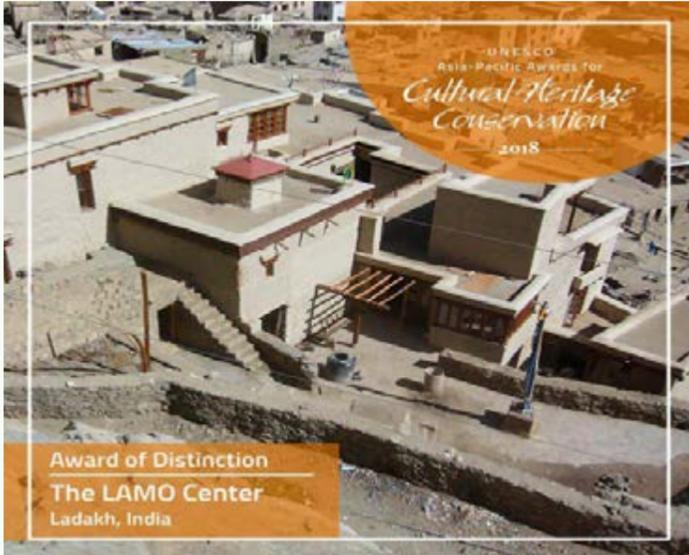


## LAMO Receives UNESCO Award



Announcement of the Award by UNESCO



LAMO building under the grandeur of Leh Palace in Old Town Leh

The restoration work had its own share of challenges and rewards, but with John at the helm of the conservation and a dedicated team of skilled workers, the two houses gradually took shape as the LAMO Centre. By the autumn of 2009 we were able to start using the buildings, with Tashi Morup joining us (see his article below). In the 10 years since then we'd like to believe that we've made an impact, in a minimal way, to Ladakh's heritage and culture, and efforts at the conservation and rejuvenation of

Monisha Ahmed

In November last year, LAMO received UNESCO's 'Award of Distinction' under the 2018 Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation. The award recognises efforts to restore or conserve structures of heritage value and also demonstrate its appropriate contribution to the surrounding environment, as well as the local community's cultural and historical continuity. Naturally, we were delighted to be recognised by UNESCO, for both the restoration of the Munshi and Gyao houses that make up the LAMO Centre and for the work we have done since then.

Commenting on LAMO, UNESCO's jury wrote: "The recovery of two aristocratic houses from a state of partial ruin establishes an important precedent for conserving the non-monumental urban fabric of Leh Old Town. Informed by detailed research and investigation, the systematic restoration project used salvaged and local building materials, and indigenous construction techniques while adroitly introducing modern amenities to assure its ongoing use. A dynamic programme of arts activities enlivens its space for the benefit of both local residents and visitors. Strategically located at the foot of the Leh palace, the restored structure contributes significantly to the continuity of the historic townscape dating back to the 17th century."

What began in 2002, with an introduction to conservation architect John Harrison followed by a meeting with Dr Angchuk Munshi and his father (late) Ishey Stobden led to work beginning on the Munshi House in 2005. A year later, Stanzin Gyaltzen of the neighbouring Gyao House approached LAMO to include his home as the two houses shared a wall and he wondered how they would look standing beside each other, one restored and the other not. We were honoured that both Dr Munshi and Stanzin Gyaltzen entrusted their homes to us without perhaps not quite knowing how they would be used. Dr Munshi's only condition being that if we 'started the restoration work we had to finish it'.

And that we have created a space for the cultivation of new ideas and imagination to flourish, open discussions to be held, explorations of contemporary art and new media forms to take shape. We believe that culture is not merely rooted in tradition but is also open to change and innovation. And though change is inevitable, the past has to be acknowledged and understood. As Ladakh moves forward LAMO hopes to continue to be a part of that journey.

Monisha Ahmed is Executive Director at LAMO

## With LAMO, so far ...

### Tashi Morup reminisces about his last 10 years at LAMO



Tashi Morup interacting with participants in a workshop

I've been with LAMO since 2008, but it seems like it all started just yesterday. Such was the absorbing experience of working at this historical building of the Munshi and Gyao families. Aba Stobdan of Lardak family, Abdul Ghani Sheikh and Mohammad Hassan, who lives in Stalam part of old town, were the first three to walk me through the labyrinths of this heritage town, narrating its history and stories.

Earlier, in 2006 when restoration work on Munshi House was starting under John Harrison, conservation architect, I was asked by Monisha and Ravina, co-founders of LAMO, to arrange for video documentation of the process and take pictures of the ruins. At that time I didn't have a figment of an idea about the Centre as it is today, after 10 years of its active functioning and working here.

Two things went side by side: Arts and Media activities at the centre was meant to be and then the creation of a Library and Archives, both have kept us pretty intensely occupied. A youthful group led by Sharon Sonam was formed to study the neighbourhood of Old Town under the Mapping of Old Town project funded by Sir Dorabji Tata Trust.

Later, Monisha guided us to put up a series of exhibitions at LAMO Centre based on the study's findings beginning with Mapping of Old Town and WASH with water as the theme. Chimet Dorje was the main artist and everyone else at LAMO contributed their part in these exhibitions.

...to be continued on page 2

## Living in Old Town Leh

### Sonam Angchok explores Old Town's heritage value

I have been living in the Old Town Leh since last 30 years. My parents were living here much before I was born. Over time, I have learnt that, the Old Town has a rich heritage value. A majestic Palace stands tall above old houses and narrow lanes telling different stories. Everything in this part of the town fills my heart and mind with awe. Yet, I am drawn beyond the grandeur of this place. I am deeply concerned to see the problems faced by the people of this area.

If we look at the history, Leh Kharyok, also known as Old Town, refers to the residential houses below the 17th century Leh Palace. Earlier, this area was occupied by families of ministers, secretaries and important personnel to the King such as the Lonpo, Kalon, Munshi, Nochung and others. The area was divided with a walled fortification and was also known as Skyanos and Gogsum. It was said that there are 60 houses in Skyanos and 60 in Gogsum (Skyanos tukchu, Gogsum tukchu). A total number of 120 families used to live in the Old Town area of Leh.

Leh Palace was built in the 17th century. It antedates the Potala in Tibet by some three years. Around that time, families used to live in the Old Town of Leh during the winter and shift to their residence below the fields during summer. They would call it their Gunsu and Yarsa (winter residence and summer residence respectively). This practice was followed until very recent times. Now,

almost all of these resident owners have shifted permanently to their summer residence, as the area is greener and more viable for people owing to the influx of tourists. It also has more amenities, such as electricity and piped water. The residences in the Old Town were gradually abandoned due to lack of different facilities and civic amenities.

The area has some very important historical buildings, apart from the Leh Palace, there is the Jama Masjid, Namgyal Tsemo and the Old Church. The area also has an amalgamation of communities living here from Buddhist, Muslim and Christian families coexisting together.

In 1974, Ladakh was opened for tourism. Many tourists started visiting Ladakh. This was one of the main reasons for the shift in residence, as people wanted to build guest-houses and hotels. The problems of sanitation, water and lack of footpaths were

...to be continued on page 2



Sonam Angchok in Old Town



**ZHUNGLU**

Winter at LAMO was made more lively with a session of Zhunglu (folk songs) workshops.



**CHIPAY SKAT**

An origami workshop by Shuchita Grover, where children made paper birds and imitated bird sounds.



**Editorial Note**

It has been 10 years since the LAMO Centre opened. Looking back, there is much to reflect on – the challenges, uncertainties and the small joys. Walking through the labyrinth of alleyways in the Old Town of Leh to reach the Centre, past mud brick buildings with wooden balconies, has given us a sense of Ladakh's rich and vibrant heritage. Interacting with the communities that live here has emphasized the regions rich diversity and pluralism.

It has been an exciting time, as each year footfall to the Centre increases. We have tried our best to bring a variety of programs from exhibitions of the works of Ladakhi contemporary artists to media literacy workshops, a repository for archival photographs of the region, animation films and new publications in the form of a graphic novel.

Old Town has also started to change, HCHF (Himalayan Cultural Heritage Foundation) has an office in Lonpo house, Chemat Dorje has opened his studio in the former residence of the Onpo (astrologer), Alliance Française has opened in Zomskit House, Basti Haveli is restored and LOTI (Leh Old Town Initiative) continues to restore residential homes on a 50:50 sharing basis. It is encouraging to see more people moving in and rejuvenating heritage buildings. At the same time we may have to be wary of gentrification, of keeping the inherent character of the area intact.

The last year has been an exciting one with an exhibition and seminar celebrating the birds of Ladakh, talks on photography and geology of the region, interacting with artists from Bangladesh, Japan, Korea and Germany. We began work on a documentation project on the Western Himalayas for Sahapedia, an open online resource on the arts, culture and heritage of India. And held a workshop with students from Siddhartha School on how to curate an exhibition exploring all aspects from display of artwork to designing invitations and planning the opening. Workshops such as these encourage students to explore new opportunities in the career choices they may make.

LAMO Trustees have been the foundation of our organisation: guiding, advising and nurturing the organisation as it moves forward. As trustees Dr Ravina Aggarwal, Ghulam Mohammad Sheikh and Skalzang Youdon move on from LAMO, we thank them for being part of our journey, are grateful for their contributions and look forward to their continued association with LAMO. We also welcome Tadzjin Joldan as a Trustee, and along with Phunsok Stobdan, look forward to them enriching the organisation.

Finally we thank the interns who have worked with us this year, the community of artists who come by to discuss their art and participate in our activities, schools and colleges, and the wider community who is our audience. As always, we thank everyone for their support and look forward to welcoming you to another year at LAMO.

The LAMO Team.



Members of LAMO and Dara Shikoh Foundation with participating artists, during the Ladakh Bird Festival

**With LAMO, so far ...**

...continues from page 1

It set off the pace and with every project the subtle forms of expression through the art of exhibition was a new realisation. It made me think that opportunities can be created and in so many ways.

Secondly, the patience with which Monisha mentored each of one us at LAMO also made me realise that conventional way of passing orders in an office work culture was not the best way to work. Instead, walking along, listening and exchanging knowledge, skills can actually help develop real interest and no task is then cumbersome. Most appealingly, assignments were designed as per individual interest. Boosting your confidence on one side, in this manner each one of us at LAMO had the prerogative to pick and choose our work space and interest area.

Everyone at LAMO, including interns, produced write ups, photographs, films, art works on dress, food, woodwork, jewellery, music, cultural celebrations, folklore, environment, water, traffic, history, gender, media, birds and so on. The list can only increase and we have much more to do and achieve to continue our joint effort to inspire others and inculcate the same spirit to see the pool of opportunities, contribute meaningfully and progress in life. Ladakh has a rich legacy and a vast field of traditional experience for future talents to explore and gain. LAMO Centre provides that platform for all age groups from different backgrounds to come together, share and work for restoring harmony and peace through arts and media. Youth groups have, over the years, shown lots of zeal to participate in our regular activities. They take away three things from any event that they take part in: knowledge, a sense of contribution and lots of friends.

