

Riyaz January Report

Mandhu Workshop – 26th January to 1st February

26 January

Most students had reached Indore on the previous night, for the last session of Riyaz to be convened in Mandu. A bus was booked and all the students and faculty members travelled to Mandu and visited the different monuments at a glance to get an idea of the town and the different sites.

Dileep told everyone that a detailed trip to any of these monuments was to be planned the following day depending upon the wish of the students and mentors. And that since there is a general similarity in the architectural style of the monuments the students could roam the town for a couple of days but really get down to the act of making the work for the rest of the days.

27 January

After a day of visiting the two important sites in Mandu, students presented their work to the mentors. Since the students were given an assignment to work on two drawings per day with impressions and also their own take of Mandu. They were advised to think about the page distribution and the aspects of design for these compositions. It was also made clear that while they could do several sketches a day for their own work, for the assignment as such they needed to submit two drawings per day which needed to be more detailed than a sketch normally would be.

Chandramohan reiterated to the students that the need of the assignment was for the students to work on their illustrations more than they would spend time say roaming at the sites, since it was more or less a similar and repetitive structure architecture wise.

Since students would be making sketches in different ways, the medium of any kind was allowed for that purpose. But, when it came to the assignment as such, the students were told that they needed to give their submissions in the very particular medium of pen and ink on a A5 size paper. Within these constrictions, they needed to work on their individual drawings everyday.

Taposhi added that the students can look at the historical monuments and the possibilities of reflecting on the past through their illustrations. That there was a possibility to look at the several trees of Baobab and their history as well as part of the history of the town.

28 January

In the common session on the following day, Dileep spoke of the problems that can arise in the printing of some of the works that were shown by the students.

Many were still doing sketches of a landscape and treating the work more as a documentation of a site than a reflection of it which was what the assignment sought for them to do. Dileep also said that they needed to pay closer attention to perspective in their compositions especially because many of them referred to the architectural sites and they needed precision and perfection as well as a reflective mode.

Dileep then pinpointed for example that many huts and shelters in Nikhil's work were not looking exactly how they would or should in Mandu or that nothing differentiated them from a hut in any other place. This raised the question of whether it was then meaningful to have such a composition with these generic huts at all, or if they needed to implore further to get a different kind of composition in order to better reflect the ethos of the place.

In Anantjit's composition he pointed out that the medium that was set for this assignment was set with a focus on printing in black and white which will become difficult if the wash technique is used.

Chandramohan pinpointed the issue in the page design with the example of Bhargav and Shubhangi and Niharika especially for space distribution. The weight of the work also needed to be managed thinking about the black and white also in terms of positive and negative space. He said that the compositions were appearing very weak and the space distribution of the page was not very thought out.

Taposhi reiterated that the work should not be drawn edge to edge because of the scanning process and printing margins which needed to be kept in mind. Atanu said that the students needed to use the page well and do work with pencil before inking. Chandramohan said the way different techniques are used in the same composition the overall affect in it will differ. Taposhi also spoke of the management of the space and composition. Dileep and Chandramohan said that the start was good and it was conceptually going well but that they needed to forget about landscape for a few days especially in the case of Bhargav and Niharika.

Dileep said that the *jharokas* that were made so far were all way too symmetrical and that there were many symmetrical and that there were many asymmetrical points in it. He also said that there are many people who are still in their comfort zones which they need to get out of. Dileep gave an analogy of French cuisine where food is not served very proportionately to how Indians eat and said that Niharika's work was like that in respect to the page.

Chandramohan asked why the students were still roaming and going to the sites now and told them to not go for long, infact only go during the morning and work in the afternoon and night in the guest house. Dileep told that Ayushi's drawing reminded him of a witches' house. Dileep said that the students should let the architecture grow on them and inspire them instead of working on site as sketches.

All the mentors also told the students that they wanted to speak to them personally and individually to each of the students regarding their work.

29 January

Offering individual comments on the works, in the next group session, the mentors reiterated how they all needed to work on their illustrations and concentrate on that aspect more than sketching outside. Dileep said that he missed the presence of the students in the guest house.

They also said that there are repetitive monuments and no one needs to be working on the site anymore at all. It was also pointed out that the workmanship which was excessive in some people's work was not needed. Niharika said that what would be the use of coming to this place then? Dileep also gave a detailed example of how he feels dismayed at the end of the day when he is paid a salary and he doesn't work he feels extremely guilty. He implored the students to think this way about the money they were getting from the funding bodies and strive to create a body of work in that manner.

