
Riyaz Session | August 2017

Mentors - Sushil Shukla, Dileep Chinchalker, Chandramohan Kulkarni, Atanu Roy, Taposhi Ghoshal; Riyaz team Shivangi Singh, Tata Trusts – Swaha Sahoo, Room to Read Team – Manisha and Karthik

25 August 2017

The August session began with individual introductions (Names) of the students with interesting hand-gestures suggested by Swaha. Actual work began with the students speaking of their inspirations for their assignments of stories. Sagar told the class about the character that he created by tracing childhood memories and how he preferred the real-life memories to create the illustrations. Dileep asked him if the making of the storybook has made any impacted on him, in deciding the size and the shape of the illustrations. Sagar explained how he had made a dummy of the size and how he is influenced with creating a comic. He started thinking of the layouts which were coming to him as squares and since it is a wordless picture book. He spoke of the generic nature that the images were getting to and how he tried experimentation with the close up shots and different kinds of compositions.

Shubhangi spoke of the work she had done with children and how the conversations with them created an active ground for her to conceptualize a story. She spoke how she admires the square size of the book. Working in watercolor, she spoke of how she has created free compositions. She spoke of the different techniques like using dry brush, using flows and patches of color. Dileep stressed how one must enjoy the experience of making the book. She was suggested by Chandramohan to think about the issue of continuity of certain parts of the narrative. Anantjeet spoke of how she wanted to delve into fantasy world and how she was able to think of the text and the image in relation to one another.

Meenakshi expressed her struggles adapting an already available story for her storybook rather than illustrating one. It took her some time before she was certain that she wanted to work on a musical instrument using a poem on 'dholak'. She started with a composition which rhymes. How then the poem and the story and finally the illustrations. Dileep reminded the class on how there has been a writing component in the course so far with enough guidelines on how the story need not influence the process of illustration. That illustration needs to be of foremost importance and picture books can be without words as well. He added that since the 'Dholak' was the main character, she can try another treatment with thw dholak always in the foreground and changing appearance everytime. Sagar spoke of the visualization of the story he has made, and that the thumbnail sketches of the characters, which guided him well.

Niharika spoke of the problems she faced in illustration process, how she has used the double spread. Shubhangi remembered how the paper's texture and the use of the double spread led her to think of printing. She spoke of the paper she would like to print on to enhance the colors of the illustrations. Dileep spoke of the role of the designer and the printing process

which is rarely in designer's control. That you take part in the whole process of layout and printing to be more in charge of their own books. Swaha reminded that the whole class must participate in the peer sharing of the group.

Bandana spoke of the struggles that she is facing with illustrations especially in using the medium she wanted to use. How for one spread she had two or more options and how to make decisions on these issues. Then she spoke of the 'attractive' elements for children of a younger age. Dileep reminded the class of the most important aspect of any picture book - its illustrations and how the layout and format of the book comes right after the illustrations. That the illustrations themselves should be able to dictate the size or design of the books.

Rishi explained how he couldn't think of the text of a story and then shifted to a wordless book. That the pictures themselves led them to a narrative in his case and how he has made a rough draft without deciding the size of the dummy. Avnish expressed his struggle with finding the right words or the right context to set his story. Currently it was still on the level of initial and referential sketches and he needed to decide on how to take it forward from there. Shailesh spoke how he drew an inspiration from his childhood to think about *shor* (noise). At the moment he was struggling with avoiding literal or cliché images for the story. Bhargav said he struggled with the aspect of illustrations, and how to think of a story as either an incident or an experience? For example, while recounting an instance from childhood, how does one ensure that narrative comes through with a beginning and end?

Sushil stressed on making an imaginative take of the story without always going back to the viewpoints that we assume a child or a character like a fish would have. That some experience should be created from the happenings of the illustrations. Dileep suggested that the story can follow the image and be led by the visuals. Sushil suggested that there is no sequence to an array of images but each reader looks at the next page finding something different each to his own. Debarati spoke how she has illustrated a poem by Rabindranath Tagore after struggling with making an original story. She explained how she wanted to make landscapes and struggled with the same. Sushil pointed out how this famous poem was published by Rupa, and also asked if the poem needs to be taken further in this day and age.

Ayushi explained the struggle she faced with depicting the forms and animals in her illustrations. Manoj described how he is trying to replace the dog with tiger to create a comment on the extinction of the species. He spoke of the struggle he faced with his handling of the proportions.