Schools are happy to send students to LAMO. We have had a special collaboration with Siddhartha School, Stok, of which two most concrete results were the setting up of Siddhartha-LAMO Sound Studio and Heroes Project exhibitions. Their students also keenly took part in different art and media workshops held at LAMO along with students from host of

other government and private schools. In future, plans are afoot to focus on more specific workshops on media and art with different institutions.

Surrounding view from LAMO terrace adds to already perfect settings within the building. Most decorated of all is the Rab-sal room and it actually is the busiest space also having virtually every event held in it, from film screenings to talks to workshops to music jamming sessions. The old summer kitchen (next to courtyard) has been turned into a Sound Studio along with the adjoining room said to have once been Ladakh's Treasury, the courtyard itself is an open meeting place under the blue sky, Art Studio below, old kitchen for exhibitions that continues in the corridors and the two floors of Gyao house that are used as art galleries – LAMO has more than one interesting space to use.

In winter, the rather neglected glassroom upstairs becomes warm and cozy for all of us. Next to it is the Library, which has lots of natural light and receives good sun in winter. We have a pretty decent collection of books on art, environment, reference material on Ladakh and children's collections. An archive of visual material - photos from private and institutional collections are LAMO's pride possessions, films too.

All these made much more sense when recently the UNESCO distinction award was announced. We all talk about the need to restore heritage monuments and buildings dotted all over Ladakh, however, LAMO set a unique example of how the restored building can be reused and maintained as a contemporary space. It has given us a way to explore the idea of adaptive reuse of old beautiful buildings in Ladakh instead of building new structures, or worse, replacing with the concrete ones that are mushrooming everywhere and wiping out our rich legacy.

*Tashi Morup is Projects Director at LAMO*

**Living in Old Town Leh**

...continues from page 1

reasons amongst others that drove the residents to shift away from the Old Town. Thus leaving this heritage space in a completely dilapidated state. Today, most of the buildings are rented to labourers from Kashmir, Doda, Bihar and other places. Absence of proper sanitation and other facilities has added to the woes of Old Town dwellers.

In 2008, Old Town of Leh was declared an endangered site and the area was included in the World Monuments Watch List. Interestingly, few abandoned buildings are as old as the Leh Palace. Yet, there does not seem to be any awareness among the owners, larger community people and younger generations of this area about the heritage value of these buildings and the ways to protect them. There are several NGOs that undertake a range of works here. Leh Old Town Initiative (LOTI) under Tibet Heritage Fund (THF) focuses on the restoration of these heritage buildings in the Old Town

area. Government officials/agencies are also focusing on the restoration and development of Old Town as a heritage site. It is also important for the prospects of the future of this heritage area, to restore buildings and structures, and create awareness amongst the locals of its heritage value.

Many tourists are coming here to explore the history and cultural values of these heritage buildings. It is the responsibility of the local administration to keep alive the heritage and cultural value of these buildings. Currently, the Old Town area reels under several problems. I believe if all stakeholders come forward to take care of this supremely important space, it can be created into an area of cultural learning and exploration.

*Sonam Angchok is Media Assitant at LAMO*



**LAMO Staff**

- Monisha Ahmed** : Executive Director
- Tashi Morup** : Projects Director
- Rinchen Dolma** : Projects Officer, Media
- Rigzin Chodon** : Research Associate
- Sonam Angchok** : Assistant Officer, Media
- Tsering Chonzom** : Librarian and Accountant
- Sonam Yangdol** : Administrative Assistant

**LAMO Trustees**

- Monisha Ahmed
- Phunchok Stobdan
- Tadzjin Joldan

**LAMO Advisors**

- Clare Harris
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- Dorje Angchuk

**Newsletter Editor and Design: Rinchen Dolma**  
**Assistant Editor: Stanzin Ladol and Rigzin Chodon**  
**Photo Editor: Rinchen Dolma and Nurboo Tundup**  
 All photos from LAMO Archives unless otherwise stated



## LADAKHI MUSIC

Ladakhi traditional musicians came together to perform at LAMO for a German crew who were documenting different kinds of music throughout India.



## CALLIGRAPHY

Intern Anshika Bhandari, a graphic designer, held a Calligraphy workshop where participants were taught the technique and different styles of brush lettering.

## THROUGH WATER, THROUGH

Artist Tomoyo Ihaya screened her animated film 'Through Water, Through'. The film explores the cycle of life and death through everyday life rituals around water.

# Rinchen Dolma talks to Michaela Appel about her grandfather, Otto Honnigman's journey to Ladakh, Kashmir and Baltistan



Michaela Appel during the opening of Otto Honnigman's photograph exhibition

Otto Honnigman was from a renowned Aachen family of mine owners and his comfortable background enabled him to undertake three major overseas expeditions. The first took place in 1907 to Ceylon, Singapore, Siam and Burma. In 1910, he travelled alone to British Columbia and Alberta, Canada. His third and longest expedition took him to Kashmir, Ladakh and Baltistan in 1911-12. A number of acquisitions made on these trips have remained in the family along with around 200 photographs from Kashmir, Ladakh and Baltistan. Otto had most of these photographs mounted in a bound album and the captions have been preserved in their original state for the book. Michaela Appel, granddaughter of Otto Honnigman and Head of Department of South Asia, Southeast Asia and Australia, Five Continents Museum, Munich. She brought these photographs back to Ladakh with the support of the Museum and here she talks about the book 'Kashmir-Ladakh-Baltistan 1911/1912: Photographs by Otto Honnigman', the exhibition and her own travel through Ladakh.

**When was the first time you came to know about Otto's photographs?**

I think it was when I started to study Indology and Tibetan. And then, my grandmother showed me these photographs for the first time. I think, before I knew only the ones from Canada, which were in our house.

**It was which year when your grandmother showed these pictures to you?**

I was maybe 20 years old. She had them always in her room. I started studying Indology and Tibetan in 1977 and I had a teacher for my Tibetan studies and she was doing her fieldwork in Ladakh, in Zaskar. I think that was in 1978-79. And in 1980 she went to Canada to work as a professor and before she left, we showed these photographs to her and her husband. She was married to a Tibetan Geshe. We saw that these photos were very interesting for them and at that time even I wanted to do something with them, to find out what they mean. But it only happened more than 25 years later in 2008-09.

**So, did Otto himself give any account of his expedition to you?**

Otto died when I was two and a half years old. Of course, I would have loved to ask him a lot of questions when I was doing the book but I couldn't. My mother told me that he rarely spoke about his travels.

**So, did your mother give you accounts of his travels?**

Yes, but it was little information as she

couldn't remember much. But I think he was a very humble person. Maybe you know that we had a little hotel and Otto took over this hotel in the 1920s, after the First World War. He fought in that war and then he got married in 1920. His first wife died after one year. The 1920s and 30s were economically a very difficult period in many places because of the war. And I think, he and his family lost most of their money during that time, so he took over this little hotel, which was beautifully situated on a hill near the Bavarian Alps, 50 kilometers away from Munich. I think he loved the mountains and maybe therefore he also moved to this area. He kept the souvenirs and photographs of his travels and also displayed some of them in the hotel. And so I grew up surrounded by exotic things which I loved. But Otto obviously did not talk much about his adventures. Fortunately, his mother kept all the letters he wrote to her.

**So you grew up with his photographs around you. Which photograph is most close to you?**

The Ladakh photos are very close to me. I thought about these photographs very intensely before I came here and I know them inside out and by heart. And of course, there are many more than there are here in the exhibition. About 200 photographs only from Ladakh. And then, there are about 100 photographs from Canada. On Saturday and Sunday, I went to Lamayuru, Basgo, Mulbekh, Fotula and Namikala and yesterday I went to Spituk and Stok Palace and for me it was simply unbelievable, how beautiful this piece of land here is. And also, now I understand even more of what Otto did at that time and doing all that by foot and ponies and maybe riding. And I just sat in a car and was driven around, and it was only a small section of the journey he did, when he travelled from Srinagar to Leh. I understand now much better what he did.

**Is there any particular picture from Ladakh, which you like? And why do you like them?**

Yes, I like the Maitreya of Mulbekh and the photo of the monks in the courtyard of Lamayuru monastery amongst the many photos.

Of course, the Maitreya is very impressive. But there are many other photos, which I love. Some of the photos I love because of the people who are pictured and some because of the landscape or the architecture, others I love because of the perspective they are taken from, I think Otto chose his motifs and angles very carefully.

I also saw the bridge at Khaltse. You know the old bridge and the new bridge. And now I understand from which point of view he took the photograph, which is very interesting for me. On the way to Mulbekh, we went to Basgo fortress and temples. On the way back we found the stupa he photographed in Basgo, and that was very special for me as I had read there were little figures all around it in former times. And I am very happy that we saw that stupa.

**What inspired you to bring Otto's photographs back to Ladakh, to LAMO?**

It was originally the idea of Dr. Leah Bohle, a lady who has worked in Ladakh. She is an anthropologist and a medical doctor and she did medical research here in 2012. She is from Germany and her professor Brigitta Hauser-Schaublin, whom I know, told me about a student of hers who went to Ladakh and did



Shri Tsering Dorje inaugurated the opening of the photo exhibition

research. So she gave her my book and Leah photocopied parts of it and brought it to Ladakh and the people were very interested and asked her to translate things. Then they both asked me whether it was possible to translate the book into English and have the exhibition here in Ladakh. So, I picked this idea up because I thought it's a wonderful idea but I think on my own I wouldn't have dared to do that because I had never been to Ladakh and I didn't know any people here. So Leah was the one who put me in touch with Monisha and LAMO. Because for the museum and me the idea was good but we thought where can we do that, in which exhibition space and yeah everybody I asked said LAMO. Not only Leah Bohle but also others who had been to Ladakh.

**How do you feel after getting these photographs back to Ladakh?**

I think it is wonderful for me. You know I had read about LAMO, but it is something else if you are in this space, in these two houses, you feel something very special. And I am very very happy that these photographs are exhibited in these houses. This is very special for me. It is also a big privilege to be able to see what a house like this looks like from the inside. And I think, it is also special for foreigners who come here and may see the exhibition.

