness of consumer needs. The mock sales also allowed for comments on one's own work as well as the work of others, feedback that was shared objectively and sportingly, and from the customer's point of view. All participants enjoyed this exercise.
- The NGO made considerable efforts to contact various organizations, stores, architects and marketing agencies to develop potential long-term markets.
- The women began a movement to shift the illegal arrack shop in the village in an attempt to show that the villagers were trying to improve their ways.

Identification of Long-term Issues

- The potters were unable to afford crucial and major items, both at the presale and sale stages, including raw material and fuel to produce goods for sale, packing, loading and transportation costs and the cost of renting a stall. It was felt that a short-term loan, a revolving fund and other similar solutions were necessary before the potters could stand on their own feet. The availability of initial credit was essential for translating training, skills upgrading, market know-how, and new designs into economically viable products, and hence means of livelihood and survival. It was very difficult for a short-term project team to monitor such developments on a long-term basis unless there was continuous motivation and an organizational support base to guide, support and organize firm–market linkages.



New developments

■ **The Future of the Project:**

The project was mainly directed towards the revival of the potters' skills and the restoration of the villagers' dignity. The most important step for the future was to develop regular markets for their products and for the potters to learn the intricacies of market mechanisms. External support was still required, especially in the area of marketing.

Phase II

K.B. Jinan returned to Aruvacode and founded an NGO called Kumbham. He started a project to design and market terracotta products suited to the modern context and contemporary/urban tastes. The product range created in cooperation with the Aruvacode potters included objects for use in architectural projects, in homes and offices, and in gardens. Jinan moved to Aruvacode to oversee and design the products. He stayed on in the village even after the project was over to help the potters stand on their own feet. '*When an entire village proves that it wants to turn over a new leaf, it is the responsibility of a civilized society to respond with sensitivity.*'

Over the past few years, many products have been created and marketed, which are notable for both their form as well as function. Kumbham products now find wide acceptance in households, corporate offices, hotels and resorts.

3.3.2 Dastkar: A Design Interaction with Chikan Embroidery

- **Location**: Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
- **Sponsor**: SEWA[11] Lucknow
- **Designer**: Laila Tyabji,[12] Dastkar
- **Date**: 1986
- **Participants**: 100 embroiderers

Chikan embroiderers

■ **Background**

Chikan is a centuries-old craft of white-on-white embroidery with a strong design and motif tradition. It is practised by a large urban craft community in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. The community of embroiderers was largely illiterate and poverty ridden; they were caught in a debt stranglehold imposed by the wholesale traders; the women embroiderers lived in purdah, in crowded unsanitary conditions, and earned subhuman wages.

- **Objectives:** The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Lucknow, while working with the chikan embroidery community on an income-generation and community-building programme, asked Laila Tyabji and Dastkar, a design and market-based professional craft NGO, to intervene with the following objectives in mind:

  1. To help make the embroiderers *economically and creatively independent* and viable as in the past.
  2. Differentiate the product from what was available in the market.

'Design inputs must lead forward rather than being an end in themselves.'

– Laila Tyabji

11 Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Lucknow, is a trade union of over 30,000 women.
12 Laila Tyabji is a craft activist, designer, and Chairperson of Dastkar.
Note : All illustrations in this section are courtesy Dastkar.

3. Create a product range that *took into account the aptitudes and skill levels* of all potential beneficiaries, rather than only those who were most highly skilled.
4. Ensure that the price point of the product guaranteed a fair wage to the embroiderer.
5. Create a product range with a *varied price range*, to gain credibility and appeal.

- **The Initial Study**

The initial study revealed that SEWA Lucknow needed:

1. Better planning of stocks and quantities of specific selling items, that is, market analysis alongside the study and breakdown of sales figures was necessary.
2. A better quality and wider range of fabric.
3. Design inputs aimed at making SEWA products more distinctive from the run-of-the-mill chikan available everywhere. The design needed to utilize the embroiderer's special skills and superb workmanship and ally this with cuts, styles, colours and fabrics suited to the tastes and preferences of the sophisticated urban consumer.
4. A wider selection of products.
5. Better finish and styling.
6. Revival of traditional stitches, cuts and tailoring techniques.
7. Some promotional and descriptive background material that would highlight and illustrate the difference between the SEWA product and the generic market product, as well as information about the work that the organization is doing.

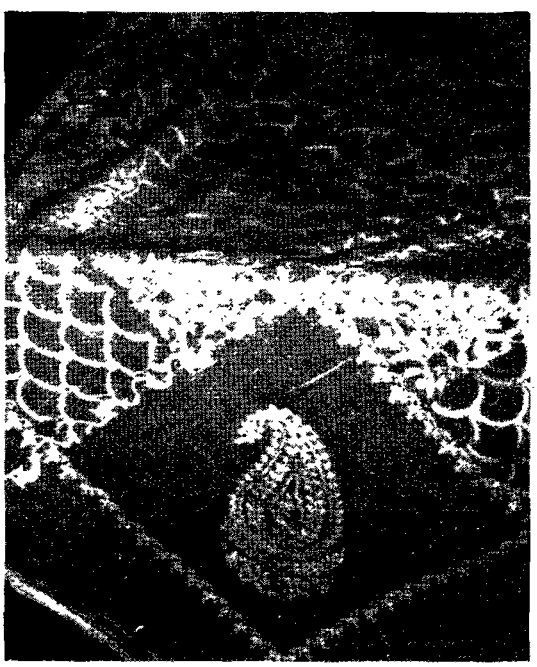
■ **The underlying philosophy behind the design intervention**

- Provide ideas and stimuli for the emergence of creative and innovative product design from among the embroiderers themselves. *Explain the process* of designing and creating a product.
- Explain the rationale and theory behind the items developed, and the relationship of this with the guidelines laid down by the design intervention.
- Encourage the embroiderers to understand and *develop the design process* further.
- Aim at eventually making expensive *outside design interventions unnecessary.*
- Develop a product range that incorporates the differing skill levels of the embroiderers.
- Keep the product usage and price applicable to the widest possible market and consumer base.
- Incorporate the typical and representative motifs, colours and shapes of the tradition/region harmoniously into the new product range.

■ **Methodology/Inputs**

- The format and structure of the design development workshop was informal, so as to suit the local living and working conditions and timings of the participants.

1. Forming the group and selecting the leaders: One or two artisans are always



Chikan table cloth

'Contrary to one's fears, it was not the art of chikankari that was dead, but the aesthetic perceptions and sensibilities of those who order and design the market product.'
– Laila Tyabji

'Once the craftsperson understands the form and function of the finished product, his/her participation is simultaneously more creative and more long term. The designer and development worker must constantly keep in mind that her objective, and greatest achievement, is to become redundant.'
– Laila Tyabji

'If you start on First Principles and get them right, there is nothing you can't eventually achieve.'
– Laila Tyabji

'I explained that our only hope of breaking the stranglehold of the wholesale traders was to develop our own uniquely distinctive style.'
– Laila Tyabji

more responsive and innovative than the others. Dastkar has learned that in a group situation, it works well to use the leaders as a medium to reach out to the others.

2. Identifying traditional skills, techniques, and motifs; encouraging and reteaching the use of the entire repertoire of traditional stitches. Tyabji says that she was 'delighted that so many traditional chikan stitches—*murri, phanda, tepchi, keel, ghas ki pathi, kangan*, etc.—as well as different types of jali and fine hemming [were] still part of the repertoire of so many women, and that almost all [were] capable of doing work of the very highest quality.'
3. Harmoniously incorporating the motifs, colours and shapes of the tradition and region into the new product range.
4. Acquiring the wooden printing blocks used to transfer embroidery patterns on to cloth. These were sorted, modified and printed into registers for easy reference.
5. Selecting and procuring appropriate and easily available raw materials.

■ **Skill Development**

1. Developing a range of samples; correcting and modifying errors in sizing, design and finish; suggesting variations, sizes, colours and alternatives for all samples developed.

Chikan table cloth

2. Cutting of garments: A skill traditionally practised by a master cutter, with patterns geared to mass production, was now taught to the embroiderers, so that they could cut and sew the new styles themselves, starting with simple patterns and moving on to more complex ones.
3. Doing costing and pricing.
4. Working out a production plan.
5. Learning about finishing techniques.
6. Learning about various types of decorative fagotting, inserting seams, new designs based on drawn-thread techniques and making fabric buttons.

■ **Product Development**

1. Developing a product range incorporating the different skill levels of all members of the group, as well as a product and price range applicable to the widest possible market and consumer base.
2. Developing different product ranges, including saris and dupattas, table linen, men's wear, children's clothes and a women's line. Designs were inspired by classic Mughal styles using embroidery to accent the cut and flow of the garment.

The use of non-traditional textile fabrics as a base for the embroidery resulted in a distinctively different style.

Five years later, Laila Tyabji reflected:

When we first started working with SEWA, the average wage paid for embroidery in the Chowk was Rs. 2.50 to Rs. 5 per kurta, and Rs. 25 for a sari. SEWA women now earn between ten to twenty times that much, depending on the quality of the embroidery. Many of the women (there are 800 of them now, and their numbers are still growing) earn between Rs. 800 and Rs. 1,500 a month, working only a few hours a day instead of the blinding slave schedules of previous days. The wheel has turned full circle. Whereas formerly everyone wanted to join the SEWA office staff on a regular stipend, today most women say they prefer embroidery as a more flexible, creative and lucrative form of earning a living. SEWA's

success has proved that craft is still a viable and effective tool for employment and income generation today. It has also confirmed the large and growing market for quality craft products . . . Profits go back into a crèche, a school, health and social awareness programmes, and eye camps. SEWA workers coming from the most backward purdah and poverty-ridden communities of Lucknow today travel all over India, and work, interact and live with export buyers from Habitat, leather workers from Rajasthan and tribals from Orissa, with ease, warmth and independence. They participate in every aspect of SEWA planning and production, from fixing wage scales to cutting and stitching cloth, and dealing with issues of quality control, pricing and sales. Rigidly stratified notions about religion, male supremacy, personal law, marriage and birth control have been cast aside along with their burkas.

But what of the other chikan workers? The impact of what SEWA is doing has had a knock-on effect in a number of ways:

- A chikan product of better quality and better design, which commands higher wages and leads to more sales and more employment, which in turn results in a higher standard of living.
- SEWA, while paying appreciably higher wages, can still sell well enough to provide regular employment, to make other chikan workers aware of the value of their skills, and boost their self-confidence in demanding higher wages.
- The workshop-cum-community centre atmosphere fostered by SEWA encourages dialogue and discussion, and leads to a growing social awareness among the women, who are otherwise cut off by purdah, about social issues and matters of health and hygiene, etc. In turn, they spread this information and awareness among their families and friends.
- A revival and upgrading of skills that had almost disappeared, and which, in turn, will extend the range, demand and market for chikan.

Both the quality of workmanship and the rates paid for embroidery in the Chowk are slowly improving. But much still remains to be done. SEWA is one module showing that change is possible if there is a will.

■ Postscript

It is exactly twenty years since SEWA Lucknow first started, famously 'with twelve women, one tin trunk and ten thousand rupees'. Dastkar began its design and marketing intervention with them a year later. By then, the group consisted of a hundred or so women. At that time, a chikan-embroidered kurta was something that people wore to bed. Most of these so-called chikan kurtas were actually crudely embroidered shadow-work, rather than the complex combination of knotted, pulled, under- and over-laid stitches that comprise genuine chikan embroidery.

In the interim years, SEWA Lucknow has grown to an ever increasing number of 7,500 women and their annual turnover is in crores. It still continues to be both a major centre of chikan production and marketing, as well as a catalyst for social development and women's empowerment.

Meanwhile, hundreds of traders, designers, exporters and boutiques, nationally and internationally, have jumped onto the chikan bandwagon launched by SEWA. Chikan is seen regularly on the fashion ramp (with fashion gurus Abu Jani, Sandeep Khosla and

Chikan embroiderer

Muzaffar Ali as its major proponents), at the Oscar awards (modelled by Dame Judi Dench), and is worn by style icons ranging from Jaya Bachchan and Cherie Blair to Jemima Khan and Bianca Jagger. But thanks to its huge producer base (Lucknow and its environs now have more than 75,000 craftswomen engaged in chikan production) and inexpensive raw materials like cotton thread and cloth, it still manages to also be a popular and affordable style for the middle-class urban consumer.

There are dangers: over-saturation of the market, as everyone uses chikan in more or less the same way, and on more or less the same products. Fashion trends persuade everyone to buy the same clothes, but then move on to something else the next season. However suitable a chikan sari or kurta is as feminine and cool summer garb, there will inevitably be a glut. People will tire of chikan, and it will slip downmarket again, with traders and producers lowering both prices and the quality of the workmanship in order to hold on to their customers.

SEWA Lucknow itself, having succeeded in making chikan a hotly fought-over fashion statement at a time when it was almost unknown in most parts of India, has now settled into bulk production of middle-range kurtas, saris and dupattas, sold through exhibition-sales all over India, targeted at young working professionals, students and housewives. Its success now—as then—has been in combining good-quality embroidery, using traditional motifs and designs that are distinctively Lucknavi, with simple wearable styles and affordable prices. But with competition and market saturation an ever-present threat, SEWA Lucknow now needs to take another leap forward—targeting different, upper-end consumer markets and diversifying its products and styles.

It is surprising (and disappointing) that no one has explored the huge potential that chikan has in other areas apart from women's wear, for instance, for baby and children's garments, table and bed linen, lingerie and night wear, formal men's wear, blinds and curtains. In addition, it is unfortunate that no one has fully explored the huge variety of traditional Indian fabrics on which chikan can be applied. SEWA Lucknow and Dastkar pioneered the use of *kota*, tussore silk and organza, and many designers now use these materials, as well as georgette and crepe, in addition to the traditional muslin and voile. India is a treasure house of fabulous handloom weaves that could enhance and add new dimensions to this age-old yet extraordinarily versatile craft.

There is also a huge scope for innovation in the designs and motifs used in chikan embroidery. Beautiful as they are, the old floral *jals*, paisleys and *butis* have become rather stereotypical, and the craft could do with an injection of new design.

Styling, finish and presentation are also becoming increasingly important to today's quality-conscious and trendy consumer, who has many more shopping options than were available twenty years ago. NGOs must professionalize themselves if they want to maintain their place in the market. People no longer buy out of compassion.

Both chikan and SEWA Lucknow need to reinvent themselves if they are to successfully survive another twenty years.

– Laila Tyabji

3.4 NGO DESIGN INTERVENTION IN THE REVIVAL OF A LANGUISHING CRAFT

3.4.1 The Embroidered Art of the Chamba Rumal

- **Location:** Chamba, Himachal Pradesh
- **Duration:** Began in 1995, and is continuing
- **Sponsors:** Delhi Crafts Council (DCC)[13]
- **Project Coordinators:** Usha Bhagat, Purnima Rai and Manjari Nirula of Delhi Crafts Council

13 The Delhi Crafts Council (DCC), is affiliated to the Crafts Council of India. Its concerns include securing better livelihood for artisans and preserving and promoting their craft skills.

Embroidered art

■ Background

The embroidered art of the Chamba *rumal* emerged in the princely hill states of Chamba, Basoli, Kangra and adjacent areas in present-day Himachal Pradesh. Though practised throughout the region, it came to be associated with Chamba because of the continued patronage by its rulers, and because the style and colours of the *rumal* were influenced by the miniature painting tradition of Chamba. The *rumal* is the image of the painting in embroidery.

It is apparent from the *rumals*, which have existed since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that the drawings were made by miniature-painting artists and embroidered by women of the nobility, who had developed a high level of sophistication and stylization. The themes of the *rumal* were mainly religious, with special favour given to the *raasmandal* and scenes from the life of Krishna. The fabric was usually hand-spun or handwoven unbleached *mulmul* or fine khaddar. The embroidery was done in a double satin stitch using untwisted pure silk yarn. The *rumals* were used as covers for offerings made at weddings, festivals and religious occasions.

Chamba *rumals* were being made until the early twentieth century, but had suffered with the decline of the feudal system of patronage. The original designs and colours were lost; the *rumals* were being embroidered on low-grade fabric with chemically dyed threads. The embroidery was of poor quality. Indeed, the craft had degenerated to the level of calendar art.

■ Objectives of the Project

1. To revive the art form by attempting to recreate the quality and finesse of the originals by replicating the *rumals* housed in various museum collections.
2. To launch a sustained revival programme, which would include the training of craftswomen and a sustained marketing effort.

Phase 1

Several visits were made by DCC to Chamba to study the work currently being done, to acquaint the members with the area and to develop a working relationship with the embroiderers. On surveying the existing situation, DCC identified both the drawbacks and the positive aspects of the *rumals* being embroidered at that time:

- The base cloth used was mill-made polyester, not the original *mulmul* or fine handwoven fabric used traditionally. This fabric with its machine-finished sheen did not add value to the embroidered piece, unlike the handwoven fabric that provided a pleasing dimension.
- The embroidery thread required was untwisted floss silk. Due to its unavailability, the embroiderers were using twisted yarn after untwisting it. This practice produced an unattractive effect.
- The yarn colours used were garish and lacked balance and harmony.
- The *rumals*, no longer inspired by the original patterns, were cruder in their design and execution, having lost their unique connection to the tradition of Chamba miniature painting.
- On the positive side, the women had not lost their skill of specialized Chamba embroidery, and the artists continued to draw the patterns.

Embroidery continued to be a popular pastime for the women, who now were selling

specimens made on ordinary items like pillowcases, etc.

Phase 2

Sixteen designs from various museums, including the National Museum, New Delhi, the Buri Singh Museum, Chamba, the Indian Museum, Kolkata, the Crafts Museum, New Delhi and the Victoria & Albert Museum, London were identified and photographed.

The next step was to source the material used to make the *rumals*. This was traditionally difficult to do because with the passage of time machine-made materials had replaced handmade materials. A close substitute—handwoven fabric/khadi as the base cloth—was selected.

The local markets were scoured for the embroidery yarn. Attempts to source naturally dyed, untwisted floss silk yarn proved futile. An alternative to the untwisted but synthetic yarn dyed in a wide range of colours was eventually found in a local market in New Delhi.

After the patterns, the fabric and the yarn were finalized, a few women embroiderers and an artist specializing in miniature painting in Chamba were chosen to execute the *rumals*.

Due to the distance, absence of communication facilities between Chamba and Delhi and initial teething problems, the pace of work was slow. However, eventually the concept, the quality standards required and the level of excellence expected from the embroiderers and the artist were achieved, and over a period of three to four years, sixteen *rumals* were produced.

Phase 3

In 1999, DCC organized an exhibition of the *rumals* at the Crafts Museum, New Delhi. The revived *rumals* were received with universal acclaim from visitors and critics alike. The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue and an in-depth discussion on the future of the *rumals* and plans for the next phase. It was unanimously agreed to maintain the high museum-quality standards of the *rumal* rather than popularize and cheapen it, to promote the *rumal* as a work of art, to accept orders and to monitor both production and quality.

Phase 4

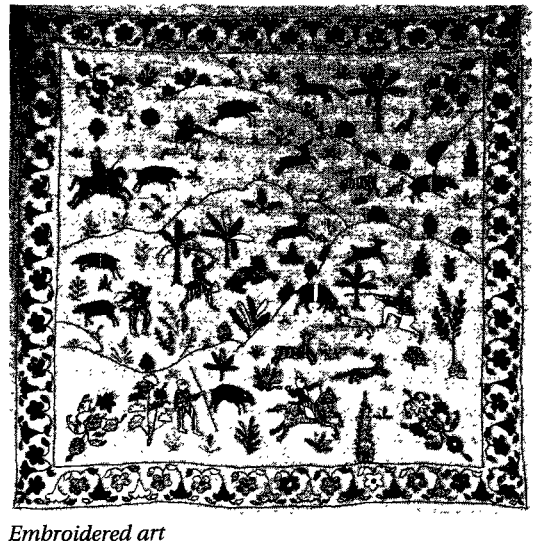
DCC decided to take orders on the created pieces. They are expensive, and it takes as long as two to four months to make one piece.

The *rumals* have been exhibited in important cities like Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Ahmedabad and others during 2003 and 2004. An important breakthrough came in Mumbai where an order of twenty *rumals* was placed for a museum in Surat. Following this demand, DCC established a centre in Chamba. They rented a room and hired a person to oversee the work of the embroiderers, who also initially trained other young girls. The trainees were given a stipend and the embroiderers were paid for their work by DCC.

The centre is still in the process of evolving, and efforts are being made to involve the local people to take an interest and participate in helping it grow.

■ Future Plans

DCC is re-examining their marketing strategy to identify new markets and new methods of distribution for the *rumals*. They plan to organize exhibitions outside the country as well as promote the artistic, social, and cultural worth of the exclusive art of Chamba *rumal* embroidery.



Embroidered art

3.5 INTERACTION BETWEEN DESIGN STUDENTS AND ARTISANS FOR DESIGN AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND LONG-TERM DESIGN REFLECTION

3.5.1 Stone Craft Artisans' Workshop

This workshop was designed with the aim of helping develop a plan of what Srishti could offer to the artisans on a long-term basis.

- **Duration**: Ten days
- **Experts**: Regional Design and Technical Development Centre (RDTDC), Bangalore; Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), New Delhi.
- **Location:** Srishti,[14] Bangalore, Karnataka
- **Participants:** Twelve stone artisans from all over south India
- **Project Leader:** Poonam Bir Kasturi, Head, Srishti

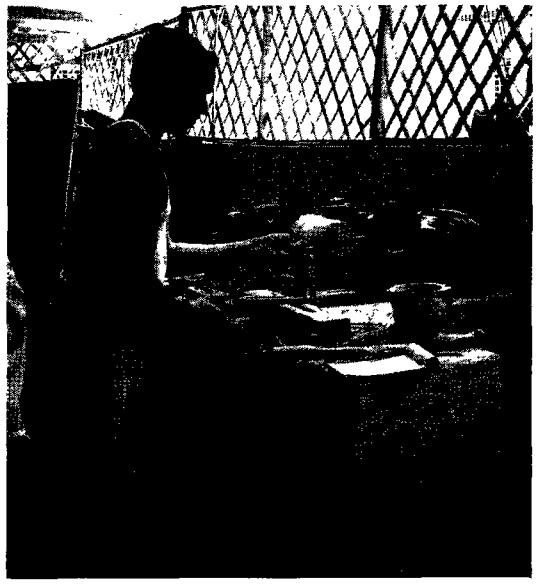
■ **Objectives**

Long term

- To encourage artisans to engage with design in order to equip them with the skill and understanding that they would use and build on progressively.
- To reach a shared understanding between artisans and designers; to encourage a two-way learning process along with the spirit of cooperation.
- To encourage capacity building by mapping the problems that block the artisans' growth.

Short term

- To generate and execute a minimum of twenty new designs (the designer was to have these ready before the commencement of the workshop).
- To develop utilitarian designs geared for new markets.



Artisan learning how to turn a stone on a lathe

■ **Outline of Activities**

Before the workshop actually began, the designer involved some design students and formulated the structure of the workshop:

The workshop had the following components, which the team felt would help achieve the objectives outlined above:

- Discussions between facilitators and artisans on design ideas and terminology.
- Exercises to develop the skill of 'looking' in a different way.
- Visits to shops and showrooms to observe what is currently available.
- Observing an urban home and talking to family members about their living habits in order to expose artisans to different lifestyles.
- Exercises to allow artisans to make a connection between the products they design and the lifestyles of the customers they have analysed by visiting their homes and through observation of market trends.
- Study methods of marketing existing products; study their packaging and point-of-purchase aspects.
- Fill out export forms—artisans fear this process as they do not understand it—in

14 Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology is a leading design school based in Bangalore, Karnataka.

. . . best practices need to be introduced in the crafts sector. No longer can the people responsible for training be oblivious of industry and corporate tools and methodologies. No longer can we ignore adult pedagogy.

– Poonam Bir Kasturi

order to help demystify them and enable artisans to decide if they individually wanted to pursue the export market.

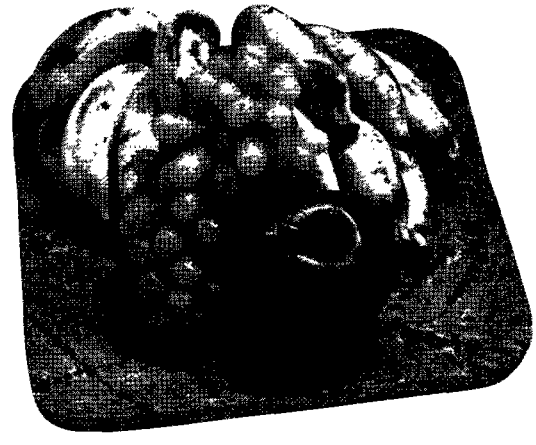
■ Activities

Day 1

- *Ice-breaker*: The artisans drew the things that they liked and didn't like on small pieces of paper. This served to introduce each artisan, who then stood up and talked about himself through the pictogram he had drawn. It also gave the facilitator an opportunity to draw out the artisans' ideas and expectations from the workshop, and what they meant by the words craft, money and work. These ideas were captured on a board through a mind map.
- *Analysis*: The RTDC design centre had set up a display of products geared for the urban market. The artisans analysed these products along with the facilitator. As most of the artisans were new to the idea of 'functional products' (they were trained in the making of religious figures or realistic sculptures), they began by questioning the need to make a new kind of product. *'Why should I carve a salt container when people can use a cheaper plastic product?' 'Why should I think of making ten such products when I can earn the same amount by carving a single idol for the same amount?' 'I need to invest in more stone initially to make these kinds of objects. Should I do that?'* This kind of analysis is an important cognitive skill; the artisans could then engage with the idea of 'function' and discuss how it related to market and cost considerations as well as to customer expectations.
- *Adding value*: At the end of the day, the artisans were invited to state what they wanted to learn specifically related to a skill during the workshop. They decided that they needed more exposure in the area of 'stone turning'. The RTDC Centre's master craftsperson in stone turning was the teacher. This created a sense of ownership and collaboration between all the stakeholders.

Day 2–10

- *Discussions*: Discussions were encouraged throughout the ten days. Enthusiastic participation demonstrated that learning happens when stereotypes are challenged. Discussions covered the issues of form, function, market, tradition, the role of the artisan in society, success, values, etc.
- *Material analysis*: Detailed discussions took place on the properties of stone, on its sizes and proportions, its manufacturing capabilities, its geological attributes, etc.
- *Collaboration*: The group cooperated, discussed, drew, analysed and made products. They learned from each other and drew inspiration from the resource materials that was provided to them. (These included magazines, design catalogues, books on form theory and images from temples, and textiles and products from different cultures.)
- *Skill upgradation*: Each artisan learned to turn stone on the lathe. Most of them had never done such turning before.
- *Specific inputs*: An informative talk entitled 'How to Export Stone Craft' was held.
- *Concepts learned*: Artisans gradually saw that different products could be created by understanding the context and the user's needs. This idea was reinforced by viewing a film on the methodology of the design process.



A product designed by an artisan for contemporary use

- *Consolidation and reflection*: At the end, each product made was analysed; the comments and learning were put together in a document, which then became a ready reckoner for each participant as well as a reference work of each other's work and ideas. It also serves as a record and remembrance of the time that the artisans spent together.

■ **Display**

The workshop ended with a display of all the products made and a detailed analysis session during which design issues were discussed threadbare.

The artisans' thoughts and discussions were wide ranging.

- 'Is my form and proportion well done? Should I try alternatives in clay to get the perfect piece?'
- 'Have I wasted raw material in any of these products? What do I need to keep in mind while sizing these for mass production?'
- 'Can I work on developing a range and making samples so that I can understand what a family of products means?'
- 'I now know how to assemble different turned parts. Can I use this skill to make new forms?'
- 'Do I also need to make tags explaining the effect of stone on food so that the customer gets a better idea of the use of this material?'
- 'Will I continue to enjoy making such products later on, after this workshop is over?'

■ **The facilitator's reflections:**

'It is frustrating to see the government not follow up such an effort with the same set of artisans over time. Doing only one such workshop, which endeavours to build capacity in thinking, creativity and problem solving, is meaningless. To truly analyse if such an effort is useful, it is important to monitor the progress of artisans with appropriate inputs over a period of time.'

3.5.2 Continuing Education Workshop

- **Location**: Srishti, Bangalore, Karnataka
- **Duration**: Six days
- **Project Leader**: Poonam Bir Kasturi, Faculty Head and Academic Adviser
- **Participants**: Sixteen potters from different communities in and around Bangalore, two design students and two facilitators

■ **Objectives**

Short term

- Attempt to make design exercises holistic and not merely product oriented.
- Attempt to introduce the basic principles of problem solving.

Long term

- The learning from the workshop will help evolve a format for a sustained interaction with this community, leading to the setting up of a school of design. We strongly feel that continuing education for artisans is the best way of building their capacities and helping them make informed decisions about their own life and work.

■ **Methodology and Inputs**

- *Pre-workshop task*: As a preliminary step, the artisan participants were sent sketchbooks before the workshop began. They were asked to experiment by drawing objects that they had observed in their immediate environment. This drawing exercise formed the basis for initiating discussions and became a take-off point for the workshop.

Day 1:

- **Drawing and measurement:** The discussion on the drawings made by the artisans led to the realization of '*drawing as a tool of communication to achieve a purpose*'. The ideas explored included production, manufacturing and advertising, and the use of these elements as tools. Con-

The workshop taught me again that adults like learning in context. Craftspeople need inputs in market readiness, export procedures and technology, but they also need to reflect on their roles, their aspirations and their sense of purpose. They respond proactively to lessons in creativity and design thinking. The country's craft sector cannot be denied these skills and attitudes.

The questions that are scattered on this page were actually tested during this workshop, and I personally think that we need a change in the way training is imparted to craftspeople.

– Poonam Bir Kasturi

This workshop was not a traditional terracotta workshop, where participants would begin to work with materials directly. It was planned as a learning-training module, with discussions about context and work and how to find creative solutions to problems.

One of the potters brought along his wife. Since wives are often partners at work, it was felt that they, too, should be included in future interactions.

A few cameras were distributed to the artisans with the aim of encouraging them to record and photograph their workspaces for the next day's discussion.

Each day began with an exchange of reflections on the previous day's thoughts, ideas, discussions and concepts. 'Homework', whether drawn or photographed, was also discussed.

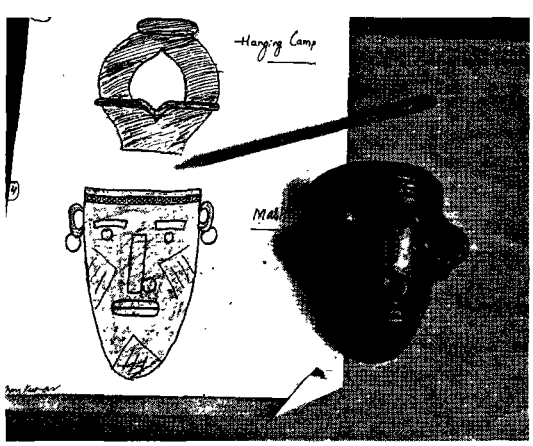
'Homework' consisted of sticking pictures of packaging, pamphlets and textures that the artisan liked on to paper.

'Visual aids outlining methods for the Indian context are not available. As designers we need to think of this area as a space to which we can contribute.'

– Poonam Bir Kasturi

comitant and intrinsic skills of measurement, visualization and labelling were also explored and discussed.

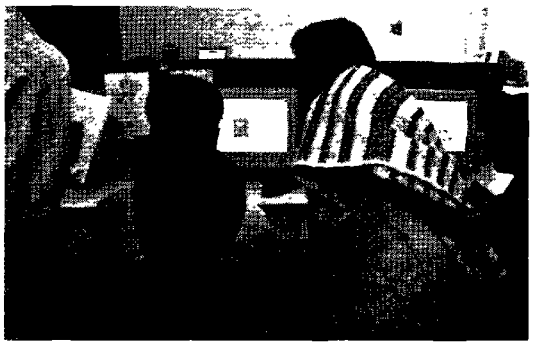
- **Timeline of work:** The exercise of 'timeline of work' was used to get the participants to identify what they felt were the benefits and problems of different professions. From this point, they arrived at the underlying universal principles of quality, value, occupational hazards, independence, scale, motivation and ability to handle change.
- **Practicality:** A small mathematical exercise revealed that artisans were pragmatic and naturally cost conscious. This was an insight for the design students. The problem given to the artisans was: If you had an order that meant you had to deliver 1,128 pots, and you could only fit 36 pots in one auto (a low-cost three-wheeled Indian vehicle), then how many autos would you need? The solutions were brilliant, and reflected the artisans' close understanding of the real world of commerce.
- **Tackling resistance to change:** Exercises aimed at demonstrating that it is only human nature to resist change, or to think outside the box, were held. Habits that allow one to face change and think differently need to be gradually inculcated in individuals and worked on. As the literal response comes more easily to most of us, and is often not questioned, it is important to *become aware of our tendency to close up when new or seemingly threatening ideas are encountered.* This realization is a step forward.



A product made to the specifications of a drawing done by the same artisan

Day 2:

- **Introduction to computers**: After a brief demonstration of a computer and its working, the artisans began with the first click of the mouse. There were only two artisans in the group who had worked with computers before; the others had never ventured near one. This was an exciting, challenging and awesome experience for them. But they all quickly understood the basic fundamentals of computer use, and were soon surfing the Internet, visiting sites on terracotta and understanding the use of search engines.
- **Business models**: Breaking up into three groups with a facilitator, the artisans had to analyse five case studies of terracotta business models. Assisted by the facilitator, they used the Internet and identified the components of each business model. This included the logo, business model, turnover, product range (existing and planned), marketing strategy, website, virtual businesses, new opportunities, rates, quality standards, etc. Based on the information obtained, each group then generated a matrix for comparison among the different case studies. This served a dual objective: *to learn to analyse, and to use a matrix as a tool for decision making and observation.*
- **Skit**: The members of one group communicated their ideas through the novel method of enacting a skit to reiterate the message that 'change is happening, but resistance to change is something to be aware of'.
- **Future scenarios**: An exercise in creating a visual scenario helped the participants articulate where they hoped to be in the future. This was then shown to a partner for interpretation. In this manner, communication skills were honed, since the partner very often needed clarification, or read a different meaning into the scenario.



