

Thread Whispers, Chapter 1 Of Rock and Apricot and Mountaintop

MONISHA AHMED

The Brogpas of Dha and Hanu have ignited many people's imaginations over the years. Inspired by legends of them being descendants of Alexander the Great's Army and the last Aryans to three brothers migrating over the mountains from Gilgit, they have fuelled many creative reconstructions of history. Shivani Gupta and Corinne Adam's

exhibition at LAMO this summer was part of that on-going engagement with the Brogpas.

Using their rich tradition of oral literature, Shivani and Corinne explore the world they inhabit – from a man's search for elusive love to Zawa, a woman whose husband has turned to ash because of a curse, to a witch who devours the flesh of unsuspecting men and animals. But going beyond the

spoken word, they looked at theatrical performances of their stories by the proponents themselves evoking their imagination and with each character playing out the story against the backdrop of their landscape, wearing their traditional dress or using found objects from plastic waste to natural materials.

Shivani is a professional photographer and classical Mohiniattam dancer from Goa/Mumbai, and Corinne E Adams is a writer, teacher, and musician from Texas/Japan. Working with the people of Dha and Hanu, Shivani and Corinne converged the practices of photography, performance, story-telling, sound and video to present *Thread Whispers*. A multi-disciplinary project it drew from many fields including anthropology, visual arts, poetry and translation. It contemplated how communities investigate their history; the part factual memory plays in this and the part of imaginative reconstruction.



Thread Whispers, of Rock and Apricot and Mountaintop

Ladakh is a region rich in story telling, and many people remember sitting huddled around the stove on long, cold winter evenings intently listening to their elders or professional story-tellers regale them night after night. Unfortunately, other forms of entertainment, especially television, have now replaced sessions like these. And as memory fades, stories get lost or forgotten for the future. LAMO is committed to ensuring they are recorded and stay relevant, especially as they inspire a search for a fantastical realism amongst the ordinary.

Monisha Ahmed is Executive Director, LAMO



Thread Whispers exhibited in the Gallery - Gyawo Wing

VISITOR'S COMMENTS

Lovely experience! This quiet space makes me introspect & look at my art practice in a new way. Hope to take a lot from Leh. Thanks.

-Neha Puri Dhir, Textile Artist

An inspiration for what can be done for young minds to carve their cultural and artistic future Bravo LAMO!

Wendell Rodricks & Jerome Marrel, Textile Designer

This building is a wonder and it holds such a good creative spirit.

Linda Connor, Photographer

What an honour to be here with you all. Bravo.

Anish Kapoor, Artist

Very wonderful and inspirational exhibition. Thank you for bringing the children of our world and the human experience closer together! May all beings be free!

Ani Yangchen

Water through your lenses Participatory Photography Workshop



A participant working on her mind-mapping of water.

JUDITH MULLER

A picture is worth a thousand words", is an often-repeated Chinese proverb. This idea was put to practice in a workshop I held at LAMO in April this year that focused on the method of participatory photography and mind-mapping to visualize what water meant to people in Leh.

Living in a cold desert region such as Ladakh, people face several challenges when it comes to managing their scarce water resources. Water plays a crucial role for all forms of life and is affected by various processes in societies all over the world. Especially where water is scarce, like in Ladakh, these problems become very obvious.

My PhD project focuses on water issues and socio-environmental change in Leh. As part of this study I approached LAMO to hold a workshop where participants would use photography to collect ideas on the various forms water can embody, besides its obvious appearance, using the method of participatory photography and mind-mapping. Participatory photography is a tool used for community empowerment where people contribute by sketching out a certain issue by visualizing their thoughts

and ideas through photography. The method of participatory photography research aims at revealing opinions and perceptions of participants that may not be visible through verbal interviews. Mind-mapping was used as a first step, before the participants actually went outside and took photos, to do a kind of brainstorming of what water means for them. Everyone created a graphic on Tibetan fine paper with words that they think of, when thinking of water. I was joined in the workshop by Otsal Jigstenpa, a practicing photographer from Leh, who provided a theoretical and technical input on photography.

The participants were all residents of Leh, mainly Old Town and Changspa, from the age of 16 to 45 years. Many of them were familiar with the use of

cameras but taking photos with single-use cameras that work with film rolls was a new experience for most of them. Taking photos when you only have a limited number of photos available and not being able to see them immediately like with a digital camera, gives a whole other experience to the photographer. Otsal is currently the only photographer in town to have a darkroom where development can be done, and he offered to develop the films and show us the process.

The photographs, later exhibited at LAMO, represented the diverse forms water can have ranging from clouds, to streams and ice. They also visualized the various uses of water in Leh from water used to wash vehicles, to build with cement, to get drinking water, to perform religious rituals, and many more examples. A critical point of view on current social and economic processes often became visible through the images.