**Do you know what kind of camera Otto used to take all the photographs?**

My mother always said that he had a big wooden camera with a tripod but I couldn't find that one. What I found and I still have is a smaller camera, a French one. You could use it as a stereo camera (a camera with two lenses and produces two images of each picture) and I think you could also use it without the stereo effect to shoot mono panoramic shots. That is why there are two different kinds of formats of printed photographs, square ones and rectangular ones. The square ones are one of the two stereo photos, the rectangular ones were taken as a panoramic photograph. And you can even see the camera in one of the photos, it is in a leather box and I still have this box and this camera. It is called Gaumont Stereo Spido Ordinaire 8.5 x 17 and it won a first prize in Paris in 1900.

But they must have used more than one camera because they were three people. You can see it for instance in the photographs of the maharaja coming into Srinagar, that one photographer was on one side of the river and took photos and the other one was on the other side. And they also gave one Kodak camera to the head of Hemis monastery.

**So, they had many cameras with them?**

Yes, probably around three. But maybe, he even did have this big wooden camera. I still have some glass plates in the format of 13 x 24 centimeters but maybe he enlarged them. I am not sure.

**So, did he carry all these cameras and plates along with him throughout the journey?**

Not he himself, but the Ladakhi people who were working as their helpers. It must have been an amazing thing to carry all these plates, you know, especially in winter, because they were not supposed to get wet. And also you can see in one of the pictures where he is crossing the river, he has the small French camera with him on the raft.

**So probably they have taken these pictures with the wooden camera?**

We don't know which camera it was, it could have been his brother or he could have asked his friend Rudolf Haniel to take the photo. But I am sure that everybody had their own camera.

**There are so many pictures from Kashmir, Baltistan and Ladakh and many of the pictures from Baltistan and Ladakh are very similar, so how did you manage to know which photograph is from which place? Who helped you?**

The most important thing was that I had Otto's own captions in his album, although not all of the photographs are in there. But I think the reason why my grandmother kept it so safely is because the album is beautiful and it has a Kashmiri lacquer and leather covering and the photographs are printed and arranged in a certain chronology and he has written his own captions and that was my guideline.

I had a second set of photographs as well, which were not bound but just mounted on a hard piece of paper. They were not arranged according to the timeline. So I took the album and arranged the other ones according to this order of the album. But of course the captions were not very long or had very little information. For instance he had mentioned the Raja of Khapulu, but I didn't know who was the Raja of Khapulu at that time, or what was his name.

At that time, I was the head of the Oceania department, but because the photographs were from my grandfather I was allowed to write the book myself. And my colleagues Bruno J. Richtsfeld from the Central Asian department

...to be continued on page 7



## ROAD FRENZY

On World Environment Day, 5th June, Rinchen Dolma curated an exhibition in Leh's main market. She showed images and data reflecting the challenges Ladakh faces as vehicular traffic increases. Her purpose is to raise awareness on the impact of this on people's health and the environment. Eventually, making people THINK about where Ladakh's future is headed as 'Road Frenzy' grips the land.



## YOUTH CULTURE AND IDENTITY

As part of a three-day workshop focusing on 'Perspectives on Contemporary Ladakh' the theme of 'Youth Culture and Identity' was explored through Portrait Photography. Led by Rinchen Dolma, Faisal Qadir Abdu and Krithika Sriram, the photographs emphasised on youths and their field of works.

# Bird Festival of Ladakh

Niharika Rajput

"Birds of a feather flock together", was quiet literally the musings at LAMO this September. LAMO hosted a large gathering of Wildlife artists, performers, speakers, conservationist's and bird enthusiasts to celebrate a five days long Bird Festival which opened on 4th September and culminated on the 8th.

"Faith is the bird that feels the light when the dawn is still dark" - Rabindranath Tagore

Birds are intriguingly referred to as God's messengers as they traverse all the five elements that constitute life: Water, Wind, Air, Fire and Space. From time immemorial birds have played a significant role in preserving and balancing various ecosystems. From being a farmer's best friend for protecting the crops against pests and insects, to helping in cross pollination and proving to be true custodians of the environment by cleaning up most human waste, birds are capable of doing it all.

A substantial part of Ladakh's fauna consists

of her Art for Wildlife Conservation initiatives, multiple workshops and bird watching trips have been conducted in various schools in Leh town, Shey, Thiksey, Korzok, Satho, Puga and Stok, to raise awareness on the issue of Bird conservation in Ladakh.

The festival received tremendous support from LEDeG, Intach, Frozen Himalayas, ALTOA, Jammu & Kashmir Tourism department and was organised in collaboration with LAMO, Dara Shikoh Foundation and Niharika Rajput. The festival entailed an Art exhibition at LAMO, workshops, seminar, bird watching trips, talks and performances. The festival opened with an Art Exhibition at LAMO and a performance "The Conference of Birds", a celebrated literary masterpiece by Attar in which the Hoopoe instructs the other birds on the sufi path to liberation. Kacho Ahmed Khan from Kargil, Amba & Anirudh from Guild of the Goat, Delhi joined Attar in reciting verses from the script.

The Art exhibition included paintings, sculptures, digital art, textile design and an ani-



Kacho Ahmed Khan from Kargil and Amba and Anirudh from Guild of Goat, Delhi performing on the first day of the festival

cry, was an exciting attraction especially for children. Paintings of many different species of birds by Sangeetha Kadur, Tashi Namgail, Tsetan Angmo, Priyanka D'souza and Suman Gupta were on display. Some intricately crafted sculptures made by Chemat Dorje and Niharika Rajput along with a digitally illustrated installation by Smita Kaushik were also on display.

Workshops on the birds of Ladakh were conducted at LAMO, Siddhartha School, Druk Padma Karpo and Lamdon Schools by Rupa Samaria, Priyanka Singh, Sangeetha Kadur and Tsetan Angmo. The workshops covered various topics such as identifying the birds through bird guides, illustrating them, bird games, story telling and their importance to our lives. A one day long bird model making workshop was also conducted at Puga Nomadic School by Niharika Rajput which was followed by an interactive session with the children led by Tashi Morup and film screening of 'No Eechu'. The children were taken on a bird watching trip by Blaize Humbert Droz in Puga and many species of birds such as the Black Necked Crane, Common Hoopoe, Wagtails, Northern pintails etc... were spotted.

A day long seminar at LEDeG was organised to discuss the issue of Bird conservation in Ladakh and Birds in art and culture. The Seminar covered every aspect of the Ladakhi Avian Spectrum ranging from the different species that are found, their migration, breeding patterns, threats they are facing and measures that can be taken to reverse the damage, to the significance of birds in Ladakhi culture, folktales and art. It was an inter-

active and educational discussion that stirred up some curiosity among the participants and hopefully will prove to be a stepping stone in raising awareness and preserving the wildlife of Ladakh.

This was followed by a session at LAMO where all the artist's spoke about their art practice. The Bird Festival culminated with a musical performance on birds led by Tsewang Phuntsog. The festival might have ended but the efforts to spread the message of Bird conservation in Ladakh are still underway in the form of 20 feet tall Black Necked Crane sculpture which is being made by Chemat Dorje and will be installed in Leh market area.

Ladakh's fragile ecosystem has been a victim to various anthropogenic activities which are affecting humans and wildlife alike. The Bird Festival saw a huge turnout and drew a diverse set of minds to witness a recital of stories from a bygone era and how/why they are losing their meaning in a perpetually growing human centric, technology driven world. The purpose of hosting the Festival was to educate, spread awareness and to bring together a community of Wildlife artists and performers who can take on the onus of representing our Wildlife.

As a result the festival triggered and motivated the Principals of many schools to set up Bird Cubs in their schools, to further educate the children. The Festival also brought together an extremely talented group of Wildlife Artists who successfully showcased the possibility of giving a voice to those who can't speak for themselves and inspiring the next generation to follow in their footsteps. LAMO also provided the right atmosphere to reinstate the value of Wildlife art. The Festival brought all the key naturalists, conservationists and bird enthusiasts under one roof to discuss the Birds of Ladakh and their future. Also, Bird watching sessions with the children gave them a chance to observe closely and understand the importance of what's being lost and the need to protect them. The Bird Festival was a small step in the right direction and hopefully these conservation efforts will gather momentum in the coming years, with active engagement from the local community to make Ladakh a safe haven for its Wildlife.

Niharika Rajput is a wildlife artist/conservationist



Artists from different parts of India participating in the Bird Festival Exhibition

of birds, statistics show that there are about 315 species of birds found in Ladakh. The wetlands and pasture lands of Ladakh provide suitable conditions for breeding, foraging and roosting of many migratory and resident bird species. A wide variety of Finches, Wagtails, Thrushes, Raptors, Partridges and Waders are found in Ladakh.

Birds play a vital role in balancing the fragile ecosystem of Ladakh, thus serving an ecological purpose. Having said that, they also play a significant role in Ladakhi culture. Evidence from pre-historic times showcase bird representations in the rock art of the region. There are a total of 130 images representing bird art on the rocks in Ladakh and 22 rock art sights. These can be found in Nubra valley, Zaskar and along the Indus river valley. Most of the rock art is situated in Zaskar gorge, near Yaru, Yaru bridge and Sumda. Zaskar gorge is an avian migration corridor. Due to the construction of the road along the Zaskar river, a substantial portion of rock art has been destroyed.

This idea for the Bird festival came in July 2016, and the Black-necked Crane (Cha Thung Thung Karmo) had a major role to play in its conception. Niharika Rajput (Wildlife artist), the brain child behind this Festival has been working on the Birds of Ladakh in collaboration with LAMO since 2016. As part

of her Art for Wildlife Conservation initiatives, multiple workshops and bird watching trips have been conducted in various schools in Leh town, Shey, Thiksey, Korzok, Satho, Puga and Stok, to raise awareness on the issue of Bird conservation in Ladakh.



Traditional musicians performing on the last day of the festival



#### US AMBASSADOR VISITS LAMO

United States Ambassador to India, Kenneth I. Juster, visited the LAMO Centre. He met with representatives from various NGOs in Leh, and discussed a range of issues from socio-cultural to environmental problems, planning and funding for their work in Ladakh.



#### NICHOLAS ROERICH IN LADAKH

Dr. Alexander Pereverzev, Assistant Curator at the International Roerich Memorial Trust (IRMT) at Naggar, Kulu in Himachal Pradesh, talked about the Russian artist Nicholas Roerich's visit to Ladakh in 1925 and introduced the audience to his paintings.