Artisan surfing the Internet to see the other sites of terracotta products

Day 3:

- **From the broad to the specific:** Each participant had a wall space to display his or her handiwork. This visually rich representation of ideas led to discussions with each other and reflection for themselves. Individual artisans outlined the issues and problems that concerned them in this space. **Ramkrishnappa, a terracotta artisan, observed, 'I don't know how to go forward in making new products.'** This led to interaction with others in the group who faced similar or other problems. Some of the critical issues that emerged were: One of the groups felt that they lacked exposure to thinking about new ways of doing things or creating products. In spite of new people always coming to the unit and having access to books, they felt that they did not have the language or the methods to use all this input.

> Unless exposure, inputs and information are available to learners in an active and accessible way, it is of no use. Learners need to be enabled with tools, methods and skills to mediate this knowledge before it can become theirs. Merely assuming that customers giving feedback at craft bazaars to craftspeople will enable them to improve their products is naive. Very often customers cannot articulate the nuances that are necessary for robust growth in a product. They can only identify the features that are insufficient.
>
> – Poonam Bir Kasturi

Day 4:

- **Exposure:** An American film on how new products are designed was shown. The connections between ideas and the process followed for creating a product were discussed.
- **Tools learned:** An exercise on **how to make and sell a product through creating a mind map** was performed. The group identified and connected the different elements that went into this process. Product attributes were discussed with visual and real examples involving terms like form, texture, shape, pattern, decoration and design. A chair was brought in as an example to aid discussion.
- **Design process:** The notion that the **design process involved decision making combined with creative thinking** was reinforced. An exercise in drawing and measuring was conducted. The artisans were taught standard orthographic drawing terms—how to show diameter measure, height, etc. Details like size, scale and proportion were discussed and measuring standards were taught. What is true length? What is height? How and why do you represent these measurements on paper? This was followed by an exercise in making a product from another participant's drawing. They were not allowed to ask questions once the drawing was given to them; if the drawing had insufficient information, they had to assume a dimension or other relevant detail and make the product according to their best interpretation of the design. The artisans developed the drawings into products. In most cases, the interpretation of the design coincided with the way that it had originally been visualized by the artisan.
- **Homework:** As homework, the artisans were assigned drawing and measuring exercises. They also had to build a terracotta product that was musical.

Day 5:

- **The user:** The next exercise attempted to make the artisan understand the **concept of the user**. Who is the user? How do you understand the user and the user's needs? What are the steps involved in this task?
- **Task analysis:** The artisans come from a culture of multi-purpose use; in response to changing times and shifting consumer needs, they have to realign their way of thinking and modify their skills to make

Two participants crafted a bell in terracotta. The thought process behind this creative endeavour was analysed and was linked to the process of design thinking.

It was apparent from their approach that there is a real need to create some kind of text for use by the artisans.

– Poonam Bir Kasturi

On the fifth day of the workshop, a 'word of mouth' artisan joined the group.

This was the best measure of whether the workshop meets the expectations and the needs of the partici-pants.

– Poonam Bir Kasturi

specific products for specific uses. The discussion led to the ideas of task analysis, prototypes, observation and research, seeking out new materials, looking at specifics and defining a brief. The need for **task analysis** and the ways of looking at the user were tackled and given a visual form in the shape of a flow chart. Discussions helped all participants to gain active insights into how important this tool is for design thinking. This was the first time that they had to reflect in detail on all aspects that they ordinarily take for granted. They made the connection between tasks and thinking about new products, or about improving old products and services, where earlier they had not anticipated the nuanced effects of an action.

Day 6:

- **Design problem:** As an exercise in creative thinking, the ideation and process for creating products for bathing were discussed. The first step was a simulation of the bathing process using the traditional terracotta product, the scrubber. Drawings were made; connections to ideas and concepts that had been worked on during the course of the workshop were thought about and discussed.
- **Individual feedback:** Each participant's work during the workshop and the work done at home were discussed during a one-to-one session, and feedback was given and received.
- **Continuity:** To ensure that both thinking and learning on the issues that had been so intensively worked on during the six-day workshop continued, work was assigned to the artisans to do at home. This had to be posted back to the project leader within a week.

Learning for the future

We need to find ways of creating an organic and flexible network of resource people who would start addressing the issues systematically. The results of the workshop showed that we need to have a follow-up of at least three sessions per year with the same group. A rough plan of a continuing education programme emerged.

–Poonam Bir Kasturi

3.5.3 Sri Kalahasti Woodcarvers

- **Location:** Sri Kalahasti, Andhra Pradesh
- **Duration:** Fifteen days
- **Participants:** Fifteen artisans, seventeen students and three faculty members
- **Project Leader:** Poonam Bir Kasturi
- **Sponsor:** Regional Design and Technical Development Centre, Bangalore, Karnataka

■ Background

Sri Kalahasti is a temple town in Andhra Pradesh, where a rich and vibrant culture has supported the famous textile craft of kalamkari and woodwork for many years. The woodcraft of this area was once famous for its intricate workmanship and finish. Even today, many artisans are engaged in this craft. According to a Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) office estimate, at least 10,000 people are engaged in this activity in and around Sri Kalahasti.

■ Objectives

- To develop a range of products and new designs in conjunction with traditional woodcarving artisans.

An artisan working on a product during the workshop

- To build into the process of design development new ways of learning in the areas of creative thinking, problem solving, reflecting, and planning.

■ Methodology / Inputs

Pre-workshop task:

- Before the start of the workshop, the design students sought to understand the artisans' traditional work by undertaking a very thorough study of secondary research material in the library. For students who did not speak the same language as the artisans, it was essential to first find common ground to aid communication. This common ground was the fact that both students and artisans were learning about design. The students' goal was to break down the task of understanding design into smaller steps. They created a workbook with many exercises that the artisans could do to widen their understanding of design and design principles.

Phase 1 (Day 1–7):

- The workshop began with an introductory session, during which the participants got to know each other and developed an understanding of the artisan's craft and way of working. The process of establishing and understanding design-related terminology was clarified and emphasized. What the artisans called design was what the students called pattern and pattern making. The students regarded design as a way of thinking and seeing, while the artisans usually perceived it as being analogous to 'motif' or 'pattern'.
- The students learned how the artisans interpreted their work, and also studied their concepts and system of weights and measures. It was noted that, unlike the process followed in a design institute where students first start by drawing lines and objects, the artisans in Sri Kalahasti start with a shape. The students felt that given the artisans' extensive experience and knowledge, it was necessary to find a via media to communicate complex and abstract concepts like line versus shape, etc.

Phase 2 (Day 8–10):

- A two-way learning system between students and artisans was established, with the concepts to be developed shown in different materials. Aspects of three-dimensional and two-dimensional drawings were also explored.

Phase 3 (Day 11–12):

- The project leader demonstrated the process of designing a contemporary chair with the new hardware available.
- A hands-on class in ergonomics explained height and size requirements, with a complete analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the object in question. Size dimensions were also among the topics discussed.

Phase 4 (Day 13–15):

- The artisans crafted products based on the two-way learning process between them and the student designers.
- Consumer feedback was obtained on the finished product.
- An exhibition of the final products was held in Bangalore.
- A film called *15 Days* was made to record the experience and learning gained from this workshop.

The participants spent the evenings during the workshop period performing impromptu skits depicting negotiations between buyer and artisan on product and price, and on dance, food and laughter.

Design students interact with artisans in an intensive and open manner at the workshop

Sushil Jain, a namda entrepreneur from Tonk, observed, 'These new geometric designs with new colour combinations will help me create namdas for the niche market in the country and abroad.'

3.6 INTERACTION BETWEEN DESIGN STUDENTS AND ARTISANS FOR DESIGN AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

3.6.1 Namda / Felted Floor Covering

- **Institute:** Indian Institute of Crafts and Design (IICD),[15] Jaipur, Rajasthan
- **Location**: Tonk, Rajasthan
- **Sponsor**: Office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), New Delhi
- **Year**: 1999–2001
- **Supervisor**: Meenakshi Singh, IICD, Faculty
- **Participants**: Eleven *namda* artisans, students and experts/faculty

■ **Background**

Namdas, felted floor coverings, have traditionally been crafted in Tonk, a village in Rajasthan. A wide range of products are made, the most popular being floor coverings of different sizes, door mats, tablemats, bags, bedroom slippers, wall hangings and magazine holders. A limited variety of floral patterns are repeated in the *namdas*, with the entire cluster of artisans replicating similar patterns. The traditional colours are also limited to specific shades of black, maroon, green and brown.

The problems facing the craft prior to the intervention:

A field survey conducted by the students revealed:

- A deterioration in the quality of the product due to the employment of inferior raw material, which leads to the shedding of the felt fibre during use, and the presence of insect infestation in the *namda*, resulting from the presence of soap residue in the felt that had not been washed out properly.
- Lack of innovation, with constant repetition of patterns and motifs.
- No change in sizes over the years.
- Competition faced from synthetic, low-cost viscose floor coverings. The colour palette was repetitive and limited. The artisans had difficulty in maintaining a consistency in the colour shades due to the dyeing methods that they followed. As no measuring or gauging equipment was used in the dyeing process, they were unable to reproduce the identical colours in repeat orders, or for orders of large volumes. This resulted in the rejection and cancellation of orders.
- *Namda* sales were restricted to the low-end, price-conscious market segment, and the artisans were unable to attract the high-end buyers.
- Market linkages were weak, with sales conducted mainly at exhibitions and fairs.
- These problems were further compounded by the lack of cohesiveness amongst the artisans, who tended to resist any offer of assistance from an outside agency, and hence were unable to generate the quality, quantity and standardization demanded by the export market that they wished to tap.

■ **Objectives**

- Improve the quality of the raw material used in *namda* making.
- Give a new look to an old craft.
- Develop a marketable range of easy-to-produce utilitarian products.
- Link the artisans to new market avenues.
- Improve livelihood.

■ **Design Brief**

- To develop different colour palettes and design concepts in keeping with market requirements.

15 The Indian Institute of Crafts and Design is based in Jaipur, Rajasthan.

- To introduce product diversification.
- To improve the quality of the basic raw material and craftsmanship.
- To ensure better results with technical improvements in the dyeing and production processes.
- To make the process less labour intensive.
- To develop market linkages for ensuring constant work for the artisans and a healthy growth for the craft.

■ Methodology

Phase 1

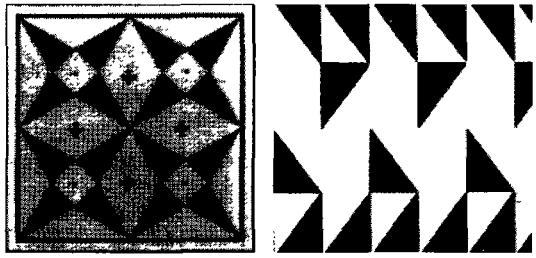
In the first stage, the design students conducted a *field study and undertook market research.* The designers visited the artisans' cluster and interested them in the project and its objectives. The artisans showed interest as they felt that this intervention would give them more designs and introduce a welcome change in their products, breaking the monotony of over-repeated and limited designs.

In the next stage, the students interacted with well-known buyers and exporters in Jaipur, Rajasthan and New Delhi to understand the market requirements. The feedback received emphasized the need for innovation in design and colours according to international forecasts and the necessity of looking carefully at the finer aspects of production and quality at every stage.

Phase 2

A brainstorming session generated a multiple-level *concept keeping the needs of both the local and the export markets in mind.* Designs were produced in all possible colour variations. Design drawings and graphs with exact dimensions, proportions and measurements were made. Based on the feedback received, the designs for the export market were more abstract while the designs for the local market were floral in character.

While planning the designs, care was taken that they should not be overly labour intensive, since the existing designs were found to be heavily over-embellished and required long production schedules to complete.



New developments

A *product range was developed consisting of a mix of traditional and non-traditional items,* including floor coverings in various sizes, floor cushions, wall hangings, tea-cosy sets, table mats, oven gloves and bedroom slippers.

Those patterns taken from the oft-repeated floral and over-decorated repertoire were pared down to suit contemporary tastes and lifestyles, and yet maintained their links to the existing design tradition. Geometric patterns were introduced. Overall, the designs introduced suited contemporary aesthetics and were less labour intensive than the earlier patterns.

Phase 3

This stage involved *upgrading of quality,* with an emphasis on dyeing techniques. A two-day workshop on interactive dyeing techniques employing permanent metal-complex dyes and chrome dyes, which were considered more suitable for both the raw material and the end product, was held in Tonk, with professional and technical experts in attendence, B.B. Paul of the Weavers' Service Centre along with his technical team worked on producing better dyeing techniques in Tonk. Demonstrations were held to show the precise measurements and timings required for every shade of colour. A new technique—of resist dyeing and tie and dye on *namda*—was demonstrated.

The artisans were introduced to the use of shade cards for identifying colour references.

Phase 4

With a view to creating direct market link-

ages, an interactive meeting was held with artisans, buyers and traders to discuss problems relating to design, quality and marketing. Discussions were held on the procurement of good quality raw material and the setting up of a common dyeing facility. The designs developed were showcased for comments and orders.

3.6.2 Mojari / Ethnic Footwear Project

- **Location**: Udaipuria, Rajasthan
- **Year**: 1999–2000
- **Sponsor**: UNDP[16]–NLDP[17] and Rural Non-Farm Development Agency (RUDA),[18] Jaipur
- **Guide**: Rajeev Mathur, IICD, Faculty

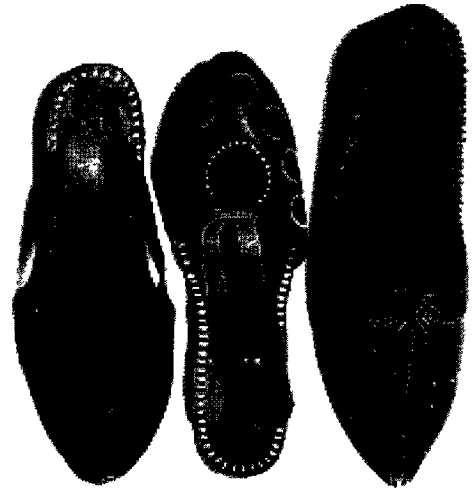
■ Background

Mojari is a traditional footwear of embellished leather popular in Rajasthan, employing a unique construction technique. Many artisans in different craft pockets in Rajasthan practise this craft. The sponsors felt that the time was ripe for this footwear to receive contemporary design inputs in order to transform it into a fashion accessory, which it once was. The village of Udaipuria was chosen for this project as it is home to around 500 Raigar[19] families, who practise this traditional craft.

■ 'Operation Mojari'

The Existing Situation

- *Mojari* making is a traditional and hereditary craft.
- The entire family contributes its skills, with the women doing the surface embellishment.
- Vegetable-tanned leather and other raw materials are purchased from Jaipur city, Agra in Uttar Pradesh and New Delhi.
- The main market is in rural areas, where *mojaris* are sold in local *haats* and weekly markets.
- *Mojaris* do not have an urban market, since the hard soles lead to shoe bites and difficulty in walking.



New Developments

■ Objectives

- Widen the market for *mojaris* to include urban consumers.
- Create designs and finishes suitable for the urban market.

■ Methodology

Phase 1

The designs were worked out on locally available vegetable-tanned leather, a material with which the artisans are entirely familiar and which has the added advantage of having excellent thermal insulation. The designs were created in such a manner that they could also be translated on to chrome-tanned leather, which is softer.

The bonding of the upper portion of the footwear with the sole was done with cotton thread, which further strengthened the product.

The following inputs were given to the artisans:

16 UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
17 NLDP – National Leather Development Programme
18 RUDA – A Rajasthan government society that adopts a focused approach to various non-farm sectors.
19 Raigar – A community engaged in working with leather.

1. Need to conform to patterns to ensure more accuracy and increased comfort.
2. Need to adopt contemporary styles and designs that dovetail with the existing skills.
3. Need to adopt appropriate mechanization for the processes of stitching and finishing.
4. Need to use alternative materials.
5. Need to understand the concept of packaging for the urban market.
6. Need to adopt standardized sizes through providing polymer lasts with standardized sizing and fitting conventions.
7. Need to initiate and establish linkages with markets.

The designs were divided into different groups:

1. Appliqué designs cut out of differently coloured leather strips and sewn on either manually or by machines, which were further enhanced by other design features like embroidery, punches, weaves, etc.
2. The shoe upper was embroidered by women artisans, either directly on the leather or on textile, in both natural and synthetic yarn. Traditional motifs were added to contemporary patterns in earthy and pastel shades.
3. The design intervention attempted a blending of the two leading handicrafts of Rajasthan—jewellery and leather—by embroidering stones on to the shoe upper.
4. Shoe designs aimed at a fusion of traditional skills and contemporary fashion, with open-toed back-open sandals, mules and lace-ups.
5. There were two categories of designs: one, with different materials laid under the punches for enhancing the design pattern; and two, those that simply used the punches as a cutwork.
6. Manually cut designs with different materials as the underlay in contrasting colours.
7. Stencilling of motifs, with the dyes being mostly vegetable.
8. Using differently coloured leather pieces/ strips for creating woven patterns on the upper.

Phase 2

Phase 1 ended in August 1999. It was followed by Phase 2, during which the product was produced and marketed successfully in the urban market.

The artisans received orders, which led them to hire outside workers to meet the additional demand. The improved product, and the price asked for it, has in turn improved the financial condition of the artisans. They now participate in fairs all over the country and are developing linkages with wholesalers.

■ On Reflection

- The success of 'Operation Mojari' may be attributed equally to design inputs supplemented by technical changes.
- The designers took the raw material already in use and added elements that could be easily accessed and sourced by the artisans.
- The use of sewing machines, which were distributed by RUDA, found easy acceptance. The artisans adopted the technical changes suggested, and adapted their work practices accordingly. This resulted in improvements in both quality and fin-

New developments

Bhagirath Prasad Saunkaria, a mojari artisan, said, 'I now have a larger and changed market, and because of the design intervention my mojaris are selling in the upmarket stores of Delhi and other cities.'

ish, and led to shorter production schedules.

- The discomfort of wearing the tough and long-lasting *mojaris* was overcome through improved finishing.
- The new *mojaris* were brought into conformity with the internationally accepted sizing convention through the single most important technical input comprising plastic shoe moulds (lasts).
- The standardization of sizes improved the artisans' ability to service distant markets.
- An understanding of design methodology and an ability to transform drawings into products helped expand the artisans' ability to induct changes into their work practices.

3.6.3 Tarkashi / Metal-wire Inlay on Wood

- **Location**: Jaipur, Rajasthan
- **Year**: 2002–03
- **Period**: One month
- **Sponsor**: Office of Development Commissioner (Handicraft), Government of India, New Delhi
- **Supervisor**: Shipra Roy, IICD, Faculty

■ Background

The traditional crafts of *tarkashi* and *pachhikari*, once patronized by royalty, continue to be practised in craft clusters located in areas like Mainpuri and Chinniot in Uttar Pradesh, and Aurangabad and Ratnagiri districts in Maharashtra, among others.

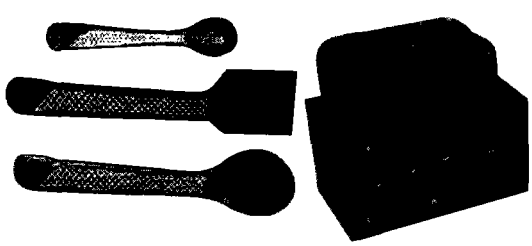
In *tarkashi*, artisans incise fine lines on a predrawn design on a wood surface. Thin brass and copper wires cut from sheets are laid into the grooves in geometric patterns and floral motifs. A bolder version of the same technique using metal-sheet inlay is called *pachhikari*. The metal sheets and wires are inlaid in an extremely intricate manner, seeming almost to have been embroidered on to the surface of the wood. The products thus crafted include miniature chariots, wooden footwear, doors and windows, jewellery boxes, etc.

Tarkashi, though an ancient craft, is not native to Rajasthan; the artisans who practise it had migrated to Jaipur from Mainpuri in Uttar Pradesh. In 1962, the All India Handicrafts Board, in an effort to further develop the craft, initiated a training programme that was run by a Master Craftsman. *Since 1962, the number of artisan families has increased from five to fifteen. Now there are four families in Jaipur that currently practise this craft.*

■ Problems

The initial survey of the craft revealed that the artisans faced the following problems:

- A declining market and low sales, as marketing outlets were limited; sales were mainly through exhibitions and fairs, or through local traders. All products were routed through middlemen. The relatively high price—because of the elaborate nature of the inlay work—also led to low sales.
- Lack of innovation in design and product development, with all the artisans producing similar designs. In form, function and shape, the products were similar to those crafted twenty years ago.
- The products had low structural strength. There was a deterioration in the quality of the wood because the process of seasoning, which took place in the home of the artisan, was being cut short.
- The handling of large orders was difficult as most artisans worked on their own, and hence were unable to obtain the support required.
- No attention was paid to the packaging.



New developments

Vishnu Kumar Jangid, a well-known artisan of tarkashi, said, 'These new contemporary and utility-based products will help me increase my livelihood and will prove a boon to this craft.'

■ Methodology

1. The designer communicated to the artisans the need for raising quality standards, especially by seasoning the wood correctly, an expertise that the artisans possessed but did not practise.
2. A new product range was developed and the exact dimensions were communicated to the artisans for a better understanding of quality issues. The new *tarkashi* products introduced included spoons, paperweights of three types, pen stands, wall racks, paper knives, candle stands, napkin rings, photo frames and visiting card holders.
3. Different patterns and motifs inspired by the traditional look were introduced.

3.6.4 Utilitarian Products in Blue Pottery

- **Location**: Jaipur, Rajasthan
- **Year**: 2003–04
- **Duration:** Six months
- **Sponsor:** Rural Non-Farm Development Agency (RUDA), Jaipur, Rajasthan
- **Guide:** Rajesh Jain, IICD, Faculty
- **Students:** Amit Gehlot (Technology Intervention) and Mitra Singh (Design Development)

■ Background

Among the many craft traditions brought to India by the Mughals, the technique of blue ceramic glazing has evolved over time and continues even today in many product variations. Innovations over the years have led to the designing and production of utilitarian and decorative products using similar yet adapted techniques. The development and evolution of blue pottery—its form, colour and decoration—was directly influenced by Persian traditional art; this influence is seen in drinking cups, water jugs, jars, bowls, plates and dishes of all shapes and sizes. The traditional colour palette was restricted to blue, light blue and green; the traditional ornamentation employed the universally found knot-and-flower patterns.

■ The Problems Facing the Craft

The initial survey revealed that:

The absence of new designs and products had led to stagnation in demand. The new lead-free blue pottery developed under the technical intervention of the Central Glass and Ceramic Research Institute (CGCRI) and RUDA gave a new dimension to product diversification.

- Quartz powder, a key raw material, contains iron; the presence of iron particles resulted in a spotted effect on the surface of the product after firing, thus ruining many pieces.
- The moulding skills of the artisans were poor, resulting in inexact and out-of-shape moulds.

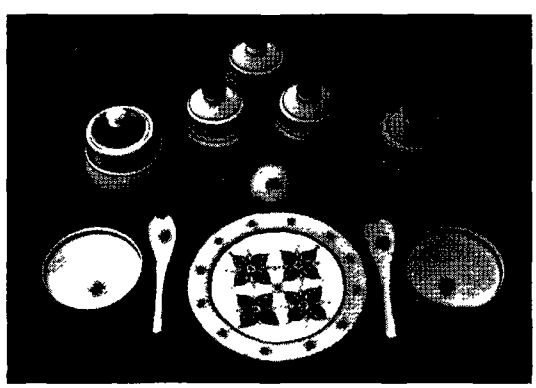
Objectives

- To explore new product forms that are not currently included in the existing range of blue pottery.
- To develop new iron-free production techniques.
- To design products for the domestic and export markets.

■ Methodology

Phase 1

- An extensive market survey was conducted for studing trends, colour choices and buyer behaviour.



New developments

'Staying in the village with the artisans and their families, with power cuts of many hours and no supply of water, gave me an exposure to the tough life of rural people. Working with the artisans was not easy. However, I would enjoy working with them again due to their caring, warm and friendly nature. The project added a new dimension to my knowledge base and exposed me to the village lifestyle.'

– Amit Gehlot

- Stores already marketing blue pottery in Jaipur, Rajasthan and Delhi were visited to study the demand patterns.
- Visit to Khurja, Uttar Pradesh, a large pottery-producing area, to study the range of products manufactured there; these share certain similarities with blue pottery, and are cheap and sell extremely well in the domestic market.
- Visits to exporters to understand the buyers' brief and product specifications as given by their clients.
- Visit to a ceramic unit to understand the standard sizes and specifications of the pieces in dinner sets and tea sets.
- Research on the Internet to understand dining settings and dining etiquette.
- Books were referred to for the history of this craft and to identify new trends.
- Based on observations, an analysis of colour, style and design trends was carried out.

Phase 2

- A new product range was designed.
- Inspiration for patterns was sought from the history of blue pottery and Mughal architectural and decorative styles.
- The existing moulds, with a few changes, were used to develop the new forms.
- Colours were adapted and their usage extended.
- The products manufactured were costed, priced and made available for marketing.
- Measurement techniques were introduced for the standardization of raw materials.

To eliminate the problem of iron content in the quartz powder, a simple and inexpensive apparatus, which could be made by local blacksmiths, was designed.

Jawaja Rural University

3.7 DEVELOPMENTAL AND LIVELIHOOD MODEL OF INTERACTION: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

3.7.1 Jawaja – The Rural University

National Institute of Design (NID),[20] Ahmedabad and Indian Institute of Management (IIM),[21] Ahmedabad

■ Background

Jawaja is a small village block in Rajasthan, with a population of approximately 80,000 in 1975. It was the first major institutional project that NID undertook in partnership with IIM(A), in August 1975; it was then steeped in age-old customs and its residents followed traditional strictures on caste, occupation, livelihood and gender. Termed the 'Rural University' by Prof. Ravi J. Matthai,[22] Jawaja was an effort to link action groups that would deal directly with rural development and academia. The work was initiated by a group of faculty and students from NID and IIM. Though this project did not start out as an experiment in craft development or in design, craft turned out to be the window of development opportunity, and designers emerged as the most effective and trusted communicators because they could work with their hands.

20 National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad is one of India's leading design institutes.
21 Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, IIM(A), is one of India's leading management institutes.
22 Prof. Ravi John Matthai was Director, IIM, Ahmedabad. He resigned in 1972 to involve himself in a pioneering and innovative experiment in rural education.

Jawaja was basically a space in which we were looking at design for development and not crafts. Crafts, as it happened, became the channel for this exploration because the NID designers and students who went there discovered that, instead of being written off as a place with no potential, there were enormous skills there . . . [The aim was to] find a way to put those skills to some kind of a purpose, which would not only feed people but also empower them—for these were people at the bottom of the social ladder. They were people who then could not—and perhaps still cannot—drink from the village well.

– Ashoke Chatterjee

■ Why Jawaja

Prof. Matthai was eager to test management knowledge and experience away from the corporate sector (which had engaged him and IIM(A) since the years of its founding), at the gut level of problem solving in an Indian context defined by poverty and the need for many people at the margins of society to participate in decisions that affect them. In effect, this was management knowledge for managing self-reliance. The Government of Rajasthan heard about this proposal, and suggested that Prof. Matthai try his experiment in that state. The state authorities suggested various locations. When Prof. Matthai asked about Jawaja block, he was told that no possibilities existed there because the place had no resources. 'Has it got people?' he asked.

Jawaja was selected. It represented a true challenge: communities surviving in an arid land, living in great poverty; facing the problems of caste oppression; hereditary skills that seemed to have no future due to competition and caste strictures; an environment of corruption; and the impact of mass production and new materials, which had made the manufacture of traditional products commercially unviable.

■ Design for Development

For NID, the first challenge was that this was not a 'design' project. It was about development and about people at the survival level. We did not know when we joined whether there would be a design dimension. We entered out of curiosity, out of a felt need to test ourselves in rural India and among the poor. NID decided to join this experiment at Prof. Matthai's invitation. NID had just come through a major crisis, which had led to questioning, both within and outside NID, on whether 'design' as a discipline was really relevant to Indian needs. The first batch of students was about to emerge. NID's radical curriculum (with its rejection of exams and mark-sheets) had upset a lot of apple carts. Ravi had joined these campus discussions. He spoke to us about his plans for Jawaja, about reports that there were communities there that had some craft knowledge. Would NID, like IIM(A), like to test its discipline at this stark level of problem solving, he asked. Among the leather artisans, a caste ban on flaying imposed on raigars was accompanied with the most severe punishments, including expulsion from the community of those who defied the ban. This deprived them of free skins, forcing them to buy in the market where they were cheated routinely. Weavers were limited to a very small product range that could not guarantee a regular income. And that's how an effort at skill and product diversification began.

– Ashoke Chatterjee

The Jawaja project raised the issue of whether the undertaking of an 'action' experiment was a legitimate activity for an academic institution, and therefore whether it was a legitimate use of faculty time and other institutional resources. The arguments put forward by both IIM(A) and NID were the following:

- This project would compete for institutional resources with other, more tradi-

Book Keeping

This was a new approach to design projects, that of trying to use the developmental models based on the community participatory approach rather than the traditional assumption that 'we' know best, and as a consequence rarely look at and for alternatives. Several development agencies had been using this approach for many years in dealing with issues of empowerment. It was tried out at Jawaja in a craft context and then picked up as an approach by other individuals and NGOs over the years. 'The Rural University' experiment at Jawaja inspired NGOs like Utthan in Gujarat and the Tata-Dhan Academy in Madurai. It has become something of a milestone in development thinking and action.

***Replication:** The important point here was that all of us learned quickly that the only thing you can 'replicate' perhaps is the effort at learning. The situation itself could not be replicated. You cannot carbon-copy communities, locations or attitudes. But you can extend the learning, taking the wisdom of experience and applying it to new situations. This was a huge learning, which retains its relevance in a time when donors still look for 'success stories' that can be 'replicated'.*

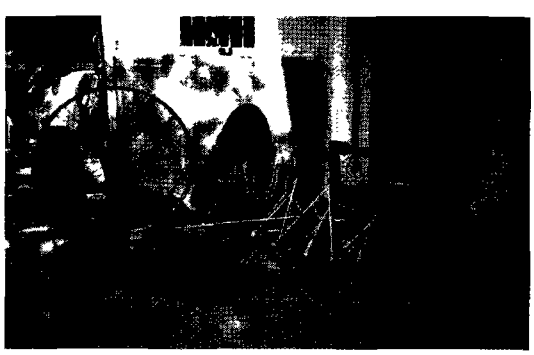
– Ashoke Chatterjee

tionally acceptable forms of academic activities.

- There are many other agencies, both governmental and private, that have been created for action, and have this as their primary objective.
- Academic faculty have not been recruited for their action capabilities, and should not duplicate these efforts and so dissipate limited resources on inappropriate and ineffective operations.
- It was also asserted that the experiences thrown up during such experiments may be restricted to personal experiences, without the methodological rigour required of research and experimentation in their accepted academic sense.

The counter argument was that in both institutions resources were indeed spent on consultancy and research. The difference here was that the 'client'—a village community—could not afford design service. The faculty involved would have to find the opportunity cost worthwhile in academic terms: the learning that students and teachers may (there was no guarantee) derive from the experiment, and the opportunities to take this learning into the classroom.

Premise: The Rural University assumed that the development of rural India would occur not merely through target-oriented plans but also through the development of its people. It was thought that development activities should be the vehicle of learning. 'Development activities without the deep involvement of people are without foundation. Involvement is not susceptible to the imposition of time-bound targets in the way that physical and financial inputs are. People must learn to help themselves, to help others, to help their community, and to help other communities. Self-reliance and mutuality are basic to the idea of the Rural University.' Ravi Matthai (*The Rural University: The Jawaja Experiment in Educational Innovation*, Popular Prakashan, 1985, p. 10) The aim was to make the villagers self-reliant and outside interveners dispensable, gradually but as soon as possible.



Spinning the yarn

1. All activities were to be based on local physical resources.
2. The ideas were to be generated by the villagers themselves, with the experimenters acting as catalysts.
3. The activities were to be decentralized as far as possible, with only some craft processes done at a centralized location.
4. The educational system was to become the supplier of skills.
5. The activities were to be aimed at adding value to the basic local resources, and the added value would be retained by the villagers through their capability and empowerment.
6. The villagers were to learn to become self-reliant and manage these activities themselves.
7. The pattern in one block would not necessarily be reproduced in another, but learning (rather than replication) could be extended.
8. The aim was for the villagers to act as catalysts in spreading the activity to a wider area.
9. In the course of developing new activities, the villagers were to learn the technical, managerial and social aspects of the new activity.
10. A part of the overall endeavour was also to get villagers, teachers, local government officials and the political system working together, and to achieve this goal, attempts were to be made to establish new relationships within and between these groups.

Matthai talks of two processes that had been initiated in the experiment—'replicability' and 'extensibility'.

Replicability implies the reproduction of circumstances by planned efforts on the part of the 'change agents'.

Extensibility implies the development of capabilities of local human resources to develop other human resources; it involves not planning in the sense of replicability, but rather the development of attitudes and the resultant behaviour and action.