Each photo selected for the exhibition is an individual artwork; each was both abstract and creative. Later, I interviewed participants to better understand the ideas behind them.

The experience of doing this workshop showed me how important and relevant the topic of water seems to be for many people in Leh, also the young ones. It taught me how worried most of the participants are about the future of water in Leh. I felt that the workshop was just a starting point that could lead to a much more intense project on water in the near future.



Judith Müller, is a PhD candidate in Geography from Heidelberg University, Germany; the workshop was supported by LAMO and the Heidelberg Centre for the Environment.

Are Leh's glaciers receding?

TASHI MORUP

Leh's water sources are stretched to their maximum. Mushrooming hotels and growing population are some of the main reasons. Last summer, the age-old churpon system in Leh collapsed and people struggled fiercely to get water to their fields and many regretted irrigating their agricultural lands for there was not enough water in Leh's stream. As a part of the workshop 'Water through your Lenses' LAMO decided to visit the two glaciers Phutse and Nangtse that supply water to Leh town.

The first visit was to Nangtse and we were accompanied by Kunzes Dol-

seen the mouth of the big glacier decades ago. "It was right here, the black cavity of the glacier so big that one could step into it," she said holding her head in disbelief. She even believed that the black soot on the glacial mouth was due to charcoal used by our ancestors to build the glacier.

This myth in Ladakh about using charcoal to build glaciers was broken on our trip to Phutse glacier by Susanne Smith, Professor at Heidelberg University, who told us the opposite – she suggested that Europe faced the Little Ice Age in the 18th century, and perhaps this correlates with a similar impact felt in the Himalayas. Perhaps corroborating this is the story about the 12-year drought Leh faced some 70 years ago and the charcoal remains at Nangtse.

On the other hand, Phutse glacier, which I last visited in 2009 with eminent glaciologist Joseph Gergan looked more or less the same. Susanne said this meant, the glacier is stable. However, if we look closely at earlier images of the glacier we

can see a marked difference in the sizes and note that it has receded too. The trip taught us the need to be vigilant of the glaciers and constantly monitor them, as they are important to Leh's water supply.



Kunzes Dolma showing the receded Nangtse Glacier

ma from Gangles. Now 50 years old, Kunzes had spent her youth in Nangtse valley herding livestock. Along the three-hours trek she kept us engaged with stories from her past, showing us the abandoned Pulu (small house) where she lived for many years when she herded sheep, goats and yaks. She remembered names of different mountains including one named after the famous 12th century Tibetan Yogi Mila Raspa, who once wandered in the valley.

As we neared the top, with bated breath to see the glacier, but what awaited us there took all of us by surprise! There was no sign of the glacier except for a few snowlines on the mountain's edge. For Kunzes it was even harder to believe as she had



Phutse Glacier in September 2016

Tashi Morup is Projects Director, LAMO



Festival

Dosmoche got more colourful at LAMO's public collaboration that included the wishing tree, an open canvas, photography exhibition, film screenings and a music session. People actively participated, expressing their thoughts on environment, through words and art.



Poetry

In collaboration with Khayal Ladakhi Jigmet Nurbuu, LAMO organized a regional Urdu Symposium. Urdu poets from Kargil and Leh participated, reciting romantic, humorous and patriotic poetry.



Photography

American photographer, Linda Connor, presented a slide show with music of her major work ODYSSEY. Linda has been visiting Ladakh since 1985, her monograph encompasses 35 years of work from around the world as well as recent images from Ladakh.

Editorial Note

The past year has been engaging and enriching, further enhancing the work we do and opening it up to new possibilities. Our focus this year was the environment and its impact on the landscape. Beginning with Dosmoche, where visitors reflected on the theme through an open canvas to this year's Art Camp that discussed the experience of it through communities, change, destruction and loss. Workshops on Water and Climate drew on personal experiences and emphasized the rising concern of people in the region. Niharika Rajput did a residency with us, looking at the endangered Black Necked Crane and taking her work to schools in the Leh area and Changthang.

In May we opened the exhibition 'Thread Whispers' with Shivani Gupta and Corrine Adams, looking at oral histories and stories through photography and performance in the area of Dha and Hanu. It demonstrated the importance of recording oral literature in Ladakh as memory fades and the older generation moves on. Tashi Morup's research on music and cultural spaces in old town Leh also reflects this, and this year he brought his many years of work on the subject together into a film.