Vrushali spoke of her own experience of weaving a story out of observations on the utensils in her house. She explained that the book is still in rough stages and its only in the stage of visualisation. Amruta told the class of her story, and how she was trying to implement illustrations by lending expressions to the character of a snail. Vijendra spoke of the story briefly and how he has designed character of frogs and at the moment struggling with the overall aspect of layout. Nikhil said that he had made the illustrations before thinking of the design and depict different time zones of the day. Explaining the story through his illustrations on a farmer and his child in the time of a drought. Sushil asked him to reflect on the experience that one must create through the story. That there is a structure that the illustrations have for now created but that they can't hold the story together and that the story also has its own

problems. Dileep asked him to think about the size of the illustrations and proportions of the human figures in the illustrations. This session was only to reflect on the process of making the story and picture book. Sushil and Chandramohan discussed how demonstration by every mentor for the whole class was an idea open to debate. Chandramohan insisted that there needs to be an emphasis in discussing individual projects.

After the tea break, Sushil asked the class to reflect on their previous feedback session to come to a consensus about going forward. Class spoke of their individual concerns where in Anantjeet spoke of the problems she was facing. She was unable to make the illustrations in anything but a realistic manner. Meenakshi agreed on this problem, and wanted to create stylistic illustrations.

Niharika spoke how she was interested in finding out the specific details which distinguish say a cartoon from an illustration. In this case, a demonstration would be helpful. Vrushali spoke that she needed help in thinking of style. Sushil explained with an example of Ghalib's poem that the form and the content influence each other. That there is meaning in the mere form that the poet employs, and that form itself differentiates it. Discussion was pointed towards the incomplete nature of the works, that the students were to come up with a plan of the book and Chandramohan asked them how they wished to remedy this issue. The session was marked with a discussion and planning of the workshops where it was decided that three picture books were to be discussed first to offer a breakdown of the technical aspects of illustrations and design of the book.

After lunch, there were some one on one discussions between the mentors and students. In the collective discussion, Meenakshi's work was taken up by Chandramohan and several aspects of the dummy that she had made were discussed to demonstrate his views on book making and illustrations as such. He asked her to focus on creating visuals in more ways than she had once made. That she should also be able to eliminate the elements which seemed unnecessary. While reading the poem, how can she ensure as an illustrator that the reader remains involved and engaged. That she can use the formats of close ups in certain illustrations while in others only suggestive elements can be placed, since at the moment her dummy had repetitive illustrations one after another. He also reminded the class about the use of different kinds of material suitable for one's illustrations and to keep in mind the color scheme in mind from the very beginning of the book.

Sagar's work was discussed and Chandramohan asked him to think about the different possibilities of the illustrations in the book. He urged Sagar to rethink the aspect of double spread in his work while also offering remarks on the aspects of composition. He asked him to think about a negative space in the book to create ample breathing space. He also reminded him to concentrate on contemporary modes of illustration to offer a newer perspective. Dileep also asked him to think of the design in the book, where in they can shift the weight of the illustration by spreading it across one and a half portion of the double spread. Shubhangi's work was then discussed and Chandramohan asked her to focus on making the first illustration which seemed to be missing from the story. When should the main element or the main incident of the story be introduced in the book needs to be re thought. That directly showing the major moment of the story would create no suspense. She

was asked to think about the element of continuity in one picture to the next. Chandramohan suggested that she do a little more experimentation.

Niharika's work was then discussed and she explained how she was finding it difficult to animate the sea waves in her illustrations. She had used black ink and water to create monotone compositions, and was suggested to use white color in addition to black ink. He also suggested her to go forward with the black and white compositions even though she insisted that she wanted to try watercolor. Chandramohan told her that she needed to create some details and density to create the result she needed. He appreciated the compositions strength and asked her to now think about the finishing touches.

Anantjeet's work was then discussed by Chandramohan and he suggested her to go forward with the drawings that she had made. He suggested that the style that was coming through was quite good, and original to her. He at this point offered her suggestions on the aspects of compositions. What she could do was to take out the elements that were not required and to shift certain existing elements (like opening a closed window) to create drama.

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Dileep at the very outset of his 'demonstration' clarified that in illustration there is nothing like this. The best he can show are techniques, as to how he approached illustration, could direct students seeking demo on the right path.

