

## TEXTILE SYMPOSIUM

# Roots & Routes: Exploring historic and contemporary textile practices

### **Inaugural Lecture: Cross Cultural Connections in Kalamkari.**

From 10:15 to 11:00 AM

Location: Mazumdar Shaw Auditorium

This inaugural lecture by Rajarshi Sengupta investigates the practice and trade of mordant and resist dyed cloth. Drawing on the exhibition, Chay Reds, Ferrous Black, it will focus in particular on the relationship of kalamkari to other traded goods, cultural exchanges, transmission of motifs and the red dye(s) such as chay root used in the Coromandel region.

The lecture will also present Rajarshi Sengupta's ongoing research, in which he surveys the presence of peacocks in the material culture of South Eastern India and Sri Lanka. By stressing upon knowledge transmission, the motif exploration also brings together the intersection of Hindu, Christian and Buddhist beliefs.

#### About the speaker:

Rajarshi Sengupta is a practitioner and art historian, presently teaching fine arts at the Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur, India (2021). Sengupta completed his PhD in art history from the University of British Columbia, Vancouver (2019). He received the IARTS Textiles of India Grant, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto (2017-18) and the Indo-Canadian Shastri Travel Grant (2023-24). Sengupta has published in World Art, Journal18, Journal of Textile Design Research and Practice, and South Asian Studies, among others, and contributed to Cloth that Changed the World: The Art and Fashion of Indian Chintz, ed. Sarah Fee (2020). His textile works are exhibited as part of Varna(n), Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad (2021), Crafting the Crossroad, Dhi Artspace, Hyderabad (2022), and Entwined, Apparao Galleries, Chennai and New Delhi (2024).

---

### **Panel Discussion: From Khadi to Kalamkari**

From 11:15 AM to 12:15 AM

Location: Mazumdar Shaw Auditorium

This panel broadly explores the process of textile making: from spinning and weaving to dyeing. It highlights how contemporary practices necessitate an understanding of each stage involved in the making of textiles. From khadi makers in Karnataka and the impact of cotton seeds on the local environment to the

## TEXTILE SYMPOSIUM

# Roots & Routes: Exploring historic and contemporary textile practices

discovery of dye chemistry, the panel explores a range of contexts that inform creative and artistic practices around textiles.

### About the Speakers:

#### Renuka Reddy

Her work is a series of experiments primarily addressing the question “is it possible to produce 18th century quality chintz today?” Referring to historic accounts on hand painted chintz making process, she researches and experiments continually searching for the perfect combination of cloth, milk, mordants, dung, dyes, and resists that propelled chintz into one of the most important textiles from India. Reddy has a background in textile crafts in India, automotive textiles in Detroit, Michigan and is based in Bangalore, India. Her work is part of the permanent collections of the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art and the TAPI Collection in India, the Fries Museum in The Netherlands, the Royal Ontario Museum in Canada, and the Kasteel d'Ursel in Belgium.

#### Ravi Kiran

After graduating from Karnataka University with a degree in electronics in 1993, Ravi Kiran chose to work in textiles/garments. For the next four years, he worked in a few garment factories and realized his true calling was more towards handcrafted textiles and made-ups. Keeping this in mind, in 1997, he started a company called 'Barometre'. Though he was not trained in textile and garment construction, having a workshop provided him with the opportunity to learn everything hands-on. In 2010, he formed Metaphor Racha with a clear understanding of working with the Khadi value chain, be it spinners, weavers, dyers, printers, or tailors, and bringing deserving craftspeople to the forefront. He strongly advocates transparency in business, fair prices, pride in labour, and equal opportunity for growth for everyone involved. He considers himself fortunate to have worked with various Khadi cooperatives in Karnataka and tries to be the bridge between rural crafts and urban needs.