The problems to be solved were:

1. How were the artisans to earn a living while they were learning the new skills?
2. Who would pay for the training as well as for the new raw material that was necessary for the new product range?
3. How was the new production to be financed before it was sold?
4. How was the artisan to relate to his products—and understand the needs of the customer—so that quality could be maintained? If this was not possible through direct contact, how was access to market information to be made available that would help the artisan compete effectively?
5. How was the market information to be translated into a product through design and product development?

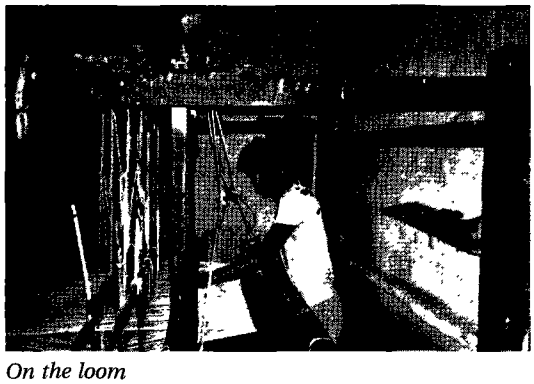
■ The Weavers of Jawaja

Aim: A village was chosen in which to introduce new types of handlooms and new handloom products, to fill the gap left by the defunct handloom cooperative society.

Activities:

1. The Economics: Costing, Pricing, Designing and Marketing

- Learning at the Rural University began with an *economic activity aimed at increasing the earning capacity of low-income groups*. Participants were given information about how to buy yarn and how much stock to keep; the dyeing of both cotton and wool yarn; weaving the new wool and cotton carpets; the economics of raw material mixes; doing their own costing and accounting; setting aside money to repay a bank loan; providing for maintenance and depreciation; learning the value of maintaining the quality of their product; and repairing and assembling their looms. All these topics were tackled gradually.
- In the area of weaving, *until the volume grew substantially and until quality control was more firmly established, the textile designers undertook the marketing of new products*. Methodologies of costing and pricing were discussed at length, giving rise to questions dealing with productivity, quality, supply and demand, economies of scale in marketing, product mix and material mix.
- *Technical expertise was provided by the Weavers' Service Centre* (WSC), Mumbai to the Jawaja artisans through NID connections. WSC helped choose the types of looms to be introduced, supervised their construction locally, helped in their erection, and taught the first few weavers how to assemble the looms. *NID was involved with the entire weaving activity from start to finish, including marketing.* The role of WSC was confined entirely to equipment and production training for specific periods of time; it overlapped with that of NID only in the technical capacity.
- *NID continued with its involvement by designing new products, helping with technical problems* such as dyeing, and being



On the loom

Faculty interacting with weaver

one of the major buyers of products, in addition to offering considerable help in establishing other marketing contacts.

- In a couple of years, the weavers' earnings had improved considerably. All the marketing was being done by NID; from the weavers' point of view, the reassurance that sales were not a problem was a big relief. This gave them a sense of security regarding their income flow.

- They banked on the relative leniency of NID in exercising its quality-control veto and assumed that whatever was produced would, with very rare exceptions, be passed. However, the same defects were found in meeting after meeting. NID decided to be strict about rejections. The weavers tried to bring previously rejected rugs back during another meeting in the hope that these would slip through. Problems arose when the weavers had to take negative decisions against each other. In the early meetings, the first option used was the 'soft' option, which was a nominal cut in the buying price of the product by NID. The 'hard' option of rejection was adopted later when it was seen that the 'soft' option was not working; this meant that the weaver would have to spend time unravelling the rug and weaving it all over again.

- NID insisted on quality standards because Panipat offered major competition in the urban market, and the Jawaja weavers, while asking for higher prices for their products, would be able to retain the market only if the quality of their own products was excellent and uniform. When NID exercised the option of rejection, stocks began to pile up with the weavers, and so did resentment among them. The norm developed that the weavers who judged the quality of a particular rug would not be from the same village in which it had been woven. The attitude of the weaver of the rejected rug was equally important. For some time, the rejections were taken philosophically, mistakes were admitted, and while there was obvious unhappiness, the resentment was not directed at anyone in particular. But it was easy for outside forces to disrupt the unity of group. Ill feeling among the group, fuelled by the local moneylender, resulted in increased competitive feelings as well as blocked working capital for those individuals whose rugs were rejected repeatedly. The weavers' group decided to help members in financial straits by contributing enough materials to get the work going again.

- Product ownership and identity were linked with quality control. When the rug was sold to either NID or to another agency, it ceased to become an individual weaver's rug. It became, as far as the market was concerned, a Jawaja rug. Learning about quality was slow because the weaver did not see the rug after it passed out of his hands and because he could not link market feedback to his individual product.

2. Cooperation and Marketing

- A seminar was held for the weavers where, through games and exercises, it was explained to them that the cohesion of the group depended on its problem-solving capacity, its risk-taking propensities and its ability to take negative decisions. Following this, NID ceased to perform the role of quality-control supervisor and sole marketer. Sales were then slow, and cash inflow became irregular as stocks piled up.

- The products, i.e. floor rugs and bedspreads, catered to an urban market. The

product range was chosen with the aim of breaking the local *traders'* marketing hold over the output of the weavers since the former were not acquainted with these urban markets. *The weavers had to learn to market their products in metropolitan cities, something about which they knew little.*

- NID had agreed to be the sole buyer for all woven products so long as the quantity was within its financial capacity, which as an educational institution was not high. They retailed the products through their Ahmedabad showroom.

- The experiment group, therefore, in its attempt to find outlets in Delhi, Jaipur, Mumbai, or wherever else the rugs could be sold, needed to take the artisans along so that they could begin to learn how to make a sale. **In 1976, the Jawaja Weavers' Association (JWA) was formed for operating a joint bank account for joint marketing and expenditure.** When the order book was satisfactory, the weavers began to disregard the need for quality control. Not only did the quality fall noticeably, but the weavers as a group also colluded in condoning large-scale and serious lapses in quality. It was felt that until JWA took on more responsibility and the organization itself faced customer reactions, these lapses would continue.

- **Features of the NID intervention:**

  1. Upgrading products and skills technologically without harming the artisans' society.

  2. Introducing new chemicals, new colours, new patterns and sometimes new materials.

  3. 'Introducing a whole new way of looking at the usable lives of the things they produced' (Helena Perheentupa).[23]

Raigars meeting

■ The Leather Workers of Jawaja

- **Aim/Strategy**: The strategy in Jawaja was to make new products for new markets. There were two reasons for this.

1. The product range needed to be widened as traditional products suffered from competition. The traditional products made by the raigars[24] were shoes, leather water buckets (*charas*) and animal harnesses. The increasing cost of leather affected the price of the shoes, which were easily substituted by mass-produced plastic shoes. The *charas* were also being slowly replaced by water pumps, thus leaving the raigars very limited means of livelihood.

2. The assumption was made that if products were created for a market unfamiliar to the moneylender, he would be unable to exploit the artisans as easily as in the past. Moreover, this would create a more direct link between the artisans and the points of sale, allowing the artisans to retain more of the product price and value addition.

One of the first requirements, as we were all to learn, is that any effort at empowerment will be sought to be thwarted by the communities to which both weavers and raigars were subservient. Therefore, the design requirement to innovate products for markets outside the bania's[25] experience, markets over which the

23 Helena Perheentupa, a textile designer from Finland, was Head of Textile Design at NID for many years. Ms Perheentupa led the NID team at Jawaja. She worked with the artisans of Jawaja for many years, among other projects. She now works in Finland.

24 Raigars are traditional leather workers.

25 Local trader and wholesaler.

Leather tanning

established power structures had no control. That in itself was not enough. The moneylender did not like what was happening, and threatened anyone who joined the effort with dire consequences, including cutting off loans for marriages and funerals. Those who joined the Rural University would need the courage and stamina to cope with such threats.

– Ashoke Chatterjee

- **NID involvement**: NID was involved with the leather activity even though it did not have a leather division. **Nilam Iyer, a student in the Products Design division, was interested in the design of leather products and wished to do her practical project on village leather crafts**. The Central Leather Research Institute (CLRI), Chennai was asked to help solve the first technical problem of the raigars, which was to improve the quality of tanning at the village level.

- **An Analysis of the Existing Situation**

In Nilam Iyer's view, the artisan had the following options:

1. He could make his traditional products for his traditional clientele for a higher price. But this would, at best, result only in a nominal increase in price because of resistance from both his clients and the traditional economic system.
2. He could make traditional products in larger quantities and enlarge his market circle. However, his expenditure would also increase.
3. He could make new products that had a higher value and sell them to his usual clientele. For this, he would have to identify a new product, which may have to compete with a similar mass-produced product.
4. He could make new products for a new and more affluent clientele found in urban areas where the appreciation for handcrafted products has been growing. Here, he would have to identify not only the products but also the consumer and the market. It was this option that seemed most practical.

- **Processes Involved in Interaction and Inputs**

1. First, the *quality of leather had to be improved* for the urban market. Leather processing stayed an entirely manual operation, although the process was improved by CLRI. The raigars underwent training for a month in new tanning technologies; they learned to keep accounts, and also learned about markets for their new products.
2. New fabricated leather products were introduced, which the raigar community learned to make. New products combining leather and handloom cloth were to be the new vehicle to launch a social, economic and technical learning process among these Jawaja craft groups.
3. Training camps were organized with the help of a national laboratory for improving leather-tanning technology among the raigars.
4. The case of the raigars was different from that of the weavers. The major leather and leather-product buyers within the country were persuaded to visit the area and establish relationships directly with the raigars. The villagers were also helped in seeking out buyers at their urban headquarters.

The first products were school bags and pouches, which did not demand the sophistication of well-finished leather, and braided belts, in which the braiding would de-emphasize the defects of the material. The products received a limited exposure in the market through exhibitions. But they sold mainly as a result of a sympathetic response to the philosophy of the Rural University experiment. Nilam Iyer calls this kind of marketing 'selling rural development'.

The quality of the tanned leather improved slowly over the years, and the range of products was widened. However, the rough, unsophisticated and somewhat unfinished look barely changed for several years.

During this period, the artisans learned other aspects of their craft; they learned to deal with bank loans and accounting systems; they were exposed to new markets; they received direct customer feedback as they were now taking the products to the points of sale. The major growth during this time was not in the volume of sales or earnings but in the growth of the artisans themselves. Their self-confidence increased; they were able to communicate directly with CLRI; they were able to visit urban centres and liaise with marketing people.

By 1977, the leather products designed by Nilam Iyer included school bags, fold bags, satchels, pouffes, belts, jackets, pouches and ordinary bags. The learning process was quite slow; the tanners had to get used to new implements and techniques for curing hide, etc. The first lot of shoulder-strap bags was sold largely on the basis of persuasive tactics by the faculty and students of IIM(A) and NID. However, the quality of the leather in the early days and the level of workmanship were so poor that apologies had to be made to customers. Subsequently, the craftsmanship registered a continual improvement in response to the growing understanding of the market and the dynamics of competition.

Weaver with rug

In 1984, eight years after the first leather artisans had started work, orders were at a low ebb, and it was felt that the standard of skills must be raised further and that the product range diversified. NID suggested a new collection of products, which was again worked on by Nilam Iyer. *This effort aimed at providing an opportunity to the artisans to upgrade their skills and raise the standard of the products, thus exposing them to more variables.* ***In the earlier products, a design decision was made to avoid hardware of any kind so that the artisans would not have to deal with the procurement and inventory of these items. Since they had by now developed confidence, zips, brass rings and the use of dyes were introduced. This product range was presented as a new collection at an exhibition with the aim of exploring new marketing channels. So the emphasis shifted from 'selling rural development' to selling competitive products with an inherent value. The idea was to design a range that catered to the needs of different consumer groups.*** *Shoulder bags for college students and office goers, folders, belts and small containers for desk-tops were made. The products were decided on the basis of the collective experience of the market rather than on scientific market research.* ***The features of the products were also changed. Brass hardware and dyed leather added to the improvement of the finished product. Leather stitching remained, but became more decorative.***

■ Some Points of Analysis

• Achievements

The biggest thing in Jawaja was that they did not take design from NID. NID and they evolved an idiom that they were directing as much as NID was. That is what lasts. They

The Jawaja village community today is perhaps the only community in that part of Rajasthan that has never had to pawn its products, never had to work on relief job opportunities like breaking stones, never had to migrate. They are their own designers, who are interacting with the country and other parts of the world, whereas when the experiment started many of them had not even been to the next town Ajmer, leave alone Jaipur and Ahmedabad.

– Ashoke Chatterjee

have shared and have learned together, and have jointly created and used learning spaces. They learned technologies, how to manage their affairs, how to create bridges of mutual help between individuals and groups. They learned about institutions and processes, which will enable them to establish links with the world beyond their immediate environment. They learned about urban and metropolitan markets, about supply and demand, about products, design and pricing. They learned how to cost their activities and keep accounts, about financial institutions and the banking habit. They also learned about their own immediate circumstances, their economic vulnerability, the pressures of caste and social customs, the structures and processes of social, economic, political and religious systems, and how these systems influence their lives. They learned the value of working together.

– Ashoke Chatterjee

The importance of this group of artisans experiencing and then learning to manage the world outside Jawaja needs to be stressed. First Ajmer, Jaipur and Ahmedabad. Then the rest of India and even markets overseas. This has been an incredible achievement for them, for a group who once saw the journey to NID as a major, and rather daunting, expedition. And who had been thrown out at the entrance to the Taj Mahal[26] Hotel in Bombay on their first visit to that city, to meet a prospective buyer, even though a prior appointment had been arranged.

– Ashoke Chatterjee

Ripple Effect: Earlier in the project, an obligation was imposed on the artisans to train others. They were required to teach artisans in another village what they themselves had been taught. This was not easy as the artisans had to cross caste and other social barriers. Now they have become part of a training programme for income-generation capacity building at the rural level in Rajasthan. Many of them are now recognized as trainers. NID has also recommended that they become trainers at the new Indian Institute of Craft and Design in Jaipur.

- **Issues to be Considered**

An issue that remained unresolved in Jawaja is the involvement of women craftspeople. The women do half the work involved in the craft processes, but the artisans do not account for that in their costing and pricing. Do they even pay them for the work that is done? Earlier, there were no women members in the Jawaja Weavers' Association. This attitude reinforces the stereotype of women as being 'technologically incapable', thus ensuring that technology itself remains socially gendered.

The 'sanctity' of tradition? Before we start giving people lectures about their ancient traditions, let us ask what is in it for them to stay on with the tradition. In the case of Jawaja, many of the heritage problems for leather workers were things that they wanted to run away from. Their caste elders told them that they must not be identified as leather workers, that they must have some other identity. When they stopped flaying animals, they were left stranded without raw material, but with an old, persistent identity. We often look at tradition and heredity as one exquisite artefact, but for them it was a centuries-old discrimination. What we can do is to encourage young persons who want to stay within their tradition to do so—not by making it a burden, or imposing it at the cost of their own progress as human beings, but rather by supplementing this progress through their tradition. Why should artisans not be able to have an option of also becoming accountants and computer operators? Interventions should not make them think that there is something inherently wrong with wanting to shift out of craft.

Self-reliance also proved to be a concept much more difficult than we had imagined. We ourselves who were so dependent on the support of a range of systems were expecting the raigars and weavers to be 'self-reliant'. Can any of us ever achieve self-reliance? Perhaps what we can achieve is the ability to do for ourselves tomorrow things which others are doing for us

26 The Taj Mahal Hotel, Mumbai (earlier Bombay) is part of a luxury hotel chain in India.

(or should be doing for us) today. But as we 'develop', there are new challenges and new situations, each one of which may need the experience and support of others. So it has been in Jawaja. They are doing for themselves so many things that were unheard of in their experience thirty years ago. But the complexity of craft marketing has intensified, as has the complexity of social and political factors. The quest for self-reliance continues and probably always will.

> *As soon as the first range of Jawaja products emerged on the market, they were copied. And copied by other NGOs! An early lesson in IPR, and perhaps in the ways of the world!*
>
> – Ashoke Chatterjee

- **Lessons from Jawaja for the Community Participatory / Development Approach**

Jawaja provided a benchmark in terms of its premise: Understand the community first before intervening. Who are the people? What are their earnings? What are their aspirations? What is in it for them? One of the lessons learned was that the reality of involvement, self-expression and self-development at which the Rural University aimed could not be achieved by depending—except in a supportive sense—on the formal channels of power and authority, but would have to grow organically from and amongst the people to whom the idea was most relevant.

Achieving working relationships: The formal legitimization of a collaborative arrangement among institutions does not necessarily bring about working relationships among the people at those institutions. For this to occur, mutuality of personal goals must exist and facilitating mechanisms must be available for individuals with such a commonality of interests to work together. On the other hand, if things go wrong at the level of personal working relationships, the fact of institutional legitimization can hold the situation given institutional willingness to provide sufficient time and space for healing, at least partly, the damage done to a working relationship.

> *Both the raigars and the weavers learning to work together and with each other: this effort at building community institutions has perhaps been the greatest learning, because it is this that has withstood all the upheavals along the way.*
>
> – Ashoke Chatterjee

In Jawaja, the conflicts illustrated the 'individual' and 'institutional' differences in the substance of responsibility, in the attitudes towards resources and their utilization. Further, it showed how, when these roles develop, differences in the individual perceptions of each role can, if they remain unexpressed, explode into irreversible crises, particularly when the persons concerned are highly motivated. Jawaja emphasized the very considerable need for a high level of communication within the experiment, and the temperamental, emotional and behavioural stability, security, and maturity required for sustaining it.

NID's role overlapped considerably with that of other members of the experiment group at IIM(A), who performed the more general roles directly related to the villagers. They were also concerned about the 'people' aspect of the experiment as were the other group members. IIM(A) were at the outset responsible for marketing, and therefore should have been responsible for the product choice and mix. It was in these overlaps that the main administrative and team problems occurred, largely because of the lack of clarity in relation to these respective roles and responsibilities. According to Prof. Matthai, 'It was important to work out, as the experiment pro-

Faculty with raigars

> *Both NID and IIM(A) retreated from Jawaja once the commitment of individuals on these campuses disappeared. This has been an unintended test of the self-reliance of Jawaja artisans and also a test for institutions. The institutions have failed, in my opinion, and the artisans have succeeded.*
>
> – Ashoke Chatterjee

gressed, the consonance within and between the groups. This should have been a prerequisite before trying to build relationships with and amongst the villagers.'

■ **In Retrospect**

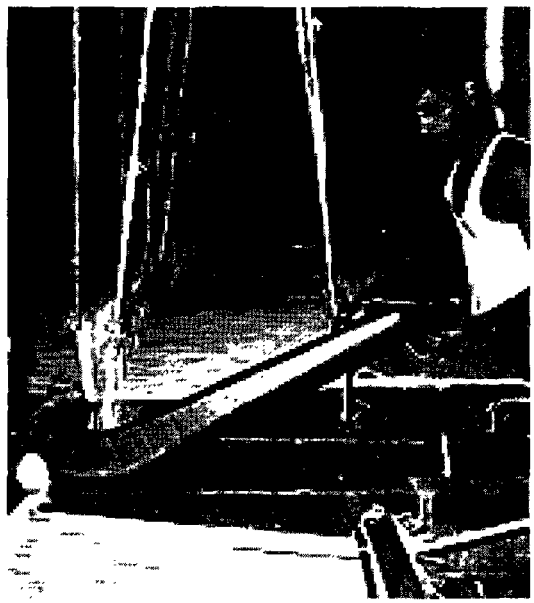
One is often asked if the Rural University was a success. 'Success' is an elusive quality, particularly in social and development terms. So this is not a case study about success, but rather about learning. Two aspects may have failed: the retreat of two national institutions from the challenge of sustaining their contact with, and learning from, a community of the poor. And many of these so-called untouchables still cannot drink from the village well. That was one indicator we hoped thirty years ago would give us the 'success' that was really needed. There is, however, another development in these years. When we went to Jawaja, most artisans felt that belonging to their community (most of all, for the raigars) was a curse from which their children should somehow be saved. All these years later, the second and third generations have seen the Jawaja brand equity as something that has given them a measure of dignity, pride and some respect in society. Sons and grandsons have started weaving and doing leatherwork. That is surely an indicator worth reflection. Yet, lest we get carried away, the presence of women remains a token one.

– Ashoke Chatterjee

3.8 CRAFT DOCUMENTATION: NGOS AND DESIGN STUDENTS

3.8.1 Panipat Khes: Documentation of a Languishing Craft

- **Location:** Panipat, Haryana
- **Student:** Meghna Jain, Indian Institute of Craft and Design (IICD), Jaipur, Rajasthan
- **Year:** 2002



Weaving workshop, Panipat

- **Organization:** Craft Revival Trust,[27] New Delhi

■ **Background**

Panipat, Haryana is today known as the city of home-furnishing textiles. It was once famed for its handwoven *khes*, a reversible double-cloth weave fabric. The *khes* had multiple uses as it was woven thickly enough to be used as a shawl, a wrap and, more popularly, as a bedspread. *Khes* once enjoyed such widespread popularity that customers often asked for or ordered the different patterns by their individual names.

The handloom sector of Panipat suffered a setback with the advent of the power loom. While carpet and dhurrie[28] weaving survived and flourished, the indigenous double-cloth *khes* weave began dying out owing to its time-consuming and complex weaving process. At present, there are only a few old weavers left who have the knowledge and skill to set the warp for this intricate weave. It is anticipated that not only will the skill be lost in the near future, but also that the knowledge of the technique and process will be entirely forgotten if efforts are not made to capture and document this tradition.

27 Craft Revival Trust (CRT) is part of a movement working towards the revitalization of Indian crafts. Its concerns include the creation of an information infrastructure for craft, artisans and design.

28 Dhurrie: a flat cotton-weave floor covering.

Study Area

The study focused on the Panipat district of Haryana. *Khes* is still being woven in some regions in the nearby state of Uttar Pradesh, though in a completely different style from the distinct and unique Panipat tradition.

Objectives

- To document this languishing craft and preserve the knowledge for future generations.
- To develop strategies for the revival of *khes*.
  - Study the historical background of the craft.
  - Understand the social, cultural and economic underpinnings of the craft.
  - Study the production process in detail, including raw material, tools, equipment and techniques.
  - Develop a design directory.
  - Collect information about the customer.
  - Identify the reasons for the decline in the craft pocket.
  - Critically analyse the information and data collected, and recommend alternatives in the problem areas identified.

Methodology

Collection of Data

Primary information:

- **Field visits:** Field studies were conducted by visiting weaving factories in Panipat. Power-loom factories working for the export market were also visited.
- **Interviews:** The owners of power-loom factories were interviewed as most of them had originally been handloom weavers who had prospered and become entrepreneurs. They had seen at first hand the complete growth-and-decline cycle of *khes* weaving in Panipat. Industrialists were also interviewed for understanding the present scenario of the handloom sector.

Spinning of yarn

- **Observation:** Visits to the factories in Panipat revealed that the economic condition of the weavers had improved dramatically. The demands of the export market—high-volume orders, rapidly changing designs, speed of production—revealed the possible reasons for the decline of the slow and complicated process of *khes* weaving, while the power-loom sector prospered.
- **Official sources:** The concerned government officials were interviewed for learning details about the policies that have been implemented in the handloom sector and their effect on the weavers and the industry.
- **Photography**: Samples of traditional *khes* are available only in private collections and at the Weavers' Service Centre, Panipat. These were photographed.
- **Sketching and drawing of the looms used.**
- **Collection of samples:** Since the traditional double-cloth weave *khes* are not available in local markets, these were made to order as samples. Samples of the raw material were collected.

Study of Secondary Sources

- **Library visits:** Books and journals were studied for learning about the history and evolution of the traditional *khes* in India.

Pre-Partition gazetteers were consulted for identifying the missing links in the history of *khes* weaving.

- **Museum visits.**

Problem Identification

- The traditional Panipat *khes* weave disappeared from the market mainly because its production was no longer cost effective in a competitive market where there were cheaper alternatives available.
- It was difficult to bring down production costs as the craft is extremely labour intensive.
- *Khes* was being marketed as a downmarket product, which did not justify its price.

Some Suggestions for Reviving the Craft

- Train young weavers in double-weave techniques.
- *Re-examine consumer needs and product usage*: *Khes* is currently being sold in local markets as a daily-use item. With appropriate design input and marketing intervention targeted at the high-end niche market, there may be prospects of a revival.
- *Re-examine the colour palette*: In the past, the colours of *khes* held a special meaning for users. Muslims preferred *khes* with blue border stripes, while Hindus preferred those with red stripes. The colours need to be changed in the current context based on the preferences of the 'new' customer.
- *Improve the finish*: As the weavers wove and sold *khes* in pairs, the warp in between was left uncut and the loose ends were left unfinished. To add to the value of *khes*, the finish should be carefully looked at.
- *Diversify product range and usage*: *Khes* was employed mainly for daily-use household purposes. It was made in cotton, the cheapest and most easily available yarn, yet early historical descriptions reveal that *khes* was also woven in silk with gold borders for zamindars. There is a need for reviving the rich look of *khes* and also re-examining the matter of sizes for different uses and market segments.

3.8.2 Blue Pottery of Delhi: Documentation of a Languishing Craft

- **Location**: Delhi
- **Student**: Aarti Yadav, Indian Institute of Craft and Design (IICD), Jaipur, Rajasthan
- **Organization**: Craft Revival Trust, New Delhi
- **Year:** 2002

■ ***Background***

The blue pottery of Delhi is a distinctive and refined product with a rich glazed blue surface and beautifully painted Mughal motifs in shades of blue and other colours. This craft of Persian origin was introduced into India by Mughal rulers, who brought in artisans from Persia for making the glazed blue tiles and jali (lattice) screens that adorn their magnificent buildings. Once a flourishing craft, the blue pottery of Delhi is today on the verge of extinction. With only one practising artisan left, the future of the craft seems uncertain.

■ **Objectives**

This study was undertaken for documenting the process, technique and skill required to make blue pottery, and for creating an archival repository of knowledge and learning about this dying craft.

■ **Aspects of the study:**

- Geographical location of the craft in the past and the present
- Historical background of the craft
- Production process: material, tools, equipment, technique, design and quality
- Marketing, packaging, economics and pricing
- Issues of occupational health hazards, development, education and gender
- Identifying problems and challenges, and suggesting possible alternatives and solutions.

■ Methodology

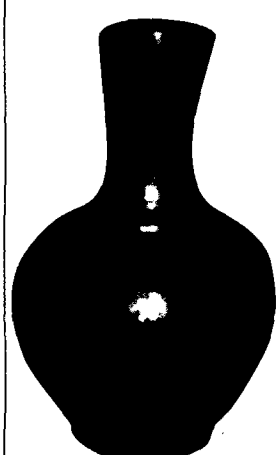
1. Systematic gathering and processing of data from secondary and primary sources
   - Gathering of information from magazines, newspapers, books, government gazetteers and archival records
   - Repeated visits to the artisan's workshop and places of sale; interviews with the artisan and his family
   - Interviews with consumers and owners of outlets/shops stocking the product
   - Collection of samples of raw material
   - Photographs of products in stock
2. The information gathered was sorted and compiled into a document.

■ Observations

- **Declining market:** Orders declined over the past few years as the quality deteriorated. The products created today are porous and fragile. The artisan pays very little attention to quality. However, it is hard to conjecture whether the quality declined first, leading to a decrease in orders, or vice versa.
- **Design input:** There has been negligible design development and product diversification as the artisan faces difficulty in developing new designs due to a lack of training.
- **Health implications:** The glaze used is hazardous to health, making the pottery unsuitable for use as tableware. This has had an adverse effect on sales. The artisan, though aware of the existence of lead-free glazes, had not adopted the new technology.
- **Stiff competition:** There was stiff competition from lead-free glazed pottery from other centres, whose makers and salesmen had adopted aggressive marketing strategies.
- **Pricing structure:** No clear method was being followed in pricing the products. The labour-intensive and time-consuming production process compelled the artisan to handle multiple products and processes during the course of his working day. Hence, it was difficult for him to assess the time, money and labour spent on preparing each article.
- **Lack of interest by artisan:** The artisan was completely demotivated and uninterested in his craft. However, as he had no other way of earning a living, he continued to follow his hereditary craft, but he was not interested in teaching it to his children. There are no new entrants into the craft.
- **Marketing assistance:** The craft needs image building and a strong regional identity. At present, blue pottery is being sold only in Delhi.

■ Recommendations

- Emphasize the importance of introducing lead-free glaze and impart knowledge about the relevant process.
- Provide aid to the artisan enabling him to build an adequate infrastructure for quality control.
- Motivate the artisan to improve the quality of his product so that it can take on the competition.
- Recruit new trainees and motivate them to carry the craft forward.
- Impart training in developing design skills to enable the artisan to meet the ever-changing market trends.
- Provide training for marketing the craft strategically.
- Provide development assistance for creating a wide range of products targeted at specific markets.
- Provide inputs to the artisan on strategic pricing, so that the prices of the products are viable.



Blue Pottery of Delhi

Madan Lal, Blue Pottery artisan

My Thoughts

The blue pottery of Delhi is a dying craft today. The investigation has raised many questions, answers to which are crucial for the revival and growth of the craft. Why is it that, even though the artisan has both skill and experience, he is finding it difficult to cope with competition? The process has been simplified with the availability of processed raw material, but the quality of the product has deteriorated. Sales have gone down drastically, and the artisan is finding it difficult to support himself and his family. This is the same artisan who was honoured with awards and accolades a few years ago and who was flooded with orders.

Why has he not benefited from the technological interventions made in the field, even though he is aware of them? What has brought the craft to its present state? Is it the competition from cheaper and more durable industrial products, or the competition from other, similar crafts, or is it the result of the artisan's incompetence? A similar craft is flourishing at another cluster. Then why is it dying in the place where it originated? What insecurities made the artisan's family keep the technique a secret? Is this the reason behind the craft's decline? Had there been more artisans practising the craft in Delhi, would the situation have been better? What is it that needs to be done now?

There is demand for blue pottery, which is evident from the flourishing craft clusters in Rajasthan. With the adoption of lead-free glazes, is design development the answer to the problem? Will the artisan be able to relate to the new contemporary designs in the same way as he does to traditional designs? How does one preserve or enhance the craft's identity if it does not suit market demand? What is more important—the craft or the artisan's livelihood?

The survival of the blue pottery of Delhi calls for strategic policies and immediate steps. Otherwise, this craft will be lost forever.

– Aarti Yadav

STUDENT–ARTISAN INTERACTIONS AND INTERVENTIONS

■ Student Interventions: The Debate

The debate about the validity and meaning of student interventions—both for product development and craft documentation—examines not only the contribution that such interventions have made to the sector, but equally the importance of field experiences in the curriculum of the student's academic programme.

This course in the design institution—**variously described as 'craft documentation', 'environmental perception', or 'craft design project'**—is held to be of far greater learning experience and importance for the student at various levels:

- A critically important exposure to India's design tradition and heritage, the foundation of contemporary Indian design.
- Exposure to living alone in another part of the country outside the security of the campus, and/or the parental or guardian home.
- Exposure to a methodology of data collection and fieldwork, which so far had been purely academic.
- A learning experience in human relationships with artisans at work; a barometer of personal maturity in empathizing with and sensitively reflecting on the situation faced by artisans and their communities.
- Understanding the issues at stake for the artisans in taking time off from a regular working day to explain processes and making prototypes or samples for the design part of the project, and their expectations of what all this investment of time and knowledge sharing will bring to them.

This offers a more intensive format of learning than any other because it involves people and real-life problems. This 'reality check' experience can actually translate into an understanding of the way in which 'other' people in the same country live, and an appreciation of their needs, aspirations, and dreams. **The craft exposure course can, therefore, be a catalyst that can send linkages and connections spinning off in all directions. If handled properly, it can be the pivot upon which the student's entire perception of design as a profession can turn.**

Students and artisans at a workshop at Srishti

However, there are people who argue that a 'field' experience should not be mandatory, at least not without first establishing whether the student actually wants to go into this field. This argument is based on the premise that perhaps not everyone possesses the interest, temperament, or ability to work effectively in the field, in an environment that is very different from what they are used to. Interaction with artisans is seen as an extremely specialized activity, requiring several attributes: sensitivity, curiosity, the ability to empathize, to keep an open mind, to eschew preconceived notions. To be effective, student-designers need to be able to communicate meaningfully with the artisans, respect their skills, understand their limitations and engage with them in an interactive format. Not every good student-designer, aver some, can be a craft designer. For those who hope to be, this is the first exposure towards a career direction. For others, it is Indian education in the best sense.

There are certain methods of developing the students' ability of working in the field. The institutes need to train and prepare them for undertaking fieldwork. It would also be worthwhile for students to undertake a recce before committing to a project; perhaps to visit the place for two or three days to see the area and familiarize themselves with the material, technique and context, and then to decide whether they really want to do the project or not. There should necessarily be a dialogue with the artisan, who should be asked how he/she wants the interaction to be positioned in order to create value from it. The critical factor is the preparation required for an important exposure.