Our level of engagement with art and artists has both evolved and increased, and in many ways we feel we are now deeper rooted in the field to provide for more developed artistic ventures. Having taken slow steps getting here, it is exciting to see the potential that is now unfolding. We conducted a three-day pilot workshop with DIET (District Institution for Education and Training) to emphasise the role of art in the classroom, and we hope to take this forward and build on it with them in the future to develop more meaningful programs in the arts for schools and teachers. Our Sound Studio in collaboration with Siddhartha Cultural and Welfare Society will open next year and we look forward to workshops and training in the field, as well as initiating an oral archives project. We have collaborated with WAA (What About Art) to start a Residency program at LAMO from 2017 that will reach out to artists from all over the world. And next year we are holding the first-ever group show of contemporary artists from Ladakh at Tarq gallery in Mumbai.

We have had many engaging visits by artists, musicians, architects and other professionals and interactions with them help us reflect on the work we do. While a growing number of visitors from students to community elders and government officials has demonstrated our contribution to, and relevance in, Ladakh. Their increasing participation in our workshops or presence at exhibition openings and film screenings has been our strength this year. Support from individuals and local organisations reaffirms our role and we were grateful to the donation we received from the Ladakh Marathon. Three wonderful interns joined us in the summer – Jigmet Angmo from Ladakh, Teva Kaplan and Joseph Michel from the States.

To everyone who has contributed to LAMO this year and supported us in endless ways we say a big Thank You. As each one of us at LAMO develops our skills and strengths we look forward to another exciting year and to welcoming you all again.

The LAMO Team
Kharyog, Leh
31st December 2016

A Summer Internship at LAMO

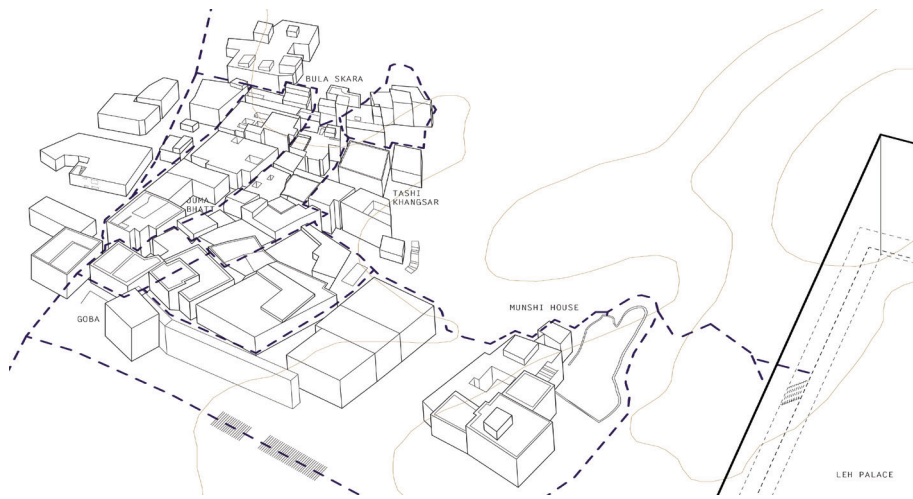
TEVA KAPLAN

Old stone steps wind steeply upwards throughout the building. Simple wooden steps stand in for stone steps crumbled away over time. As an architecture and preservation student, I couldn't have been happier working below the palace in Leh in the beautifully restored former residence of the Secretary to the King.

Munshi House taught me about Ladakhi vernacular building styles, focused on natural lighting, local materials, and interior versus exterior spaces. At LAMO, I was handed research to organise into a cohesive presentation. Knowing I needed a way to graphically represent the information, I began the process of developing a map of the five neighbourhoods in Old Town. I sought to understand

how people interacted with the historic space they occupied. While the research provided numbers, the map tied together demographic information, cultural practices and spatial understanding. The project culminated with two publications; one delving deeper into each home in Kharyok and the other about LAMO's Old Town exhibition investigating art projects and practices carried out in the neighbourhoods. The project garnered curiosity locally as Old Town moves towards developing awareness of historical and heritage value and educational programmes for both locals and tourists.

Teva Kaplan, a Masters student in Architecture and Masters in Preservation Studies, Tulane University, interned at LAMO in July.



Digital mapping of Old Town Leh, Teva Kaplan

Learning at LAMO



Sonam Angchuk shooting the Naropa event, Hemis

SONAM ANGCHUK

I joined LAMO in 2012 as a Research Fellow. It was for a project on the Old Town of Leh, where I also live. My area of research was to visually document Old Town using both photography and video. I didn't know how to use a SLR camera or shoot film, but I had a keen interest in both. I had to choose one area of interest, related to architectural heritage and I focused on the *rabsal* (balcony).

Today, I work as LAMO's Media Assistant. When I first joined the organisation, I had no knowledge about media or filmmaking. LAMO gave me a platform and an opportunity to learn about both. With more and more practice with the camera, I gained enough confidence to go out and shoot an entire event.