#### Aparna Jaishankar

She is a Gold Medallist in Social Work (MSW) from Bharathiar University, is a Storyteller, Educator and Corporate Trainer. History, Languages, Ethics and Perspectives are some of the topics covered in her modules for modern day educators and learners of varied ability and age groups. As a Guest Lecturer, she

## TEXTILE SYMPOSIUM

### **Roots & Routes:** Exploring historic and contemporary textile practices

has devised and implemented an elective course on Storytelling and Skill Development in the Modern World for Christ University, Bangalore. Aparna's personal favourite genre of stories is Indic Mythology, particularly the Mahabharata. In a bid to strengthen her learning of Mythology, field visits for primary research and courses and workshops on history, archaeology, temple architecture for theoretical understanding are her staple. Aparna enjoys the various versions of these stories found in the nooks and renditions of the Indian subcontinent in the form of songs, theatre, dance, weaving, ritual practices. She loves to incorporate stories from these rich sources into her Storytelling performances in Indic Mythology. Her passion lies in exploring Indic Mythology with a contemporary lens. While researching on stories from Indic Mythology, Aparna has also explored the world of weaves. In her series Weaving a Story, private collections of textiles from different regions are showcased along with a performance on the historical, mythological, political and contemporary stories associated with the weave. Over the years, Aparna has performed at multiple prestigious festivals—Bengaluru Storytelling Festival, Bangalore Literature Festival, Katha Karnival, Natarani's Kathaastu, Kovai Bookgalatta—to name a few.

---

#### **Workshop: Petals, Peels and Pigments: A Workshop on Dyeing Processes**

Time: 11:30 AM to 12:45 PM

Location: Learning Centre, Lower Ground Floor

The iconic block-printed or hand-painted textiles historically produced for the Indian and Sri Lankan markets were traditionally characterized by bold red and black dyes on a white cotton background. In this workshop, Harshitha from Gida Living Colours will guide participants through the process of creating these striking red and black pigments using plant-based dyes and inks. Participants will gain hands-on knowledge of transforming plants into vibrant pigments, exploring various natural processes along the way.

#### About the Facilitator

Harshitha is a craftsman, entrepreneur, and a farmer. Her background is in Electrical engineering but her interests are nature, materials, and intelligence.

About Gida: Gida is centered around celebrating the beauty and alchemy in nature.

At Gida, our mission is to push the boundaries of scientific inquiry and artistic

## TEXTILE SYMPOSIUM

# Roots & Routes: Exploring historic and contemporary textile practices

expression through the exploration of pigments and materials. We are driven by a curiosity to understand the fundamental properties of color, texture, and composition, and how they influence our perception and experience of the world.

---

### **Guided Walk: Inspired, Imagined, and Interpreted: A Student-led Exhibition Walkthrough**

Time: 12:30 to 1:00 PM

Location: Citi Bank Gallery, 3rd Floor.

Facilitated by Shreya G Raj and Sowmika R

What else was happening in the world when these textiles were being produced and traded? What were dyers thinking in their making process? How did people perceive the chintz ban? Exploring questions such as these, fashion communication students from Pearl Academy, provide a unique exploration of the Chay Reds, Ferrous Black exhibition supplemented by laser-cut motifs and mixed-media maps inspired by its textiles.

---

### **Panel Discussion: From Cotton Seeds to Chay Root: The Role of the 'Local'**

Time: 2:00 to 3:00 PM

Location: Mazumdar Shaw Auditorium.

This panel discusses the relationship between naturally dyed cloth and the communities connected to it. It explores this in two contexts: through the chay root, which was widely used in historically traded Sri Lankan cloth, and through cotton textile and dyes created in local communities in South India today. Shifting back and forth between these two contexts, the speakers bring in perspectives from Sri Lankan history to medicine and food, speculating on changes in cultural narratives and the ecosystem over time.

About the Speakers:

Ananthoo

## TEXTILE SYMPOSIUM

# Roots & Routes: Exploring historic and contemporary textile practices

He was a Telecom Engineer who worked in the IT and Telecom sector. After coming back from Switzerland in 2006, he started working for different social causes, predominantly on safe food, sustainable agriculture and slow clothing. Along with a few friends, he works with small and marginal farmers, helping them move to sustainable farming and run a not-for-profit organic outlet in Chennai called Restore. As an extension of this work and to provide safe, organic food to a larger and wider audience, he started OFM - Organic Farmer's Market - a collective through which he works with many farmers and youngsters to take the movement ahead. He is also the coordinator of Safe Food Alliance and associated with ASHA - Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture.