SHORT-TERM STUDENT-ARTISAN DESIGN INTERFACE

■ An Analysis

The experience of a one-time student–artisan design interface is that, no matter how successful it is, by its very nature such an encounter does not lead to any long-term plan for sustainability. It does, however, result in the following:

- Upgrading of skills to some extent
- Widening of the product range
- Artisan's exposure to a new world/new markets and to the design profession
- Designer's exposure to the artisan's world

■ Questions/Limitations/Suggestions

- At the end of the interface, one gets new products, but does one also get a change in the understanding or mindset of the artisans? How does one quantify a changed understanding of design and an increased confidence in the artisan's ability to design?
- The ability to process design, technique and skill is not enough. The capacity for designing must necessarily be an inherent attribute.
- A training programme must start with a basic outline. A good outline should be supported by a sound and progressive approach. The approach should be an amalgam of learning drawing elements from adult pedagogy, from the artisan, and from changing market needs. It should also reflect concerns about social, political and ecological issues, and should encompass the notions of stewardship, community welfare, social dignity and well-being.
- The interaction should be based on the conviction that it will be a two-way learning process. Group activities and discussions should be organized for arriving at a shared understanding of the important issues, by clarifying, describing and contextualizing them.

Student–artisan interface at NIFT, New Delhi

- The assumption that just making a new product will enable artisans to deal capably with changes in market trends, and adjust to the introduction of new materials, production processes and design inputs, is a limited one. For the interface to be truly effective and useful for all participants, there is a need for reflection, focused discussion and exploration. It is important that the designer should cite real-life examples and case studies as inspiration, and encourage reflection, presentations and visualization.
- If a link has to be established between product development and improved livelihood, then artisans must be encouraged to understand that the responsibility of creating this relationship does not rest outside them; nor does it rest with the designer, or the government, or the agency. Artisans should be involved in mapping all the problems that block market growth, and this exercise includes much more than 'design'.
- Language is an important issue in the interface. The designer, who often does not know the local language, struggles to find the exact words in which to communicate to the artisan ideas about form, pattern and design. Developing a working 'language' is the first challenge that the designer must face.

Some issues that arise from short-term interaction and which need to be addressed are:

- The artisan sees himself/herself as a passive recipient of design inputs; he/she sees design as analogous to the pa-tterns being made available to him/her.
- The artisan sees design as a new order being placed, or a subsidy that is being offered.
- There is no space, no process, no institution that asks the artisan to scrutinize, criticize and take control of his/her reality.
- The underlying assumption is that though the artisan is human and possesses plenty of marketable skills, he/she has no point of view.
- The underlying assumption is that in a short programme, it is the expert outsider who will benefit the craft and the artisan.

SECTION IV

The Colombian Experience: The Design Laboratory

The Colombian Experience: The Design Laboratory

4.1 BACKGROUND AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK: ARTESANÍAS DE COLOMBIA

Artesanías de Colombia was established in May 1964 as a government organization linked to the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Tourism. It is responsible for the development of the craft sector in Colombia. It promotes and develops the social, cultural, economic, and educational activities linked to the progress of artisans in the country. Its mission is to increase the competitive capacity of the craft sector; to improve the quality of life of the artisan communities; to preserve and recuperate the living cultural heritage; and to increase environmental sustainability. It works in close association with government, regional, and local institutions, private companies, and international foundations and organizations.

As a state organization, Artesanías de Colombia defines development policies; leads and coordinates strategic plans and programmes; coordinates with public and private bodies; and invests physical, human, and financial resources to stimulate the crafts sector.

Colombia has approximately 350,000 artisans, 60 per cent of whom come from the rural and indigenous regions and 65 per cent of whom are women. On the whole, close to a million people make a living from the craft sector.

Artesanías de Colombia carried out a national economic census in 1998 to help understand the sector, measure its size, and determine its actions for the short and long terms. This census favoured the inclusion of craft-promotion activities in development plans at the district and municipal levels by providing a basic information source for the sector's social and economic programmes.

Thanks to the pioneering activities of Artesanías de Colombia in the last decade, the craft sector has been growing steadily during the last few years. This development has been supported by agreements signed among territories, non-governmental organizations, mixed funds, universities, private companies, and artisans' associations. Many initiatives have also played an important role in the development of this field, for instance, strategic projects to promote national marketing and export management; fairs like Expoartesanías aimed at improving production competitiveness; information systems for the craft sector; design laboratories and centres for innovation and development of products; production chain processes to normalize demand and supply; national and international design competitions; international technical assistance; and the Artisans' Plaza. Artesanías de Colombia is internationally recognized today, and has become a development model for the craft sector in Latin America.

In addition, Artesanías de Colombia has developed many of its programmes through strategic alliances with leading industrial companies that want to link their brands to the craft sector, allowing them to present an important value addition to their own products and to associate themselves with ideas like 'handmade' Colombian products, promotion of national identity, environmental sustainability, and employment generation. The alliance between Artesanías de Colombia and these companies has led to new integration schemes between the public and

the private sectors, and between social causes and commercial brands.

To enhance the country's image, to raise the craft sector's public visibility, to dignify artisanal/craft activities, and to emphasize both traditional values and new contemporary expressions—these are some of the challenges faced every day by the Artesanías de Colombia. The growth of the craft sector is one way of sustaining productive employment, generating new sources of work for the many people who find in the craft traditions a means of creative expression, and fostering new forms of coexistence and peace-building initiatives.

■ **Objectives**

To honour the craft traditions, enhance the image of the sector, and reinforce and strengthen national identity.

To elevate the social, cultural, professional, and economic levels of the artisans and other people linked to the sector.

To promote national and international marketing of craft products.

To increase the participation of the craft sector in the national economy and contribute to employment generation.

To coordinate the growth of the craft sector with private and public bodies as well as national and international agencies, and encourage the investment of financial and technical resources in the sector.

To maximize the efficacy and efficiency of Artesanías de Colombia as far as its managerial, administrative, marketing, and financial processes are concerned.

To promote the exchange of experiences, knowledge, and techniques that will facilitate the development of the craft sector in cooperation with other national and foreign bodies.

To stimulate research and encourage the development of technologies applied to the craft sector within the framework of safeguarding, preserving, and developing the sector.

To promote ecological awareness and encourage the sustainability of natural raw materials for the sector.

The proposed objectives are achieved through the following strategies: adopting design preservation and innovation; pursuing resource management and international cooperation; maintaining the sustainability of natural resources for the craft sector; improving and enhancing the image of the Colombian artisanal sector in the national and international arenas; developing appropriate information systems for the sector, and adopting effective marketing policies and strategies.

4.2 COLOMBIAN DESIGN LABORATORY – ARTESANÍAS DE COLOMBIA

■ **Introduction**

Given the needs of the craft and small-enterprise sectors to raise their competitive capacity with regard to production and to strengthen their design inputs, Artesanías de Colombia conceived and implemented a project for the creation of a Design Laboratory that would respond effectively to the development needs of the sectors.

Seminar on design and style conducted by an international adviser

This project is aimed at the establishment of regional experimental units endowed with administrative and technical autonomy, depending simultaneously on the support of regional and local institutions, both public and private in natúre, and seeking the participation of representatives from the craft sector and the academic community.

In addition to upgrading human resources and incorporating appropriate technologies, the main responsibilities or functions of the Design Laboratory are the study of raw materials and the proper use of natural resources; product development; technical assistance and technological extension; and the promotion and diffusion of design. Each of these elements has been carefully thought through, and each one has been adopted keeping in view the goal of directly benefiting all the groups involved in the process.

■ **Objectives**

General objectives

To contribute to the integration of economic and social development processes in the craft sector of Colombia, by improving quality, including a highly competitive level of products, and strengthening the design component of the same, while simultaneously consolidating development practices that will lead to an improvement in the quality of life of the people involved in the process.

Specific objectives

- To formulate and execute design projects and develop crafts according to market demands.
- To provide counselling and technical assistance and training in the craft sector, specifically in the areas of design and technology.
- To offer training programmes and qualifications to designers, technicians, and professionals specializing in craft production and development.
- To strengthen the identity of Colombian crafts and increase their recognition in internal and external markets.
- To advise regional organizations in the interpretation and application of design policies and to formulate jointly strategies, programmes, and projects for the craft sector.
- To compile, process, and disseminate technical information related to capital, raw materials, environmental conservation, processes, products, and services for crafts.
- To promote the sustainable development of craft production, achieving in the process a better quality of life for the artisans.
- To carry out studies and research in the areas of action and interest of the Laboratory in such a way that the technical and scientific know-how involved in the process may be better understood.
- To establish cooperative links and technological exchanges at all levels and in all areas of activity of the Laboratory.
- To promote and disseminate information about all activities of the Laboratory.

4.3 WORK STRATEGIES

The Design Laboratory has adopted, and implements, the following strategies in order to achieve its proposed objectives.

4.3.1 Technological Innovation and Improvement

To stimulate the growth of indigenous technologies and to facilitate access to new technologies involved in the production process, business management, and marketing.

To stimulate innovation aimed at adapting craft production to meet the demands of a globalized economy, where obtaining efficiency and productivity are fundamental to competitive participation in the market.

4.3.2 Research and Product Development

To undertake research, design, and product development in order to increase product competitiveness with distinct proposals.

To link endogenous knowledge, technology, and the artisans' techniques with the use of new technologies in order to introduce into the market products that are representative of the craft tradition and culture of the country.

4.3.3 Integral Growth of Human Talent

To strengthen organizational culture and raise quality standards.

To contribute to the development of human capital with skills-upgrading programmes, as much as for artisans as well as for professionals, so as to guarantee the sustainability of the results obtained in all aspects of the work.

4.4 THE WORK DYNAMIC IN THE DESIGN LABORATORY

The Design Laboratory's goal is achieved through the adoption of dynamic processes and efficient and effective methodologies.

The work is interdisciplinary in nature, based on the structuring of teams including professional and craft criteria, so that it complements the process of product development and production and marketing activities.

The designers work in teams formed on the basis of each craft. This generates efficiency since the designer is not alone in the task of realizing the assigned project. Any doubts that might arise as far as technical, formal, and aesthetic areas are concerned, or regarding the actual functioning of the process, are evaluated jointly through coordination meetings. This procedure leads to results that have a positive effect on the conditions of the craft community and on the functioning of the enterprise.

Creativity workshop for jewellery, Bogotá

One of the activities undertaken by the Design Laboratory is the work done in rural areas, carried out directly in the concerned communities. Another is the generation of horizontal interactive processes, instead of vertical ones, in the development of activities pertaining to artisans, during which the participants are placed at the same level and share their skills and experiences.

4.5 METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS

4.5.1 Creativity Workshops

A creativity workshop contributes to the exchange of knowledge, guided by the designer, aimed at stimulating the artisan's creativity, beginning with his or her surroundings. It is an effective tool because it leads to high level results of a high level, bringing about product achievement as well as the artisan's active participation in the process of change.

Creativity workshops are intended for a group of artisans from the same craft tradition, and are planned with the purpose of creating and recreating craft products collectively, strengthening identity-based values, encouraging the imagination and creativity of the group, teaching the artisans to deal with the realities of the market, and addressing the subject of personality development.

During these workshops, the artisans discuss their doubts and uncertainties, technological limitations, ideas about market appraisal, and their surroundings and environment with the aim of producing creative work as a team, with the designer's assistance.

In any event, it is necessary to define the topic of the workshop as an activity around which all other activities will revolve. The topics should reflect the reality of the artisan's life and work, permitting in a short time the construction of a complete vision of the universe in which he or she lives. This world may include legends and myths, or ideas about the natural world, or a vision of the future, or

any other means that will allow the artisan to explore, to create, and to express his or her ideas through handicrafts.

To ensure the success of the workshop, it is important to work with a group of no more than 25 artisans, all of whom possess an equal level of technical know-how.

The designer will assume leadership of the group and introduce theoretical issues through discussions about topics such as identity, the market, and the place of craftsmanship in the global context. This will encourage the artisans to draw inspiration from their own surroundings and backgrounds for the creative process.

In this process, the artisans will interact with each other, sharing their backgrounds and experiences, describing how they live and work, and identifying the most traditional elements of their craft. Along with the designer, they will approach the task at hand using the skills and tools with which they are familiar. They will be motivated and encouraged to explore new possibilities of creative expression.

The role of the designer is to help the artisans organize their work and adopt a methodology based on simple sketches and drawings of what they have visualized and will soon be creating.

A workshop of this nature will conclude with a self-evaluation session, during which members of the group will describe their collective successes and failures. They will also identify the weaknesses and difficulties that they as artisans have faced in mastering techniques, in dealing with their surroundings, and in exploring the opportunities before them, that is, they will define their future activities.

Counselling session, Colombian Design Laboratory, Bogotá

The designer will make the necessary and pertinent observations on the results obtained, so that the artisans can move on to the next phase, that of working out the details of manufacturing prototypes.

The creativity workshop, regardless of its duration, initiates a process of training and planning whose result depends on how much interest has been generated among the participating artisans in the workshop programme.

4.5.2 Computer-aided Design Workshop

Computer-aided design methodology, based on the horizontal interaction between the artisan and the designer, permits the stimulation of the artisan's creative processes. It also allows during the practical session for alternatives of the product to be visualized and conceptualized, facilitating the artisan's imagination to create and recreate.

The process begins with a workshop designed to introduce the artisans to information technology and its application to craft design. The designers will work directly with the artisans on product development based on 'virtual designs', made through animation, and on the basis of the advice of a team of professionals and consultants. This method helps to save materials and labour in the preparation of prototypes while permitting the visualization of different alternative forms, functions, and representations of the final product.

4.5.3 Design Consultancy

Design consultancy permits the application of design to crafts on the basis of joint work between the designers and the artisans regarding aspects previously outlined in areas of craftsmanship or among artisan

groups where it may be applicable and/or necessary, in line with the results of the design investigation, trade records, and diagnostics.

4.5.4 Specialized Counselling

The model of specialized counselling is offered for the benefit of independent artisans or craft associations that directly or through their links with other projects consult the Design Laboratory about developing a concept for their products. This activity is carried out by a professional with specific knowledge of the craft. The counselling begins with an initial evaluation to determine the standard of the product. Subsequently, the necessary recommendations are made, which are then developed in various work sessions.

Specialized counselling also addresses subjects such as educational topics, design methodology, production organization, and special projects for other private or public institutions.

A data card is prepared as a record of this activity, which is used as the artisan's letter of undertaking for the development of the product.

4.5.5 Workshop Courses

Workshop courses contribute to the integrated training of artisans, dealing with aspects of artistic expression, natural resources management, technical skills upgrading, technological development, product development and design, and business management.

The courses are developed with the intervening presence of a technical or professional master artisan in a process of creative exchange of knowledge among the artisans, with the final aim of broadening and improving the quality of all phases of the production process.

The intensity of the courses varies according to the characteristics of the group, depending on whether the participants' backgrounds are urban, rural, or indigenous.

Dye workshop, Tumaco

4.5.6 Technical Assistance

Technical assistance is aimed at optimizing the technical processes involved in craft production. It is part of the integrated training programme, and is undertaken at the request of the artisans, the community, and the bodies that work in the craft sector. Assistance is provided to individual artisans during all phases of the process, including technical aspects and information about the appropriation, suitability, and development of technologies.

The results of the technical assistance provided are recorded in a document called the technical manual, which will later serve as a guide for the consolidation of the knowledge acquired over the course of the training programme.

4.5.7 Educational Tour or Mobile Workshop

This type of training is based on the exchange of experiences among groups of artisans from different crafts, while recognizing the cultural components of each. An educational tour offers space for integration, knowledge dissemination, and mutual understanding.

Keeping in mind that individual artisans develop their activities within a context of local traditions and within the sphere of everyday life, this strategy aims at overcoming factors that constitute resistance to change, as much

as in organization, production, and design development as in technological progress, product develop-ment, and marketing strategies. In the same way, it contributes to the appraisal of the cultural components of the crafts, and the recognition of the value of change by other artisans.

An educational tour follows a plan with specific goals and objectives. Its duration is one or more days. It calls for the formation of two groups, the receivers and the visitors; an evaluation of the achievements and difficulties faced at the venues visited; and subsequent monitoring of the visitor groups based on the report on the learning experiences gained during the tour.

4.5.8 Seminar

A seminar is a fundamental tool for imparting training and receiving feedback on institutional actions at three different levels of performance:

Within the laboratory: an evaluation of activities scheduled on plans, programmes, and projects;

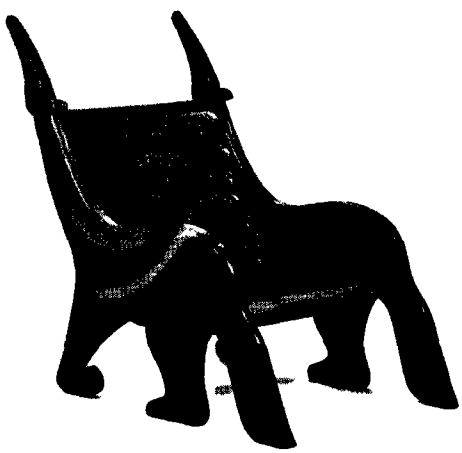
From the laboratory to the craft sector: as a direct beneficiary of the services offered and the means of communication available.

From the laboratory to other national or international bodies related to the sector: as a means for comparing work systems, processes, and methodologies.

A seminar constitutes not only a training programme but also encourages the interaction of processes and methodologies of research, planning, organization, training, production, and craft marketing with intermediary bodies for the optimal functioning or financing of grass-roots organizations in the craft sector.

SECTION V

Case Studies - Artesanías de Colombia: The Design Laboratory



Case Studies - Artesanías de Colombia: The Design Laboratory

5.1 Casa Colombiana (Colombian House) Collection

The aim of the *Casa Colombiana* project was to identify and highlight an image of national identity through design, and to develop functional and decorative product lines for contemporary lifestyles.

The concept of the house (*casa*) was chosen because it is an intimate space to which everyone can relate; its surroundings reflect the manner in which we live.

The search for a concept that would effectively project the image of Colombia at both national and international levels led to the choice of coffee as the core theme of the project. In this globalized world, people have grown tired of homogeneity; people feel the need to return to nature, to their roots, and to what is essential.

This collection of household articles is an attempt to place Colombian artisans in the international market, offering product lines with a high design content based on contemporary decoration trends. The *Casa Colombiana* project, conceived as a medium- and long-term project, has been operating for three consecutive years.

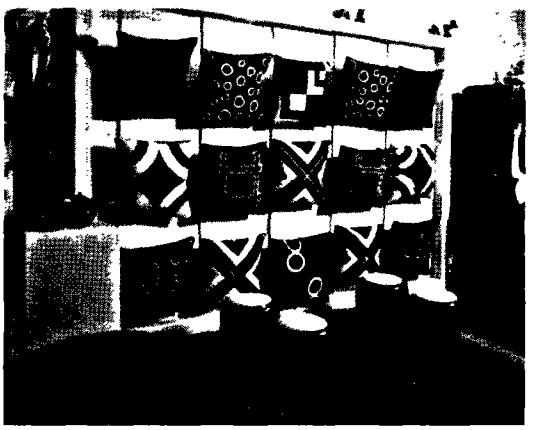
All the work for the first collection, *Casa Colombiana 2002* (Colombian House 2002), was completed in 2001. This was the first attempt at implementing the concept through the use of natural materials such as fibres and wood, all transformed through creative handwork into traditional or contemporary objects, suited to the spaces for which they had been created.

The second collection, named *Casa Colombiana: Café Sabor Esencial 2003* (Colombian House: Coffee Essential Flavour 2003), took its cue from coffee, the symbol of Colombian national identity. The creative process began with a careful study of the morphology of coffee, emphasizing the variety of colours and tones seen during the different stages of the production process, from the time it is a green bean on a bush, to the flowering of the plant, on to the oranges and reds of its maturation, and the distinct shades of brown of the dry and toasted bean. This range of colours was the inspiration for each of the different atmospheres sought to be evoked in the house.

The 2004 collection, called *Casa Colombiana: Esencia Pura* (Colombian House: Pure Essence), maintained the coffee theme, but included as an additional source of inspiration the flora that is part of the ecosystem of the coffee plant. Thus, different types of plants and leaves brought together complementary references for the collection.

■ Background

Artesanías de Colombia views international cooperation as a means of supporting the development of the handicraft sector. The



Living room, exhibition of a line of cotton and wool cushion covers

idea is to optimize the country's resources and improve the quality and production processes through design and technology transfer in order to achieve the necessary levels of competitiveness to reach the international market.

It was for this reason that, as part of the plan to strengthen the handicraft sector, and with the conviction that design is fundamental in helping handicraft production achieve real status both nationally as well as inter-nationally, it was decided to invite the Philippine designer, Percy Jutare Arañador, to launch a programme of technical assistance and design counselling for the Colombian handicraft sector.

P.J. Arañador was chosen because of his successful experience in the Philippines, where he had helped develop the products of small and medium-sized handicrafts companies for the European, North American, and Asian markets.

P.J. Arañador first visited Colombia in 1997, during Expoartesanías, along with Art Dimaano, Sub-director of CITEM, the International Centre for Trade, Expositions, and Missions of the Philippines. Both men were deeply impressed with the potential of Colombian handicraft production.

■ Objectives of the Counselling Programme

The purpose of the counselling programme was to raise the level of competitiveness of Colombian handicraft production through design intervention and to achieve a better standing in international markets.

Work began in August 2001, with the consultant's first visit. The activities were geared, on the one hand, to direct counselling and evaluation of products along with the artisans and, on the other, to training through seminars and workshops with designers associated with the Design Laboratories of Artesanías de Colombia. The programme included:

- visits to the Design Laboratories of Armenia and Pasto for a study of the situation;

Garden, using earthy colours and natural fibres

- visits to craft communities and organization of workshops in different cities and municipalities of the country;
- evaluation of products for the benefit of artisans interested in participating in fairs organized by Artesanías de Colombia.

The consultant gave a seminar on 'Trends, Marketing, and Design for the International Market', with the aim of introducing designers and artisans to the training process.

The seminar was attended by 350 people, including designers linked to the Design Laboratories of Artesanías de Colombia, artisans, designers, design students, entrepreneurs, professors, and representatives of institutions associated with the sector.

The *Casa Colombiana* project took birth between the conclusion of this first stage and the emergence of the plan to seek international technical assistance. The project was jointly prepared by the experts and designers of Artesanías de Colombia.

The second phase, from August to December 2001, was carried out over the Internet, a medium through which P.J. Arañador and the Design Laboratories remained in constant contact. Through this means of communication, they exchanged ideas and technical plans, and defined the objectives of the first collection; in this way, production began in the artisan communities.

During 2002 and 2003, the provision of technical assistance continued to follow the same work scheme, with constant Internet-aided communication, and with the presence of the expert in the country for 30 days in a year. During each of his visits, he held seminars on Design and the Development of Products, Market Trends, International Marketing, and Participation in International Fairs.

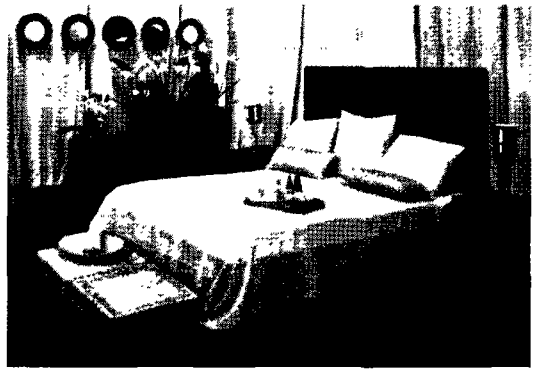
■ Methodology

P.J. Arañador led 50 designers specializing in the areas of industrial design, textile design, and graphic design, as well as architects, all linked to the Design Laboratories of Bogotá, Armenia, and Pasto. In turn, these specialists transferred the concepts that they learned to, and worked interactively with, 140 artisan communities identified throughout the country. Care was taken to ensure that each region of the country was represented and that the project was linked to indigenous, rural, and urban communities.

■ Distribution of Project Responsibilities

Six working committees were established, each with specific functions and methodologies, and each under a head designer or coordinator, who was responsible to the project coordinator.

- The purpose of the **Creative Committee** was to carry out the design proposals for the collection. These were based on innovative new concepts, or on the redesigning of existing products. The concepts were analysed and developed, and the proposals presented by the team of designers were evaluated and selected.



Bedroom, sugarcane headboard, fibre — and banana-fibre-woven cushion covers

- The **Technical Committee** prepared technical plans for the products and analysed the viability of production on the basis of materials, techniques, and processes. It also suggested the artisan communities that were capable of carrying out the proposals. The committee also evaluated the prototypes prepared and recommended changes, if any.

- The **Production Committee** was in charge of evaluating the production viability, coordinating preparation of prototypes, selecting workshops and artisan communities, and determining the technical specifications of products. It drew up strategies, implemented follow-up actions for production, and determined orders for the artisans (individual or community workshops).

- The **Marketing Committee** was in charge of handling inventories, supervising the warehouse, and coding the products with corresponding labels. It coordinated the sales and orders throughout the event, and worked along with the Production Committee to make deliveries after the event.

- The **Exhibition Committee** was responsible for the proposal for the presentation of the collection, for designing the installation, and acquiring all the necessary elements for the installation (structure, exhibitors, lighting, etc.). It also managed the logistics during the assemb-ling of the installation and coordinated activities throughout the event.

- The **Media Committee** designed and prepared the visual material supporting and advertising the project, through both the electronic and print media. It also prepared the catalogue for the collection and was responsible for the design and production of multimedia presentations.

■ Development of the Concept

The work began with the development of the concept, an activity in which all the designers took part. The aim was to find a 'Colombian look' based on one or more elements of

the national identity that would contribute to the concept of image construction.

During a brainstorming session, the idea of creating a house with a Colombian identity slowly took form until it finally became *Casa Colombiana*. Considering that each region of the country has unique characteristics, a typical yet differentiating element—like coffee—needed to be found.

Once the central theme was defined, the concept of the collection was prepared and product lines were created.

The concept was developed under the following parameters: contemporary, handcrafted, and of excellent quality.

■ **Study of Trends**

As part of the background research for the collection, a study was carried out on market trends for decorative items, which helped to determine the materials, textures, and colours that would be used. The market requirements provided the starting point, and the products developed had to corres-pond to these trends.

■ **Colour Palette**

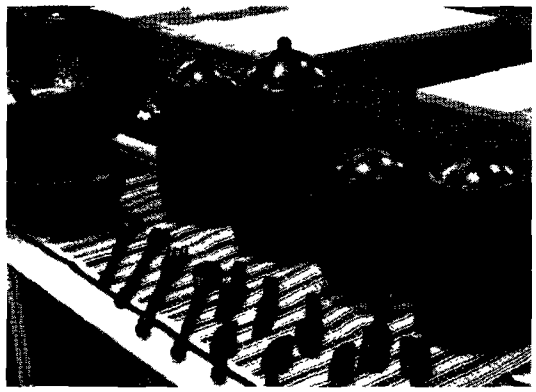
The colour palette of each collection is based on the colours of the inspirational theme or element. The basic colours and shades for each space are then selected.

■ **Forms**

The forms are also based on elements related to the theme and concept of the collection.

■ **Design Strategies**

- Delineate clearly the distinguishing features of the product (style, identity), genera-ting an aggregate value:
  - Establish identifying criteria
  - Select references and set priorities
  - Analyse markets and competition for trends according to the market niche
  - Redesign products
  - Safeguard existing successful products



Kitchen, red ceramic crockery and tucuma accessories

- Apply and intensify the use of design trends and fashions to strengthen the product image:
  - Undertake research into and seek feedback about contemporary trends
  - Create spaces for the exchange of information about trends (design journals, websites)
  - Hold brainstorming sessions
- Apply for and obtain registers and patents for intellectual property rights over products, lines, and collections:
  - Select products by category
  - Prepare the necessary documentation to fill in the registers
  - Study the conditions and benefits carefully
- Employ a common theme in the conceptual development of the collection:
  - Establish an entry point (coffee flower and bean)
  - Define a morphology to represent this theme: gradation, serial plan, geometrical abstraction. Establish the possible applications of this morphology to the products, whether in an evident or illustrative form.
- Use raw materials and gain a better understanding of their qualities and characteristics:
  - Gather and classify existing information on the subject

Dining room, wooden furniture accentuated with natural fibres

- Each designer according to his/her area of specialization should prepare a document describing the properties and characteristics of the fibres and/ or materials that he/she uses.

- Develop products with greater cultural identity references through creativity workshops that explore the forms and possibilities of materials:
  - Begin with the surroundings, while keeping in mind relevant techniques, traditions, and cultural traits

- Divide participants into working groups by assigning roles to each designer:
  - Each designer should prepare a written proposal describing his/her abilities and strengths for the purpose of achieving a better distribution of duties and assignments within the design group. This report should include details regarding the indivi-dual's design speciality, materials handled, and knowledge of the same.

- For production:
  - Work only with the workshops listed under the Production Chain Programmes.
  - Determine the speciality of each workshop, keeping in mind its infra-structure.
  - Formalize the exclusivity of production of these workshops through legal means.
  - Consult the commercial contacts in the list of existing providers in order to involve them in the Production Chain Programmes.

- Plan production in accordance with actual production time:
  - Follow product development.
  - Study time and movements.
  - Analyse costs according to each locality.

- Make an inventory of the successful products and connect them with the production chains:
  - Identify successful products.
  - Adjust processes and verify information in order to increase purchasing orders.
  - Adapt production in response to prevailing trends in colour and design concepts.
  - Pilot production schedules and plans.
  - Launch effective marketing efforts.

■ **Products**

Proposals were prepared for each space: garden, living room, dining room, kitchen, study, bedroom, and bathroom.

The Design Laboratories of Armenia and Pasto followed the process along with the Design Laboratory of Bogotá; they presented their proposals based on the craft materials and techniques peculiar to their regions.

The final decision was taken by the Philippine consultant and a committee from Artesanías de Colombia.

The aim of the collection was to develop new products, select traditional products that could be integrated into the collection, and choose products from earlier collections that could be reused.

■ **Materials, Techniques, and Crafts**

The huge variety of crafts and techniques that exists in Colombia is determined and influ-

enced by the kinds of raw materials available in the country. These include different kinds of wood; *guadua* (a type of bamboo found in Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela); vegetable fibres (wicker, pita fibre, banana fibre, *iraca*, esparto grass, sugarcane); cotton, wool, and silk; ceramic; leather; ivory; nut palm; bone; coconut; copper and other metals; rocks, etc.

■ **Work in the Communities**

Once the items to be produced have been chosen and the materials and techniques have been selected, the communities that are to be assigned the work are determined.

According to their work profiles and areas of specialization, the designers travel to different regions to follow up the work directly with the concerned artisans.

When working with artisan communities it is important to keep in mind that the work must be interactive and should be respectful of traditional methods. The design proposals should be technically feasible, and the artisans should be able to appropriate them in order to ensure the completion of production and achieve a commercially viable result.

During this stage, prototypes are prepared and technical instructions are given for the products, which are sent to the head office of Artesanías de Colombia.

The prototypes are analysed by the Technical Committee, which makes the necessary assessment. Once these recommendations are approved, the Commercial Department places orders to ensure sufficient availability of stock at the event.

■ **Launching the Collection and Market Testing**

Each collection is launched during Expoartesanías, a craft fair organized each year in December by Artesanías de Colombia along with the Bogotá Corporation of Fairs – Corferias. The fair, which lasts 12 days, receives more than 100,000 visitors; it is the most important event of its kind in Latin America.

Apart from enjoying the display, visitors also place orders. Surveys are carried out every day to gather information about enquiries made by visitors regarding products, prices, purchase motivations, and the economic strata to which they belong. This information is collected in order to create consumer profiles and hence cater to their needs with more precision and care.

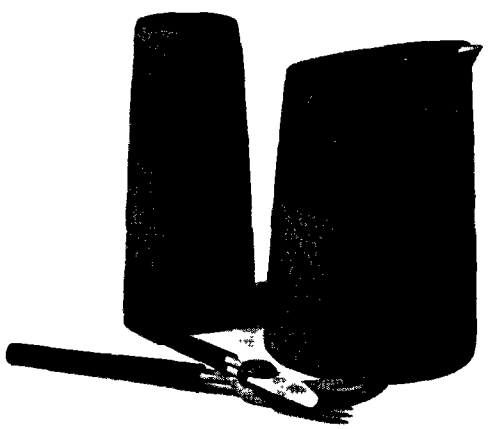
At the end of the fair, and based on the volume of sales made, a rigorous evaluation of the collection is done to identify factors that need to be improved or corrected.

5.2 Case Study: *Guadua* (variety of bamboo native to Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela)

- **Geographic location:** Quindio, Risaralda, and Caldas districts
- **Trade:** Working with *guadua*
- **Raw material:** *Guadua*

■ **Historical and Socio-economic Background**

Since 1985, Artesanías de Colombia has been organizing counselling and training sessions through the Design Laboratory of Armenia aimed at product development in different handicraft trades. In the coffee-cultivating regions of the country, the tradition of working with *guadua* has existed for so many years that it has now become a permanent means of subsistence for many workshops and for the many people who work there.



Guadua set : Vase, jug and serving spoons

Guadua raw material

In these regions, there are many kinds of artisans' workshops, which employ different techniques of handling *guadua* and create a variety of original and utilitarian products. The Design Laboratory of Armenia has been working with artisans from the coffee-cultivating regions since 1998. Their work is focused on trying to market *guadua* products, sold normally only on a local level (where their only displays are at local fairs) and on a national level, with the eventual possibility of being exported.

- **Related Products: Problems and Solutions**

After the earthquake on 25 January 1999, Artesanías de Colombia S.A., with the support of the Corporation for the Development of Small Industries, began holding a fair exclusively for the craft workshops located in the coffee-growing areas, in the 'Plaza de los Artesanos', in Bogotá. The intention was to help craftspeople who were in some way affected by the catastrophe. Thanks to this initiative, the Colombian Design Laboratory for Crafts (CDLC) was able to carry out a census and survey of the affected workshops in the region, with the aim of linking these craftspeople to this fair, and hence giving them the opportunity to market their products at extremely low costs.