Taposhi also insisted that they needed to work more on their illustrations especially pinpointing Anantjit's work. Atanu said that they were not enjoying to work which is why they were not able to work more and treating the work only as submissions.

Chandramohan said that they needed to keep it simple and that tomorrow they needed to submit ten total works for the submissions for which they are kept in a residential complex where the focus should be to produce more work.

On this note the session ended and the following day the students did not get out of the guest house at all.

30 January

Students gave their submissions on this day and were joined by all the mentors to look at their work produced so far. Atanu, Taposhi, Dileep and Chandramohan were joined by Shashi, Sushil, Kanak (from Eklavya team) and a visiting faculty Devlal Patidar for the process of final assessment.

The mentors appreciated the work that was submitted for the session and were also commended by the mentors for staying put at the guest house and striving to do ten illustrations as a part of the assignment. The quality and the quantity of the work was appreciated. Taposhi asked the students to think about the new compositions that they could make within the frame of Mandu. Atanu asked them to think about the town of Mandu without the reference of the historical monument at all times. An overall improvement was noted in everyone's works.

The mentors discussed with the students the need to finish their work in time (for those who hadn't submitted all ten) so that they could devote adequate time for the final assessment which was to take place the following day.

31 January

The day was to take a final assessment of the students by taking an individual account of their submissions. Ten submissions from their trip to Mandu and an illustration adapting a story or poem given on the previous day was to be discussed one by one with the mentors and the external faculty.

For instance, in their discussion with Ayushi, the mentors pointed out the mistakes in the proportions and accuracy of the human figures that she had depicted and asked her several questions about the visualization process in her work. Taposhi asked her why there was a huge gap in the formal depiction of the visuals. Dileep and Sushil told her to concentrate in the visualization as well as anatomy of the figures as much as she should have in the conceptualization of the work. Chandramohan and Atanu asked her to push her work through more practice. They also asked and debated why her work even though she was in an arts college doesn't match up to their expectations. In her response she spoke how she has progressed in comparison to when she came in but it wasn't accepted as such. Sushil told her that her progress was underwhelming and that they felt her attitude was insincere and that she should have been more consistent especially in the context of choosing between her college and her time in Riyaz. They also spoke of the medium of collage which she had worked with and expressed interest in. They felt that the medium had been experimented with by many artists and that she needed to have researched far more to search for the different artists who have worked with this medium exclusively. They asked her aspirations in future, and she told how she wants to finish her studies in BFA and then go for commercial arts/advertisement. She also told that her interest in cinema has increased because of her time in Riyaz.

With Amrita, they spoke of her illustration for the final assessment and asked her what the process was in making of the work. She told how she had worked in the night for the purpose of the assignment. Dileep asked her to ponder more on the idea of her work so as to get more flavor of the idea. They asked her several questions regarding the illustration and the different things that could have been added to the drawings. They spoke of the obvious mistakes that were visible in the work such as the proportions and logistics of the text in relation to the work. They asked her about the aspirations in future and she spoke how she was preparing to get into an art college and was inclined to work with photography. They asked her regarding the authors and writers she liked. They tried to gauge the understanding she had of the text and the specific nature of the things she had depicted. Dileep asked her to observe the specific plants and animals and their characteristics in order to be able to draw them from memory.

With Anantjit, they asked her what meaning she was getting from the text that she had received with regards to her final assessment. They asked her to explain why there was a depiction of the child from the lower strata of economy in a way that was not too obvious and was that a representational problem that she was struggling with or was it unintentional as such. Sushil asked her what according to her was added to the meaning of the text through the illustration that she had made. Taposhi asked her to reflect on the

different aspects of the text through her approach to the meanings that emerge beyond the literal.

With Avnish, they spoke of his details in the drawing. They asked him what poet had written the poem that he was given to illustrate and also asked him to research further the name of the poet each time a poem inspired them. He was asked what age group of children would appreciate the poem the most. Sushil asked the relevance of the composition and how the page was distributed in his illustration to further understand the importance of the work once it is printed. Atanu told him to concentrate on the aspects that lend smaller but interesting details. They found that he didn't know names of any illustrators which was expressed as a real pity.

In their conversation with Bandana, they spoke of the problems in how the understanding of the text was not deeply reflected in the work itself. Sushil asked about the different authors and works that she liked during the process of her being in Riyaaaz. She spoke of the artists whose works she has been seeing like Priya Kurien, Proiti Roy, Shubham Lakhera, Habib Ali, Madhuri Purandare. She spoke of her own problems especially in being able to translate the work properly through the illustrations. She felt that she needed to perfect the figure drawings in order to be able to get more confident about her work.