He explained the technique he had started with sketching himself. Being a self-taught artist, how he handled illustrations by asking his daughter and wife to pose for his early compositions. He started to elaborate the peculiarities of human figures. How with the help of the clothing and with the gestures that they are expressing, one can put a lot of character into making a human figure. He suggested that students must make an effort to improve the quality of sketches with anatomical study. He asked the students them to suggest the finer details like the fold of the ears, not necessarily always drawing these realistically.

He asked the students to observe and create an original line quality for this line decides their actions, character and every imaginable thing. He noted how for example he has observed that the trends in clothing like low waist jeans define a generation. Telling the students how he had used the simplest materials in his work and how the students need to focus on the work regardless of the availability of some materials. How there needs to be an effort to think of different materials to suit the work at hand. He presented various examples of his works offering his view into the modes of simplifying human figures whilst presenting the different concepts.

In the presentation he laid emphasis on developing a single character then on the play between more than two elements, by focusing on the relationship between two elements of the composition. For example, how two or more human figures in an illustration interact with each other. Or of the inanimate objects which can create a tension between the elements

which are otherwise stationary. He also remarked how it is important that the students revisit their old works to think of their new works.

The main points that he laid out in summation were –

1. Sketching is very important, and that one finds many things with the observations that one engages with when sketching their surrounding environments
2. Observation – the different faculties of sight, touch, smell, sound, taste can be activated through observation. That sketching enhances one's observation.
3. Sketching is also important to think of one's own line quality and with more the sketches one does, the more likely they are to ascertain the true nature of one's lines
4. That sketching also facilitates memory and creates many references for one's later illustrations
5. That drawing from memory and the unique quality of line creates a unique style of the illustration where in one can focus on the peculiar aspects of the observed scenes
6. That style is not created through references of photographs or sketches but the continual act of sketching does create one's own technique that can then aid one to style.

After the presentation discussion resumed on the students' works for their picture books. Starting with Bharghav, who spoke about his dummy and the problems he was facing in making the story for his book. He spoke how he wanted to work with double spread illustrations, and think about the story as he made the illustrations. In this context he wanted to experiment with different techniques in each double spread. Chandramohan pointed out his discomfort with the use of frames in the double spread asking Bharghav to think about the dummy as a book with a finality. He asked Bharghav to think of mediums to establish which medium suits the book according to him the best. Bharghav spoke how he was trying to create suggestive details to offer the environment. Rishi admired the details and technical aspects of Bharghav's illustrations. Speaking of the details of the techniques that he had employed for the most part, Chandramohan pointed out the aspects that Bharghav had made, and how to think of the more affective mediums and techniques when many were available to him.

Nikhil expressed how he was facing problems with the ideas of double spreads and Chandramohan spoke to him about the particularity of the continuity in the two pages which marks the double spread. Chandramohan advised him to think of his own illustration without having to follow anyone else's style. That he re think about the proportions more clearly while trying to employ distortion in his illustrations. Chandramohan stressed on the strength of the medium of acrylic and how to use the medium with how it is an opaque medium unlike the watercolor especially in the context of Nikhil's works.

Manoj spoke of the reference point in the first illustration, and that he used several photos for some elements. To this it was pointed out that the illustrations which had been created from memory were more impressive and that he needed to stretch it further. That the illustrations and the book were still on the initial stages and it should be implored whether or

not they can be done in color or black and white. Chandramohan suggested a demonstration to try out the color for the composition, and find out which composition would be more suitable. Rishi spoke of his story with the sixteen frames and that he was struggling to keep it within sixteen pages of a story. Rishi's storyline was generally appreciated, and Chandramohan asked him to finalize and strengthen it further. Vijendra spoke of the story of two frogs and Chandramohan asked him to think about the finalizing the work, and how one can color it as well.

Bandana's work was then discussed and she spoke of the problems she was facing in the making as well as procuring of the material for her work. At the moment, she only had few illustrations, to which she was suggested to make a dummy with frames and sketches. Discussion was also done on the works submitted by Shailesh, to which it was suggested that more details were needed. Shubham's story was then presented and Chandramohan asserted that he needed to now think about the color compositions. He appreciated the drawings and imaginative quality of the work. He asked Shubham to fill in the gaps to make sure the story continues from one page to another. And to think about the textual element that can bind the elements together. Next Ayushi's work was viewed, where Chandramohan suggested she rethink her style of the illustration and also reorganize the layout further from its present initial stage.