CDLC began an intensive training programme for the craftspeople to ensure that marketing efforts would be successful. Training and counselling sessions on product diversification, creating product lines, improving quality, costing, and natural finishes among other topics were held, along with creativity workshops to generate new proposals and identify alternatives for the use of *guadua*.

The pricing 'strategy' of *guadua* products is generally focused on the regional tourist market. Due to this, handicrafts made in these workshops are sold at relatively low prices (between 5 and 10 USD) given the nature of the market, the fabrication time, and the size of the piece. However, the majority of workshops did not possess the proper methodology of calculating product costing, and therefore the determination of a sale price was quite inaccurate. The result was that the artisans did not earn what they deserved for their work.

The costs and prices calculated by the workshops were based more on the emotional and sentimental factors attached to their products rather than on factors such as the actual time involved, the cost of raw materials, and all other components of production costs, that is, the variables that ensure that the sale of products is profitable and productive.

Moreover, the workshops did not promote their products in any way, and since they did not know the processes involved in determining the actual cost, the rise and fall in prices depended completely on what the buyer was willing to pay for a particular craft item. In the majority of cases, these promotions and sales usually gave the buyer the advantage, since he/she would get an excellent handicraft at a price that often did not even cover the basic fabrication costs.

The handicrafts produced in these workshops are influenced by the nature of the market, the environment, and the low prices of the products on which most workshops depend. The products cater primarily to regional and tourist markets, to customers with low purchasing power, hence with little aggregate value being attached to their design and utility. Generally speaking, the products lack quality and their finish leaves much to be desired, at least in the minds of buyers.

- **Development of the Counselling Sessions**

CDLC worked with the *guadua* workshops for three years at the fairs in the coffee-cultivating regions. During this time, activities directed towards improving four basic aspects of handicraft production were carried out:

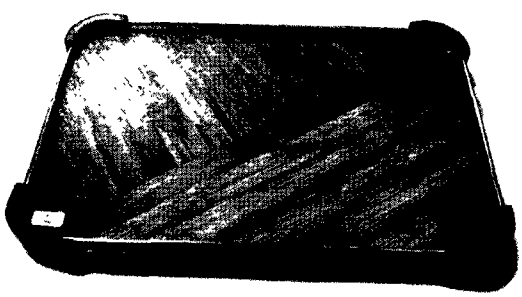
1. At the costing level, the artisans of the workshops received training and technical assistance from the designers at CDLC in the basics of costing, which allowed them to understand clearly their costing structure and organize their accounting system. They also learned how to determine their break-even rate for any new project being considered, and to calculate the internal rate of return on their invest-

ments. Most importantly, they learned how to fix proper prices, which would benefit both the workshops as well as the buyers.

2. Similarly, by introducing a costing structure for their products, the artisans became aware of the need to reorganize their workshops and review the manner in which they carried out the various tasks involved in production. This realization prompted the artisans to revise the distribution of their production processes and rearrange the physical plan of their work space, since the costing methodo-logy necessitates a clear identification of each and every activity or step involved in obtaining the finished product. They were also trained in industrial security norms pertaining to each activity, guaranteeing the well-being of the artisans. This led to the proper and efficient organization of the production process.

3. Thanks to the commercial events held by Artesanías de Colombia S.A. in Bogotá, the handicraft workshops have been exposed to the tastes and trends of the most cosmopolitan and contemporary market in the country. This has resulted in the need to emphasize design as the fundamental means of remaining competitive in the craft market. Bogotá specifically is the only place in the country that attracts a clientele with high purchasing power, but who at the same time demand craft products of an international standard.

4. Hence, design intervention and the development of new CDLC products have become the most important means of helping the workshops in improving their sales, quality, and efficiency. In this way, through an interaction between designers and artisans, CDLC has proposed various new product lines targeted at the highest segments of the market in the most efficient manner. They will preserve the traditional identity of the craft, which originated in the municipality of Salento, a reputation based on the artisans' dexterity and skill in working with *guadua*; they will improve the quality of the product with regard to the raw materials used and the finish of each piece. Similarly, the design of each product has been carefully planned so as to cater directly and efficiently to the needs and tastes of the market.



Guadua tray, with guadua bark

■ **Impact**

Year after year, these activities have led the workshops to achieve sustained growth rates of sales, averaging 22 per cent annually. This growth has allowed some workshops access to better equipment for production, which has led to a noticeable improvement in the quality of life of the artisans, and on the whole, to a significant development of their trade.

5.3 Case Study: Ethnic Furniture Collection: Innovation and Improvement of Competitiveness

- **Name of group/community:** Wooden handicraft sector
- **Geographic location:** Pasto – Nariño
- **Number of people in the group:** 34 small industries
- **Trade:** Wood carving, basketry, hat making, horizontal-loom weaving
- **Raw material(s):** A combination of materials can be used:
  - *Iraca* and wood
  - Pita fibre and wood
  - Wheat stem and wood
  - Pierced wood
  - Fibres and wood

■ Historical and Socio-economic Background

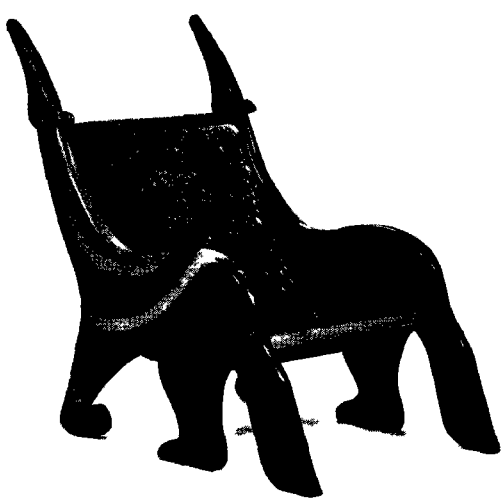
The southern part of Colombia is home to the Department (province) of Nariño, whose material and non-material traditions are deeply respected by local residents; here age-old customs and ideas are conserved and the handicraft traditions are handed down from generation to generation with devotion and skill. This region is well known for its production of cabinets and musical instruments, and plaiting in chaff and *mopa mopa* (a local vegetable resin).

■ Related Products: Problems and Solutions

The case study sought to: obtain products based on the specific properties of the raw materials from Nariño; spread knowledge about the techniques of the region; find combinations or mixtures of new and functional materials; expand the creative capacity of local artisans; facilitate an exchange of ideas among artisans, designers, and students of design in the region; and, using a teamwork approach, generate the concept of an 'ethnic furniture' collection.

A survey of the community was carried out, and it yielded the following conclusions:

- Lack of innovation and identity in the products
- Lack of knowledge of technical norms regarding furniture, ergonomics, and the environment



Design Intervention Line, Creation

- Lack of proper drying and treatment of wood
- Lack of knowledge of tech-niques of natural finishes
- Deficiency in technical drawings
- Informal management of accounting
- Low production levels

■ Development of the Counselling Sessions

The process of developing this collection began with the gathering of data on the standards and practices related to wood. A total of 130 technically related norms were identified. These were prioritized in a manual according to the type of products that were being worked on: those that were considered mandatory for all finished products; those that would allow experimental trials without a laboratory; and those with related anthropometric and ergonomic characte-ristics.

Five working groups were then formed, each consisting of three artisans, two designers, and two design students. Each group worked with a combination of materials, as described below:

Group 1: *Iraca* and wood

Group 2: Pita fibre and wood

Group 3: Wheat stem and wood

Group 4: Pierced wood

Group 5: Fibres and wood

Each group had to fulfil the following goals:

- Organize the proposals into clear groups, each with a sample of the experimental material.
- Create a design 'concept' for each proposal.
- Share all the proposals with the design group.
- Exhibit the results on a billboard so that all participants could follow the same process and provide feedback.
- Establish a database of written and photographic material on the possibilities of

raw material(s) and/or the experiments conducted.

These five groups generated 255 experiments using wood, natural fibres, and leather, and 300 outlines of products, including lines and design concepts. Out of these, 40 outlines were selected; these met the formal requirements regarding the characteristics and functions of the combinations of materials, enjoyed market demand, and whose prices were within the reach of the target market.

As far as improving the existing products was concerned, 15 product lines were redesigned. Adjustments were made in terms of the combination of materials used, colours, finishes, dimensions, and proportions. A technical study was carried out on assemb-ling and constructing the prototypes.

In addition to the development of the collection, a workshop was conducted for the beneficiary group dealing with research into natural finishes and training, emphasizing the critical areas of drying and treatment of wood, technical drawing, application of natural finishes for wood, basic accounting, and financial planning.

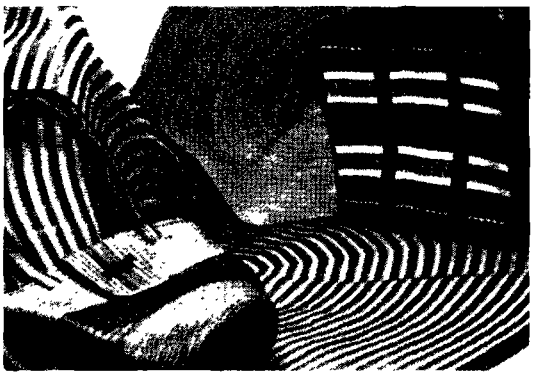
■ **Impact**

Pilot production of the selected lines was started. Representatives of small industries were selected to participate and market the developed lines during Expoartesanías 2003. A survey indicated that 80 per cent of the lines exhibited were successful. Subsequently, the Association of Small Industries was established to carry out a project entitled 'Ethnic'.

5.4 Case Study: Zenú Resguardo, San Andrés de Sotavento: Diversification, Expansion of Product Lines, and Innovation

Design Laboratory of Colombia, Bogotá Unit

- **Name of group/community:** Zenú Shelter, San Andrés de Sotavento
- **Geographic location:** Departments of Córdoba and Sucre; Zenú Resguardo



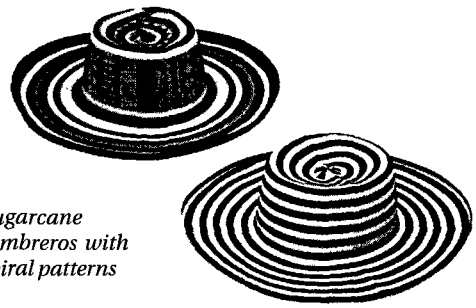
Diversification of sugarcane products

- **Number of people in the group:** More than 500 artisans from the Zenú Shelter
- **Trades:** Hat making, braiding, needlework
- **Raw material:** Caña flecha fibre

■ **Historical and Socio-economic Background**

The Vueltiao hat is without doubt the craft *par excellence* of Colombia, and one of the most well-known and popular symbols of the country. Its pre-Columbian origins are clearly revealed in its design and colours. The primary region of its production is the Zenú Resguardo in San Andrés de Sotavento, which includes the territories of Córdoba and Sucre. This area includes various jurisdictions, among them Tuchín, where the maximum amount of work in product innovation has been done in the last few years. The millennium braid is woven in this region, employing symbolic figures drawn from the alphabet of the Zenú ethnic group. The black and white pictograms are the heritage of the Zebú Shelter community, whose members stand out as the builders and engineers of the channel of rivers under the Sinú and San Jorge.

After a complicated process involving the classification, scraping, polishing, dehydration, boiling, and colouring of the fibres, the artisans proceed to braid and combine the black and white fibres in harmonious patterns to form figures ('lineage') that symbolize the totemic elements of the Sinú culture, with picturesque names like 'Crocodile Flower', 'Butterfly', and 'Heart of the Fan', among others.



Sugarcane sombreros with spiral patterns

■ **Related Products: Problems and Solutions**

The Design Laboratory for Crafts and Small and Medium Enterprises emphasized the need to create cooperatives in the production centres to promote the Sombrero Vueltiao (the Vueltiao hat), strengthen marketing efforts, diversify weaving techniques using sugarcane, and improve the quality of life of the indigenous people.

Alongside this project, studies on agronomics with respect to the cultivation of caña flecha, determining the beneficiaries, and cultivating experimental crops throughout the year in order to contribute successfully to national and international markets, were also conducted. This is meant as a long-term project, ranging between 10 to 15 years, to ensure that the community will respond favourably to the new production and marketing techniques proposed by the design consultants.

■ **Development of the Counselling Sessions**

The project was of a regional nature, covering mainly the indigenous communities of San Andrés de Sotavento Resguardo. It began with inspection visits by the consultants and designers, who studied the actual situation in the region and compiled photographic and technical records of the products in question. On the basis of this report, a work methodology, an outline of innovation and diversification possibilities, and types of counselling sessions for artisans to help them reach their goals were formulated. Counselling sessions were conducted on the following topics: organization of production for artisans; development of business mentality in administration; costing; and managing of accounts. With regard to innovation in design, the consultants began with the diversification of the original *sombrero* (hat) made out of caña flecha fibre, then passed on to the production of items woven into spirals (like containers or rugs), and diversified them using the same braid, but on flat surfaces and woven over a rigid base. This process allowed for the expansion of possibilities in the use of the same material.

■ **Impact**

The product diversification suggested by the consultants of Artesanías de Colombia and the improvement in the finish have stimulated the expansion of the market at the national level. Here, aside from exhibiting and selling their products at handicraft fairs and markets, the artisans also provide raw materials (braids and weaves on a base) for newer products with inlay work, which add more value to the product. These products are welcomed widely by local as well as foreign buyers.

5.5 Case Study: Bolívar Municipality

- **Name of the group/community:** Indigenous Community of Yanacona, Bolivar (Cauca)
- **Geographic location:** Bolivar Municipality, Cauca Department, western region; includes the Angoní, El Cidral, and Placetillas localities
- **Number of people in the group:** 50 craftswomen
- **Trade:** Weaving on a vertical loom or *guanga*; based on indigenous tradition and heritage
- **Raw material:** Sheep's wool

■ **Historical and Socio-economic Background**

The textile tradition of the southern part of Cauca dates back to when the Quechua-speaking people established themselves in the region, before the arrival of the Spaniards. The men were engaged in farming, and the

women spun cotton and sisal to weave blankets, sashes, belts, and bags.

After the Spanish introduced sheep in the region, the indigenous people began using wool. In the south of Colombia, weaving was a supplementary activity for agricultural workers, and was specifically an activity for women. The women contributed to household income by selling blankets, mainly to pay the taxes imposed by the Spaniards.

During the colonial period, this trade was considered a domestic activity. It was only in the nineteenth century that textile weaving began to be recognized as a technique, and in the twentieth century it became an important industry in the country.

There are close to 8,000 indigenous people in the region. At present, artisanal weaving as an ancestral tradition is preserved primarily by women, and their knowledge is passed down from generation to generation.

The region has been affected by coca cultivation, and Artesanías de Colombia in a joint effort with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme took the initiative to rescue the traditional trades and values of the communities, and create sustainable employment and income-generation alternatives to improve the conditions of the local people.

■ Related Products: Problems and Solutions

Even before beginning the manufacture of related products, this project sought to expand the economic possibilities of the weavers as an alternative to the cultivation of illicit goods. The revival of the handicraft trade began in 1988, so that the techniques, raw materials, and traditional products would again become part of the community: from the *guanga* (vertical loom) came new forms of traditional items like ponchos, shawls, and sashes. The sashes are used like belts and employed primarily by women to wrap their newborns and carry them on their backs.

While the craft was revived, it appeared that the products enjoying both traditional and popular demand could not enter the present-day craft market due to two factors: first, the number of local pieces is limited to the requirements of the local people themselves, and caters to a small local market; and second, the considerable weight of the products due to the manner in which the wool is spun.

A primary analysis of the potential of the fabrics, and their possible application in decorative objects, was conducted with the intention of expanding the market. The investigation attempted to find different uses for the products while maintaining the techniques and materials already in use.

The counselling sessions began with a search for diversification by developing decorative items, transforming heavy shawls into rugs and designing cushions, table runners, throws for chairs and sofas, upholstery for furniture and cloth, which, when combined with leather, could be used for handbags and wallets for the contemporary lifestyle markets as well as fashion shows like the Colombian Identity Catwalk held at the 2004 Milan Moda Donna.

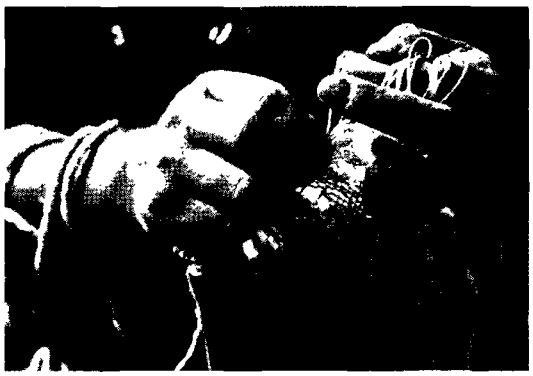
The launch of the first collection was held at the Artesanías de Colombia headquarters in 1991. The products have remained in the market, and the company still lends its support to these communities. Some artisans have received awards such as the Medal for Handicraft Mastery granted by the company, and recently one of the weavers had the opportunity to travel to Milan during Fashion Week 2004.

■ Development of the Counselling Sessions

Counselling sessions were conducted in the community as follows:

- Revival of handicraft know-how, 1988

Product line in leather and pita fibre



Artisans weaving pita fibre

- Diversification of production, 1989, 1991
- Technical assistance for products previously diversified, 1993, 1994
- Theory of colour and the use of colour in products with industrial dyes, 1995
- Introduction of the concept of product lines and the manufacture of product lines, 1996
- Production stages of product lines, 1997
- Industrial dyes for wool, and the manufacture of new product lines, 2001–02
- Production of fabrics for the Colombian Identity fashion show, 2003–04

■ **Products Resulting from the Technical Assistance Provided**

- Rugs, table cloths, table runners, cushion covers, and scarves, 1989
- Knapsacks, bolster covers, cushion covers with borders, pillowcases, wall-hangings, and leather works, 1991; *Guangas and Zingas* (Vertical and Horizontal Looms) Exhibition
- Adding colour to cushion covers, cloth rugs, and knapsacks, 1995
- Living room collection (rugs, table runners, cushion covers) and kitchen collection (rugs, table and chair covers) with different colour combinations, 1996—97
- Cushion cover collection and armchairs upholstered with fabric dyed with industrial and natural dyes, 2001—02
- Textiles for bags, 2003—04

■ **Impact**

The greatest impact on the artisans was the revival of their craft traditions and the securing of a respectful source of income. For them, this opened up new possibilities in foreign markets and provided access to national and international fairs, where they could exhibit their know-how and skills and sell their products. Their products have gained a distinctive identity and are sought after because they represent a living craft tradition with a high design content.

5.6 Case Study: San Agustín Municipality

- **Name of the group/community:** San Agustín Community, District of Huila; includes the El Estrecho del Magdalena, Obando, and Cabecera Municipalities
- **Geographic location:** San Agustín Municipality, Department of Huila, central-eastern region
- **Number of people in the group:** 50 craftswomen
- **Trade:** Weaving on a vertical loom or *guanga*; based on indigenous tradition and heritage
- **Raw materials:** Banana and pita fibre and yarn

■ **Historical and Socio-economic Background**

The practice of weaving on a vertical loom or *guanga* supposedly comes from Cauca. Wool was substituted by pita fibre and woven in the same way, in two distinct styles based on the raw material used. The first is a fine textile, in which the fibres are not spun but joined by knotting them together. The second is a thick textile, in which the fibres are spun.

After the use of pita fibre was widely accepted, in the 1980s a craftswoman began to use fibre from the banana stem, using it in the same way as the pita fibre. Other artisans also began to use the banana fibre, and soon the municipality became involved in the

management and extraction of the material on a national level; it was the sole producer until only a few years ago. Nevertheless, San Agustín continues to occupy the primary position in terms of the production and manufacture of banana-fibre handicrafts.

This craft occupies a significant place in the municipality, and the women weave with great skill. It offers them a source of extra income as well as a way to be self-sufficient.

■ **Related Products: Problems and Solutions**

The traditional products of the region are table sets, small bags, finely woven souvenirs, and pieces in a thicker weave. These products are aimed strictly at the local market whose internal flow is on an average acceptable, despite a fall due to a drop in tourism in the area.

The manufacturing process is still entirely manual, from the extraction of the fibre to the spinning (which is mostly done using a spindle), and finally the weaving of the fabric, which is done entirely by hand. This means that the production process is very slow, even though neither the selling price nor the use of the product compensates for the time spent in production.

The raw material, specifically the pita fibre, is known in Colombia for being cheap, which diminishes the value of the craftsmanship that goes into each finished piece. Banana fibre more often than not goes unnoticed by consumers given its similarity to pita fibre, so the two are generally seen as being the same.

With these factors in mind, the design counselling sessions were aimed at finding more design alternatives that would open out new avenues in the external market. Recently, they have tried to emphasize the main difference between this craft and national handicraft production, that is, involving the use of banana fibre.

■ **Development of the Counselling Sessions**

The sessions began in the 1990s, and are being conducted to date. The following outcomes have been achieved:

- Workshop on natural dyes, using materials of the region.
- Research for compiling a record of the trade and a study of the weaving practices concerning banana and pita fibres on the vertical loom.
- Improving the quality of traditional crafts: finely woven place mats, thickly woven bags.
- Fine-tuning the dyeing process using industrial anilines and improving the use of natural dyes.
- Redesigning craft items and developing new proposals, including weaving techniques on the loom and crochet.
- Adopting techniques for the special industrial dyeing of cellulose fibres and developing a colour card to substitute for the use of anilines.
- Diversification of production and proposals for new product lines.

■ **Results of the Counselling Sessions**

- Improving the finish of thickly woven traditional fabrics
- Producing thickly woven fabrics with natural dyes
- Producing thickly woven cushion covers with banana or pita fibre yarn
- Producing crocheted cushion covers with banana fibre yarn
- Producing finely woven place mats and table runners made from banana or pita fibre
- Producing a line of finely woven cushion covers made with banana fibre

■ **Impact**

The guided design process has raised the standards of handicrafts, facilitating their easy entry into markets on a national level and eventually on an international level. Consequently, there has been a notable improvement in the incomes of artisans. Pro-

duction has improved to such an extent that the craft sector has guaranteed itself a permanent position in the municipality.

5.7 Case Study: National Jewellery Programme

- **Name of the group/community:** Communities of jewellers and goldsmiths/silversmiths from the auriferous districts, and the 34 municipalities and the 13 districts of Colombia that have a tradition of jewellery-making.
- **Geographic location:** Antioquia, Bolívar, Caldas, Cauca, Córdoba, Cundinamarca, Chocó, Guainia, Nariño, Quindío, Risaralda, Santander, and Vaupés.
- **Number of people in the group:** 1,535 people, 65 per cent men and 35 per cent women
- **Trade:** Jewellery making and gold/silver work
- **Raw materials:** Gold, silver, semi-precious stones, wood, seeds, etc.

Historical and Socio-economic Background

Socio-cultural factors influence the jewellery-making community more than any other section in the country. Colombian jewellery has been classified into traditional, contemporary, and design jewellery. It is rich in variety, technique, geometric forms, materials, and aesthetic elements, which symbolize and embody the creative energy of the most talented and skilful Colombian artisans.

The cultures of south-western Colombia (Tumaco, Calima, Malagana, Cauca, San

Window — gold and silver rings, modern filigree — gold and silver rings

Double weave — silver ring

Agustín, Tierradentro, Nariño, Quimbaya, and Tolima) were the first to work with precious metals, found in fertile river valleys and bends. The barter system allowed for an exchange of ideas and techniques like gilding, alloying, smelting, granulation, and lost-wax casting in the different regions of the area. The encounter between the two worlds—the pre-Hispanic and the Hispanic—inspired the conquered peoples to weave the fabulous tale of 'The Legend of El Dorado', while the Conquistadores in their search for riches encountered gold and silver threads and golden Moorish cities with the finest filigree.

Pre-Hispanic metalwork clearly demonstrated the influence of indigenous ideas, such as the elements of the universe—earth, stars, people, animals, and plants—in perfect equilibrium. Post-Hispanic designs survived in the goldsmith communities of the Pacific coast, the Caribbean, and the Andean regions, which now depend on this craft tradition for their livelihood.

Colombian jewellery making is influenced by the interrelations among symbols, traditions, customs, values, and norms that the pre-Hispanic, post-Hispanic, modern, postmodern, and contemporary jeweller/goldsmith/silversmith communities have woven together in the construction of their national identity. Just like the country itself, jewellery making is a polychromatic, multi-ethnic, happy, festive, fragmented, and specialized craft. It is the product of the peoples' collective fantasies, who have displayed all their creative energies from generation to generation. Traditional jewellery making commu-

nities specializing in skills like filigree and setting are found in Mompóx, Barbacoas, Santa Fe de Antioquia, Quibdó, Istmina, Condoto, Andagoya, and Tadó. In small localities and cities, jewellery making is a business, calling for mastery of techniques like setting, lost-wax casting, engraving, and, in some cases, filigree. The centres of contemporary jewellery design are big cities like Bogotá, D.C. and Medellín.

The 1990s marked the beginning of the boom in contemporary jewellery making in Colombia. Its pioneers described it as 'an artistic expression open to new materials and a language more personal than commercial'. The work of pioneering schools like Nuria Carulla has led to the emergence of jewellery as a representation of national identity.

Currently, the jewellery and metalwork sector of Colombia is composed of 65 per cent men and 35 per cent women between the ages of 20 and 50; of these, 40 per cent have not completed primary schooling, while 30 per cent have, and the remaining hold technical certificates or university degrees, especially in the capital cities.

The techniques used are in the following order of priority: setting, lost-wax casting, stone setting, engraving, filigree, enamel work, and work with precious and semi-precious stones.

Most of the artisans have been initiated into the trade through their families or through courses offered at different institutions. Designs are copied from magazines or are based on specifications provided by clients. About 76 per cent of them earn their livelihood solely through this trade, while the remaining combine this occupation with something else. Their workshops are characterized by a poorly defined division of labour between men and women and low levels of technology. About 50 per cent of them own their own houses, while the rest are rent-paying tenants.

■ Related Products: Problems and Solutions

The National Jewellery Programme has contributed towards improving the country's jewellery-making and goldsmith/silversmith sectors by creating viable sources of employment, improving the technological processes involved in the production system and the design process, and stimulating their application to guarantee high-quality products. It has also helped educate the craftspeople to use resources efficiently, preserve their sustainability, and follow best practices regarding marketing.

Some of the solutions proposed through design include:

- A strong need to redesign products to cater to different market niches. New lines and collections with innovative forms, materials, and uses are developed to facilitate this. In this connection, the need was felt for comparing both national as well as international experiences, combining the traditional with the modern, and juxtaposing local pre-ferences with a global perspective.
- The need to collect and analyse data regarding potential market demand, both national and international. In order to achieve this goal, specialists in fashion and jewellery were consulted to explain and analyse cultural experiences.

Pieces from the catalogue

Rainbow — gold and silver ring

- The manufacturers of jewellery market their products without considering the need to reduce costs, minimize production processes, produce in large quantities, and enhance the aggregate value.
- The marketing channels are closely linked to the homes or small workshops of the artisans. This confines them to a local context of a closed nature, and prevents them from having access to innovative design and effective techniques necessary to produce marketable jewellery.

■ **Development of the Counselling Sessions**

- **International Cooperation from Brazil (Barroso Group)**

The International Design Programme 'Towards New Colombian Jewellery' allowed international and national designers and jewellers to analyse and suggest, in an interactive process, a spectrum of innovative proposals regarding the position of jewellery making in the external market based on traditional and contemporary technological processes.

To propose is to construct something that does not exist; it is to innovate form and content, to redefine the appropriation and use of conceptual tools that are the deciding factors for the production of different aesthetic elements. The designer is committed to the client, and his product is not determined by his personal tastes and ideas; the designer's own style does not matter because his style is determined by the market niche to which he caters.

A design without a concept is not a design. When one begins to design, one should begin with the construction of a conceptual framework that lends support to aesthetic expressions. An exchange of knowledge, views, and research are all important elements in this process.

- The workshop—seminar created awareness in the minds of the participants of the need to change their manner of thinking, and the importance of making jewellery production more effective and efficient, based on innovative proposals, given the fact that marketing challenges have made the market increasingly competitive. The focus was on the development of new mental attitudes that would allow one to recognize and value the most remarkable elements of Colombian culture.
- The participants took up the challenge to produce and offer unusual products to the public, that is, innovative products that motivate customers to make a first-time purchase.
- The consumer demands characteristic of different market niches were examined. By putting themselves in the shoes of the buyers, artisans could completely understand the desires and needs of consumers, which in turn allowed them to manufac-ture products to truly satisfy the needs of the clients.
- Designers and jewellers reflected on the motivation behind undertaking collective, harmonious, and positive work in the process of creating products for various market niches.
- With all of the above factors in mind, new lines of quality jewellery were developed for a consumer market increasingly more demanding and aware of global trends.

Some of the techniques used were:

- Exhibitions by specialists in Colombian iconography and national identity
- Brainstorming without reference to specific topics

- Architectural and cultural fieldwork
- Video presentation
- Brainstorming on specific topics
- Construction of a conceptual framework
- Working in groups to think of concepts that could satisfy the exigencies of the different market niches
- Developing proposals in the form of plans and sketches
- Projection and development of product lines and collections

■ **Resulting Products**

The final product opened out new possibilities of niche-market-oriented jewellery, for instance, for housewives, working women, and other groups of young consumers.

■ **Impact**

- A total of 12 designers and 12 jewellers from different parts of the country were trained.
- The participants replicated the workshop seminar in 34 other localities.
- The theme of national identity was illustrated in 48 pieces of jewellery.

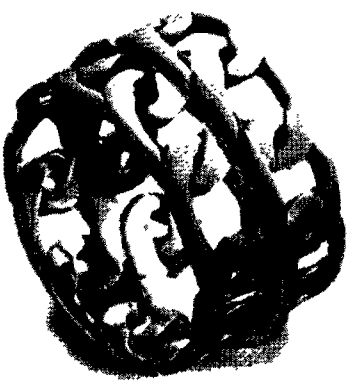
International Cooperation from Italy (Diplomado Scuola D'Arte e Mestieri Di Vicenza)

The idea proposed by Scuola D'Arte e Mestieri Di Vicenza was based on the recognition and analysis of the different historical and cultural backgrounds of the participants. They had complete freedom over the design and production of jewellery, which was unique to Colombian culture.

The formative process dealt with the conceptual and methodological assimilation of the different historical, cultural, and technological factors, and the promotion and understanding of different creative and technical abilities. The whole process was geared to the production of items with a perfect finish, each with its own identity.

The seminar was based on two models: a design model and a technical model. The first involved communication theory and the study of the communicative value of jewellery both in the past and the present, the projection method, selection and interpretation of motifs with cultural significance, and the use of ideas to invent new forms. This model coincided with the creative planning stage and the designing of jewellery pieces under the principle of originality. The second model explored the techniques of micro-fusion, metallurgy, engraving, and stone-setting, with a strong emphasis on finishes and high quality of the product.

- Contribute to the improvement of the productiveness and competitiveness of the gold/silver and jewellery sectors, and to the quality-control system for Colombian products.
- Disseminate concepts and methodologies based on historical, cultural, and technological elements, in order to promote and inspire the creative and technical abilities required for the conception and realization of impeccable pieces with their own identities.
- Introduce the proposed innovative elements in Colombian jewellery design to give the pieces a competitive edge in national and international markets.
- Demonstrate a formative process focusing on the assimilation and potential of various technological skills that are also responsible for finished products with market potential.
- Inspire the creation of a local product, traditional yet modern, that maintains its



Princess Zora — gold and silver band

cultural identity and at the same time satisfies the demands and tastes of contemporary lifestyles.

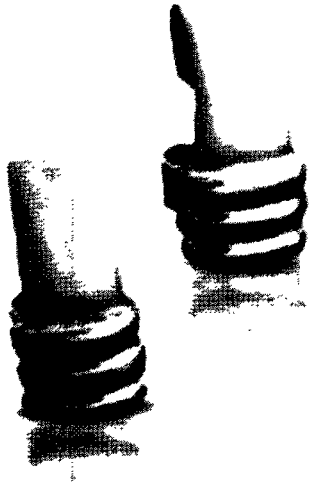
- Understand the significance of jewellery as an element of personal, social, and historic communication.
- Elaborate the planning and creative processes involved in the task, and the conception of the work plan and its execution.
- Explore the techniques of micro-fusion, metallurgy and stone-setting with the aim of eventually increasing production levels, giving aggregate value, linking precious and semi-precious gems and jewellery, and constantly improving the quality of the final product, which are all fundamental factors in guaranteeing the quality and competitiveness of Colombian products in the international market.