## Dungjonma – Jigmet Angmo reminisces about how her graphic novel took shape

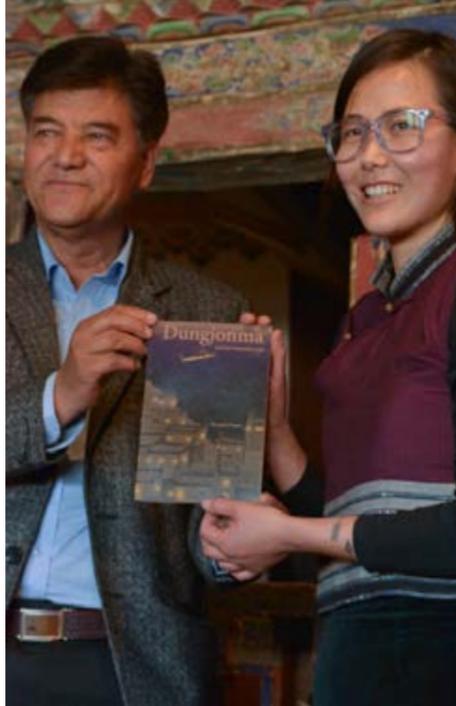
As long as there have been humans, there have been stories. History tells us about stories from cave-paintings to bedtime stories. Some stories have lasted hundreds and even thousands of years and are still being told to our children.

Storytelling through oral tradition is one of the oldest ways to tell folklore, epics and legends. They date back to different points in history, depending on the stories and the culture within which they were created. Ladakh, like the rest of the world, has its own culture of storytelling, mostly in an oral tradition form. Stories are told through songs and poetry too.

During long and cold winter nights in Ladakh, when friends and family gather around the *thap* (clay stove) in the kitchen, they entertain each other by telling factual and fictional stories of kings, battles, events, love, romance, heroes and ghosts. *Dungjonma* is one such story about a witch (*dudmo*) who is said to a man-eater and is known for creating havoc.

I vaguely remember listening to the story being narrated when I was small. The main character, *Dungjonma*, is a man-eating witch. She comes at night to people's homes, pulls out the main beam of their room (the *dungma*) and rides on it while she goes hunting for humans.

They say if you don't like a story, it will be hard to spend a lot of time with it! For me the *Dungjonma* story has done just the opposite. I tried digging for information about the story, storytellers who could tell me more about *Dungjonma* as the story is quite popular in Ladakh, but I found only the elderly ones knew it. People of my generation had not even heard of the character, let alone the story,



Jigmet Angmo and Mohd. Abbas (DFO) during the launch of the book 'Dungjonma'

which was really sad to know. This gave me one more reason to do the book.

For as long as I can remember, I have loved to draw. As a child I would draw landscapes, buildings, people, faces, but my favorite was a house with all its interior details. My school books were always covered with such drawings.

I was born and raised in Leh with my sister, Sonam Angmo, who was a huge fan of comic books and other fiction stories. She would recite to me her favourite scenes and tell me about her special characters. This would

fascinate me a lot. And I think, that's how I found my love for stories and storytelling.

It was spring of 2016 when I attended a 'Scriptlab' workshop at LAMO held by Rigzin Kalon (a film maker), who really influenced me with his storytelling and making skills. LAMO is situated in the old part of Leh town; this part of the town was established in the early part of the 17th century. The building the Centre is located in was once the residence of the Ladakhi king's very own Secretary (the Munshi). I was very inspired by the buildings rich architectural details, its wooden screened windows and balconies (*rabsal*), its large winter kitchen and steep stairs hewn out of a log of wood. In addition to this, Tashi Morup (Projects Director at LAMO) regaled me with stories of the old town, its history and folklore, its narrow passages and its cobbled streets. This triggered something in me; a story began to emerge. I could sense making it in a graphic form, a comic. I couldn't think of any better setting for it than the old town itself, my story had to take place there.

My story is loosely inspired from the original *Dungjonma* story and the rest is my own imagination. I wanted to tell the story in a slightly different manner. I wanted this witch to be a superhero, who would save and protect people like any other superhero. I wanted to demonstrate the positive aspects of women through this character, and so having a girl superhero was perfect for me.

From here began the journey of *Dungjonma* as a graphic novel. I started weaving the storyline sitting in every corner of the old building of LAMO, overlooking the old/new town below, followed by the illustration, which is merely pen work done with the technique of

stippling, hatching and cross hatching. And further discussion with LAMO Team for the printing and publishing part was one of the most exciting part of the whole process for me. As the book has finally taken its shape. And C'mon! I never had any of my work printed before, let alone a book!

On 2nd of June 2018, the book was launched at the very Centre where it all began. Number of people including family, relatives, friends and other interested folks showed up. We had a small yet the most amazing session that day followed by people buying signed copies of the book. Every single person was encouraging and supporting my work. In short, it was my 'proud moment'. I was so honoured to have everyone supporting and loving the book, because since it was first of its kind in Ladakh I was little doubtful of how they will receive this. Now it is also available on Amazon and few book shops at Leh.

These kind of works are definitely new to Leh and one might not be so confident about such works, but now the times are changing and people are getting more exposed to the outer world and want to see and learn new and more creative works and pieces.

This journey of *Dungjonma* also made its place in the September issue of the Outlook magazine.

*Jigmet Angmo is the illustrator and author of Dungjonma and a graphic artist*

## The Colour that Is Hope

Tsetan Angmo writes about following her dream

"Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up" - Pablo Picasso

A child's hand always searches for colours in different forms and the slight idea of creation brings a flood of excitement and glitter in their eyes. They love scribbling on every space they find, play with colours and papers, almost go on their own colourful adventures. But as we grow up, we somehow or in some way distance ourselves from those colourful worlds, replacing them with subjects we give more priority to but gladly they never leave us. We breathe them every day, sometimes in the rays of the first beam of sunlight, sometimes in the white robe of the mountains and sometimes in the gradient of green over a patch of land. The list is endless, we are surrounded by them. The thick blue sky above, tempting water rustling, streets with beautiful architecture, big boulders, cafes you go, books you read, movies you watch. They all come with some buried colours, which fuels our life.

Design, illustrations and animation. They are all different forms of same colors, offspring of what we call "drawings", "sketches" having their own set of style and techniques. In design, we need to articulate an idea or a thought in a creative and unique way, giving birth to a new art. There are many varied subjects in design ranging from textile to graphic, animation, game, fashion and many more. While illustrations is creating or documenting a scene, feeling or an event or a subject, in an appealing way through the use of different mediums. It can be in the form of manual de-

sign or can be digital as well. And animation is an art of moving your sketches and infusing life to your drawings, something I am diving into these days.

In Ladakh, the beautiful landscape, houses, dresses, people and culture goes beyond the periphery of art. I was naive to design, illustrations, animations, printmaking and all such similar fields. Four years ago when I opted for Fine Arts, I knew very little of these terms and often mistook everything for "painting". But as I dived deeper, the more familiar I got with the different mediums and technique. In the beginning, I hardly knew any other Ladakhi artist but gradually I got to know many of them and got hugely inspired and quite excited as I saw that many of the students are now opting for their dreams rather than pursuing narrow professions like "doctors" and "engineers" only. Today not only students but parents also understand and encourage the kids, and this is the bravest thing they do.

I am a graphic artist, illustrator and animator. I graduated from College of Art in Delhi this year [2018] and have been a part of the art exhibitions at LAMO quite often. This is the place where I see the small community of local artists, which is gladly growing, and other art lovers who always visit this place, encouraging silently. As an illustrator, I love putting down my feelings or a vision or a subject both manually and digitally. It's something that fuels my heart and pushes me to work more. I usually love the process more than the result. It's an extraordinary feeling. With graphic design, you play with your subject and try to bring them out in the most extraordinary



'No Eechu' is an animation film based on a folk story from Ladakh

Illustration: Tsetan Angmo

manner. I displayed my work on design-based illustrations at LAMO showing the integrated fragmentation of Ladakhi wildlife due to the accelerating development.

I always had this dream to make an animation film based on a folk tale even though I was never taught how to do it. I got inspired from friends at college and wanted to try it out and so I did. The animation was based on a local folk tale and revolves around a bird 'No Eechu' and his struggle on a rainy day where he goes to these three sisters asking for help and what happens. This film got screened during the Ladakh Bird Festival at LAMO along with the art exhibition. It was so much fun doing this project and quite worthwhile. It was a product of Tashi Morup's story narration to me, my dream, majorly the online tutorials and so many inspiring artists both local artist, fellow artists and artist from different social media.

Today Ladakh has not only talented traditional artists but also has contemporary ones too, trying to explore more of our culture and identity in their own respective mediums. Today there are artists who practice sculpture, painting, graphic design, printmaking, ceramic, animation and are still exploring a lot deeper in their practice. This is in itself a great movement. Ladakh is on the threshold of new discoveries and development and I hope the growth of art will be one among them. I hope there would be more colours added to the landscape and people to value its importance.

*Tsetan Angmo is a graduate of College of Art, New Delhi*



## PHOTOGRAPHY

'From Alchi to Angkor: Forty years Documenting Asian Art' was a talk by the well-known Photographer, Jaroslav Poncar. He spent his time with the audience talking about his photographic journey, which began in Ladakh in 1974, and shared his work and the interesting stories around them.



## INTER-CULTURAL MUSIC

Ladakhi artists Tsering Anchuk, Tsewang Phunchok and Mutup had a lively music session with Czech singer, composer and violinist Iva Bittova at the LAMO Centre.

# Education Migration

## Rigzin Chodon reflects on her experience while conducting a survey with parents whose children have left Ladakh to study

Studying outside Ladakh opens up a lot of new avenues. These experiences are in themselves a blend of mixed reactions to new things, new people, new learning opportunities and most importantly creation of a unique identity for oneself.

Coming back home and exploring ways to be here also opens up new ways of identifying oneself on the whole, as compared to the idea of oneself as a Ladags Ma or Ladags Pa when away from here. Living in a cultural, social, religious and a political space in Ladakh can mean different things to different people. While away from here, one ends up creating many other intricate details of identity formation with one's home and outside, personal and community that usually ends up with an imagined community especially when we are away from home. This could probably be due to extensive exchange of new ideas, different worldviews, opinions with people from other cultures etc.

Last summer, when I joined LAMO as a Research Assistant for the project titled, 'Impacts of Education-Driven Urban Migration on Youth Aspirations and Identity in India' under Prof. Sara Smith from University of North Carolina, USA (in collaboration with LAMO) I could relate to the issues addressed within this project outline. I was one of those Ladakhi students who studied outside Ladakh and had gone through this process of acculturation. Sara's project workshop conducted that summer involved a group of students and their reactions towards questions related to Ladakhi identity

fore, our role in furthering the project started with research field trips along with fellow researcher, Rinchen Dolma, to Changthang, Nubra and Sham regions of the Leh district of Ladakh during the months of October and November, 2017 and April, 2018. This experience was truly remarkable as it brought about a lot of new insights into what parents and the community as a whole thought about education in particular and the implications of education migration of their children outside Ladakh on themselves and their household along with the future aspirations like jobs etc. within and outside this region.