I started with filming events at LAMO, happenings in Leh town, and festivals in Ladakh. Gradually, I learned more. My photographs have appeared at LAMO exhibitions and Stawa magazine. The first film I worked on was a 5-minute production, called 'Maongspa' based on the 2010 flash flood in Leh, as a camera man. This year, in July, not only did I get the opportunity to take photos and videos of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama but I also got the opportunity to meet him. This was an opportunity I will always treasure and it would not have

been possible if I were not working with LAMO's Media section.

Now, I cover almost all the events in Leh. I really enjoy being in this line as I get to meet and talk to different people. In September I covered the biggest event in Leh, the Naropa Festival at Hemis, and currently I'm working on a small documentary film on one part of it. I am also doing a film based on old town, on how the area and people's lives have changed over time.

Alongside my work with photography and film I also install the exhibitions held at LAMO. Whether they are canvas or photos, mixed media installations, I work with the artist(s) and together we shape the display of the exhibition. Sometimes it's difficult as we have limited materials in Leh for hanging or we have restrictions, as LAMO is in a heritage house. But I've learned to be both innovative and resourceful. At times the artists can be a bit demanding but I've learned to be patient as well!

As I work with LAMO my sense of the visual world has greatly heightened.

Sonam Angchuk is Media Assistant, LAMO.

RINCHEN DOLMA

People associate Ladakh with pristine beauty and clean air. While that is still true of our villages, in Leh, it is very different. Here, life has become dependent on technologies in the name of development. People are adapting to a modern lifestyle, looking for comfort without much concern for the environment. Leh is now a hub of crowded guesthouses and hotels, a multitude of shops and restaurants/cafes, of cars and Royal Enfield's, of garbage and pollution. Negotiating a street in Leh by foot is impossible these days. It is not only the traffic but also the increase in pollution, dirt and its effect on health that are growing.

If I look back to my younger days, I do not remember there being so many cars on the road. It was only some army vehicles and very few private cars. But today, there are so many vehicles that the roads are proving to be narrow with



A vehicle in Leh Market area in 1970s. Photo: Harjit Singh, LAMO Visual Archive

lack of proper parking facilities, traffic signs and signals.

Looking at data from the Regional Transport Office (RTO) – in 1995-96 there were only 196 vehicles registered with it. Twenty years later, this number has risen to 1,649. This huge increase in automobiles over time is due to many factors but the main ones are an increase in number of taxis, surplus money to buy cars, loans given out by banks for cars, amongst others. And like everywhere, Ladakhis also aspire to own a car for their basic need and sometimes, due to competitiveness.

In addition, there is the huge and growing presence of the Indian army in Ladakh and the number of vehicles they ply should also be taken into account.

This unanticipated increase in the num-

ber of vehicles affects the health and eco-system of humans and animals alike. It not only creates congestion on the road but also attributes to one of the leading sources of pollution, be it air or noise. Ladakh, being a desert area with not enough greenery to purify the air, makes the region more fragile to the toxics.

Without a systematic methodology to navigate this increase, it is proving to be a challenge in our everyday life. It is also proving to be a big environmental challenge. Though we cannot put a stop to the purchase of vehicles, efforts have to be made to introduce a proper system for the rising number of vehicles and regulation of traffic.

Rinchen Dolma is Projects Officer, Media, LAMO; she is currently doing a research project on traffic in Leh.



A jeep in Leh Market in the 1970s, photograph by Lalit Kumar Gohil, courtesy Sanjay Kumar, LAMO Visual Archive



Workshop

Sara Smith, Professor of Geography at the University of North Carolina, initiated her project 'Explore student life through Film and Photography' at LAMO with a workshop for the participating students. An exhibition will follow based on this Project in 2017.



Painting

Artist Richard Weinstein, a specialist in oil and watercolor portraiture, conducted a 'Portrait making workshop' with water-colours. Many artists and enthusiasts from Leh attended.



Film Screening

'Saving Mes-Aynak' was screened followed by a discussion with former Ambassador and LAMO Trustee Phunchok Stobdan. The film is about Afghan archaeologist, Qadir Temori, braving terrorist threats and attacks, to save Mes Aynak from a Chinese coal mining company.

Screenplay Writing Workshop

RIGZIN KALON

I can still vividly recall one lazy afternoon day lounging with my dear friend Tashi Morup, indulging in some Irish coffee and getting drenched in the warm April sun. After a hectic schedule of production work for a Mumbai based commercial I was visibly relaxed and soaking in the magnificent Stok-kangri view. I have had this great association with TM (as he is affectionately known) for years now and I feel at ease to talk about anything without the slightest fear of being judged, and absolutely envy his love for the things mundane and profound alike that he passionately discusses, flavouring them perfectly with his uncanny sense of humour and insight.