Jennifer Moragoda

Jennifer is an independent writer and researcher. She holds a BSc. Degree in Textile Sciences from the University of California, Davis. She was the co-founder and head of Sri Lanka's first multinational garment and textile quality-testing laboratory, a pioneering US-Sri Lanka joint venture providing vital support to Sri Lanka's largest export sector. She has extensively researched the chay root (*Oldenlandia umbellata*), once the most important dyestuff used in cloth production in northern Sri Lanka and the southeast coastal region of India. In 2009, she curated 'Unravelling the Past: Contemporary Textile Artists Post-Independence to the Present.' This ground-breaking exhibition was the first to bring together the work of eight important textile artists and to present textile design as an art rather than mere craft. Jennifer has been working on an illustrated historical glossary of Sri Lankan textile traditions, cloth types, and dyestuffs; an extended history of the chay root; and a history of the Buddhist robe (chivara).

An American by birth, Jennifer has lived in Sri Lanka for almost four decades and has resided in India. She served as a Board Member on the US-Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission for over a decade. As Honorary Consul for Brazil in Sri Lanka, she was conferred with the honour of 'Officer of the Order of Rio Branco' by the President of Brazil in recognition of her services in fostering Brazil-Sri Lanka relations.

Sneha Chaudhary

Sneha is a multidisciplinary creative from India, with a focus on ecologically inclusive art/design based on material cultures and communities. She works across materials, techniques, craft economies and cultural stories to create enriching textile experiences. Her textile journey began with expertise in weaving and a curiosity

## TEXTILE SYMPOSIUM

# Roots & Routes: Exploring historic and contemporary textile practices

about the ecological aspects of craft, led her to Assam's 7Weaves, where she explored sustainable material innovation with Eri silk co-creating with indigenous communities. Her work evolved with Maku Textiles, deepening the understanding of textile history and its applications in fashion. She expanded into textile and fibre art, blending weaving with spatial design for installations during her work with WariWatai.

---

### Workshop: Fruits, Flags and Floral Patterns: A Workshop on Contemporary Chintz

Time: 2:00 to 3:30 PM

Location: Smoor Cafe, Lower ground floor

In contemporary print design, designers have continued to explore kalamkari or chintz by drawing inspiration from historical patterns. In this workshop, Shambhavi T delves into MAP's collection to uncover ideas and reinterpret historical patterns for modern use. Participants will paint an artwork, using unique motifs such as fruit, floral, bird or animal patterns seen in Indian and Sri Lankan textiles. While the designs will be inspired by and closely crafted to mimic the appearance of such motifs on cloth, workshop participants will reproduce them on paper to create unique hand-made pieces that they can carry back with them as souvenirs.

#### About the Facilitator:

Shambhavi T is a graduate of NID Ahmedabad, and an honorary Alumni Ambassador for the French Embassy (2023–25), Shambhavi Tiwari is the founder and creative director of Shambhavi T (Studio ST), a Jaipur-based multidisciplinary design studio. Her work combines contemporary sensibilities with traditional techniques, offering bespoke, hand-painted surface designs across textiles, wallpapers, tableware, and stationery. Known for her context-driven approach, Shambhavi draws inspiration from craft, culture, and nature to create contemporary print artefacts. She invites creatives to reimagine tradition through her distinct visual language and craft meaningful experiences.

---

## TEXTILE SYMPOSIUM

# Roots & Routes: Exploring historic and contemporary textile practices

### Panel Discussion: From Fabric to Fashion: 'Hybrid' Practices

Time: 3:15 to 4:15 PM

Location: Mazumdar Shaw Auditorium.

A conversation around cultural identities, "hybrid" practices, and personal narratives within the realms of art, fashion, design, and textiles. By exploring the autobiographical stories and regional traditions that shape the work of Amesh Wijesekera and Lisa King, this panel will offer a thoughtful discussion on design choices and the role of grief and gender identities in their practice.