As a protocol, we first went through a rigorous training before the actual field work. It is very important to understand the aims and objectives of the project along with a training on ethics while conducting field research on subjects. Questionnaires framed by the lead Researcher and concerned personnel from their Review Panel, were practiced on interviewees on an experimental basis to see how best we could use them in the context of Ladakh. These initial phases of questionnaires were crucial, in that we understood, what to expect and how to handle responses from the people who were being interviewed. Interestingly, many other issues pertaining to the main subject were touched upon and we understood how many other issues like economy, demography, social practices, cultural implications, amongst others were interconnected with the main research question of education migration of young people from Ladakh.



Rinchen Dolma carrying out the survey at Gya Village

outside their homes; cultural representation through food, dance, etc; problems and challenges on educational level, personal level, that they faced outside as students studying in metropolitan cities. These issues were also faced by me when I studied outside Ladakh. I could strongly relate to all of those issues.

The participants in Sara's workshop expressed their opinions through discussions, and when I came here, I saw their exhibition through photographic images that spoke a thousand words. Their collages as well as their letters to parents brought about this feeling of disconnect that I had experienced when I studied away. Their exhibition brought out a lot of personal and intimate stories to be shared with everyone.

This research project addressed questions directly at the impacts that education driven migration had on the students so far and the reactions of the parents and the community as a whole were yet to be explored. There-

Practically, rural practices seemed to be slowly diminishing due to the non-availability of helping hands during crucial farming season, or during practice of social customs and traditions like marriages, Losar, religious gatherings, herding, among other community based service exchanges.

The almost ten days survey for each valley of Ladakh namely, Changthang, Nubra and Shamm valley were very rewarding. Along with Rinchen Dolma, the trip took us to atleast a minimum of 86 households along with a Goba or the chief of each village.

The first and foremost challenge of the survey was the cold weather of Ladakh where the temperature on a cold winter night usually drops down below zero degree centigrade. To carry out a survey in such harsh climatic conditions, for many days at a stretch was a difficult task, however, several cups of butter tea offered by families and our home stays with them eased out this situation. Other challenges were



Rigzin Chodon explaining the survey to residents of Panamik village, Nubra

our work schedule. Many of the villagers/parents worked in government sectors as school teachers, clerks, army and other jobs which made it difficult to meet them when we went to interview them. Many parents were ploughing their fields even then, that didn't stop us from interviewing the farmers turn by turn on their fields. While many parents worked as labourers with the army or with the GREF; in some places, we had to wait for them to be home and interview them, some were parents who were nomadic pastoralists who were tending to their flock high up in the mountains near the Taglang La Pass. Overall, we met parents who were mostly full-time farmers but many who would also work elsewhere as homestay owners or drove Taxis in and around Ladakh or have taken up other occupations.

Travelling to different villages was interesting for me, apart from the set questionnaires to be answered, the villagers always had many interesting things to share. Some noteworthy mention are about the history of their village, about family genealogies, about the Lhas/demigods of the village and houses, about weaving, about horses, about valleys and their names, about stupas, about artefacts found in houses, about language, about Passes, about growing mushrooms, about walkable mountain routes to and from their villages, about shepherding, about mountain pastures used during summer and those in winters, about songs and their meanings, about spring water that has medicinal qualities, about the wetlands (Hanley) and the migratory birds that flock there, about the borders; along with many other interesting experiences with supernatural beings that are usually a topic of discussion during late night after dinner talks, like encounters with Tsan, Manmo, Belung Pa, etc. These few months in three different parts of Ladakh was an interesting melange of the history of the people, in a holistic manner.

The main challenge was the difficulty in explaining to them about 'Research' and what research entails. Few village residents were well aware of what research generally means, since many government and non-government organizations had visited them before for surveys and provisions thereafter. So, we had to patiently explain to them about this particular project, their voluntary consent to participate and also the expected outcome of the project. Few of the parents anticipated monetary benefits for their children, however the project did not provide such benefits and most of them understood that and readily answered our queries.

During the survey period, we came across different kinds of people, mostly welcom-

ing but some very sceptical, along with many critics. It was interesting to note what many of the elders had to say about asking questions and answers. The interviews were audio without any visuals so most of them were not very hesitant about what they spoke. However, some respondents were very conscious. We took a note of their feedback and that helped us in the next round of interviews with elders, thereby, making it an easier task to explain how the interviews would go.

After the survey and several rounds of interviews, the period of study helped me understand the crucial social issues, especially the problems that the residents of each village faced due to 'Education driven Migration' of children to other parts of India or the world. Many of the parents, talked about how at the village level, the return of their children after completion of their studies, brought a lot of positive changes in their society. The children would educate their parents, making them more aware about modern amenities, social media, modern agricultural practices, etc. In some villages however, due to high rate of unemployment, the parents were not very happy about the outcome of educating their children outside Ladakh. Since they had to struggle a lot to send their children outside for education.

Many of the parents want their children to become job providers instead of job seekers, many want their children to make changes in the society here in Ladakh and many are happy that their children are working outside Ladakh and living a comfortable life. However, many parents also talk about their children staying away from home and how disconnected that makes them feel. After meeting so many parents, I see a dire need to have a university and more amenities related to education here in Ladakh. In the context that due to limited options of career paths and studies, many students leave home for higher education. With the most recent announcement of a cluster university in Ladakh by the Governor of J&K in December 2018, the issue of education of migration might get addressed to a certain extent due to the possibilities of introduction of new courses for study. Keeping that in mind, education driven urban migration from Ladakh is a crucial topic of discussion for the society and the administration here and most importantly for the students themselves.

Rigzin Chodon is Research Associate at LAMO



## TRADITIONAL MUSIC OF LADAKH

Ethnomusicologist, Noe Dinnerstein, presented a talk on traditional music of Ladakh focusing on the songs of the Palace and Village. Noe did his PhD in Ethnomusicology researching musical traditions of Ladakh; he currently teaches at City University, New York.



## BOOK LAUNCH

The book 'Hemis', a fictional story based in Ladakh was launched at the Lehling Book Cafe as part of the Bird Festival.



# Anthology of Ambience

## Seven Artists from Bangladesh show at LAMO

Fahema Ahmed

An ultramarine blue sky comes near to the yellow Ochre and Naples yellow uneven lands where some white strokes are also visible ...

It is not a description of a painting; it is the landscape of Leh and the first impression we had about our surroundings when we arrived in Leh. We – Fahema Ahmed, Effat Ara Nuzat, Md. Intiaj Islam, Mehnaz Tabassum, Shaila Jinnat – a group of five young artists from different parts of Bangladesh arrived in Leh with imaginative thoughts about this place. Not only the natural beauty encouraged us to visit Leh once, but also one book- “Amar Ladakh Jatra (Meri Ladakh Yatra)” written by Rahul Sankrityayan in 1942, inspired us most, where the writer talked about his travel experiences with the regional, historical and cultural specificity of that region. Besides to see the natural beauty we wanted to know about the life of local people with their culture and build a relationship with them. As an artist, the most effective and interesting way to communicate with the local people is through our artworks. So we traveled with our artworks and LAMO gave us the opportunity and space to do a group exhibition titled ‘Anthology of Ambience’ from 13th to 18th October 2018.

LAMO is located at two historic 17th century houses in Old Town Leh. When we were

going up, to reach LAMO, we were walking through the Old Town of Leh, which has so many years of history, in every step we tried to explore the new place, along with its history and through our works we also left our impression on this history.

Among us, the most common concept is, we all are describing our journey of life and our experiences through our artworks. In this exhibition, ‘Anthology of Ambience’ we exhibited seven artworks. Md. Intiaj Islam's drawing series titled “Narration of Journey” was a visual narration of his new journey in a new place by using the watercolor medium and it displayed in an uneven surface to depict the mood of a journey. Effat Ara Nuzat captured portraits and expressions from her surroundings through the blind drawing process, and this series of forty-two drawings titled “Impressions” showed in this exhibition. Mehnaz Tabassum displayed her travel diary named “Depth of Memories” in a visual form by using microscopic photography. Shaila Jinnat's three artworks based on the concept of deconstruction and the rhythm of life exhibited in the gallery space. Beside that, on the opening day of our exhibition, she also did a performance art where she used her body as the medium to execute her thoughts, titled “Poplar Tree”. She used the poplar tree as the metaphoric representation of humanity. I (Fahema Ahmed) installed twelve scrolls to cre-



“Depth of Memories” are microscopic photography in visual form by Mehnaz Tabassum

ate a space for interaction, titled “Flow With Stories”. These twelve scrolls were the stories of twelve students - Feroz Ahmed, Jigmet Dolker, Lobzang Jigmet, Phuntsok Zangmo, Rigzin Angmo, Stanzin Sungrap, Tsewang Nephel, Padma Lhadol, Padma Dolma, Jigmet Meru, Stanzing Chosgyal, Jigmet Dolker from SECMOL (Students Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh). Students narrated their stories through drawings and then converted these in cyanotype process. In the gallery space, viewers could walk into the scrolls, get to know them and their stories. The spontaneous responses from the local people, tourists from different places and the artists gave us different perspectives about our works. Along with the exhibition, LAMO or-

ganized an art talk, where we shared our practice, process, and artworks with the local artist community, the conversation was remarkable.

Apart from the successful exhibition, we visited Leh town and nearby places as well. When we arrived in Leh, we arrived with imaginative thoughts but, when we left, we came away with the amazing reality along with a full bag of new thoughts, preservatives, positive energies and unforgettable memories.

*Fahema Ahmed is an artist from Bangladesh*

## Rinchen Dolma talks to Michaela Appel

...continues from page 3

and Jurgen Wasim Frembgen from the Islamic department contributed their knowledge and wrote the photo captions for Ladakh and Baltistan while I wrote the ones for Kashmir. But our basis were the captions written by Otto himself.

**So to write the book, did you take help from Otto's caption?**

Yes in a way, because they showed the itinerary, but to write the book, I had the letters he had written to his parents and he had also written a short report.

**So he had kept a dairy also?**

Obviously he had, at least he said the report is from an old diary, but the dairy, if it ever existed, is not there anymore. I took these letters and his report and then I tried to find out more from the literature. For instance, Otto mentioned the Shah Hamadan Mosque in Srinagar, but I had no idea about it, when it was built and that it has Buddhist influences in its architecture.

**How did Otto, his brother and friend travel from Germany to Kashmir?**

They went by ship from probably somewhere in Italy, in Aden they changed ship and went to Bombay. And then, they went by train from Bombay to Rawalpindi. At Rawalpindi they took a tonga (horse cart) via Baramullah and Muree in the direction of Srinagar and I think they stayed on houseboats on the Dal and Wular lakes. And then they went to Gandarbal and then to Leh. The first route they took with three people is the one marked red in the book. The route Otto took alone is marked green.