That spring day, on a whim, I expressed my wish to do a script-writing workshop in collaboration with LAMO. Before I knew it, TM immediately suggested a date and I excitedly agreed.

Jump cut to a month later, there I was, a half hour early all geared for the workshop. As I waited, I wandered aimlessly around the well-restored LAMO premises. I consider each visit to LAMO an experience, I thoroughly relish their old-world ambience perennially buzzing with well curated activities and shows. Being there, it becomes so easy to slip in to the embrace of quality art works and invoke one's higher consciousness, which is a wonderful escape

from the predictability and boorishness of everyday Leh, that the city has unfortunately come to become of late.

To begin with I was pretty impressed with the turn out of the participants for the workshop. There were ten of them – most were students, then there

long intensive programme we managed to cover quite a lot. We began with our discussion on conception of an idea and methods to build a story based on it. We then proceeded to write a short story inspired from the idea. Once the story was locked, we learned the techniques of dissecting it and forming synopsis



Rigzin Kalon, on left, conducts the Screenplay writing workshop

was a professional filmmaker, an aspiring fashionista, a school teacher and a talented scientist with a keen interest in the arts. I must say 'an interesting bunch of enthusiasts to work with!'

We decided to call the programme "The art of script writing." Within that week-

out of them. Finally, with the synopsis ready we took to elaborating them into scenes. And thus, we saw the complete process from idea to a screenplay within this short span of time.

To make the sessions more immersive I

had planned it be interactive and made sure there was equal participation from everyone involved. I had assumed the role of a trusted guide and an initiator and helped them discover the stories embedded deep within themselves. It is paramount to realize our own stories as our experiences are unique to us. No one will ever know exactly how we feel and react to the incidents, as we know about them ourselves, this is where the seed of our originality and peculiarity lies and this is where we all are structured differently with our own special flavour of life.

This was very important for them to understand to realize that stories should come forth from within through thorough self-realization rather than trying to find them in other people's experiences and stories. By the end of each day they all were given homework (never trust a workshop without one!), which helped the class progress

steadily each day.

Within our tight schedule of learning script writing, I somehow managed to hold a brief session about art appreciation that included introductory talks on literature, music, poetry, painting and theatre. Filmmaking, as a creative form,

is very diverse in its approach. To be a filmmaker one must be fluent in all the above-mentioned arts and that is what makes filmmaking so intense and interesting as well.

How could one have a screenplay-writing workshop without getting to know the films, which are considered recent landmarks and have helped redefine filmmaking today. We saw Alejandro Inarritu's 'Revenant', which won 2015 Oscar for Best Film and the other was Apichatpong Weerasethakul's 'Uncle Bonmee' which won Palme d'Or at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival.

These films were very different in their approach towards storytelling yet both managed successfully to do it in their own unique style. That was the idea. To showcase these films and let the participants know the importance of reflecting ones' individuality in a work of art.

Overall it was a deeply satisfying exercise for me sharing whatever little I know about filmmaking and hopefully everyone associated with the workshop also got something out of it. We plan to meet up next summer and work further at developing the screenplay. The story we have narrowed on is a children's story, told in today's time with ample doses of magic realism. Sounds good? Trust me it will be a great story with all of us putting our creative best.

Rigzin Kalon is a spiritual-seeker, filmmaker and entrepreneur

Wallposter Comics

JIGMET ANGMO

I was desperately hopping stationeries for drawing pens when I got distracted by a crowd of excited kids gathered around a wall, each one holding some colour pencils and colouring furiously. Amidst all the heads I saw Joseph's, interacting with the kids, a big smile on his face. The picture was clear, I thought to myself, 'our Wall Comics were a success!'



Children looking at and colouring the wall comic posters put up in the market, Leh

ownership, but it also encourages debate in the society.

Joeseeph Michel (USA) and I both happen to share this interest in comic making and illustration. We met in LAMO, where we were both interning in the summer, and planned a comic making workshop with students.

The workshop included a series of exercises, discussions and presentations. One of the exercise was "Exquisite Corpse", a helpful way to get kids to talk and feel comfortable as co-participants. This exercise would trigger creativity as well as encourage participants to become comfortable with each other. 'This is so far my best, I want to name it Ben Fatima,' shouted Hamida Bano a 1st grader, on the character her group developed.

The workshop ended up with each student coming up with their own comic strips of which we made large copies to be distributed onto the walls of shops that are in view of people passing by. One of the walls was in the main market, opposite the mosque where Joe spent the day explaining the project to viewers. And that's where I found him the day I went stationary shopping, with a group of kids who had come to see the comics and then started colouring them. We had come full circle.