The techniques used included:

- Holding concept exhibitions related to communication and creative projection using universal references to gems as communicative elements
- Holding exhibitions of related products to help carry out the projects
- Undertaking an exploratory or initial study of different local or national elements with the aim of solving the identified problem or defining the starting point; defining the initial phase of undertaking the task
- Compiling and interpreting data on Colombian culture, including scenery and landscape. Information pertaining to subjects such as geometric forms, two-dimensional forms, and other physical elements were all later regrouped under the categories of natural, cultural, figurative, and geometric forms.
- Undertaking architectural, cultural, and landscape-based fieldwork
- Redesigning selected elements in the original style to create new images that would fulfil specific communicative intentions
- Recognizing and using the codes of visual expression in a functional way, which is related to the communicative intentions
- Recognizing and applying the appropriate techniques correctly
- Creating and developing an idea sketch or graphic representation in terms of its flexibility
- Selecting motifs
- Taking the initial image out of its context
- Putting back the image in its context and classifying the image typologically
- Translating the sketch and applying technical tests in order to identify possible flaws in the project regarding the proportions, dimensions, and construc-tion of the object, and to give it a clear visual representation
- Using appropriate production techniques and launching the work plan, to guarantee a well-functioning communicative system and maintain high standards of finish and quality

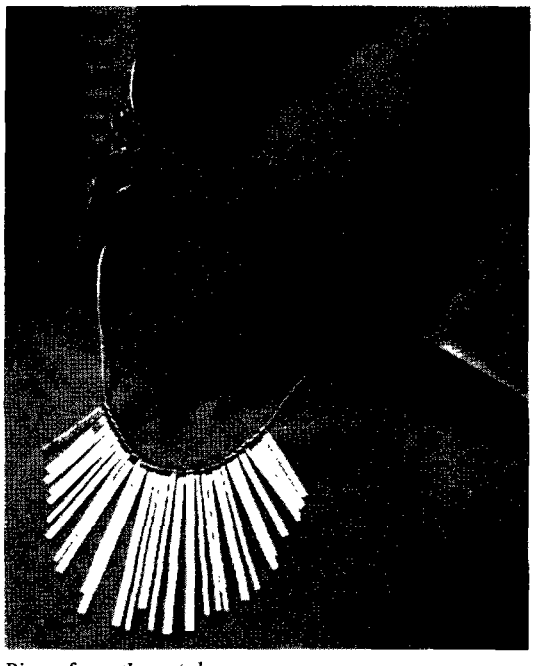
Each participant was expected to maintain a work journal, in which he/she was to record the following details:

- The sources of inspiration, and selecting one of them



Princess Zora — gold and silver bands

- The conceptual guidelines for the proposal
- The structural transformations of the source of inspiration, that is to say, the geometric de-composition and composition of the guiding elements of the project
- The typology of the jewellery to be developed, both as an artistic and commercial object; as a unique piece; and as a piece that can be reproduced, along with the technical requirements for this
- Describe briefly, in two or three lines, aspects of the participant's professional life, but not in the form of a curriculum vitae



Pieces from the catalogue

This exercise made possible the achievement of the following objectives:

- The prototype
- The technical specifications of the jewellery
- The plans for the same
- The production specifications for the same

■ Resulting Products

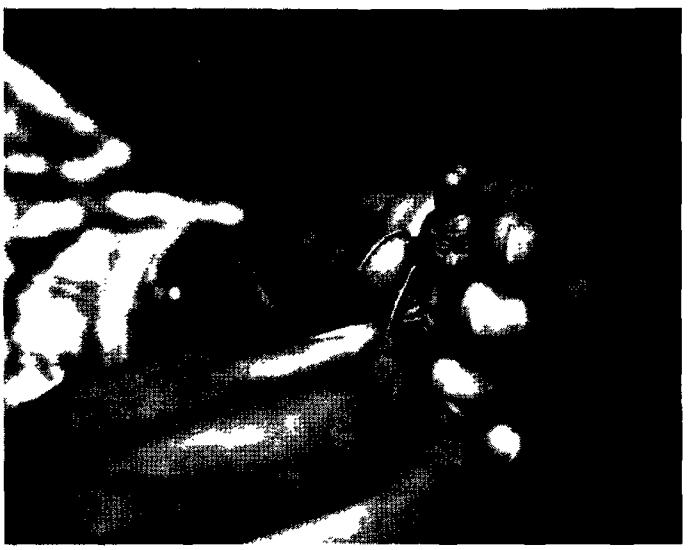
As the final result, high-quality products were developed using conceptual design tools and the techniques of lost-wax casting, setting, engraving, and stone-setting.

■ Impact

- A total of 37 designers and jewellers from around the country were trained.
- The participants conducted similar seminars in 34 different localities.
- A total of 100 jewellery items were developed.

SECTION VI

Guidelines



Guidelines

6.1 CREATING THE FRAMEWORK FOR INTERACTION: SOME GUIDELINES

Design is not just a product manifestation. It is a process-driven exercise concerned with resolving problems and with improving the quality of life. Design involves decision making and innovation. It is a holistic exercise of looking at things from a fresh perspective. Design intervention involves not just the designer and the artisan, but also many other people and processes, including materials, technologies, sellers and buyers of crafts, and markets.

Craft consists of a series of processes, not a single process. Thus, when viewing a craft, one should regard it in all its processes. Design intervention can occur at one or more points in a process or processes. Intervention could involve designing new products; redesigning existing products, with changes in shape, size, colour, surface ornamentation, function and utility; exploring new markets and reviving lapsed markets; applying traditional skills to meet new opportunities and challenges; and introducing new materials, new processes, and new tools and technologies. Design intervention is an interface between tradition and modernity, and calls for matching craft production to the needs of modern living. It can, and has been shown to, play a role in empowering the disenfranchised and the marginalized.

'Is design intervention in crafts different from a typical design project in the organized sector?'

There are often some key differences that require that artisans be addressed differently. These differences are defined by issues governing the scale of operations; access to capital; market opportunities and market intelligence; marketing and distribution channels; and accounting and business practices. These factors—which are critical to conducting and developing business opportunities and linking any business activity to mainstream commerce—are often lacking in the case of artisans.

6.1.1 Determining the Reasons for the Intervention

It is critical to determine the reasons for the design intervention because these will directly influence the methods and strategies used, the processes adopted, the scope and time frame, and the expected outcomes of the exercise. A designer identifies the problem by asking questions about needs—of the craft, of the artisan, and of the market. Among the various reasons for intervention are:

- **Intervention to preserve a heritage, a dying craft, and a way of life**

- **Is one seeking to preserve cultural values and crafts as a cultural symbol?** If so, then a scholarly attitude focused on research and study, accompanied by genuine concern and passion, is required. Skilled artisans are increasingly leaving their family professions of countless generations and turning to other jobs. Also, many craft traditions are oral traditions. In the absence of documentation, the oral traditions, once lost, can seldom be retrieved. These traditional crafts need to be protected and revived, since they have a potential for tomorrow that they may not have today. Among the many crafts that are in need of preservation is the Chamba *rumal* (see case study in Section III). The importance of any craft practice on the verge of disappearance needs to be articulated for its cultural and historical significance.

■ **Intervention to create a database to support proactive intervention**

- The designer's role here is to help research, analyse, categorize, and document the craft tradition so that this knowledge will be protected and accessible. It can also involve preserving a way of life and attitudes in addition to a set of techniques passed down through the generations. Documenting/protecting a cultural heritage linked with a craft or a group of crafts is directly related to the pre-servation of 'tradition' and traditional wisdom. Such efforts have been undertaken by various bodies and individuals. (See the Craft Revival Trust's documentation of the languishing craft of *khes* weaving in Panipat (India) and the blue pottery of Delhi (India) in Section III.)

- Documentation can also serve as a baseline for more proactive interaction and movement into the realm of regeneration/revitalization. Thus, documentation as a form of intervention is not merely an academic exercise where the oral history of craft traditions is studied and recorded. Rather, it is critical in preventing the irreparable loss that takes place when an oral tradition—or the practitioners of that tradition—fade away.

- **Documentation as a form of intervention is critical in protecting both the intellectual property of communities and regions as well as intellectual copyright.** The authorities need a base upon which to build schemes to support the crafts sector. The defining characteristics—the process, for instance—in each craft can be quite distinct. Based on the fact that a product is made by hand and that it follows a certain process, documentation can create the required basis for a 'craft mark' in these days of unrestricted trade. For example, nowadays one can find machine-printed traditional weaves and block prints. The term handlooms is being used to describe mill-made textiles. To ensure that only a particular process can claim a 'craft mark'—and that products that have not been made following that process cannot claim to be authentic—documentation is necessary.

The Kala Raksha[29] Folk Art Museum (Bhuj, Gujarat, India) is an example of how a local museum has revitalized the traditions of a craft community and protected its heritage. Kala Raksha's museum is intended to serve artisans, to provide them with access to their heritage, specifically through traditional embroideries, and restore the link of tradition, while allowing them to innovate and take their craft in whatever direction they want. The community museum addresses a simple but revolutionary concept: **involve people in re-presenting their own cultures.**

■ **Intervention to create sustainable livelihoods and development**

- **Creating sustainable livelihoods through particular crafts for artisan communities:** Is the designer intervening for economic reasons with the aim of improving the quality of life of a particular community? If so, then the designer has to see what kinds of skills exist in the group/community that has been identified or chosen for the intervention, a project whose results/outcomes somebody somewhere will need/find useful and for which they will pay. At the same time, there are many traditional artisans who continue to produce small volumes of individually crafted products and artefacts across the entire rural belt of India. They are mostly dependent on small sales and marginal incomes. Diminished local markets, limited conduits for their wares to urban/global markets, unfamiliarity with market tastes and needs, limited access to funds and working capital, and lack of requisite capacity have often made these crafts unviable for survival. Interventions targeted at sustainable livelihoods need careful socio-economic analysis and support, as well as stamina and time, in order to achieve their goals (See case study: Section III, 8.1, NID and IIM(A) Jawaja project.)

29 Kala Raksha is a grass-roots social organization working with artisans in the Kutch region of Gujarat.

- **For community rehabilitation:** Working as a catalyst for the community or working in a community to help people deal with the issues facing them. (See case study in Section III: Dastkari Haat Samitis work in Aruvacode.)
- **For women's empowerment and gender equality:** See the intervention among the chikan embroidery workers of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh (India) undertaken by SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association), an NGO. Several of these efforts are in the area of 'women's crafts' like embroidery. (See case study in Section III: 4.1, Dastkar: Design interaction with chikan embroidery.)

Intervention to create visibility for a particular craft, or a group of artisans, and for the preservation of cultural tradition(s) and heritage

- A pertinent example of this is *thewa*, a jewellery craft in which filigreed gold sheets are fused on to plates of glass. A handful of hereditary artisans in the small fortified town of Pratapgarh in district Chittorgarh in southern Rajasthan (India) and Rampura in Madhya Pradesh (India) specialize in *thewa*. An urban designer brought the art of *thewa* to the forefront, publicizing the jewellery through magazines and newspapers and showcasing it at exhibitions and upmarket fashionable stores, thereby creating not only an awareness of the craft but also a demand for the product. This is an example of the marketing 'savvy' essential for the revival of the crafts sector.

Intervention for problem solving

- **By reducing outside dependencies or making a craft self-sustaining:** A pertinent example of this is seen in the work of Prof. M.P. Ranjan, Faculty, National Institute of Design (NID) (Ahmedabad, India), who worked with Chennapatna wooden lacquerware. The need was for simple products with value addition, using low-capital infrastructure and systems that avoided exploitation by traders. Ranjan visited Chennapatna, Karnataka, and studied the existing situation and the range of products available; he decided to focus on 'toys as playthings' rather than as mere items of decoration. He designed a range of simple wooden toys that involved no adhesives (less dependence) and no nails (safety).
- **Change in the production process:** An example is the intervention by Amit Gehlot of the Indian Institute of Crafts and Design (IICD) (Jaipur, India) in the blue pottery of Jaipur (IICD, 2000; see case study). He identified problems in the production process such as badly made moulds, incorrect proportions of iron in the quartz powder, non-ergonomic working conditions, and inefficient packaging. Gehlot worked on eliminating the problem of iron content in the quartz powder, the basic ingredient of blue pottery's clay recipe. The presence of iron particles in the quartz powder produces a spotted effect on the surface of the pot after firing, thus ruining many pieces. In order to solve this problem, Gehlot developed a simple and economical apparatus that could be made by local blacksmiths and that artisans could afford. This device can eliminate the maximum iron content from the quartz powder. After a little refinement, it can produce even better results. (See case study in Section III, 7.4, Utilitarian products in blue pottery.)
- **Introducing alternative and appropriate technologies or upgrading technology to reduce drudgery:** For example, the NIFT–CARE—FICCI disaster relief project in Kutch (see Section III) led to the introduction of kilns for potters using open pits for firing; this is not only fuel efficient but it also reduces the firing time considerably, thus allowing artisans the flexibility to fire daily.
- **Sources of raw materials/alternative materials:** There is a need to use local materials and eliminate or reduce the use of hazardous materials and processes. The designer should inform artisans about the hazards of particular materials, and introduce eco-friendly technology or take pre-

ventive steps to reduce such risks. Crafts using materials like lead have resulted in health problems for both artisans and buyers. In Afghanistan, potters from Mexico are assisting artisans to make lead-free pottery that is acceptable to markets overseas.

Intervention to create new product lines, provide knowledge of the market and establish new market links

Inputs pertaining to markets and market linkages are often necessary where the product itself has potential but where the artisans need market exposure and contacts. The finishing of the product, its packaging, delivery, pricing and quality need to be looked at for value-addition opportunities. (See case studies in Sections III and V.)

- Designing new product lines or enhancing existing products also creates access to new markets. Most short-term student interventions fall into this category. (See case studies in Section III, 7.1 and 7.3.)

Intervention to upgrade the artisans' skills to meet these needs

- This involves intervention to upgrade artisanal skills to ensure better access and response to market demand. It can take several forms: introducing new techniques like slip casting in terracotta work (see NIFT—CARE—FICCI pottery intervention in Kutch); upgrading the technology already available; introducing concepts of/emphasis on quality, pre-cision and finish; and ensuring exposure to varied markets and product ranges that the artisan can access with his/her existing skills or through upgrading the skills. (See case study in Section III, NID and IIM(A) Jawaja project.)

Intervention for speedy evolution and knowledge

Speaking about the NID–Bamboo Project, an extensive documentation of north-east India and its craft traditions undertaken by NID (Ahmedabad, India) with a view to intervention, Nilam Iyer[30] cites an example of the usefulness of design intervention in the field of development. There is lack of awareness, information and exposure. Intervention can help in creating awareness among artisans and bringing about exposure that will help them to develop their own craft.

Says Iyer: 'We were very struck by the process of flattening out bamboo, so we went to one place in Manipur first. Their process is fairly elaborate . . . Then we went to Nagaland and saw a similar kind of process but much less elaborate, which means that a less elaborate and less time-consuming process can work. . . Then we went to Arunachal and saw an even simpler process. One thing that really struck me there was that these artisans were not aware of what was happening next door to them.'

The reasons for an intervention could be a combination of several of the above reasons and others. However, it is important to define and prioritize these reasons. A tangible set of objectives is necessary for determining the scope of the intervention and the strategies to be used in finding solutions, which may need to come from various fronts—materials, technology, marketing and new products. For an intervention to succeed, interdisciplinary teamwork is thus a prerequisite as solutions do not lie in the hands of artisans and designers alone.

It is also essential to recognize what an artisan gains from the intervention. It is this knowledge that fuels sustainability.

- Sustainable livelihoods
- New markets
- Value addition to products
- Exposure/visibility
- Community rehabilitation
- Gender equality
- Technical enhancement
- Confidence and self-belief

'. . . first focus on and understand the community before . . . (we) intervene in crafts. Who are the people? What are their earnings? What are their aspirations? What is in it for them? Before we start giving people lectures about their ancient traditions, ask what is in it for them to stay in their tradition. (We) have tried to ask what we can do to encourage someone who wants to stay within the tradition. Not force them into it, not make it a kind of burden. But consider what can be done to encourage any younger people who want to remain in their tradition and ensure that their staying in this craft is not at the cost of their own progress as human beings, but rather supplements their progress as human beings.'
— Ashoke Chatterjee

30 Nilam Iyer is a trained designer from NID, Ahmedabad, India

6.1.2 Selecting the Craft, the Artisans and the Geographical Area

As part of their developmental responsibility, government and development agencies have recognized design as an important input in efforts aimed at craft revival and sustenance. As a result, a large part of the funding and initiative in design comes from these agencies. The majority of design initiatives involve professional designers, design institutions and design students. Among the many issues being addressed, funding, product development and training of artisans are entrusted to design professionals.

Usually a client (this could be the government, a development agency, an NGO, or even a group of artisans) commissions design professional with a particular direction in mind. While this official sponsorship may ease entry into the artisan community, the designer still has to establish his/her own equation with the artisans in order to win their trust as a colleague and fellow learner.

The approach used or the product proposed has to be backed by data, observations, insights and conclusions in order to help artisans, designers and clients make the appropriate decisions. For example, as part of disaster-relief operations, CARE approached NIFT (New Delhi, India) to develop a comprehensive livelihood package for artisans in the areas affected by the earthquake, using the available craft skills and experience of the community. Thus, a geographical area was identified and became the core of the intervention; this is the 'CLUSTER APPROACH', in which several crafts within a selected area, or a single craft covering a wider geographical area, become the focus of the intervention. (Details in Section III, NIFT—CARE—FICCI Disaster Relief Project in Kutch.)

In situations where an artisanal community is the core focus, the context—political, social, economic, cultural and developmental—of the area in which the community and its craft are located has to be incorporated into the intervention strategy. An understanding of the anthropological and sociological background of the community and the region becomes extremely critical. (In Chirala, Andhra Pradesh (India), NID students intervened to alleviate the plight of poor weavers and developed a product line that was easily marketable.)

If a craft is the core focus, an analysis must be done of the fundamental premise of the craft. Is it a ritual craft linked only with a particular set of rituals/religious ceremonies and traditions? Is it a utilitarian craft that can adapt to changing circumstances and traditions even if its ritual content is eliminated? Is it a combination of ritual and utilitarian elements, which can absorb adaptations? Is the aim to document and make knowledge available to the community? What values underpin tradition, and how can these be protected? These are only some of the important questions that must be addressed.

Sanjhi, or hand-cut paper stencils used for creating ritualistic and ceremonial *rangolis* or floor decorations, is a traditional craft used in temples, and sometimes homes, for the worship of Krishna. It has today evolved into a craft with a more contemporary usage. The demand for *sanjhi* work in its traditional form has been declining over the years. In a search for alternative employment for their skills, *sanjhi* artisans, with intervention from the Delhi Crafts Council, have turned their hand to making *sanjhis* for contemporary use. *Sanjhi* templates are now used not only as stencils for traditional *rangolis* but also as artwork in greeting cards, cut-out partitions, coasters, lampshades, trays and other decorative items.

6.1.3 Determining a Realistic Scope for the Intervention

The reasons for the intervention and the expected outcomes will determine the scope of the exercise, the strategies and roles adopted and the commitments made. These decisions will be made on the basis of:

- Time
- Money
- Resources
- Experience and expertise

Sourcing existing documentation on the craft and its practitioners, and the geographical

area of its provenance, is a great reference. Alternatively, if none exists, a field study can be undertaken as a precursor to the intervention. (See chapter on documentation and pre-field preparation in Section VI, 6.2 and 6.3.)

A first visit/field study is extremely useful

- To understand the local context, the socio-economic context and lifestyle changes. For example, as the custom of wearing turbans declined in Gujarat and Rajasthan in India, the weaving patterns changed since there was little demand for the craft. A skill existed but without a corresponding need for the product, and hence it was important to find alternative uses for it.
- To assess the skills, materials, technologies, products, markets, resources, traditions, and, most importantly, the bottlenecks, especially if the intervention is aimed as a livelihood project. This means relating these factors to the identification of new opportunities and understanding the time span of a product-development cycle.
- To decide the design strategy linking the identified skills with the identified markets, to identify the potential and plan the skill-based activity that can be done. The artisan's skill base and strengths need to be determined as skill is the leverage that the artisan possesses. Based on this, other required inputs—available technology, information on markets and cultural context—can be determined.
- To identify bottlenecks in the functioning of the craft as a viable economic activity; in the competition faced in marketing channels; in the quality and range of the products; and in the production processes.

Renuka Savasere, a designer, was asked to develop a livelihood project for the Konkan region in India. She found bamboo growing in this area as a non-forest product and decided to use this. As the region had no tradition of basket weaving, the intervention was aimed at training the women in this area. Preliminary information was collected on different kinds of weaves, bamboo splits, and other natural fibres before beginning the training.

Factors that can determine the scope of the intervention should be taken into account, including for the preliminary documentation or recce. These are:

- Socio-cultural factors: social norms, values, social organization, traditions, religion, status of women, organizational and institutional arrangements.
- Economic factors: level of income earned and needed, inflation, infrastructure, income distribution, economic organization.
- Environmental factors: quality and availability of raw materials, including land, water and fuel.
- Political factors: power, equity issues, relationships, influence of government, legal system, community organizations.
- Demographic factors: migration, life expectancy, mortality.
- Services: government, education, health care, funding.
- Legal factors: rights of ownership, franchise, inheritance.
- Geographical factors: land, soil, terrain, weather.
- Infrastructural factors: water, transport, electricity, communications.

6.1.4 Selection of the Format for Intervention

At the institutional level, design students are initiated into the study of traditional crafts through field study to undertake documentation of the larger socio-cultural and economic reality of traditional crafts, often followed by an interactive design-development course or a craft-based design project with practising artisans. Often the design institute itself becomes involved in a design project, and faculty and students then work together on a project.

Depending on the person initiating the in-

A story that has entered popular discourse in the craft sector describes an incident where an architect and a mason were working on the construction of an arch. The architect indicated some specifications, which the mason said were incorrect, he had built several arches during his working life and knew that the proportions mentioned by the architect were not viable. However, since the mason could not explain the technicalities precisely, the architect overrode his objections. The arch was built according to the specifications of the architect; it collapsed.

tervention and the defined outcomes for the design process, the format for intervention could take on several forms:

- Where the project is undertaken by a design school, involving students and faculty, continuing over a time frame that is not necessarily parallel to the academic year. In this case, it is not necessarily the same set of students who will interact with the artisans. Rather, the continuity of the institutional support to the project and the design exercise is maintained as a result of the faculty acting in tandem with the students. Design schools feel increasingly that any meaningful intervention has to be sustained over the long term and that it requires regular interaction, and hence they are opting for this kind of intervention. For example, a five-day workshop conducted by the Srishti School of Design for potters in Bangalore (India) is being envisaged as a programme that will have follow-ups every three to four months. (See case studies in Section III, 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3.)

- The design school could also undertake the project along with other institutional partners such as government bodies and NGOs working in the sector and/or the area selected. If more than one agency is involved, then the roles of and expectations from each individual partner need to be delineated and defined very carefully. The careful selection of partners—local NGOs, village bodies, local leaders, government bodies, etc.— minimizes duplication of effort and allows for the creation of a synergy that results in an impact of greater effectiveness and productivity. Usually these kinds of design projects should be part of a larger agenda of development or livelihoods; in this case, the craft intervention is only one aspect of overall socio-economic development. (See case studies in Section III, especially the NID—IIM Jawaja Project and the NIFT—CARE—FICCI disaster relief project in Kutch.)

Design inputs can be provided by individual/s working for projects undertaken by government bodies or NGOs in a particular area. (See case studies in Sections III and V.)

NGOs or other organizations often get Student Designers to work for them. The focus of the intervention is usually a combination of marketing considerations and a concern for sustaining people's livelihoods; the focus could also be gender equality. (For example, Kunjan Singh, working as a design consultant, gave specialized inputs. See case study UMBVS: Kunjan Singh in Section III.) The NGO, UMBVS, employed student interns from NID (Ahmedabad, India), who adapted the woven range of their products for cotton. The *pattu* designs were originally done in wool, but this posed a problem as wool has only seasonal sales. This intervention resulted in year-round sales as well as sales in those parts of the country where there is no winter.

The designer-enterpreneur private enterprise model is one in which the artisan has little to contribute in terms of design, and uses only his/her skills. Design interventions by professional designers aimed at creating a product line are essentially focused on meeting a market need/opportunity. In this format, design interventions take place in the private sector, where store or boutique owners could be designers themselves or could hire designers who will go out and design a range of products that will be retailed in their shops. This creates different high-priced products that do not necessarily have a large market. These interventions are largely driven by market considerations, both export markets and highend niche markets.

Working with individual artisans on a one-to-one basis: These are 'design' interventions and documentation exercises undertaken by students in design schools to fulfil academic requirements, which are usually restricted to short outreach programmes.

- Sometimes the Artisan is the initiator of the design exercise.

For example, Pankaj Kumar Sahu, an artisan from Orissa (India) specializing in filigree jewellery, talks about a society that the artisans have formed called Paramparik, which hires designers to develop new products. According to Sahu, the society has benefited from this experiment as the designer proposes products based on urban market trends while the artisans add their own variations once they have learned about new design trends and market demands. Their experience with the designer–artisan interface has been very good. The designer presents the complete background—a full storyboard and graph—and the storyboard is converted by the women artisans, who do the moulding, setting and fine coordination work.

The designer also introduces market realities, making a connection between design and the market. In this context, the credentials of the designer are established by the fact that his/her designs sell. In Orissa filigree work, the designer gives individual designs to each artisan; the onus is on the artisan to get the most out of the interaction. The members of Paramparik have learned from experience not to compete with each other—they do not make the same designs—as this rivalry is not beneficial to any one individual. Once a design comes into the market, it becomes public property and is then adapted by others. Borrowing and learning from each other—this openness makes for robust craft and design.

6.2 PRE-FIELD PREPARATION

How does the design process address the needs of the craft sector?

A design process involving design students requires substantial planning and an operational structure to be put in place prior to undertaking the interaction with artisans. The design faculty involved with such an initiative normally carries this out well in advance. The selection of artisans is based on either a specific brief from the sponsoring agency or on a combination of materials, skills and techniques aimed at encouraging learning and development. The decision to invite specific artisans is influenced by experience, recommendations of NGOs/local agencies and by actual on-field interaction on a preparatory visit.

6.2.1 Preparation and Orientation

The student groups are briefed ahead of the actual interaction. The students are assigned to different artisan groups, and initiate inquiries related to the crafts. Students are expected to communicate with the artisan groups to which they have been assigned about the specific requirements and expectations that each side has from the intervention.

The student designer should :

- Be humble, open-minded, respectful and willing to learn from artisans, recognizing their traditional knowledge and wisdom.
- Be aware of the reason for the intervention, be familiar with the community and the craft with which they will be working, and learn about the socio-economic and other challenges that they will face.
- Be familiar with the relevant issues concerning not just the craft but also the larger issues involved in the intervention.
- Realize the importance of observation/ scrutiny of the rhythm of the craft.
- Be familiar with his/her own strengths and weaknesses, hopes and expectations, and be aware of his/her own biases, prejudices and opinions.
- Be prepared to face the discomforts of the artisan's physical environment, including differing standards of hygiene, food habits, accommodation, modes of transportation, etc.
- Be open and sensitive to exploring new and unfamiliar areas and expressions of creativity.

6.2.2 Understanding the Craft, Its Context and the Environment

The designer should also understand the environmental, social and cultural traditions and customs of the artisan community:

The designer is necessarily a person with multidisciplinary talents, who combines a specialization or learning in materials, tools and processes with a concern for utility, economics and aesthetics in the final product. If the best combinations of form, function and utility are to be realized, the designer should be interested in a range of disciplines—aesthetics, history, ethnography, culture, economics and so on.

- Existing infrastructure: Water, transportation and communication facilities
- Knowledge of geographical terrain, weather and seasons (harvests)
- Knowledge of the festivals, rituals, customs and practices of the artisan community
- Awareness of the local social structure: castes, hierarchies and power structures.

6.2.3 Understanding the Existing Processes of the Craft: Materials, Processes, Technologies and Practices

- **Raw materials used:** For example, the quarrying of stones is become increasingly difficult, and hence it is important to keep in mind the size of the proposed products. Similarly, lantana is available in abundance at low cost and can be used suitably, while water is scarce everywhere. Such an orientation is supported by visual and verbal presentations and intensive discussions.
- **Practices:** Talking about his work at Etticopaka, a village in Andhra Pradesh (India), home to a craft cluster of artisans, who have over the years been producing turned-wood lacquerware products, a designer said that he went to the field without any preconceived ideas and found it was just as well. The artisans use only branches, so the diameter of their products is limited to 4.5–5 inches; had he developed concepts before his arrival, he would have soon discovered that they were unviable.
- **Time frames:** Background information and research should include product and productivity cycles: the time span of a cycle, how long it takes to make a product and time-and-motion studies. A designer who is unfamiliar with local conditions can arrive at a time when the artisans are too busy to interact, or are engaged in some other seasonal occupation that supplements their income.
- **Techniques, skills and technological inputs:** The limitations of hand production need to be defined and protected. It is important to understand that each craft has well-established processes that have been developed over generations; reusing materials is encouraged and wastage is kept to the minimum. For example, in Shantiniketan (West Bengal, India), faded saris are taken to the block printer for reprinting, thus resulting in a new design created by overprinting. (Often, when the printing is not up to standard, the artisan simply prints over it.) Elsewhere, old saris were converted into *kantha* quilts, embroidered with threads taken out of the sari borders. Jolly Rohtagi[31] cited the example of *parandis* (hair tassels) at a workshop in Jammu (India) where the tradition of wearing *parandis* exists. Designers working with women on the look of the *parandi* suggested increasing the tassels at the end. There was a lot of wastage of thread; this upset the craftswomen, who said that they could not afford to work like this. Another example of established practices that do not support wastage is the case of the screw-pine craft, where the finely cut waste is used as cordage for stitching the sides of mats.
- **Identifying the bottlenecks:** Understanding the limitations of hand production as compared to machine production. These limits have to be defined and optimized. Identifying other bottlenecks —in the areas of materials, processes, infrastructure, tools and techniques—is also necessary.

6.2.4 Understanding the Artisan

- It is important to understand the work culture of the artisan. For example, a burnt-wood artisan in New Delhi (India), while executing an export order, stated that he began to feel like a prisoner as the buyer's representatives stayed with him

31 Jolly Rohtagi is a craft activist based in New Delhi, India

the whole day. Because an artisan expresses cultural life through his craft, it is imperative to understand the value system of a particular person or community. A potter had to abruptly leave in the middle of an assignment as his sister's husband fell ill; family ties are very important to artisans, but designers tend to view this as 'unprofessional' conduct or behaviour.

- ***The rhythm of the artisan's day needs to be respected:*** Artisans may not necessarily observe a working day as defined by corporate culture; instead of a linear use of time, they engage in multitasking, working on different stages and levels of product development, performing tasks that may appear unconnected to the outside observer. Designers need to observe, connect and study these disparate strands of activity in order to establish an effective partnership with artisans.
- How will the time spent interacting with a designer affect the artisans' livelihood? Can artisans be compensated for the loss of their time?

6.2.5 Understanding the Markets

- Wherever designers hope to sell, there they should do market surveys. The process is slow; most customers will not necessarily buy what the designer thinks they should, so the 'compromise' between giving the market what it will accept and what the designer believes the market should have has to be evolved over time for the sake of ensuring stable incomes for artisans. Finding out what customers want is the first step in this direction.
- The designer must understand the symbiotic relationship between artisan and customer. This relationship is changing with the emergence of new and distant markets and increasing competition from newer and cheaper substitutes, for example, the replacement of traditional clay pots with ubiquitous plastic pots.
- Knowledge of haats (local markets) and local marketing networks, both money and exchange or barter markets.

Simulating an Artisan's Environment/Workshop

Exposing students to the artisan's environment, or having them undertake craft documentation, can serve as training ground, sensitizing them to and acquainting them with the pertinent issues. This process of familiarization, if well structured and carefully supervised and accompanied by proper interaction and feedback, will equip students with the necessary skills and help them in planing the most suitable design intervention. The student's final product should show that he/she has gone through the entire process of production, and is thoroughly familiar with each stage; he/she should also demonstrate the skill of making the entire product.

6.3 CRAFT DOCUMENTATION: SOME GUIDELINES

The major stages in an investigation/documentation are:

- **Before: Preliminary research and documentation**
- **During: Everyday work in the field**
- **After: Sorting and classifying the data**

Reliable and thorough documentation will help a potential designer to prepare properly for an intervention. This could be already available, or it could be done at the time of the recce, pointing to the need and scope of the project. However, the preparation of good documentation may take much longer.

For useful advice, see Methodological guide to the collection of data on crafts, *UNESCO (1990).*

During the course of documentation, students often feel that they are intruding on a community. However, this is not necessarily the case. Hema, a designer from NID, narrates her experience with visiting students to Pattamadai (Tamil Nadu, India), where she was working with mat weavers. She used to feel a tremendous sense of obligation to the artisans during her own student days, and was grateful to them for expending time on helping her with her project. However, this was only until she saw

the artisans getting excited; they could not believe that young people had actually come to study them. They were touched when it was explained to them that the students were interested in them, their craft and their lives, and that they had spent their own money to be with them. The artisans did not resent having to answer questions; the processes are well rehearsed and established, and they could talk freely to the students and spend time with them even while working.

The analytical methods of collecting information about crafts, artisans, techniques and objects vary according to the purpose of the data needed. This procedure of documentation is interdisciplinary, and involves aspects of history, sociology, design, and technology among others. The information can be recorded and preserved through written documents, photographs (especially of techniques, processes and tools), audio-visuals, voice recordings of interviews and samples (of products and materials). The data collected are both qualitative and quantitative.

6.3.1 Preliminary Research and Documentation

■ **Sourcing existing information**

Before starting it must be borne in mind that a certain quantity of data may already exist. This should be gathered together, examined and sorted.

- Categories under which to look for existing information include: education and culture (art schools, training, museums); economy and planning (statistics, budgets, major projects); tourism (craft centres, craft museums where they exist and village sites); trade and industry (crafts often come under this heading for statistics and foreign trade); research (qualitative, ethno-cultural and socio-cultural inquiries, localization of techniques). It should be remembered that collated data should, to the extent possible, be checked out in the field.
- NGOs in several states, faced with the erosion of the more fragile elements of their heritage, have already set up collection processes. These collections should be followed up, encouraged and used.
- Museums and their reserve collections are reliable data banks, especially ethnographic museums and those dealing with folk traditions.
- Books, catalogues, magazines, essays, theses and studies can be found in libraries, universities, cultural centres and national and international research centres; the reports, inquiries, projects and inventories produced to order are also available in the archives of the Ministries of Culture, Planning, Tourism, Rural Development and international organizations.
- The photos found as illustrations in books and magazines as well as films are useful for visualizing articles. It can help designers know what to expect to find in the field and can be used as a point of reference.