**Did Otto go to Gilgit alone?**

Yes. He went via the Burzil Pass up to Gilgit and Haramosh and then to Skardu. He took

the Digar la and then he went back from Leh to Srinagar the same way as before with his brother and friend, but in the opposite direction.

**While going back to Germany, did he take the train from Rawalpindi to Bombay and then ship?**

Yes, I think there was no other possibility at that time. And from Germany to Italy and back, he would also travel in a train.

**So, he did a huge expedition in this area where he saw different cultures? Did you come to know about how his life was influenced after this expedition?**

I don't know, but I am sure that this experience must have changed him like it [my coming to Ladakh] will change me. The more experience you have, the more open you are and the more you know different ways of life. I think from what I heard about him, he was a very kind person. He also had a lot of humour even when he had no money anymore. He was a very generous person and he would often invite people to his hotel and they would come. We stopped the hotel in 2008 and the house was sold in 2011. I had always lived in his house and I also worked in the hotel and we always had people coming in as guests but they became friends. And I think it was the same with him. I think he also kept contact with people who had been on such journeys. And I am sure that it made him a more experienced person. Of course I could not ask him personally.

**What kind of change do you feel after coming here?**

I have never been in such a high place earlier. In such a landscape, which is so dry and at the same time, it can be so green where there is water. I think I have never been on such a high pass as Fotula and the scary steps in Basgo. I can only say that it also adds to my experience



Difficult crossing of a raging mountain stream

Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich, photo: Otto Honigmann

of life and travelling. When you go on such a journey you have probably some kind of expectations even when you don't want to have them, but it was way beyond what was expected. And also it helped me in understanding Otto's experience. So many things have changed from the photographs but the basic thing is there and strangely it doesn't affect me. You know, everything has changed but it doesn't make a difference because time has to change. When I think that there were no roads in these mountains then I wonder how did Otto travel through these places. How did they find their way? Of course they had guides also but it makes me wonder.

**When did you write this book?**

I wrote it in 2009. In 2010, it was published in German. I probably started researching it in 2008 and in 2009 I wrote this book. That was also when we knew we had to sell our house and that was a place that was very much Otto's place. So in a certain way it was kind of saying good-bye to the house. I wanted to do this for so long and then it suddenly happened in 2010. I didn't know when we would sell the house really but yes, for me it was also a bit like to do homage to Otto.

**You did the first exhibition of these photographs in Germany? In which year?**

The first exhibition was in 2010 at the Five Continents Museum in Munich and the museum financed the exhibition and the book. That is the reason why I gave the photographs to the museum. Also because when I am not there anymore then it's good that they are in such a place, where they are available for research. But the museum also has the policy to give photographs back to the original places such as Leh in this case. Of course, for that you have to find the right institution. You know now in Europe there are so many voices at the moment postulating that museums should give everything back, even the objects, but you cannot just give it back to anyone. You have to find the right institution and I think LAMO is the perfect place for these photographs.

*The exhibition was supported by Fünf Kontinente Museum and the Goethe Institute, Max Mueller Bhavan.*

*Rinchen Dolma is Projects Officer Media at LAMO*



## LADAKH FESTIVAL

Avny Lavasa, DC Leh, visited LAMO to see the art exhibition 'Celebrating Birds of Ladakh' that opened during the Ladakh Festival. During the Festival LAMO also held a series of talks by Ladakhi scholars and film screenings.



## FILM SCREENING

'Miles and More: a bicycle journey exploring Himalayan nature and culture' was screened at LAMO. The screening was followed by a discussion about the journey of an arduous bicycle trip from Delhi to Leh, with the Director/Producer of the film, Mitesh Sushila.



# Urushi | Eshi Inspiration for an Exhibition



Urushi Lacquer coated wooden bowls on display

Akiko Ookuni

The most significant scene in my daily life is the time when all of my family members gather around the dining table and eat our meals together. Those meals would not be the same without the use of our traditional Japanese utensils, which have been coated with URUSHI lacquer.

We use URUSHI-coated bowls for eating rice and miso soup. I am filled with a feeling of decadence when I feel the smooth URUSHI lacquer against the skin on my hand as I eat or on lips against the bowls as I drink. For many years, I thought that Urushi was a gift from heaven to enrich our lives. But my thoughts towards URUSHI have grown even more than this, since I showed URUSHI implements to people of the Warli tribe (from Maharashtra) with whom we have been running an art project together. "It's light, durable and beautiful. If we threw it away, it would return to soil. This is marvelous". It dawned on me through their words that URUSHI lacquer is recognized as a fine material globally. This was the moment my perspective on URUSHI changed from private to social. I thought URUSHI should not be thought of as something one simply treasures privately but had the desire to publically make URUSHI lacquer known as a traditional Japanese craft which increases happiness in daily life.

In addition to URUSHI, I would like to introduce an eccentric Japanese man. When I first saw Daisuke Kagawa's epic "22 Gods of Warehouse" in 2011, I was taken aback at the wonderful image drawn on the walls of the 150-year old warehouse. A few years



Meguri Ichida coating Urushi Lacquer on a wooden bowl

later, I had a chance to invite Daisuke to our art project in Khagaria, Bihar, after visiting his home in Tochigi, Japan. He restored an old Japanese style house, over three years, with his wife and converted it into a gallery. It was more beautiful than I could have ever imagined. Over a cup of freshly brewed coffee, he had prepared, Daisuke shared the story of how he became a painter. With limited income through the sales he made from paintings, he travelled the length of Japan, from south to north, on foot for two years and became an artist. He has not received formal art training.

I was attracted by his mysterious nature and realized something. In the same way he lives in a renovated old house with his wife (and the baby boy they were blessed with on 4th September), Daisuke Kagawa visited the old warehouse, cleaned it up, found old tools which had been kept for many years, gave them a new lease of life, and resurrected them as Gods. Moreover, the concept came out of impulse from within himself. "22 Gods of Warehouse" has now taken on a new form for me.

A second encounter with Kagawa's "Gods of Warehouse" and the realization of URUSHI; these two accidents were the inspiration for this exhibition. What ties these "accidents" together is the beauty that is preserved on well-used tools by human hands. If we keep the phrase "You No Bi" (beauty of use) in mind, our daily life will become enriched. In contemporary language, we call this "sustainable."

Therefore, I have selected living URUSHI works of artisans Yukiko Yagi and Meguri Ichida. I wanted people to feel these artworks of Urushi in their hands and feel the passion they have put into creating them. Yukiko and Meguri have been working as URUSHI artists from a young age and are always eager to find new possibilities in their artwork while balancing them with traditional techniques. It was an attempt to meet the Gods, that were old tools, but now stand revived with Daisuke Kagawa.

I hope the exhibition was an opportunity for everyone to appreciate the sheer happiness of daily life, which is just as important as the joy experienced at festivals or when eating out or travelling.

Akiko Ookuni is the Chief Director of Wall Art Project and curator of URUSHI | ESHI

# On The Earth- Ladakh An Art Exchange Program



So-hee Park engages in a workshop with students from different schools

Photo: Rigzin Tamchos

So-hee Park

This year SEOMI (an association of Korean artists) took the theme of "On the Earth - Ladakh" for the international art exchange project as a way to envision the association's identity and future. Korea and India have already developed solid cultural exchanges. Harking back to 2,000 years ago, there is a historical record of marriage between a Korean King named Kim Soo-ro, the founder of the ancient Karak-guk (Kaya), and an Indian Princess named Huh from Ayuta-guk (current Ayodhya). Korea and India has solidified their relationships in terms of people, culture and history. Despite the mystic impression pertaining to India to Korean people, India was close to Korean history especially when Buddhism was dominant in Korea. The Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore had once mentioned Korea to "become the light of the East".

With the exhibition "On the Earth - Ladakh" held in association with LAMO, SEOMI aims to address the artistic message to the global audiences with the works by Korean and Indian artists. Being considered to be least inflicted by materialism, the life and people in Ladakh

would provoke contemporary people living in capitalist consumer societies to reflect on our way of life. Deeply embedded in the Buddhist idea of the Void, Ladakhi people believe that everything is connected with each other. This understanding of the world in harmony is the philosophical foundation of Ladakhi people, who live with the law of nature and depend on the land, instead of seeking material abundance.

This exhibition aims to provide a venue for an exchange between the Ladakhi artists who have been living in this spiritual environment and the Seo-san based Korean artist associated with SEOMI. Held in an old house, participating artists shared their ideas about global issues in refreshing aesthetic experiences to both art lovers and general audiences. My special thanks go to the staffs and many people who have been of substantial help to realize this exhibition.

So-hee Park is the President of SEOMI Association

Rinchen Dolma

LAMO organised an International Exchange Program for ARTS in collaboration with Association SEOMI from 19th - 23rd July. The program took the theme of 'On the Earth - Ladakh' as a way to envision the identity and future of Arts between Ladakh (India) and Korea. The exhibition held at LAMO aimed to provide a platform for an exchange of artists between the two communities and address the fact that Art can reach out beyond a fixed place to communicate to a global audience.

The exhibition began with an interactive session between the Ladakhi and Korean Artists, both showing and explaining their artworks. A calligraphy demonstration was given by Korean Artists Sung Bae Lee who is a Doctor of Literature Calligrapher and Calligraphy Performer. In another performing art, Artist Kyo-ung In Che, created an artwork with a coloured salt installation and also made the participants create their own artwork on the gallery floor.

Students from St. Peters School, Siddhartha High School, Islamia Public School took keen interest in doing artwork participating through these performing arts and also creating Korean Fans with their own designs and motifs.

Association SEOMI is an art association established in the City of Seo-san located in the south Chung-chung district, South Korea. As

the oldest art community established in 1976 in the city, it was founded by Seo-san born artists and has grown to include the artists who were active in Korea and overseas. It has endeavored to support regional young artists and encourage artists' exchange via national and international venues.



Students engaged in a performing art

Photo: Rigzin Tamchos



## CURATING AN EXHIBITION

To understand the elements involved in setting up an art exhibition, students from Siddhartha School took part in a workshop that introduced them to the process and various stages involved in the planning, design and installation of art works. For the final exhibition they worked with material from the 'Heroes Project'.



# Media Literacy and Awareness

Stanzin Ladol

“Tell me and I forget  
Teach me and I remember  
Involve me and I learn”  
Benjamin Franklin

It is not uncommon to sight people curiously gazing at their mobile phones. It is not surprising, if infants unlock and operate a mobile device way before they can learn to eat on their own. Amidst such changes and challenges, LAMO and Local Futures jointly organized a Media Literacy and Film-making workshop at LAMO's centre in Old Town, Leh, from 9th - 15th of August 2018.