Joseph Michel teaching wall comic

Jigmet Angmo has a B.A in animation and VFX (MAAC Delhi). She interened with LAMO this summer and is currently working on A comic book featuring a witch called 'Dungjonma'.

Heroes Elevate Empathy: A Global Collaboration for Young People

ISAAC GERGAN

LAMO in collaboration with the Siddhartha Cultural and Welfare Society hosted 'Heroes Elevate Empathy: A Global Collaboration for Young People', and invited four schools from the Leh area to take part in a five-day workshop to look at heroes of our times through art and essay. Continuing the project from schools in Colorado, New York City and Stok, the LAMO workshop was designed to delve into the lives of these heroes through a range of skill and capacity building activities before coming up with writing, sketches and final portraits of the chosen heroes.

While different activities brought in equally remarkable results, I found our role play session the most noteworthy. Children wore masks of their heroes and were asked to talk like them about issues from their lives. In a most engaged conversation, children took on the roles where a Hilary Clinton asked HH Dalai Lama his views on ethical politics or when Aung San Suu Kyi asked APJ Abdul Kalam his views on the importance of science. One ninth grader recited an entire prayer of Buddha's as response to a question about war. While they asked and answered as children would, I was surprised at how accurate it could have been to a real life conversation among these world leaders. This activity truly let the children empathise with and for that moment be their "heroes".



Students make and wear masks of heroes that inspire them

Working with children is always a great joy because in such interactions preconceived ideas and boundaries become nonexistent. Children are the best out of box thinkers and once a comfortable space for creative thinking and making is provided, they can analyze, critique and conceptualize the given task in some of the most ingenious ways. Their knowledge through such involvement can now manifest in original and stimulating results. I believe that such activities can be part of the methods we provide our children for learning and developing new ways of thinking. The crazy wacky ideas with some refining can sometimes be the best solutions. Similarly I believe existing education structures must help and aid this progress for the young kids.

Following the workshops we opened an exhibition which involved the works of children from around the world, in which the range of heroes gave us the opportunity to learn more about other cultures, histories and values.

Isaac Gergan is Projects Officer, Arts LAMO



Portraits of the Heroes

Excerpts by Students

Kushok Bakula Rinpoche is my hero because he brought awareness among the people of Ladakh for education. His mission was to promote harmony and peace among the people whether they were Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim or Christian. He asked the communities to stay together and respect all religions.

Stanzin Migmar, Central Institute of Buddhist Studies

I have always been interested in painting but never managed to paint anything. At the workshop I learnt how to make faces, eyes, nose, ears. I was never so confident but now I can draw something that truly satisfies me. I needed a hero, a person whom I admire, and I had many people in mind and finally I chose Malala Yousufzai as my hero.

Stanzin Phantok, Lamdon Model School

What I liked most was the role-play, wearing masks and conversing with each other as our heroes. Someone asked me, "By science many technologies are coming up which can lead to many global issues, what do you think of that?" I replied, "everything has advantages and disadvantages like science. If we apply it in a proper way then it is best for all of us.

Kesang Wangmo, Mahabodhi Residential School

Chacha Nehru is my hero because he sacrificed everything and lived for others. Heroes could be like superman, or our parents can be heroes as well. But they are like everyday heroes and a true hero is someone who has done a surprising amount of work for not one or two people but for everyone.

Ngawang Sertso, Central Institute of Buddhist Studies



Archaeology

Archaeologist, Dr Sonam Spalzin, gave a talk on her book 'Ster-nying', which looks at archaeological finds in the region and the importance of preserv- ing these pre-historic remains in Ladakh.



Politics

LAMO Trustee GM Sheikh gives an insight on 'Local Governance as Politics' and how it plays a vital role in our society. A healthy discussion followed where participants shared their daily experience and the role of polity in it.



Climate

Sonam Lotus, Director Met Dept. J&K, gave a talk on 'Climate and Weather of Ladakh', speaking on the importance of location in determining climatic condition, the effects of wind directions, and how climate change is evident in the region.



Visit

Sir Anish Kapoor – renowned British Indian Sculptor visits LAMO Centre and interacts with local artists who were honoured to show him their work.

Open Studios - Art Camp 2016

TSETAN ANGMO

The memories of the summer colour surfaced like a beautiful flower from the deep. The open blue sky seen from the LAMO courtyard and the intense discussions kept the artists engrossed with their work. This is the fourth of the LAMO Art Camps, held each year in the summer, bringing together Ladakhi artists studying at different art colleges in the country and some who have graduated. LAMO has thus become a platform where I along with my artist friends can express our thoughts through our respective mediums and show our work in Ladakh.