Discussing the techniques and rituals that inform their creative processes, it will touch upon various practices such as batik, knitwear printing, pressed flower art, crochet, lace, screen printing and upcycling. Through this conversation, the audience will gain insight into how these elements intersect and inform each artist's approach to contemporary fashion or design.

#### About the Speakers:

##### Amesh Wijesekera

London born Amesh is a graduate of the Academy of Design in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Celebrated for his eclectic use of textiles, AMESH combines artisanal craftsmanship in hand-weaving, knitting and crochet, whilst re-purposing pre-consumer waste materials from the apparel industry in Sri Lanka to create trans-Seasonal statement pieces for a shared wardrobe concept. AMESH was first discovered at the Mercedes-Benz fashion runways in Colombo, he went on to debut at Berlin Fashion Week in 2019, and MBFW Tbilisi, Georgia. AMESH represented Sri Lanka at the International fashion showcase in 2019, in partnership with the British Fashion Council, University of the Arts London, British Council and Somerset House. AMESH became the first Sri Lankan designer to be nominated for the prestigious LVMH Prize in Paris 2022, and continued on to be UK Winner and a finalist for the Circular Design Challenge in India 2023 He has expanded his medium into canvas with a solo textile art exhibition at Barefoot Gallery in Colombo 2024. AMESH is on a continuous journey re-imagining South Asian Beauty & Identity while exploring gender expression and youth culture

## TEXTILE SYMPOSIUM

# Roots & Routes: Exploring historic and contemporary textile practices

### Lisa King

Lisa King is a multi-disciplinary artist and fashion designer whose dynamic visual work draws on her personal experience, a love of nature and her British, Thai and Indonesian heritage to tell stories through textile design. She takes an investigative approach to print using experimental processes; encompassing photography, abstract drawing, painting, film, screen and digital print design and batik to convey an emotional response. A graduate of Textiles from Central St. Martins, with her own practice founded in 2013, King's eponymous scarf collections have been sold in stores across the world since 2013 including Harvey Nichols, Bergdorff Goodman and Fortnum & Mason, and her ready-to-wear collections garner a strong following particularly in Japan, while commission clients include Nike, The Savoy, and Prada. Since 2019 her prints have transitioned into larger scale projects, commissions and collaborations spanning art, fashion, retail and event design, interiors, and costume.

The last year has seen her join a movement of craft makers and artists working to push the boundaries of traditional textiles, inspired by her mother's batik archive to preserve the practices and bring them to a new audience. Featured in British Vogue, FT How to spend it, and Nowness.com, King also shares her alternative approach to print design through regular workshops where she demonstrates the unique methods of her signature style.

### Yash Sanhotra

Yash is a textile and apparel designer with a focus on the cultural and historical significance of South Asian textiles and costumes. Holding a Bachelor's in Textile Design from the National Institute of Fashion Technology he is pursuing a Master's in Apparel Design at the National Institute of Design. Combining research and documentation with hands-on experience, Yash's diverse portfolio includes working as a textile designer, a researcher, an educator and a costume designer. His commitment to preserving textile heritage extends to roles in documentation, cataloguing and handling of historical textiles for institutions such as the Museum of Art and Photography (MAP), and NID Archives. Currently finishing his graduation project with NID Archives, he is working with the DTIG Collection (Documentation of Traditional Indian Garments), a collection put together by Madhurima Patni (Gitto) in the 1980s.

As a creative, Yash continues to explore sustainable practices and cultural narratives through robust research, education and design practices. He believes, it is



## TEXTILE SYMPOSIUM

# Roots & Routes: Exploring historic and contemporary textile practices

through honouring the cultural identities that a community can weave the tangible-intangible values and embroider memories into our consciousness.

---

### Curator-led Guided Walk

From: 5:00 to 5:30 PM

Location: Citi Bank Gallery, 3rd Floor

Join us for a guided walk of our latest exhibition, "Chay Reds, Ferrous Black" with curator Yash Sanhotra. This exhibition reveals the untold stories of Indian textiles found in Sri Lanka. Featuring exquisite Palampores and textile fragments, dating back to the 18th century, they once graced humble homes as well as sacred temples. Today, they serve as storytellers, weaving together the rich and intricate history shared between two ancient cultures.