Media devices and consumption of various media has increased exponentially in Ladakh in the past few years. Owing to uninterrupted electricity and improving internet services in the region, it is bound to grow in the future. Hence, the workshop on media literacy – understanding media and its impacts – is imperative at this juncture.

Filmmaking was another significant part of the workshop. Experienced filmmakers took the kids through the process of making a film. They were taught basic story writing, filming and editing skills. Participants had the opportunity to work in groups to create short films about their own experiences of media and a range of interesting topics concerning Ladakh. They touched on subjects including climate change, addiction to electronic devices leading to social withdrawal symptoms among the youth, adapting to internet era and more. The attempt at unravelling the social changes through their films was an eye opener. It

reflected how aware the students are about the problems in the society contradicting the popular notion of their indifference to society and issues concerning it. Additionally, such an experience of fructifying their projects in the shape of short films instilled in them loads of confidence and sheer sense of fulfillment. They expressed utmost joy throughout the workshop.

Over the course of one week - the kids were engaged in multiple modules including numerous presentations, participatory activities, film screenings and discussions about media literacy.

Advertising and its various latent dimensions were discussed widely. They were educated on the impact of advertising, particularly on young minds. Attempts were made at raising awareness against the rising availability of junk food and consumerism culture and various resultant health epidemics.

Corporate control of media, and the psychological, social, and environmental effects of media and 'screen culture' were discussed too. Special guest speakers shared their expertise in media ethics, creating media for positive social change, gender and media, and more.

Some fun and frolic too was part of the workshop, including playing some interesting games. This exercise proved fruitful in drawing kids from different schools closer to one another. They were served delicious local food, which they savored thoroughly. Towards the end the team had become a family.

The workshop concluded on 15th August, few



Participants of the week-long Media Literacy Workshop

guests and parents of the kids were invited. The films that the kids made were premiered on this day and abundant appreciations were said for their work. The participants gladly shared their thoughts about the workshop.

Oskit from Lamdon Model school said the workshop was very informative, and it equipped them to critically understand media. Likewise, Semkey, TCV school thoroughly enjoyed the workshop. She found it educative and inspired her to explore further on the subject. Skarma Thartan, Boys Higher Secondary School added, rather honestly, that he anticipated the workshop to be boring. Contrarily, he said, he was completely hooked to the program. He found the sections on advertising and fake news thought provoking. Stan-

zin Chosyang, Siddhartha School thanked the organizers and said he was extremely glad he could be a part of the workshop.

Each one of them pledged to effect change among their peers at school and elsewhere. Towards the evening, the participants dispersed rather unwillingly. The larger goal of the workshop has been to help the students move from being passive media consumers to active media producers, and one hopes it succeeds in this goal.

Stanzin Ladol is Research Assistant at LAMO

# Need of Digital Literacy to Bridge the Digital Divide



Participants engaged in an activity during the Media Literacy Workshop

Norboo Tundup

The 21st century is an era of technologies and digitalization. This proliferation of digital devices and the internet changed the way people communicate among each other in the world. It is necessary to have digital skills to operate these technologies. Digital literacy could simply be defined as an individual who is able to use and access the digital technologies for various purposes. However, it isn't just about having skills in composing of emails, sending messages, logging into online platforms. But the correct usage of media content received from digital devices in the form of image, audio-visuals, sounds, etc via web and news portals, social networking sites, blogs, etc. All the contents shared need to be critically evaluated and analyzed.

All the content provided in the digital environment shares one thing, that is some one

had created it for some reason and to understand the reason behind it is the basis of the media literacy. So it becomes necessary to evaluate the information thoroughly.

'Digital India' was a mission launched by the Government of India to transform the country and its citizen through digital empowerment, by providing high speed internet, citizen participation in digital space, safe and secure cyber space, making financial transactions through digital means, making it universally accessible through digital resources. The government has also come out with a vision to educate digital skills for its citizens, which includes having at least one person who is digitally literate from each family, by 2020, with National Digital Literacy Mission scheme.

Under the scheme of Digital India, Indian Telecommunication Industries have created their connections in every part of the coun-

try and it has reached places like Ladakh also. Two years ago, the number of smart mobile phone users was quite low, but it has increased rapidly due to the accessibility of 4G internet network. This sudden development of internet network in Ladakh has inundated the people with information, brought them the possibility of online shopping, online transactions. It also helps businesses people in the field of tourism to stay in touch with their clients amongst other things. But how digitally skilled are Ladakh is to operate and access this digital world?

Digital divide is one of the vital reasons in lacking knowledge about digital technologies and its operation in Ladakh and other parts of the world. Around two-three decades ago, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) like computers, Internet, mobile phone, etc were nowhere to be seen in Ladakh and this reason formed an illiteracy that led to knowledge divide in technology. The sudden contact with the digitalized world, without having digital knowledge is challenging the people of this region. Lack of knowledge about operating of digital online devices may lead to online fraud or extortion, loss of privacy, overriding cultures, etc. But it has its own

positive impact in learning other than bookish knowledge for school and college students, video calling with friends and families, online transactions, online shopping, digitally connected with rest of the world, etc.

Citizen should stay alert while interacting with digital world. There are various methods which can help in averting them from fake news and information. Media education is one of the methods which needs to be introduced in schools and colleges to make students aware, conducting workshops on media and information literacy to villagers, installing information and communication technology centres in rural areas so that citizens can stay updated. Also staying cautious about IT acts while connecting to the digital environment secures an individual's life and also helps prevent getting caught by online traps. Analyzing information received via social networking sites in smartphones, tablets, in the form of text, viral videos, meme and images before forwarding to any others is also important. It's not too late to be a techie. This is the time for people from Ladakh to compete with the world to learn, to enlighten folks, to be safe and secure in this digital era.



Participants filming as part of their workshop

NorbooTundup is a visual artist interning with LAMO



### EXHIBITION IN TOKYO

Five artists from Ladakh – Jigmet Angmo, Jigmet Wangchok, Rigzin Paljor, Tsering Youdol and Tsetan Angmo – were chosen by Gallery JIB to show at an exhibition in Tokyo, Japan.



### ZHUGS NYID TODMO

Michael G. Petterson, Professor of Geology, School of Science, Auckland University of Technology talked about the geological makeup and tectonic shifts in Ladakh, during our Zhugs-nyid-todmo (basking in the sun) session.

# When No One Is Looking - A Retrospective

Payal Arya

In the year 2013, I set up an installation at the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival, an event that takes place annually in the month of February in Mumbai. The first instance of this installation at the Festival was a response to the lack of private spaces in a populous metropolitan city. My art is also a series of attempts on my part to negotiate my position in society. The installation opened up a scope of discourse and a place to openly talk about a sensitive issue such as this.

As a woman living in a populous city like Mumbai from 2010 to 2013, the themes of violation of private space, gender issues and body image were of immediate concern to me. Inspired by these themes, I started to create highly interactive installations. The realization of this work would not have been possible without the generous support of Thermax and Akshara Foundation in Mumbai.

One such installation titled, "When No one is Looking", is that of a narrow dark tunnel/ pathway. Along the way a number of fake rubber hands are positioned at the chest level, which would brush against those who cross the dark tunnel and relate the experience to that of groping. Through these interactive installations, the audience will get a sensorial experience that makes one revisit reality. The reactions are then recorded on a CCTV camera.

I believe, these kinds of interactive installations have a very far-reaching effect. They makes people revisit reality in a profound and real manner. A huge turnout of 40,000 people sharing their personal experiences and holding a discourse was the crux of the installation.

The experience was realistic and some women came out of it screaming. They expressed how they were really disturbed by the entire experience and affirmed it as "real", "horrifying", and a "hard truth". Some came out angry and agitated. Alka says, "sahan bhi nahi hota aur bataya bhi nahi jata." Amita Shah from Baroda wrote, "God!! How my heart thumped and this was a make believe. I can't even begin



Dummy hands were installed in a dark alley of LAMO building for people to experience the feel Photo: Payal Arya

to imagine how an actual victim would feel." Asha wrote, "Oh God! It was really scary, for a while when I entered my breath stopped. Hope soon we women don't feel scared even in the darkness where nobody exists." "40, 50 years ago this was not a problem. Are we really progressing...," "It was a glimpse of what a girl goes through at any place in this claustrophobic country. Disgusting!"

Mrs Mahadik said, "Very well created!! Very often women are caught off guard. I am glad that men who went in will know what we go through. Hope the world improves after this realization."

Mickey from the US said, "As a woman traveling alone in India, I know this experience only too well! What an insightful way to draw attention to this sensitive subject!" Bhavana said, "Shivers went down my spine recalling the few events that I have been through, just because I am a GIRL."

It was also interesting to note that many women wrote about how they would hit anyone who touches them. One lady that went in ac-

ually started hitting the hands in self defense and came out scared and flushed. Others wrote about carrying knives and safety pins for their security.

Men reacted differently to the installation. Most men came out wearing a serious expression. Some even appeared embarrassed and guilty. One of the men stated, "Being a man I have realized for the first time and first hand how it feels. However it does happen to us men in men's coach on the local trains." Another man wrote, "Ab nazarein na jhuki to kab..." Parth says, "everyone should go through it to know there's a hell of a lot happening when no one is seeing or seeing but pretending to not have seen." Vikram said, "Thank God I'm not a woman. I am ashamed of my brothers who are doing such things to women!" Akshay wrote, "If this is the real situation then it's a pathetic act, feeling ashamed to be a male."

Before coming to Leh, I had a very different idea of the place. On reaching, I was taken aback by its landscape and the dry mountains that surround the city. LAMO opened up an opportunity for me to live and interact with the

local community as well as the tourists that come into Leh. I got to interact with artists, architects, and writers. I found out that there are a lot of discussions and ideas shared at forums within the city.

I learnt that issues of gender injustice and violation of private space not only exist here but that such issues are silenced and kept hidden and not spoken about openly within the local community. My installation at LAMO, "When No One is Looking" would hopefully spark a conversation and add to the discourse. I wanted to use the existing infrastructure in Leh as there are a lot of small passage and narrow walkways that connect the city. I placed the installation in a narrow tunnel found at LAMO itself. The visitors shared their reactions on exiting the tunnel and we had people from all walks of life visit the exhibition.

The workshop / outreach program was in collaboration with the New Ladakhi Girls. They have been working on women's rights and providing a fresh perspective right from the school level. They were working on the theme of menstruation and the installation began as a starting point to start talking about this apparently uncomfortable topic. The participants for the workshop were local men and women as we wanted to have a mixed crowd that wouldn't usually discuss or openly speak about these topics. We asked them to think of menstruation as a theme and to express themselves through the art materials provided to them. They adopted various mediums to express themselves. They drew, painted, made 3d objects, wrote poems and told stories. It was an enriching experience.