When they discussed Bhargav's work, they first discussed his understanding of the poem that was given to him. He explained in detail what he felt through the poem, and how he wanted to depict the same in a different way. Devilal Patidar appreciated the use of the metaphors in the poem and the work was able to portray the same very effectively. He was also asked to give feedback about the course, in which he expressed that there was from the side of mentors the deadlines should have been more strict which would make them more focused.

Next was Meenakshi who spoke of the page distribution that she had done and what she has imagined. In that interpretation she had made something which was quite opposite to the interpretation that the mentors were gauging from the poem. This led to all the different discussions regarding the poem itself. They also asked her to talk about her feedback for the course where she expressed that there was a gap between the criticism of students in class and the mentors and their teaching methods. Like many others before her, she was also asked to give some names of authors, books and artists that she had come to know because of Riyaaaz. They also asked her to think about the divide or preference between painting and illustration, where she spoke how her interest is very much in all the different fields and she will continue to do engage with it in the best way she can.

In their conversation with Shailesh they spoke of his interpretation of the poem and how he related with the same. In this way how he wanted to avoid the direct meaning and illustration and only hint at the meaning through the drawing. The mentors asked him to speak further on his view of Riyaaaz. He spoke how he felt that there was an overall growth he saw to his design sense through Riyaaaz and whether or not he does illustration per se in future he was committed to the working with the things like learning to read and write in Hindi as well as English he had learned in the duration of the course. He also suggested that there could be a direct and verbal feedback from children.

With Shubham, he spoke of the poem first and then the interpretation of it. The mentors gave him feedback regarding the same by further questioning the layered meanings within the poem. They took issue with the accuracy of the drawing of the animal which was to be portrayed. They felt that the work was not living up to the expectation and that there was no originality to the drawings because of the references that he just takes and copies without thinking.

In their conversation with Shubhangi they asked her to read out her poem and then also present her views regarding her interpretation of the same. They asked her about the visualisation of the poem in her illustration and if she had taken ample references before drawing it. In her own feedback she spoke of how she had been able to start reading Hindi literature more after being in Riyaz but felt that the process of illustrating has had only minor changes. She was also asked to reflect on her expectation from Riyaz and she spoke how perspective and figure drawing could have been introduced in a better manner. She spoke of the struggle she had faced while working through painting and the difference she found in the illustration process.

The mentors discussed with Vijendra why he had made an illustration in a way that the meaning of the poem was not becoming clearer but instead was becoming very literal and meaningless. He reflected on his future plans regarding illustration and painting and then express what he will chose to do and how he wanted to be in a professional space as an illustrator.

With Vrushali her illustration seemed to be falling flat as the mentors felt that the meaning which she was taking out of it was very literal. Vrushali said that she struggled with the meaning making of the texts for the illustrations, and there was in that way a problem for her to go a step beyond the given. She felt that the poem or text was something that gave her focus to work on any of her work as an illustrator, and that she could not at the moment see the difference between illustrating and painting.

Niharika spoke of the poem and the illustration with it and how she saw a stylistic possibility for a particular age group. The mentors felt that the illustration was not able to portray an element of fun. In her feedback she said that a more constructive criticism was needed, plus the flow from working to presentations and then again to a space for other things to be done.

1 February

The day was marked with a final feedback session of the students and taking their advice on how the final exhibition could be organized and what other activities or events be conducted as part of the exhibition. Main points to take back from this discussion were –

1. That there will be publishers present at the exhibition for discussion and interaction with the students.
2. The exhibition will also have ex students from the previous batch of Riyaz take part.

3. Professional and senior illustrators will be invited to speak and present about their work at the exhibition.
4. Two students from each batch would represent their batch and speak about their experience at Riyaaaz.
5. That there should be an audio visual component which gives a highlight of the journey of the course.
6. That the exhibition will happen for about two days in March.
7. That there is a proper portfolio by each student to showcase at the exhibition.
8. That the exhibition will be showcased in a way that it can be taken to different cities in the future.
9. Anantjeet suggested that in future it will be good if the course video can be taken to different schools etc. She also suggested that there can be a level of interaction which makes it more engaging.
10. Sagar said that creating more advertisements regarding the event on social media would be good. He also suggested talks for this purpose and small workshops in the exhibition itself.

And thus came to an end the journey of 2017 batch of Riyaaaz and the group departed from Mandu after the discussion.