This year, the theme revolved around mountain environments and the experience of it through communities, change, loss and damage. This time, the focus was more on the process. It followed an open studio format where each artist chose a designated space at LAMO and made it their "studio". Visitors to LAMO could engage with the artist while seeing the research and process method. It was a bit daunting to work in such a public atmosphere but also interesting to interact and get feedback from the audience. At the same time it was fun to meet with other artists, explore each other's world, understand their perspective as each artist came up with their own concept and techniques and rendered their piece of work.

In this, Chemet Dorje and Skalzang Otsal tried to bring forward the gradual evasion of culture in our daily lifestyle while Tashi Namgail looked at the concept of 'death' in his artwork, showing a funeral pro-



Funeral procession by Artist Tashi Namgyal

cession on the canvas. Jigmet Wangchok introduced us as to how animal agriculture is profoundly affecting our environment bringing forward the loss of compassion in humans. While Paljor illustrated how the modern stigma of plastic is ruining the serene landscape of Ladakh. Among these, my work was more focused on the endangered and existing species of Ladakh, talking about this through polygon designs that showed their limited mystifying existence.

We came to know what loss means to us from our perspective and the results were worth seeing and analysing, evoking in the minds of people that it is high time to value what you would might lose forever.

Tsetan Angmo is a third year BFA student in Applied Arts, College of Art, New Delhi.

Working in a Traditional space

Isaac Gergan talks about his experience at this year's Art Camp

The brown mud walls, the sooted ceilings, the textures that time had pressed on wood, the fading pigments on walls and weathered elements became an inspiration for this year's Art Camp. As I deconstructed the traditional space of the historical Munshi House/ LAMO Centre, these raised questions of the impact of architectural structure, traditional building methods, weathering and human touch. This method of understanding the space synecdochically initiated my research, even though during the two weeks I found myself asking more questions than finding answers.

My interest in the elemental suddenly branched into topics of heritage, memory, time and tradition. How was what I was doing speaking to the space I was working in and vice versa? The initial process included collecting samples that spoke to my topics and creating sketches of these. For the second part, it was a natural transi-



Isaac's installation on display

tion to the camera, which became a tool to document and create. However the camera, the eye, the act of looking also became a subject to study. What was my experience and how did I photograph it? How did my framing the mud walls, stained pillars, the ceilings and spaces affect the understanding and memory of the space?

My installation became about highlighting the space with found materials. I chose a corner space that had all the elements of my initial interest: misshaped wall, blackened beams, a sky light and an old doorway, which all had their own energy and story. By re-employing empty frames, stones, thread, a ladder, a painted canvas rolled up in a corner, and other elements that were natural to the space, I created juxtapositions that either highlighted the space or gave new meaning. In an adjacent section, collaged photographs of these spaces and other parts of the building spoke to the installation. The experience of the installation, one that was felt as one maneuvered around it, and its consequence on memory, became the artwork. The installation then was simply an aid and technic to react to traditional Ladakhi space. It was then a curated journey into memory, presence and place, playing on imagination, allowing this momentarily heightened experience to be re-projected onto many surfaces beyond where it was first experienced.

Isaac Gergan is Projects Officer, Arts LAMO

Art for Wildlife Conservation



Black necked cranes exhibited in the library of LAMO

NIHARIKA RAJPUT

The sheer melody of the cheerful hidden chirrups at the break of dawn fills every bird lover with joy. I have always been intrigued by nature's sophisticated mechanisms, but my love for birds is unmatched.

The Himalayan ranges are a paradise for bird lovers and on my first visit to Ladakh I heard about the Black Necked Crane from one of the taxi drivers who drove me. The Crane is the State bird of J&K and is an endangered species listed in Appendix 1 of CITES (The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). The bird resides in the Tibetan plateau and migrates to Ladakh and Bhutan. On learning more about the current status of this magnificent bird, and the threats they face, I wanted to initiate an 'Art for Wildlife Conservation' project in Ladakh.

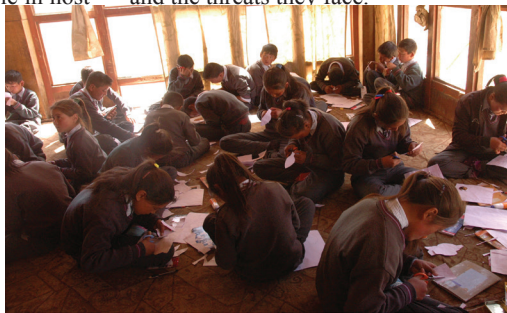
resides in the Tibetan plateau and migrates to Ladakh and Bhutan. On learning more about the current status of this magnificent bird, and the threats they face, I wanted to initiate an 'Art for Wildlife Conservation' project in Ladakh.