The installation would not have been possible without the support of LAMO and their entire team who helped me with each step of the process.

*Payal Arya was Resident Artist in July 2018. She explores and works on gender related issues.*

# NLG talk on Menstruation

Tsewang Chuskit & Stanzin Angmo

Over 20 years ago, Ladakh became a tourist destination, growth exploded, and our society started developing without plans. Girls were a liability in our traditional, patriarchal society. Most of our parents and grandparents generation are illiterate or of limited education, so we believe it is hard for them to recognize women's health as an issue. Our grandmothers followed myths and customs about how to take care of themselves when they had periods, some of which are unhygienic and cause severe health problems. We learned that social change in a conservative society is slow but not impossible; this is why New Ladakhi Girls started in 2015 and continues its work every summer.

New Ladakhi Girls was founded in 2015 by two Siddhartha School graduates, Tsewang Chuskit and Stanzin Angmo, who are currently studying in America. Tsewang Chuskit is from Muth, Changthang Village, currently finishing her undergraduate degree in Smith College. Stanzin Angmo is from Stok, finishing her undergraduate degree at Bennington College. We finished 10th grade at Siddhartha School then we both had the huge opportunity to pursue further studies in the USA, first for 11th and 12th grades and now in our respective colleges. The goal of our social work, New Ladakhi Girls, is to educate young girls and their mothers about

their bodies and how to take care of them. We encourage young girls to dream big and work hard.

In summer 2015, we enrolled in a science program at Smith College which paved the wave for our social work. We studied with Dr. Leslie Jaffe; his course 'By Girls, For Girls' was eye opening because we discovered that we didn't know much about why our bodies work the way they do. We didn't have sex education in school, and our mothers weren't open about female bodies. We then realized that we needed to share information about women's health with all girls and mothers back home. Now, every summer, we return to Ladakh to give presentations and do local outreach in different schools around Leh and in Changthang.

We are so fortunate to receive funding from international foundations such as ANN power, Davis Peace Foundation, and the Siddhartha School Project (SSP). This year, the Davis Foundation awarded Chuskit a generous fellowship grant of \$10,000 to expand NLG and run a year-round program in Ladakh. A key objective in 2018 is to encourage students, women, and girls to meet regularly and talk about sensitive topics. With the Davis Foundation's support, we created NLG's Women's Traveling



Stanzin Angmo and Tsewang Chuskit giving a talk on Menstruation at Ladakh Nun Association



Library. This digital library uses technologies that work without the Internet (making it more accessible in remote villages): Zoom recorders and three Kindles loaded with educational videos on menstruation, feminine hygiene, sexual health, and harassment and abuse. Most notable are the Ladakhi-created content, which includes interviews with local women sharing their menstruation stories and memories, and NLG PowerPoint presentations. With the kindles, students and local women can listen to the interviews, reflect on and discuss the stories, and record and share their opinions and stories with other women isolated by geography or shame. We gave three traveling libraries to villages in Changthang.

We would like to express our gratitude to women leaders in Ladakh who have always support-

ed our work and given helpful feedback, and for giving us precious time for interviews and discussions. We thank Siddhartha School for instilling in us a strong pride and appreciation for our heritage and a sense of social responsibility at an early age. We are most grateful to SSP's US foundation for its ongoing help to continue NLG, and to LAMO for always welcoming our project and new ideas, and mentoring us as NLG expands into what we hope will be an enduring and fruitful project.

*Tsewang Chuskit is studying at Smith College and Stanzin Angmo is studying at Bennington College in New York, USA*



## AIDS DAY

Ladakh NGOs Forum under the host organisation LAMO organised an awareness program on 'World AIDS Day' at Kushok Bakula Rinpoche Memorial Hall, Lamdon Model Sr. Sec. School Leh. Dr. Spalchen Gonbo was the key speaker along with other presentations, documentary screenings and a quiz session for creating awareness about AIDS.



## FICA DALMIA GRANT

This year, the IlaDalmia FICA Research Grant 2018 was awarded to LAMO's Research Associate, Rigzin Chodon for her project titled 'Hand-made Sketches from the Early-20th Century Newspapers of Ladakh and Kyelang: A Study of Kyelang Agbar and Ladvags Phonya (1925-35; 1936-47 & 1952-59 A.D.)'.

# Interning with LAMO



Achay Yangdol inaugurates the new LAMO cafe space

Photo :Stenzin Tenkon

Aishwarya Jhavar

Only some fortunate people get the chance to make a living in the field they are really passionate about. For them, it's not just about meeting deadlines and finishing their work, it's what they live for, it's why they live.

I consider myself to be one such fortunate person.

I am a public space designer, currently studying at Srishti Institute of Art Design and Technology, Bangalore. As a part of my internship program, I worked at LAMO in the summer of 2018.

This epiphany of being fortunate, in this sense, came to me in many little ways while I was working at LAMO. Here I was given the task of designing a simple café, or a tea-house, in the outdoor space of the LAMO Centre. The brief was that I work only with materials found on site. At first, it looked impossible, then I saw it as a real challenge. As I started to explore the space, it got so much more interesting and intriguing as I discovered new things with every passing day. For me, the storeroom was a treasure in disguise, it had so many captivating elements stored in its belly, things ranging from empty paint bottles to zillions of wooden blocks; one could find anything and everything there and all this contributed to the making of the café. Further with a lot of guidance and help from Tashi Morup, slowly and slowly I got the

sense of how things worked around here. He helped me navigate through various aspects of understanding on how practical projects take place, he helped me understand the culture, giving me in-depth insights on how locals work, what are the traditional elements, vernacular architecture and most importantly how to communicate effectively. The tips and tricks learned there are still serving me and have molded my thinking process. This has to be mentioned that I'm truly grateful to Monisha and Tashi for trusting me with the project. Coming from a highly urban background of Bangalore, I had my own box of jitters of working in a completely different setting that is so disparate culturally but the entire LAMO family was so welcoming and warm that they made it difficult for me to leave.

Writing this has made me retrospect on those two months in Leh and I can't actually define this in true sense what that time has given me and how it has shaped me as a person, because it was not just about the work, it was the culture, the smiles, the warmth, the mountains and so much more. There are few experiences in life, which are crucial to what you do and become later in life; working at LAMO was one such for me.

*Aishwarya Jhavar is a space designer student at Srishti Institute of Arts, Design and Technology*

# A Journey With Four Artists

Kerstin Mempel

We were a group of four German artists and we came to Ladakh in July for an Art and Culture tour.

During our travel Kerstin (Mempel) always made some drawings from the surroundings including portraits of local people. She often started her artwork by drawing on the way; her favorite medium is watercolour. It is important for her to be in direct contact with the place where she is, so it is easier to sort out what is important for her painting. She does not like to work with photos very much. She often paints on canvas or paper on her way and finishes the work later in her studio.

In Ladakh she made fast portraits of people she met, as it is a great opportunity for her to come in contact with her subjects. She used only water-based pencils to teach the participants and a simple method to build a portrait. That was the idea for a workshop at LAMO. Together with her colleague Susanne (Kallenbach) they offered an afternoon for youngsters. It was a

great event as the participants learned to draw a simple scheme of a face and they compared it with each other and people from photographs to see if it fits the likeness or not. The conclusion was to find the differences and drawing them, like small or big face, nose, ears etc. At the end of the session, the kids were able to make their own portraits.

It was also great to meet other artists at the LAMO Centre and to get an idea of the past and present Culture and Art in this beautiful place..

For us it was a great pleasure to be invited by LAMO for this event and we would like to come back for more.

German artists:  
Kerstin Mempel (painting// drawing)  
Susanne Kallenbach (ceramics)  
Clemens C. Franke (graphic)  
Volker Altenhof (painting)

*Kerstin Mempel is a watercolour artist and sketch maker based in Germany*



## Walks in Leh

In December, Avny Lavasa, DC Leh, launches the first of LAMO's booklets on 'Walks in Leh' beginning with the one on Old Town. The idea germinated at a meeting LAHDC held in 2017 to look at various cultural aspects of Ladakh with an emphasis on promoting sustainable tourism. Walks hopes to bring an alternative experience as people explore parts of Leh by foot, impacting the fragile ecology of the town by easing the impact of pollution. *The project is supported by LAHDC and J&K Tourism*

# A Winter Spent Well at LAMO

Stanzin Loldan

The thought of being part of LAMO kept crossing my mind and then, last winter I did an internship at the Centre. Being a teacher at a local school, there could not be a better place to spend the winter months doing some research work than LAMO, which is located just below the magnificent palace of Leh.

At LAMO, I met hosts of people from different backgrounds. On the first day, I saw children at a workshop on design and drawing. Seeing them freely and creatively indulging in the workshop left a deep impression on me.

I find LAMO to be an open and creative space. It is a place that retains the aura of traditional architecture and design, which have proven to be a time tested solution to protect us from the long months of harsh Ladakhi winter.

With the help of LAMO, I got to do some research on inclusive local politics. It helped me to know more about the kind of political culture that we are cultivating, which I do not find to be truly democratic. The political space in Ladakh is hugely contested along the lines of client-patron network of relationships. In this sphere, the dominant narratives are those of influential local ideologues high on the social hierarchy who manage to mobilise public by appropriating themes like culture, language, religion and region. In the process of constructing and representing such grand narratives, more pressing and relevant local issues like gender, caste, class, unemployment etc... get overlooked and avoided.

Most people down the socio-political hierarchy hover around to seek the patronage of local leaders. For most of them, politics is a means of showing allegiance and seeking patronage for personal gains at the cost of empowering a democratic society. I think this is the reason why we do not have a political culture where marginal sections of society come forward to form a vibrant civil society.

In today's society LAMO is playing a very crucial role especially with respect to giving the youth of Ladakh a chance in discovering and showcasing their talents in arts and media. LAMO is a platform from where youth can explore their potential and train themselves to find new avenues of expression and employment.

LAMO has a very beautiful library. The view of Stok Range from its window is spectacular. It has some of the best books on Ladakh. Besides there are many journals and magazines which are very helpful for students / researchers and others who are preparing for various competitive exams or just interested in the subject. But it needs to be accessed by more and more people. In this regard, I think the management could do something to attract readers so that it becomes a hub of learning.

I would like to thank team LAMO for their untiring effort in conserving the local heritage and at the same time making a space for arts and media out of a very unique place. Overall my experience at LAMO was very enriching.

*Stanzin Loldan teaches at Jamyang School, leh*



Kerstin teaching the kids about portrait sketching

Photo: Susanne Kallenbach