■ **Knowing the terrain**

It is vital to start out with as much information as possible about the geographical and ethnic environment in question. Knowing about the vegetation, soil, climate, relief and water courses provides in advance a wealth of information on vegetable, animal and mine-ral raw materials found there, which may be used by craft workers to learn about the lifestyles and habits of the local people. Ethnic groupings often determine affinities, inclinations and taboos, which it is advisable to know in order to observe the acceptable forms of behaviour and thus facilitate a good reception and dialogue.

■ **Formalities**

Authorization: Travel authorization, authorization for photographing sites, monuments and museums, letters of introduction and recommendation addressed to local officials or copies of letters that have already been sent to them, can help in ensuring a good reception and lodgings, contacts and working facilities.

Requirements:

- **Documentation and sketching:** Notebooks, drawing books, record sheets, copies of questionnaires, pencils, ballpoint pens, sharpeners, erasers, instruments of scale.
- **Oral documentation, interviews:** Small tape recorder, tapes or cassettes, batteries.
- **Preparing a budget in advance** is essential to avoid difficulties in the field. Always allow for contingencies.
- **Photography:** Camera with lenses, batteries and film, both black/white or colour; one compact video camera and cassettes. (A special notebook should be kept for recording the details of each shot, film number, date, place and subject. This makes it easier to sort out and classify the photographs afterwards in relation to the record sheets.)
- **Miscellaneous:** Plastic bags to protect equipment from heat and rain, small items such as knives and penknives; presents to distribute in a village to thank the local people for their help. Petty cash must be available for daily expenses.

6.4 DESIGN CONCERNS

All design interventions in the craft sector have a predominant product focus. The product outcome is tangible and hence measurable, unlike initiatives that may be equally critical but intangible. The impact of such interventions is most often limited and excludes the artisan from the intellectual process of design and product development. Such initiatives also lack a focus on market linkages, positioning and the requisite furtherance of the efforts to convert into business for the beneficiary artisans. While such initiatives have validity in terms of the need to reinterpret crafts to match contemporary market reality, the actual value retention for the artisan is limited. Time investment by the designers is most often proportional to the funds available and the defined outcome in the brief, which invariably is only in the number of designs. The extent of familiarity on the part of the designers regarding craft techniques, processes and the ability of the artisans to explore and deliver distinct products determine the quality of the outcome.

– Jatin Bhatt

The ability to anticipate and visualize the entire complexity of issues that can affect the design is the single most critical concern in mapping, analysing and synthesizing the process of ideation and concept development.

The benefit of interaction must be clear to the artisan at the outset, whether it is a monetary benefit, mutual exchange of knowledge, marketing of a product and design development leading to future orders. In exchange for the artisans' time and knowledge, the design students need to make clear what they will offer: an urban dimension; value addition (not only in design but also in techniques to aid the artisan in the areas of costing, finishing, new technical development, raw material sourcing, etc.); help in strengthening the process of design.

At the end of the interaction you get new products, but do you get a change in understanding in the artisans' minds? How do you quantify that these people have a changed understanding of design and more confidence in their ability to design? It implies that processing design, technique and skills is not enough. We also have to build capacities to design. We have to provide artisans access to their roots and knowledge of networking, documenting and disseminating research and information.

6.4.1 Understanding the Context and Integrating It into the Format of the Planned Intervention

The 'environment' is the context for design. The design activity of any country cannot be understood without knowledge of the context in which it operates. A complex human environment includes several small environments. Human environments are the products of function and need. Understanding the context in which the subject of the intervention—craft, community, or area—is embedded is necessary in any intervention. In relation to craft and design, the 'environment' includes economic, social, cultural and political realities, in macro and micro forms (region-specific, craft specific, community specific, and so on). Contexts have to be integrated and understood; it is culture that links a craft to the artisan. Take that away, as in the case of external design, and the links are broken between an artisan and his/her craft.

To be relevant, the designer has to respect the work culture and traditions of the artisan and the artisan community. All interventions, even those of limited scope, should empower the artisan in some way. *To be relevant, the aims of the designer* should:

- Be geared towards capital saving;
- Generate employment;
- Use appropriate scientific and technological knowledge and equipment;
- Use local materials to maximum advantage;
- Use local skills such as manual dexterity and the ability to adapt and be flexible to maximum advantage;
- Be suited to relevant conditions such as excessive heat and dust, lashing rain, poor roads, rough handling/mishandling;
- Draw on rich traditions. Traditions are as much a benefit as a burden to the designer. In conditions where modernity and tradition coexist, is a challenge to the designer to explore the past creatively and adapt it for the present and the future.
- It is important to understand local contexts; lack of understanding often leads to solutions that do not have relevance. Mirjam Southwell[32] cites the example of an intervention in Africa in which she was the designer. It was a livelihood project for women, based on the Western model where women do the embroidery. However, in this case it was actually the men who did the embroidery, and they wanted to know why they were being left out of the entire project and why the embroidery intervention was focused on women.

6.4.2 Understanding the Material and the Process

- It is necessary for designers to acquire at least a basic familiarity with materials and processes and some technical skills. As Kristine Michael[33] says: 'There is a difference between a 2-D object and a 3-D object. It is important to see a drawing graph being translated into an object. Sometimes it does not happen the way it was originally visualized. Therefore, it is important to be able to make the object by hand and demonstrate it immediately.'
- The designer can also do a time-and-motion study. Haku Shah,[34] in the process of studying pottery techniques, counted the number of times per minute the potter beat the pot to complete a process. Suresh Mittal, a craft specialist in Agra (India), talks about designers, most of who 'worked with pen and paper and showed pictures'. 'Only one or two made the product themselves, like a lady who did some embroidery herself. The artisans were delighted with that,' he said.
- One of the chief perceived blockages between designer and artisan is seen to be that of language and communication. The juxtaposition of urban-educated, English-speaking designers and design students and 'rustic' artisans speaking in their own language has assumed larger-than-life proportions. However, for the suggested interactive relationship to work communication is a must. The designer needs to ensure that he/she establishes some methods of communication and dialogue; it does not matter if he/she uses unorthodox methods. It is part of the designer's brief to build up an understanding with the artisan in which the designer can 'sense' that which the artisan might not be able to articulate too clearly.

6.4.3 Establishing Communication

- There should be no projection of a superior–inferior paradigm based on the language divide. The artisan may not be 'literate' in the formal sense but is far from uneducated.

> Visual vocabulary should be used to the maximum extent possible. Both designer and artisan speak the same language—the language of the craft, of warp and weft, of colour, of looms and of the hands. This language is not 'verbal', but is a form of communication; there is a strong commonality among them.
>
> —Jolly Rohtagi

32 Dr Mirjam Southwell is a craft and development consultant. She has worked extensively in Asia and Africa and has written many articles on craft.
33 Kristine Michael, an NID—trained designer, works as a ceramist, potter and teacher.
34 Haku Shah, an artist-scholar, is an authority on folk and tribal traditions of Indian art.

> Crafts have their own non-verbal language. Textiles, for instance, have their own language: where they come from, who makes them, their techniques, who wears it. The association of dress and identity is very important.
>
> – Jasleen Dhamija.[35]

■ **Building Equations, Gaining Entry**

- Explaining and establishing the reason for being there.
- Working on making your presence as unobtrusive as possible.
- Understanding the cultural, social, religious and ritualistic context, survey of area (a pre-field documentation is extre-mely relevant). Building equations with community leaders, including village heads, teachers, etc.
- Building equations with artisans to ensure the participative process; establishing a 'give and take' format of mutual learning.
- Building equations with NGOs: working out roles and strategies for sustainability.

> Establish a relationship with the community you choose to study/work with. This relationship has to extend beyond the mere mechanics of data collection—the field-worker has to be a 'genuine participant observer'... Do not work without regard for feeling or convenience—do not violate the personal life or personal space of those about whom you are working with/about whom information is being collected.
>
> – T.N. Madan, n.d.

6.4.4 Humanizing the Interaction and Respecting the Artisan

> The object is important, but nothing is more important than the people—those who make them, use them, deal with them, buy them, collect them and destroy them. Objects are humanized by the uses to which people put them. Their value and meaning lie in their use and context.

- **Sensitivity:** As a student/designer working within the artisan's environment—whether for the purpose of documentation or designing—awareness must be accompanied by a sensitivity to the human side of the partnership process. This is necessary; it is also a very fulfilling learning experience for both sides.
- **Not alienating the artisan:** The attitude of the student designer must be such that it does not alienate the artisan. Attitude spans a range from attire to language; it involves every action during the course of the interaction.
- **Intuition:** Conducting interviews and understanding how to ask the right questions is not just a question of methodology and questionnaire filling. Intuition is needed to judge the right timing, the appropriate permission to photograph and question other members of the household, allowing the artisan the right to choose the appropriate time, place and day for the interview, etc. As Ravi Matthai states: 'The weakness of the data base is also a hindrance in research, the reliability of primary data raised not by cross—sectional questionnaire based surveys or sampling methodology but in terms of the truthfulness of responses from villagers who do not know you, have no reason to trust you and have their own assumptions about why you want this information.'

A good way to understand how to handle questions is to be the recipient of a questionnaire yourself.

> You can try and speak their language and follow their ways . . . the social acceptance has to be there from both sides . . . One has to relish the experience that these remote craft pockets offer, these experiences that one cannot get in urban life, and it becomes embedded in your memory. You have to merge with the craft persons . . . Once you've broken the ice, you will be welcome even if you visit after ten years. In the craft sector, the humility aspect is very important.
>
> – Haku Shah

35 Jasleen Dhamija is a textile art historian and has authored many books on textiles in India and the Middle East. She lives and works in New Delhi.

6.4.5 Treating the Artisan as a Creative Partner, not as Skilled Labour

It is increasingly felt that more and more external inputs can make the artisan sterile and eventually undermine his capacities. There are two ways of intervening: long term, to prepare him to design; and short term, to give him designs and products. The approach to design should be collaborative rather than top-down—that is, where the artisan is considered an equal partner in the whole process. Ideally, it is the artisan who should set the design brief.

- The student and the artisan are equal 'resource persons', with joint responsibility of working together towards a specific outcome. It is very important to establish equality of competence. Designers should thus seek to establish a dialogue/exchange and a two-way flow of information.
- Recognize and utilize the artisans' creativity: Designers should not treat artisans as the equivalent of skilled labour; the artisan is a creative partner in the 'design process'—and should be treated as such—in creating new products and product lines. The designer should provide ideas and stimuli, creating the right atmosphere for the emergence of creative and innovative product designs from the artisans themselves. After all, artisans have been designers for generations, and know their own traditions best.

When working with *pattu* workers in Phalodi (India) for UMVS, designers found that when given a base cloth, artisans came up with better colour combinations of weaves when allowed to choose their own colours than the designers did. It is important for designers to use this ability, and to encourage it.

- The leverage that the artisan possesses is his/her skill, experience and knowledge of the craft. It can be dangerous to the craft for a 'designer' to simply hand over a set of new or modified 'designs' to artisans and instruct them to execute the designs, thus treating them effectively like skilled labour. More and more design inputs make the artisans sterile. Designers should give inputs about the new markets that are proposed and then allow the artisans to innovate and create. They already possesses design capability: 'All that they don't have is the buyer. They don't know the buyer's face, and they also don't have the questioning attitude that the designers have.' The designer's brief is to communicate the perceived needs of the unknown and unfamiliar market to the artisans.

As Jolly Rohatgi notes, the urban designer often represents the 'buyer'. Artisans have their own creativity; it is thus necessary to give them only knowledge of the market, after which, as Ashoke Chatterjee argues, they can respond to market needs creatively. Distant markets are not new to artisans, who have served the needs of foreign customers for centuries.

- Explain the basis for a design input to allow artisans to integrate it into their design sensibility: It is part of the designer's brief to make artisans understand the form and function of the intended product. **Once artisans understand the form and function of the finished product, their participation is both more creative and more long term. The designer and development worker must constantly keep in mind that his/her objectives and greatest achievement is to become redundant.**

6.4.6 Building Skills and Capacities

- The focus of an intervention has often been to develop various capabilities that will initiate a proactive response from artisan groups to understand and appreciate the nuances of contemporary market parameters, and to apply this knowledge to ensure the competitiveness of their product with better value realization. **However, the larger purpose of the interaction is to arrive at better capacities and**

understandings, more insights and possibilities, rather than just make more products. Almost all artisans who have participated in design- interaction workshops have continued to refine, add to and build on the insights gained even beyond the workshops.

- The key factor for a deeper and more long-lasting impact is to empower artisans, and thereby enhance the value of their product offering and reduce their feeling of alienation. This format of development is achieved by adopting a more artisan-centric approach, and not merely through a product-development approach.
- What artisans need is an understanding of the requirements of urban and distant markets and the ability to meet these challenges. To design new products independently, artisans need to:
  - Understand the significance of existing and past motifs, symbols, colours and traditions, and to use these as a starting point.
  - Understand the significance of function, form, colour and symbols.
  - Learn to appreciate different aesthetic styles.
  - Be exposed to many worlds through photographs, slides, television and other media.
  - Understand the rationale and theory behind the items developed and the guidelines laid down.
  - Realize the importance of consistency, including precision, in dimensions and measurements. This involves the basic ability to use measuring tools effectively.
  - Realize the importance of schedules and packaging.
  - Appreciate the importance of standardization and quality control in finishing and packaging.
  - Adopt newer, efficient, yet low-cost technologies, such as kilns.
  - Enhance and build specific capability and capacity; to move away, if required, from family models of production to larger production models.

Artisans need to be introduced to new technologies, including something as basic as the use of paper and pencil, and should be trained to translate designs from 3-D and 2-D drawings. A 2-D drawing does not always get recognized as a 3-D object. Some artisans can work from a sketch. Others prefer to have complete sets of drawings for all components. Yet others have to be talked through the making of each component of a product. Artisans have to be encouraged to work with photographs and drawings, as well as with precision instruments, to achieve certain standards of quality required for high-quality finishes. Design should also explore and understand the artisan's own ideas about technical drawings and expressions.

6.4.7 Recognizing the Importance of Space and Spaces

- While it is important to provide exposure to design students about the ground realities pertaining to artisans and their larger work environment, it is equally significant to orient artisans to environments of the designers as well as actual consumers.
- **Ratios:** The number of student designers interacting with a single artisan should not be greater than two or three as larger numbers may pressurize the artisan.
- **Flexibility and Time Frame:** Craft is practised most often under flexible conditions. Artisans follows work methods and processes that are not standardized but are integrated into their life and community. It is a way of life. They don't need to learn about flexibility. They live it. Artisans are free to evolve their work discipline according to a convenient time. It is ironical that this very strength is perceived as a weakness and that they are told to

The ability to design effectively is restricted to the application of design to the prevailing skills, techniques and materials of artisans. What is required, therefore, is to interpret their material skills and techniques differently from the ability to generate a variety of applications that most suit the market needs.

'standardize', 'upgrade', 'modernize' and 'change'. '*Understand the artisans' time frames and the reasons behind them before trying to alter them*' (Poonam Bir Kasturi).

Flexibility needs to be managed so that it becomes a strength, accompanied with a schedule and a commitment. Flexibility cannot be at the cost of unreliability.

Poonam Bir Kasturi describes her meeting with Maruthi, a law student in the small town of Chennapatna (Karnataka, India), which is famous for its turned-wood products. Maruthi helps his father, an artisan, in the mornings before leaving for college and in the evenings after returning home, to turn wooden beads. Asked if he would like to make crafts his career, Maruthi said he saw no reason why he could not pursue both law and craft. Highlighting this flexible aspect of craft, Kasturi notes the struggle that the corporate sector is having with this idea. 'In this age of networked connectivity, corporations advertise their work space as being flexible to attract employees. Flexibility is often portrayed positively as a way of creating work that is more meaningful and holistic for individuals.'

Location for Interaction: Do you bring the artisan to your space or do you go to his? There are differing viewpoints on the approaches possible.

- **In the Artisans' Environment:** Since people react to spaces, it is important for the artisan to be in his/her own space. Thus, the designer working with artisans should live and work in the producer's community. The design work should take place within the workspace of the producer, and a designer must be acutely aware of the parameters influencing the artisan's production, and be influenced in turn by them. If the student is in the artisans' place then he/she should mix with the artisans and become acceptable to them—break bread with them, stay with them—break the ice and develop an acceptance of their way of life.
- **In the Institute/Urban/Students'/Designers' Environment:** Others suggest a structure of interaction that is designed to get the artisans to the design schools rather than sending the students to the artisans. The assumption is that artisans are removed from their routine chores and are, therefore, able to commit quality time with an opportunity to respond with an open mind in a new and stimulating environment. Another factor in this preference is the apparently lower costs involved as well, resolving the problems of providing creature comforts for students, especially accommodation and health facilities in rural areas. This framework makes it possible to introduce to artisans the urban markets and other artisans producing for these markets. It is important to orient artisans to the environments of the designers as well as actual consumers. The familiarity of artisans with the marketplace, competi tion, retail environment, similar production units and practices in urban business set-ups is another factor in creating a dialogue around new possibilities with design students. These experiences also offer a set of aspirations that the artisans can strive to achieve in market reach, product possibilities as well as business practices.

Whatever the space, it is important to create a positive beginning to any interaction. Participants must feel relaxed and enthusiastic. They must get to know each other and get to know the programme, its goals and objectives. This assumes even more importance in instances where the artisan is not in his/her own environment.

6.4.8 The Need for Sustained Follow-ups

It is not that the designer has to be in the field for 365 days but that the designer has to go at frequent intervals, often for ten days at a time, every month. Then the NGO and the designer should have somebody who monitors this process and handholds the artisan.

– Laila Tyabji

- If the issue is the development of the artisan's capacity to genuinely restructure his/her capabilities in the form of competitive and marketable products, then follow-ups are critical. Training programmes and workshops aimed at such an education can be too short to create effectively a new level of understanding. If professional design programmes with the best of selected and talented students require three to four years of full-time education, it is difficult to visualize any significant change through the provision of short bursts of training to the artisans, who are often far removed from the market context that they need to penetrate. It requires long-term follow-up initiatives to consolidate and sustain the positive influences generated.
- Projects often have abrupt endings because funds are not enough. Projects are time bound, which means that work is sometimes not completed within stipulated time-bound frameworks of the curriculum. These issues need to be addressed while organizing the format and framework for the interaction.
- The time required needs to be ideally divided into two phases. The first phase needs to be intensive, taking up more time, and the second phase could be a shorter trip, which is a follow-up and a repeat. All schedules should, however, be governed by a clear understanding of the objectives and processes essential to success.

6.5 PRODUCT CONCERNS

In reality, it is those crafts and craft clusters that are not doing well that seek outside intervention or help. Working within this reality, any product that is developed as a result of intervention must, therefore, ensure a marketability that sustains the craft and the artisans. Simultaneously, it is important that the products have meaning and significance for the artisans, and fit into a local context.

> Whether you work in the craft sector or in industry, you have to first look at what you are designing for, understand what the product is, and why it is so, interact and say if you have any problems, and get feedback on the positive and negative aspects. Then you start designing keeping the problem statement in mind, come up with your concepts, and identify your design criteria. One must come up with at least three or four design concepts per design, and select one concept out of the lot for technical or aesthetic reasons. This design process is the same for any designer, whether working in craft or industry.
>
> – Sharmishta Yadav[36]

6.5.1 The Need for Establishing Connections and Meanings in Product Development

Connections and Meanings: These apply to dealings with other people and to the ways in which individual actions affect the natural world. In the field of product design and manufacturing, the implications of individual decisions are often somewhat removed from the design makers. Indirectly, however, these decisions become embedded in a set of processes that are not infrequently exploitative, or which may affect people adversely in other ways and which may have negative environmental consequences. Designers can choose to either avoid these issues or embrace them as part of their job.

The current approaches and systems are, to a very great extent, dissociated or disengaged both from people and from natural processes. There is often limited comprehension of the product in terms of its materials, how it was made, how it works, or how it can be repaired. Contemporary product aesthetics are a result and reflection of this sense of detachment.

In order to start creating products that are both sustainable and meaningful, it is imperative to begin developing, or perhaps retrieving, a sense of connection. This connection—in the design process, in the manner

36 Sharmishta Yadav is faculty at IICD, Jaipur.

of production, and in the very nature of material objects—would mean that products would not only fulfil a useful function, but that they would also embody meaningful human values and allow us to understand them, engage with them, and experience an empathetic cohesion and affinity with them, as fruits of human endeavour and as material things.

This sense of connection needs to start occurring at all stages of a product's life cycle—during the designing stage, during the making process, during the period of use, and even during the end-of-use processing. In order to facilitate this, the designer's role is crucial. It is incumbent upon designers to start addressing and exploring this connection in their work, not by designing products that they think will connect with users (this would be a step 'removed' from the process of creation, and hence would be yet another form of disconnection).

The connection must occur in the designer's process, in the designer's way of designing, in what the designer designs. If designers learn to work in this way, and if they continually strive to practise their skills in this way, then the products will begin to 'connect' with users. This connection is not a direct aim in terms of design outcome; it is the result of a way of thinking about, conceiving, designing, making and using material objects.

6.5.2 Orienting the Artisan

> Successful artefacts symbolically mediate between the relatively stable, mythological heritage of a culture and the relatively fast changing socio-economic context of their everyday use.
>
> – Balaram, 1998: p. 45

- Explain the function of a new product—customer usage and maintenance—to help artisans relate to it. They can then visualize the use of the product. Potters in Bangalore, during a Srishti School of Art and Design project on design development, actually stayed with a family for one day to see urban lifestyles and product usage at close quarters.
- There is a tendency to put a limit on the artisans' activities based on a perception of their skill and its expression through their traditional product manifestations. This often negates the potential and capability of artisans to think and respond differently to new opportunities and environments. Artisans are as keen as designers to incorporate new experiences and insights into their work. For example, Orissa painters traditionally used to making mat hangings with painted birds and animals are equally adept at interpreting, with great precision, urban products such as cameras, computers, MacDonald burgers and cars. This was one of the recent outcomes of the collaborative process between the accessory design students of NIFT, New Delhi and the artisans. While the students were catalysts in initiating this new application of skills for a range of gift items produced for food chain stores or multinational corporations, it was mainly the artisans who created these amazing miniature objects. Similarly, the experience of students in developing footwear in collaboration with the traditional Mojari makers of Rajasthan demonstrates how useful and creative such teamwork can be. (See Section III: Mojari Case Study.)

> While designing products with artisans is an exciting and enriching activity, the most important aspect of the work is the relationship between artisan and designer. Every designer has to realize that he or she is an intruder in a fragile economic environment. Artisans in many developing countries may be considered as 'second-class citizens', but this belies their incredible skills and strengths to survive in their social position. Artisans are among the finest people on earth, and deserve respect without deference. Working with them is an equal opportunity for both designer and artisan to share creativity, not a designer engaging an artisan.
>
> – John Ballyn[37]

37 John Ballyn, an industrial designer, has worked extensively in the UK, South Asia, East Asia and Africa.

6.5.3 Developing a Product USP (Unique Selling Proposition)

> We are lucky in India to have these rich traditions, which have their huge directories of design motifs, of usage, shapes, colour combinations, and all that. We should take this as a starting point.
>
> – Laila Tyabji

The final product should reflect the identity of the place of origin, its own niche and its own USP. The artisan's work has always had a distinctive local identity since the materials and the tools used, and the skills employed, are indigenous. Design interventions have to be done keeping in mind the USP of the craft as well as the identity and background of the artisan community involved. It is necessary to avoid copying between crafts as this results in a lose–lose situation for all.

It is very important to keep each intervention separate, unique and appropriate to the peculiar aspects of the craft. For example, a special feature of Punjab's phulkari embroidery is the use of two or three shades of yellow. Thus, initial interventions should be based on this tradition since this is one of the core characteristics of the craft. The intervention or strategy naturally cannot remain static, and nor does it need to. In the case of UMBVS, the designer took the essence of the colours and motifs that were characteristic of traditional *pattus* and used this for modern-day products; the designer also introduced weaving with cotton yarn. The intervention was a great success. In a country with so many woven textiles, this new look was completely distinct. Now, after more than a decade, the artisans themselves are reinventing products based on market trends. The initial niche was created by using the distinctive signature of *pattu* weaves, which continues until today.

6.5.4 Tradition and Adaptation

It is important to adapt design elements for new crafts without destroying the cultural core that lies behind the tradition. The process of adaptation should take place over a long period.

> In the interaction between the design student, Smitha Murthy and the Bodo weavers of north-east India, the student worked initially with the traditional colour palette—yellows, oranges, reds—and the traditional motifs because she felt that the weavers would feel more comfortable with this choice. In developing the products, she began with shawls (long and short) and dupattas because once again these items were similar to those that the weavers wove commonly. Later she introduced certain new products, but did so keeping in mind the kinds of products that the weavers were comfortable weaving. (See Section II: Case Study.)

Understand existing, that is 'traditional', colour palettes and why these are used before introducing new colours.

Understand existing, that is 'traditional', motifs and designs and the underlying bases for these before introducing new motifs and designs.

Attempt, whenever possible, to create new designs using variations on or adaptations of existing design bases.

6.5.5 Dealing with Materials and Processes

Use eco-friendly raw materials that are locally available or easily accessible as this makes a craft more sustainable. Also, substitute locally available raw materials for materials not easily available. This has to be kept in mind while making design inputs; there is little point in a student designer adding beads to embellish a product if the artisan cannot access the beads easily and inexpensively; the input is then not sustainable.

Eliminate hazardous raw materials. The designer must also share information about whether a particular material is hazardous, and if so, then introduce technology or take preventive steps to resolve the problem. For example, a critical design intervention in textiles has been the banning of Azo dyes, which

Design intervention is also concerned with finding contemporary uses for traditional knowledge and skills. The designing of bus shelters with Kerala terracotta roof tiles uses traditional and appropriate knowledge and skill in the present context, and thus also helps sustain crafts and livelihoods.

are hazardous to health, and the requirement that designers and technologists think of alternative dyes.

Keep in mind the seasonal availability of raw materials. In the UMBVS intervention, the change of the base material from wool (seasonally available) to cotton (available all year round) was a dramatic input as the products could be sold all year round in the country.

Explore the potential of using 'viable' mixed materials. Artisans do not have to be confined to using any one particular material. It is our failure that we have classified crafts and artisans according to materials: metal worker, leather worker, etc. Mixed materials should be used if they can make the product more mainstream. For instance, a few of the key sections of a rattan chair can be made from aluminium to improve marketability. There is as yet little infrastructure to achieve this 'mixed material' prototype.

> 'The mixing of craft and mass-production skills and different materials will help bring craft into mainstream merchandising, and do much for increasing and reviving the craft sector'
>
> – Neelam Chibber[38]

6.5.6 Skills, Processes, and Techniques and Technology

Reduce drudgery. Introduce suitable techniques or devices to broaden the skill and technology base. Make available appropriate skills and technology to artisans.

Ensure that the product range under development has room for the aptitudes and skill levels of all potential beneficiaries rather than just those who are most highly skilled. Some artisans can work from a sketch, others prefer to have complete sets of drawings of components, and yet others have to be talked through each stage of making all components of a product.

Provide technological inputs about and training in variations of existing techniques to provide new finishes, looks and improved quality.

Take steps to deal with and eliminate hazardous processes.

6.5.7 Sustainability

> Any designer thinking of working with artisans must maintain the artisans' security as their first consideration. Then it is possible to evolve products to a higher quality of design and manufacture. If a designer chooses to have a difficult economic situation for himself or herself, that's fine, but they cannot inflict these ideals on the producer. They can insist on good quality and excellent performance, but must make sure that they deliver the economic stability that the artisan needs.
>
> – John Ballyn

Design inputs cannot be detached from livelihood issues. For example, women making kurtas/dresses with minimal embroidery for an NGO in Jaisalmer were being paid a very low rate for each embroidered piece. The questions then arise: Should the kurtas be made with such a minimal amount of embroidery? Are the women earning enough for their survival?

The design approach should be such that not only should the product be aesthetically appealing but the amount (and nature) of the work should also be enough to ensure adequate earnings for the artisan. The designer should be careful about developing a product without first finding a market for it, as there is a livelihood issue involved. The artisan must earn an adequate income if the intervention is to be sustainable.

6.5.8 Marketability, Product Semantics and Quality

> Any successful intervention has to go together with the market linkages, that is, the marketing strategy must be appropriate to the additional inputs of quality, pricing and materials.

38 Neelam Chibber, a trained designer, is Director, Industree Crafts Pvt. Ltd., Bangalore, India

The designer should be linked to a market or a retail system, otherwise he/she will not feel responsible for his/her actions and decisions. Bhola Nath, a carpet weaver from Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), says that artisans expect knowledge of marketable products as an input from designers. Several artisans who were interviewed said that they saw designers as a 'window' to markets and marketable products. Ikhtiar Ali, a bell maker from Jalesar (Uttar Pradesh), observed that though 'all learning is important, market information is primary'. Learning about 'outside demand' is critical to survival.

The surface qualities of a product such as its form, colour and texture are widely recognized concerns of product semantics. Emphasizing the importance of quality, finish and packaging to the artisan is necessary for ensuring marketability.

The product usage and price should be maintained so as to appeal to the widest possible market and consumer base. The product range should encompass many niches and price ranges.

■ CONCERNS

- Does it meet the required need/function?
- Does it revitalize the product?
- Does it affirm cultural symbols?
- Does it leave room for human creativity?
- Does it have a continuing meaning for the artisan?
- Does it continue to be meaningful to the community?
- Does it provide opportunities to pass on traditional skills and knowledge?

■ **Going Down the Wrong Path: Interventions that Went Astray**

Interventions that go astray are not necessarily because of bad work or lack of foresight, but often because of limitations of follow-up action on the supply chain or other organizations that are part of the process or the result of poor anticipation. Expectations from a student designer and a professional designer also need to be differentiated in terms of outcome and maturity. It is important that we do not let disaster stories prevent us from recognizing that design and product development are essential.

A designer was given a brief to work with *kota doria*. Sourcing the fabric was a bit difficult; she had some fabric developed in contrasting warp and weft. Initially, the artisans thought that it was very cheap fabric as it was sheer. Slowly, however, they realized that embroidering on *doria* is far easier and quicker, and it soon became the most popular base fabric. The designer combined these *doria* garments with *lehariya* sourced from Jaipur; the designs were tested at an exhibition in Bangalore and were a total sell-out. However, *kota* is difficult to source, and embroidery is no longer being done on *kota*; hence the inputs have been nullified.

An example of a mismatch between intention and final product is the case of an intervention in embroidery in which the designers were not given a proper brief.

The NGO involved gives out work to artisans, who sell through exhibitions and bazaars, but who do not have facilities for trials and for showing and presenting their products. The customer base has the capacity to spend Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,500 for an outfit. The NGO did not inform the designers of these essential facts.

The designers created a collection in which all the garments were made of silk and satin; the materials themselves cost Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 6,000. The clothes were extraordinarily fussy, with details like pin tucks and pleats; the tailors could not replicate these features. The embroidery content—the NGO's core strength—was worth only about Rs. 25. For a garment priced at Rs. 10,000, the craftswomen were being paid only between Rs. 25 and Rs. 75 for the embroidery.

The garments were never made. The NGO spent a huge amount on the project.

From Gods and Goddesses to Toys and Games: An intervention has converted a craft dedicated to making beautiful images of gods and goddesses/deities for special and festive occasions to the production of fruits and vegetables, all because the deity-making craft was categorized as 'Toys and Dolls', and the

. . . enormous challenges remain. Perhaps the most important of these is the challenge of marketing: understanding the domestic and overseas needs that craft skills can satisfy, and acquiring the ability to satisfy demand in a market that grows more competitive with each passing day. The ability to flourish within this reality must also be achieved in a manner that can empower artisans, millions of whom remain deprived. On the threshold of a new century, artisans face the need to look to the future while also ensuring growth that brings real change in their quality of life. It is this that makes these workshops and meetings so important. Through them, artisans and marketers can assist each other in understanding the opportunities that exist in this era of globaliza-tion, as well as the 'how' to meet the new challenges of free trade. Marketing strategies are the most important element for a sustainable future. This is true for all those countries that, like India, have a heritage of craft traditions struggling to find their place in contemporary markets.

— Ashoke Chatterjee

intervention sought to widen the range of products.

6.6 REGARDING MARKETS

There is a cycle of activity to all manufacturing enterprises that is basic; it involves market research, market strategy, business planning, product development, promotion, sales and evaluation of sales and new market research. It happens every year, and is the process that yields the most consistent results. Nothing is guaranteed to sell. Good market, research and enterprise management pays off.

- The crux of the matter is for the designer—who seeks to work in/is working in the crafts sector—to understand that making designs and samples is the beginning and not the end of the process. The designer is often regarded as the link to the market; while not always providing direct market access, the designer nevertheless opens windows of opportunity that afford a view of the market and consumer preferences. (See Section II: Case Studies.)

6.6.1 The Design—Marketing Interface

- According to Jatin Bhatt of NIFT, the typical approach and process that students are trained to apply to design and product development is based on the understanding that design initiatives must have meaning in the marketplace and that the products should be viable.
- This necessitates the process of articulating existing and emerging opportunities, positioning in terms of consumer/market segments, price, retail and merchandise strategies, material and technical feasibility, influences and tastes as well as the aesthetic and functional dimensions of the product range.

Product viability—viability in marketing terms—is thus a critical element in design intervention. One of the frequent criticisms of student interventions by artisans is that the students come and learn but never come back to help with the problems of marketing. In this context, the artisans feel that they have been used. The institution may have no control over students once they finish their course of study and so cannot always address this problem. However, the ethical issues involved cannot be ignored. Responsible design needs responsible designers.