I am a Visual artist and a creative conservationist, using sculptural forms as my medium to investigate the damage and dissociation caused by the urban intellect. I make birds largely using unconventional materials such as M-seal, Paper and Wire. I use my art to address social, political and economic issues focusing on nature and wildlife, and raising concerns about their current status. My work in Ladakh has primarily focused on the Black Necked Crane.

LAMO played an integral role in hosting and collaborating on this project, assisting me to dissolve the boundaries between what is natural and what is human. It provided a platform which helped me establish the natural within the realm of the human threshold and allowed me to use art as my weapon to spread awareness and engage

with the local community through outreach programs.

'Art for Wildlife Conservation' was a month-long project aimed at unravelling the truth about the declining numbers of the Black-Necked Crane in Ladakh. The project kick-started with a display of a Black-Necked Crane sculpture suspended from the roof of the lantern of the Library at LAMO. As two pairs of Black-Necked cranes flew above we were reminded of their status and the threats they face.



Children making black necked crane from paper at Satho High School

The project gradually inflated into a series of workshops conducted with children from various schools in Leh town, Thiksey, Shey, Korzok and Satho on the way to Chushul and one conducted at LAMO. The workshops entailed building cranes out of paper and wire, bird watching trips with guides and the use of binoculars. The children were introduced to bird feeders and houses too. The concept of 'Citizen Science' was also established amongst them, showing them how to gather data on wildlife and share it with conservationists or publish it on web portals for use by scientists. As the next generation and future guardians of Ladakh, hopefully they will use these methods in the years to come.

Niharika Rajput is an Artist/Conservationist. Her residency at LAMO was supported by ATREE Foundation, Bangalore

Himalayan Melodies – A Review

RICHARD HENDIN

Stanzin Lhaskyabs, an engineer, published a volume of poems, entitled Himalayan Melodies, illustrated by Lokesh Pangty. It is a good thing that engineers, doctors, revolutionaries, and yes, even politicians (Keats, Wordsworth, Eliot) write poetry, because if only "poets" did we tend to be offered poems about writing poetry: clever, self-referential and Postmodern maybe, but a narcissistic regress nonetheless; or, to put it another way, before you sit down to write, better stand up and live.

As part of LAMO's Author's Talk's series an audience gathered to listen to Stanzin talk about poetry and read his poems. A poem for this poet is a fusion of contemplation and imagination that guides the reader into the feelings of the writer. In Himalayan Melodies, these feelings are often unashamedly personal and romantic, expressed in a free form, especially in the first section

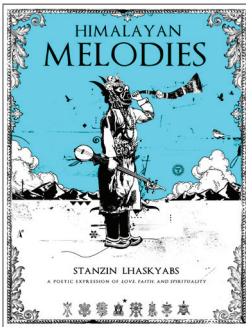
of the volume, entitled 'Of Love'. It's a kind of fusion flashback to Romanticism because free form contemporary poets tend to shun romantic words such as heart, soul, Lord, etc. which permeate this volume.

It takes a long and rigorous time, both of spontaneous creation and self-criticism, for any poet to find his or her own voice, so it will be interesting to see how Stanzin's voice develops over the years. He confesses an admiration for W.B. Yeats, the Irish poet whose poems are infused with Celtic mythology, and Stanzin buys into the Buddhist philosophy that permeates Ladakh in a similar way, for instance in one of the poems, "Four Noble Truths", he puts himself into the mind of the Buddha.

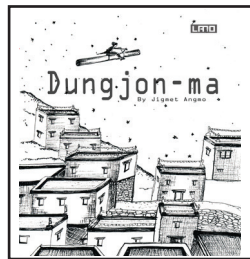
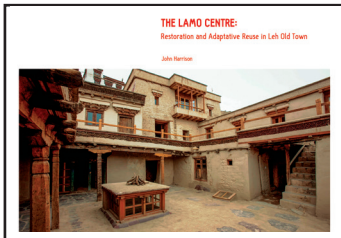
The moment he gives up himself, He sees nothing but the pure mind. The moment he gave up his self, He sees nothing but others.

This provides an interesting tension between the Buddhist abnegation of the self, and the strong Romantic-style sense of self that is the receptacle for the intimate feelings the poet attempts to convey. But not all poetry is Romantic – I would have liked to listen to a poem, say, about the tensions inside an ancient bridge, or how an agricultural machine works and what it achieves, written with a Buddhist Ladakhi engineer's insight. Then I would say to myself: only Stanzin Lhaskyabs could have written this.

Richard Hendin is an NGO volunteer



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