6.6.2 Some Basic Inputs

- Introduce the artisan to the importance of quality finish, packaging and display in the context of marketing.
- Be cognizant of market constraints such as customer needs, colour and style trends, packaging needs for display and shipping, labelling and customs requirements and prohibitions.
- Develop products for multiple markets—domestic, local, urban, export—and for a range of needs and purchasing power. As Amba Sanyal[39] observes: 'Products should encompass many niches and price ranges.' It is important not to bank on fickle export markets. Export markets are also very demanding in terms of production schedules and delivery, changing trends and preferences, and quality standards.

John Ballyn believes that foreign markets are not necessarily the panacea. 'The complications and risks of chasing the Dollar/Euro are many, and why bother when the Indian middle class has been estimated at two hundred and fifty million. That's the total population of the USA! Middle classes have dreams and aspirations which are achievable because their income has some limited surplus.... In the Indian context, which already has an interest in its own crafts, one should be looking to supply beautiful high-quality products for house, home and daily use which are attractive to those members of the public who certainly have money, and want elegant products for their homes.'

39 Amba Sanyal is a designer and author who has worked with rural communities in craft development and design intervention.

- Attempt to develop recycled packaging.
- Look at issues related to import substitution and fair trade.

6.6.3 Producing for Local/ Urban Markets

- Undertake market research for identifying customer views and trends.
- Lifestyle changes have to be addressed. Even artisans are no longer wearing their own textiles or using their own products. A part of the intervention is sensitizing buyers and encouraging a consumer taste for handicrafts. Products need promotion and advertising.
- If customers are residents buying for daily needs, products must be economically viable, of good quality, and must be changed regularly to attract customers.
- Complaints and rejection procedures have to be developed.

6.6.4 Producing for Export Markets

> The reason that exports of handicrafts from our countries is so strong is because in the more developed nations that buy from us, our products fit well into the home products and gift sections of their shopping baskets. The key here is price. All of us who have dealt with foreign buyers know that orders actualize if the price is right. The reason simply is that there are certain target rates at which products can retail, even in the developed countries.
>
> – Neelam Chibber

It is important to be aware of the nature of export markets:

- They are transient in nature, changing from season to season.
- They are demanding in terms of production and delivery schedules, as they must respond to changing trends, shifting preferences, and strict quality standards.
- Temporary export booms often result in the artisans losing their own local markets, leaving many of them in a hopeless situation.

6.6.5 Merchandising

Why are our craft products kept in specific craft shops and government emporia? Why are they not on the shop floors of our big retail chains?

Neelam Chibber observes that most craft development, other than what is ordered by export buyers, is done without thinking about the craft product, which is actually a piece of merchandise that must compete with many other products. Crafts cannot be economically viable if they are restricted to the expatriate, or collector, or 'craft-conscious' buyers, those who look at the product because of its 'craft' value. *For the majority of consumers—who are actually being ignored—the 'craft' aspect can definitely be the added value but not the only value.*

People in the handicrafts field must be deeply convinced of the value of what they are doing in order to draw up the correct strategies to achieve their objectives. Chibber believes that an 'entrepreneurial-commercial model' of handicrafts is necessary to promote sales, create employment and preserve a way of life. She observes: 'This should not be confused with the cultural strengths of craft in our minds. The cultural strength of craft is too obvious. If we as planners focus too much on this, we are often unable to bring about change, which is the key to growth. **The cultural strength of craft should be used only as a marketing tool.'**

> We need to only look at the buyers from the large successful chain stores to know what merchandising is. They know at what price a tablemat, for example, will move from their stores. They order and sample products only within that specific price range. I know for a fact at what price a set of tablemats will move out and at what speed from our stores in India. The speciality of the large stores is that they are really not concerned with speed of products moving off the shelf simply because they have only one speed. Fast!

On the other hand, we the people who run smaller stores, and many other small- and middle-sized retailers in most countries, operate on a mixture of speeds. We keep some tablemats that move out very fast, and then some that move more slowly, since they cater to specialized tastes, which means that they could be more expensive or just have a different taste for mass appeal. This type of merchandising follows the 80:20 law. This marketing strategy focuses on the fact that 80 per cent of your business comes from 20 per cent of your merchandise. This definitely means that the stock flow of the 80 per cent item has to be superb. The item has to be always on the shelf.

– Neelam Chibber

6.7 MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

If you alter traditional materials or technology, you are altering something fundamental about the craft, so tread with caution (Ravindran).[40]

It is important to distinguish between what is technology and what is skill. Many people think of technology as machinery or high-tech objects. However, technology is something that helps us to produce things. It does include tools and equipment, but in order to produce anything we also need the proper skills and appropriate knowledge to use the tools and equipment. The utility, appropriateness, sustainability, economy, environment-friendly aspects and process changes need to be all looked at carefully and simultaneously.

- What is the impact on the livelihoods of artisans and practitioners of related crafts?
- Technology has to be introduced with caution and its effects thought through carefully. Haji Muzzafar Tajmiyan, a block maker from Pillakhwa, Uttar Pradesh, describes how block designs were converted into screen prints using technology 10–15 years ago. This has had an adverse effect on block making, and most block makers have stopped making blocks and moved to other professions. Of the thousands of people once engaged in block making, only a dozen or so remain. This has also adversely affected the handblock printers in Pillakhwa and beyond.

Neelam Chibber of Industree points out that before industrialization, handicrafts were a mainstream production activity, indeed the only form of production activity. After being in existence for thousands of years, handicrafts were suddenly assailed by industrialization. Today the sector has been forced totally on the back foot. It has recovered to some extent but only where it has been helped by technology, good merchandising, capital inputs and reliable markets.

6.7.1 Some Concerns Regarding Materials: Knowledge of Materials is Essential in Taking Decisions

Jolly Rohatgi talks about two lacquerware artisans she interviewed. Both had design interventions done; beautiful designs were created for the German market. The sample lacquerware articles were airlifted and confirmed orders were placed. However, when the products were made and the shipment was sent out by sea, the lacquer melted in transit because of heat and humidity. The products were all rejected and the market dried out.

- The designer should encourage the use of local materials to ensure easy supply and to reduce dependence on outside factors.
- The designer must share information about whether a particular material is hazardous, and introduce non-hazardous technology or preventive steps wherever possible.

6.7.2 Some Concerns Regarding the Introduction of Technological Change

- Are there any materials or processes in the existing set-up that are hazardous to

40 Ravindran teaches at the Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology, Bangalore, Karnataka.

the artisan and/or the environment? Can these be replaced with alternative and sustainable technological inputs?

- What will the impact of technological intervention be on makers? Will the introduction of technology change the existing division of labour between men and women?
- In regard to these particular aspects, will change benefit the craft or will it cause irreversible damage?
- Introduction of new materials and technologies change the composition of the product and hence the product range changes accordingly, e.g. Jaipur blue pottery. (See case study in Section III.)
- Will the introduction of appropriate technology make the work less ardous?
- Can technology reduce drudgery and ensure more time and value from hand-skills?

6.7.3 Using Appropriate Technologies

Appropriate technology is any technology that is suitable to the context of a particular community, area, region or country. It is an amalgam of skills, methods, techniques, appliances and equipment that can contribute towards solving the basic socio-economic problems of the concerned community (Das, 1981: p. 11). Appropriate technologies do not pose a disjunction between 'modern technologies'—supposedly of the developed countries—and 'traditional technologies'—supposedly 'primitive' and 'outdated' belonging to the less developed countries. Appropriate technologies are simply those that are most relevant in a particular context.

In the case of hardware for appropriate technology, it is either the result of upgrading traditional technologies or the result of scaling down modern sophisticated technologies or innovations.

> It is essential for us to decide what we actually mean by these currently fashionable terms— 'intermediate', 'appropriate' or 'adaptive' technologies! My own interpretation is that these technologies are those which show us the easiest, simplest, least expensive but efficient ways of dealing with everyday problems. Such technologies are affordable, as the commodities required are easily available and so are the skills needed for the job. All that is required is to go a step further with the research our forefathers have done—that is, to add on our twentieth-century experience to improve on what has already been accomplished. But this addition should be a contribution—not a contradiction.
>
> — Laurie Baker, 1990

Questions that need to be asked to determine whether a technology that is going to be introduced is 'appropriate':

- Is it economically viable?
- Is it easily adaptable and sustainable? Can it be replaced without altering the quality of the product?
- Is it technically feasible? Does it facilitate translation into other materials?
- Does it fit into the socio-economic fabric and patterns of the local communities?
- Is it capable of being adapted and further developed under local conditions?
- Can it be accomplished either by upgrading traditional technology or scaling down modern technology?
- Can it be introduced as a result of recent innovations or inventions?
- Will it be able to create a sense of participation and decision making at the local level?
- Is it amenable to the use of non-conventional energy sources like biogas, solar energy and wind energy?
- Is it safe?

The Benefits of Using/Introducing Appropriate Technologies[41]

- They can help in providing employment to vast numbers of people in rural areas.

41 Derived from the practical successes in village and cottage industries in India, where over 500 items have been earmarked that can be manufactured by village, cottage and small-scale industries without competing with large-sized industries.

- The introduction of improved craft tools and simple machines can help village artisans to greatly improve their performance and also help their finished products to compete well in the market-place.
- They require minimal training inputs. Machines and equipment if not handled properly and operated by experienced operators cannot produce goods of quality. To handle them, special skills and knowledge are necessary, for which intensive training is required. Appropriate technologies, on the other hand, are usually of a very simple type and are comparatively cheap. These can be installed and operated by local operators with little training. Maintenance and repair do not pose any special difficulty. This is very important in the rural context where transport and communication facilities are not well developed, maintenance costs rise due to distances from industrial centres, and the purchase of replacement parts from nearby urban centres presents several difficulties.

6.7.4 Exploring the Gendered Nature of Technology

Part of the reason why women are perceived to be non-technical is because skills are not always regarded as technical. Also, they are used in the performance of domestic tasks, which means that they are dismissed as 'women's work' and are not valued. Special attention needs to be paid to redefining cultural systems in relation to women. Technology, because it is mainly controlled by men, reinforces entrenched cultural taboos rather than negating them. Thus, women continue to be disempowered by technology. The belief that women are technologically inept is so ingrained that it is invisible and ignored. Design intervention needs to address seriously gender concerns of such a nature.

The following questions can help us in assessing the situation in this context:

- Do women and men have equal access to the resources required for the use of the technology?
- Do women and men have equal access to the skills and training required for the use of the technology?
- Can the current patterns of control be changed?
- Do women own land? Does this factor affect the success of the project?
- Do women have access to credit? What implications does this factor have for the success of the project?
- Who are the decision makers in the village? Will this factor affect the implementation of the project activities?
- How has information about the project been shared in the community? Are women and men both aware of the proposed intervention and related activities? What are their attitudes towards the project?
- Is the contribution of women valued in terms of cost/price? Do women share in the earnings?

6.7.5 Making Technological Change Participatory and Adaptive

Change existing projects, training courses, or similar activities to enable the participants to include new perspectives. Many training courses are designed in a top-down manner or in a way that ignores the skills that participants can bring to such programmes. They may be able to identify modifications that will improve the sensitivity of the training or other project activities.

Design can be carried out in a participatory way, again offering a bridge between people and technology, allowing control over technology, rather than being controlled by it. Designers have a significant part to play in how technology is used for development. Third World societies, rather than picking and moulding technology according to their values, are being shaped by technology, especially those technologies that the First World deigns to allow them. This is where design intervention can prove critical. However, technological change as a part of design in-

tervention needs to be organic and adaptive—a process in which the artisan is involved integrally—so that the technological change or adaptation is beneficial and productive and not harmful in terms of quality, sustainability and livelihood in the long run.

- **Identifying Technical Skills and Inputs among Artisans:** It is important to understand what constitutes technology and skill among artisans. Technology is often seen as machinery or hightech objects. However, in a broader sense, technology is something that helps us to produce things. It actually does include tools and equipment, but in order to produce anything we also need the skills and knowledge to use the tools and equipment to develop a product. It is important to enable artisans to recognize the value of the skills needed to do different things, and to begin to identify these skills as technology. The view that technology is only tools, machinery and equipment—that is, 'hardware'—needs to be challenged. The value accorded to certain skills should also be questioned, for example, is blacksmithing less difficult and valuable than dressmaking? (See Case Study in Section III: NIFT—CARE—FICCI Disaster Relief in Kutch.)

- **Organization as a Technical Skill:** Production processes require organization. Different tasks have to be carried out in a particular order (planting before weeding, grinding before oil extraction), and the labour and other conditions necessary for carrying out the tasks have to be organized. Where people have a lot of different things to do in one day (particularly women), organizing activities around a production process may require considerable skill. Organization is a part of production and a part of technology.

- **Technology as an Infrastructural Input:** Technology to solve problems need have nothing to do with the craft process but rather with the required infrastructure for executing the process. The potter Ramkrishanappa in a village outside Bangalore identified water scarcity as the most pressing problem in his craft. The technological input under consideration is a water-harvesting model, on which Srishti is working.

Some Key Issues for Design Intervention

- First, identify who has access to and control over the following resources and who benefits from them: land, capital, labour, skills, technology, education, credit savings, information and political power. Remember that access to resources does not necessarily imply control over them.

- Consider where and when the activities take place, how much time they take, why women do some tasks and men do others, how roles and responsibilities are organized on the basis of age and social groups, and how roles and responsibilities have changed over time.

- What technologies are being used for what activities?

- Which activities are time consuming and labour intensive? Who does them? Can the introduction of technology save time, reduce drudgery, improve health and increase safety? What implications will this have on labour?

- What will be the impact of the technological intervention on women and men?

- Will the introduction of the technology change the existing gendered division of labour?

- Who does technology empower? Can it promote greater equity? Or can it lead to disempowerment?

- Will the project affect basic services and needs such as water, fuel, and transport? What will be the impact of these factors on the lives of men and women?

- What implications does this information have for designing training programmes and other project activities?

- The project design needs to take into account the artisans' access to and control over resources and also the flow of benefits from project activities to them.

6.8 ARTESANÍAS DE COLOMBIA: DESIGN LABORATORY: SOME WORKING TOOLS

6.8.1 Planning

Planning is a process that ensures the administration of physical, technical, and economic resources so that specific actions may be carried out.

The Design Laboratory plans and organizes its activities on the basis of an annual operational design plan. This gives way to a design report intended for monthly as well as annual presentation. It is organized and presented in a main chart on the basis of region, department, and municipality. Each adviser (hired directly or working on a contract basis) records, in the specified format, on a month-to-month basis, the information relevant to the projects for which he or she is responsible. The aim is to reach a level of continuity with respect to the work developed with each group of artisans, setting the standards for the action to be taken monthly and annually.

6.8.2 Research

This activity is focused on the analysis, evaluation, and careful consideration of the components that form a part of the craft activity, such as: research aimed at improving the quality of raw materials; new technology; factors related to culture and identity; new markets; product demand; sustainability of resources; analysis of supply and demand; new trends; product behaviour in different markets; and systems of promotion and distribution at fairs and events. Research is also undertaken with the aim of disseminating knowledge about the technical, social, aesthetic, and symbolic aspects of the craft sector, as well as the practical aspects of production and marketing, among others.

6.8.3 Experimentation

This includes a set of skills related to the various tasks of artisans, which are converted into a series of training sessions programmed and executed directly in the craft workshops, pilot workshops, and/or laboratories, to evaluate materials, processes, combinations of materials, alloys, and explore the different possibilities for the physical or chemical transformation of the components that are involved in product development.

The aim of these sessions is to devise approaches and proposals to achieve productivity, quality improvement, and innovation in new or traditional products.

6.8.4 Product Development

This is directed towards the manufacture of craft items or products that better satisfy needs, improving the quality, changing or implementing technological elements in the processes, and/or modifying the culture of the organization. The aim is to position the craft products and consolidate the craft business in the market.

6.8.4(A) Defining Product Lines, Systems, and Families

Through this strategy, a group of related products (based on their form and/or function) is defined. The strategy responds to market demands or trends and helps in consolidating the craft business as a production unit.

6.8.4(B) Development of the Product Image, Packaging, and Final Presentation

This strategy attempts to increase the added value of the product through packaging, its method of protection, and the form in which it reaches the consumer. It also helps in competing with similar products in the market.

- **Graphic Identity of the Craft Product**

Handicrafts compete with other handmade products in the market. It is, therefore, necessary to provide them with various elements of visual communication that convey their characteristics and value to consumers. In this way, the craft product can attain a competitive advantage among other products.

With this aim in mind, the Design Laboratory adopts a model of graphic identity developed through workshops and consultations with a professional graphic designer.

1. Theoretical workshop dealing with the relevance of graphic identity to the product and the craft industry;
2. Practical evaluation workshop dealing with the elements of graphic identity intrinsic to the group, the craft enterprise, or the workshop;
3. Graphic identity counselling;
4. Implementation.

1. *Theoretical workshop*: This is a collective event, attended by the working group most interested in the topic. Its approximate duration is four hours. It is conducted like a seminar, with slides and posters depicting concepts and with pertinent examples that illustrate craft topics.

   The workshop deals with the concept of graphic communication and identity, and its role in craft production. It also touches upon various graphic elements and their characteristics, systems of graphic identity, institutional identifiers, development of graphic applications, and features and standards of labelling.

2. *Practical workshop*: This takes place in the artisan's workspace. In light of what has been learned during the theoretical component of the workshop, the artisan's application is evaluated in areas such as stationery, business advertisements, and brochures, among others.

   The evaluation is a dialogue between the consultant and the artisan that concludes with a checklist or questionnaire on the elements that require redesigning and/or designing, and the reasons for this. At this point, the artisan decides on his commitment to the next stage; if he opts for counselling, it should begin at this stage.

3. *Counselling in graphic identity*: The artisan starts working in two areas: determining the product identity and deciding what he wants it to project. This is an interactive phase and involves joint production between the artisan and the designer. Through it the foundation is laid for the envisaged product, and this forms the initial outline of the graphic identity proposal. It is important that the artisan approves of this graphic identity proposal.

   Then the adviser applies the graphic identity proposal selected to the stationery: envelopes, letterhead paper, visiting cards, labels, and notices for window fronts. The groups are given assignments for designing brochures and catalogues.

   The outcome of the counselling session is summarized in a printed format and saved onto a CD, which contains information on the concerned artisan for his use. This final document also contains recommendations about the materials to be used, a colour chart, and typography.

4. *Application*: This is optional, and can be carried out in stages, depending on budget constraints.

   Artisans or craft groups/associations use graphic identity to present their products at the time of selection for fairs organized by Artesanías de Colombia, since a graphic identity is one of the requirements.

■ Design and Development of Packaging for the Craft Sector

The aim of this component of the counselling session is to sensitize artisans and small-scale producers to the importance of product packaging and the role that it plays in influencing consumers deciding to purchase or not. It is as important as product protection and final presentation.

The counselling session begins with a workshop seminar that deals with the functions and classification of different kinds of packaging. Topics such as the product, market, technical and material norms, physical distribution, logistics, and suppliers are also addressed. After this, a creativity workshop is held during which the artisan—who best knows the product—learns about materials,

dimensions, and structure. On the basis of this information, proposals are drawn up. The proposals are then evaluated by the adviser, who, during various sessions of individual work, carries out the necessary adjustments and tests to determine the viability of the proposals.

- **Installation and Commercial Exhibition for the Craft Sector**

The main objective of the counselling session is to sensitize artisans to the use of this tool in creating attention and interest, and in stimulating the client to buy the product on display at the exhibition. It applies to both products displayed on shelves as well as in showcases since the producer as well as the retailer (who wants to increase his sales and attend to his customers) can use their creativity and good taste to attract new buyers.

In order to organize an exhibition that is attractive to potential buyers, it must be balanced and in good taste, and this can be achieved through a design process that includes:

- Defining the concept from the seller's point of view
- Identifying and defining client potential
- Identifying product lines
- Preparing a budget and defining resources
- Defining the concept of the exhibition
- Designing the proposal
- Doing the costing
- Executing the proposal
- Preparing a packaging and safety plan

The counselling session for the installation and the exhibition is carried out in craft production units that identify opportunities for improving their business through this method. The majority of the artisans assessed by Artesanías de Colombia (according to whose criteria they must have an optimum level of development) have the opportunity to participate in scheduled events like fairs, business meetings, and press conferences. A specialist in the field and the artisan carry out a project whose results are displayed at an exhibition in keeping with established criteria and the capabilities of the producer.

The methodology employed is a theoretical and practical workshop, whether individual or collective in nature, where a basic outline is constructed on the basis of which the adviser develops a structured and formal proposal that reflects the character of the group. From that point on, decisions regarding costs, material management, production, and assembling are taken.

The following issues are discussed during the counselling session:

- the space, plan, circulation, and centre of interest or sub-space;
- the typologies of the forms (straight lines, curves), the organization of the pieces into patterns (whether the arrangement of the objects is repeated, or is symmetrical, varied, or contrasted);
- the components of the exhibition (colour, harmony, contrast, light);
- the materials needed during the assembling of the exhibition.

6.8.5 Market Testing

This step consists of a set of activities directed towards evaluating the commercial behaviour of the products developed by the Design Laboratory and the different craft groups based on the tastes and preferences of consumers.

The objective is to establish, through market research, directives dealing with products to be developed in different communities, and to set up various permanent and itinerant spaces for exhibition and commercial promotion that will allow for an exchange of information between the designer and the buyer—consumer with respect to design, quality, and the price of the proposed products.

Annexures

Possible Formats For Data Collection

Annexure 1(A)

Among the many methods of collecting information, a material history methodology is one that could perhaps be used as a base from which any craft product could be studied. Exclusions and inclusions need to be done for each craft model.

Materials: The natural, organic and/or manmade materials that compose the product and complete its appearance.

- What materials were used to make the product and complete its appearance?
- Did the materials used influence the product's final form?
- Are these materials used in similar products?
- Are these materials available locally?
- Are these materials being depleted?
- Are these materials hazardous?

Construction: The methods employed to produce the object; a physical description of the product's appearance.

- What was the process followed to fabricate and finish the product? A detailed examination, including texture, size, etc.
- What tools were required?
- What is the quality and complexity of the construction?
- How was the product's appearance affected or influenced by the construction techniques employed? Rules of iconography: size, proportion, etc.
- Is any form of ornamentation/decoration present? If yes, what type is it? How does this affect the appearance of the object? What are the local symbols, patterns, motifs, and colours used?
- Does the construction of this product differ greatly from the construction of similar products, including products made by the same artisan and by others?
- Is the design comparable to the design of other products? Is the overall design a set style?
- What degree of sophistication is represented by the product? What is the style, method of construction, etc.?
- From where are the tools obtained? Are they locally made? Are they similar to tools used for making similar products elsewhere?

Function: The reasons for the product's creation and the use that was made of it. Its effectiveness in the role for which it is intended, including attendant social function(s).

- Why was the product manufactured?
- What function does this product perform?
- How well does the product perform its intended function?

- Is the product's functional performance affected by its design, the materials used, the construction methods employed, or the ornamentation applied? Do any of these hinder or reduce the product's effectiveness?
- Does the product function reveal anything about its maker/owner?
- What is the function of the product today? Has its function changed over time?

Provenance: The object's place and time of origin, and its history, including alterations or evolution from its point of origin to the present.

- Where and when was the object produced?
- Who was the maker?
- Where and how was the object used?
- Who is the user of the object?
- What is the user's social status, trade, etc.?

Annexure 1(B)

MODEL SHEET 1

- Object category/ reference number: year, photo number/ country/ region/ ethnic group
- Photo or sketch
- Object and general description/local name/material/measurements/use/ where collected/where made/ where distributed/date collected/ cost/observations—is it becoming scarce, is it undergoing changes in use, links or resemblance with other objects, etc.

MODEL SHEET 2

- Techniques used
- Workshop/tools/time taken/observations
- Craft worker/observations

MODEL SHEET 3

- Production/commercialization
- Article/originality/average rate of production per day, per week, per month
- Number of people employed in a workshop
- Cost price/sale price
- Turnover: per week, per month, per year
- Distribution: direct/by intermediary/ local/regional/national/foreign
- Stocks: raw material/finished products/ estimated value
- Use of equipment other than purely manual tools
- Power source used: human/animal/ electric/hydraulic/fuel
- Observations on conditions of work, strength of competition

MODEL SHEET 4

- Artisan/date/place/region or province
- General aspects/identification name/ ethnic group/age/sex/nationality
- Address of workshop
- Estimated number of people living on earnings from workshop
- Years of experience/initial training/ date/person responsible
- Later training/date/person or place responsible
- Objects made
- Raw materials used
- Type of product: traditional or modern/ functional or artistic
- Activity: seasonal/time of year/part time/duration/full time
- Professional help: family members/ apprentices/employees

- Brief description of the workshop/ situation/type of building/surface area/ tools/electricity/water
- Special position/aspects of lifestyle, vehicle, housing, telephone
- Local status/member of organization like a cooperative, etc.
- Relationship with the state/direct contact/received state aid in finance, training, equipment, etc.

■ **Photography**

- It is critical to seek permission from the artisan(s) before photographing his/their products, work environment, homes, etc. Sketching can be a useful option. In many cases, it makes people curious and draws them out; they come and watch and talk.
- Time should be taken for observation before photographing anything. This 'looking' stage will allow an overall impression of the surroundings to be memorized, which will be useful later when it comes to producing precise descriptions. Observation also makes it easier to get to know craft workers, villagers, and traders, and gives them time to overcome their reluctance and get used to being approached, watched, and questioned. Use the questionnaire and then add notes afterwards for the basic questions.
- The photographs should provide a meaningful illustration of the objects, showing their shapes, materials, aesthetic qualities, usefulness, and decorative or commercial possibilities.
- The photographs provide a clear illustration of craft workers in their everyday surroundings, along with the tools, techniques, and movements used, showing the peculiarities or difficulties of the work.
- Take a photograph of the whole object (as far as possible with a point of comparison to indicate its size). A detailed close-up showing the material(s) and the technique(s) used as well as any decoration, motifs, colours, or textures. A step-by-step detailed record or documentation showing how the object is made provides information about the cultural heritage of the artisan, helps in making a technological assessment, and also provides information about the craft workers, and their needs and potential.
- A single photograph is not enough to show how an object was made. Start with the raw material and show all the stages through which it goes before it is turned into the finished article. Photographs should be taken close up in order to show clearly the movements and tools used.
- An overall view of the workplace is desirable to show the environment, layout of tools and materials, and the relationship among artisans. Special tools can also be photographed. Use a photo notebook to record details about date, place, number of film, particulars about each shot, and other information about the object or scene.

Annexure 1(C)

The initial classification can be made along the following broad lines:

- According to chronological order
- According to category of product/raw material
- According to artisan
- According to technique
- According to place/region

Information cards for each object with accompanying photographs should be made.

Though possible formats for questionnaires have been listed below, these should be considered only as checklist as it has been observed that in the field answers often overlap and that each situation needs to be treated individually.

QUESTIONNAIRE NO. 1

(i) Date:_____ (ii) Place:_____

(iii) Region or province:_____

(iv) Crafts category:_____

1. OBJECT/PROJECT

1.1 Description

1.1.1 Usual name:_____ Local name:_____

1.1.2 Shape:_____

1.1.3 Measurements:_____

1.1.4 Raw material(s):_____

1.1.5 Decoration, colours:_____

1.1.6 Use:_____

1.2 Production

1.2.1 Where made:_____ Where seen or where sold:_____

1.2.2 Name of craft worker:_____

1.2.3 Address of craft worker:_____

1.2.4 Local price:_____

1.3 Observations

_____

_____

QUESTIONNAIRE NO. 2

Form no.:_____ Date:_____

Region or province:_____ Place:_____

Crafts category:_____

2. CRAFT WORKER

2.1 GENERAL ASPECTS

2.1.1 Identification

2.1.1.1Surname:_____ Age:_____

First name:_____ Sex:_____

Ethnic group:_____ Nationality:_____

2.1.1.2 Address of workshop: _____

Estimated number of people living on earnings from the workshop: _____

2.1.1.3 Address of craft worker (if different from above): _____

2.1.1.4 Official registration Yes _____ No _____

If yes, where registered: _____ No. _____

2.1.2 Definition

2.1.2.1 Years of experience: _____

2.1.2.2 Initial training Date: _____ Person responsible: _____

(family or other) Place: _____ Length of training: _____

2.1.2.3 Later training Date: _____ Person responsible: _____

Place: _____ Length of training: _____

2.1.2.4 Objects made:

_____

_____

_____

2.1.2.5 Raw materials used:

_____

_____

_____

2.1.2.6 Type of product: Traditional ☐ or Modern ☐

Functional ☐ or Artistic ☐

2.1.2.7 Activity: Seasonal ☐ Time of year _____

Part time ☐ Duration _____

Full time ☐

2.1.2.8 Professional help: Family members ☐ No. _____

Apprentices ☐ No. _____

Employees ☐ No. _____

2.1.2.9 Brief description of the workshop (situation, type of building, surface area, tools, electricity, water)

_____

_____

_____

_____

2.1.3 Social position

2.1.3.1 Aspects of lifestyle (vehicle, housing, telephone):

_____

_____

2.1.3.2 Local status (e.g. village chief, farmer)

_____

_____

2.1.3.3 Membership of organizations (professional group, cooperative)

_____

2.1.3.4 Has the craft worker received state aid (financing, training, equipment)?

_____

_____

2.2 ECONOMIC ASPECTS

2.2.1 Supplies

2.2.1.1 Origin of raw materials:

Local (under 5 km. away) ☐ 5–10 km. away ☐

10–50 km. away ☐ Over 50 km. away ☐

If obtained from abroad, origin:_____ Amount paid:_____

2.2.1.2 Distance from lines of communications (several replies possible):

DISTANCE	Up to 1 km.	1–10 km.
TYPE		
Track		
Road (tarmac)		
Train		
Navigable river		
Airport		
Port		

2.2.1.3 Amount of raw materials used:

	TYPE	QUANTITY
Per day:		
Per week:		
Per month:		

2.2.1.4 Amount of raw materials bought:

TYPE	QUANTITY	HOW OFTEN

2.2.1.5 Power used in production

Oil ☐ Water ☐
Electricity ☐ None ☐

2.2.1.6 If no power used, why not?

	Not available	Too costly	No point
Oil			
Water			
Electricity			

2.2.2 Rate of production

2.2.2.1 No. of objects made: Per day: _____
Per week: _____
Per month: _____

2.2.2.2 Estimated time taken: Object 1: _____
Object 2: _____
Object 3: _____
Object 4: _____

2.2.2.3 Stocks (estimated value, if possible):
Raw materials: _____
Finished products: _____

2.2.2.4 Extra production capacity: Yes ☐ No ☐
If yes, estimated quantity: Per day: _____
Per week: _____
Per month: _____

2.2.3 Management

2.2.3.1 Average cost of raw materials for a given number of articles (e.g. 10,50,100), according to category:

_____
_____

2.2.3.2 Other expenditure for the same number of articles (e.g. hours of work, miscellaneous expenses):

_____
_____

2.2.3.3 Artisan's estimate of cost price of each article:

_____
_____

2.2.3.4 Average on-the-spot selling price (per article):

_____

2.2.3.5 Do prices vary according to quantity? Yes ☐ No ☐

2.2.3.6 Do prices vary for different customers? Yes ☐ No ☐

2.2.3.7 Average turnover: Per week: _____

Per month: _____

2.2.3.8 Is credit given? Yes ☐ No ☐

2.2.3.9 Is supplier credit used? Yes ☐ No ☐

2.2.3.10 Usual way of financing a purchase: Own resources ☐

Loans from family/friends ☐

Banking system ☐

2.2.3.11 Can outside financing be easily obtained? Yes ☐ No ☐

Rate of interest: _____

Source (family, friends, bank): _____

2.2.3.12 Does the worker have debts? Yes ☐ No ☐

Estimated percentage of turnover: _____

2.2.3.13 Are written accounts kept? Yes ☐ No ☐

Of what kind?: _____

2.2.3.14 Does the worker use a bank account? Yes ☐ No ☐

2.2.3.15 Does the worker use a cheque book? Yes ☐ No ☐

2.2.4 Commercialization/Distribution

2.2.4.1 Selling methods (advertising, special offers, shop windows):

_____

_____

2.2.4.2 Types of customers (intermediaries, direct sale, local, regional, national, foreign):

_____

_____

2.2.4.3 Importance of the various types of customers (in decreasing order of importance and giving percentages for each, if possible):

_____

_____

2.2.4.4 Experience at trade fairs and exhibitions:

National: _____

International: _____

2.2.4.5 Experience in sending goods abroad: Yes ☐ No ☐

2.2.4.6 If the customers are mostly intermediaries:

Quantity bought: How often:

Buying to order: Yes ☐ No ☐

Possible advances: Yes ☐ No ☐

Final point of sale: Known:_____

Presumed:_____

2.2.4.7 Does the artisan have a place to display the goods? Yes ☐ No ☐

In the workplace:_____

Elsewhere (shop, window display, airport):_____

If so, surface area:_____

2.2.4.8 Is packaging used for transport? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, is it: made locally by the artisan ☐

made locally by another worker ☐

purchased in the country ☐

purchased abroad ☐

2.2.4.9 Means of transport used (retail or wholesale):

Road ☐ Train ☐ Plane ☐ Boat ☐ Animal ☐

2.2.5 Competition

2.2.5.1 Competitors: Local/village, how many:_____

Regional:_____

National:_____

2.2.5.2 Are there competing imported products? Give examples.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2.2.6 Taxes

2.2.6.1 Name/Designation:_____

2.2.6.2 Method of taxation:_____

2.2.6.3 Method of payment:_____

2.2.6.4 How often:_____

Amount paid each time:_____

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