The discussion then moved to when the class decide it can submit a final version of their books. This was discussed before finally agreeing to submit this assignment in the next session so as to give the students some time to be able to complete the assignment. Chandramohan stressed on how these assignments would need to be submitted not any later than that date. Later in the day students were handed the stories from Room to Read and were to work on their illustrations for a picture book. Dileep explained the process by which the text was being given to the students and asked them to submit the works day after.

After a day of discussions and starting work on the fresh assignments, a brief presentation by Dileep was given on cartoons and cartoonists in India that he admired. He gave examples of the techniques which characterized a cartoon such as the use of humor, finding a physical characteristic to succinctly exaggerate and a context to comment on (such as political cartoons).

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The day was devoted to personal discussions between the students and the mentors. Students worked on their illustrations and their story books all through the day. They were given personal demonstrations on their individual works by the mentors.

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Sushil introduced consultants from the publishers Room to Read, an NGO based in Delhi who had come to take a look at the first set of illustrations that the students had made since they were given the assignment on the previous day.

Sushil explained to the team of two consultants, Karthik and Manisha what the vision of Riyaaz to the visitors. That the fundamentals of drawing, perspective were explored as well as an emphasis was laid on the meaning of understanding the text. He expressed this was a good way to explore the meaning of the texts that were given.

Students then briefly introduced themselves to Karthik and Manisha. Sushil invited the guests to speak more about the vision of Room to Read and in what way they were looking at children books. Manisha spoke about the limitations of publishing including costs especially in the context of printing of the books and how that lends them their choices.

When working for others, how illustrators need to think about why the client is asking for what they are asking. Within this context, how should the artist respond and make the work is of utmost importance. Students spoke of their motivations to join Riyaaz and how the institute has helped and guided them.

Manisha mentioned how a children book made by a publishing house which focuses on literature will necessarily be different from one made by an NGO with specific audiences in mind. Karthik introduced the organization, Room to Read, giving details on the founder's goals to make books for children. The organization currently focusses on the early readers and wish to make children books with emphasis on pictures.

For example, they stressed that they have a target audience of rural backgrounds and ask the students to focus on such treatment for that reason. Vrushali enquired how these books were being differentiated from classroom textbooks in the classroom context especially. Karthik supplemented that literature was a priority in their book and also distinguished these books from textbooks through the kind of illustrations they offered.

For the rest of the day, students went on to meet the duo with their illustrations individually. This process along with their assignments kept them occupied for the most part of the day. At the end of the day, five students were shortlisted for the four stories that Room to Read was going to make books with. These students were given the assignment of working on storyboards for these books while the remaining students were given the assignments of illustrating poem cards and posters.

In the evening, the group went to Bandrabhan for sightseeing and sketching.

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Five students continued with their one on one discussions with the Karthik and Manisha from Room to Read so as to speak about their storyboards, while all others worked on their posters

and poem cards. After the students were selected for the four picture books, the duo had a conversation with the class about their selection procedure for the picture books.

Manisha started off with her own limitations as a publisher, with respect to understanding art in its visual form. She said that this limitation or expectations may extend to many publishers even when students venture into making illustrations for other publishers. Taking this into account, reading a text superficially does not lend itself to interesting layouts visually.

While engaging with a text, she advised the students to offer deeper interpretations without revealing the crucial elements in pictures. She raised the issue of certain illustrations reminding her of some other illustrations which doesn't let a novel element come to the fore. Karthik advised the students to think about the element of continuity in the pictures as well as repeating some feedback shared by Manisha.

Sushil asked the students to share their feedback on the stories and this process with the duo. Niharika raised the problem with the text guidelines given with the stories, which created definite boundaries of creating an illustration, and posing as creative constraints for the illustrators. The duo agreed with this, and responded that this was done for circulation to some artists and merely to indicate some meaning.

They encouraged the students to offer their own interpretations and not to get caught up with these textual indications in future.

30 August 2017

Taposhi started the day with a presentation on the technique of using 'collage' used by illustrators and artists and how their work in turn inspired her to use this medium. Since the students were in the process of making their very own picture books, she wanted to stress on the aspect of choosing mediums for their books. Admiring the very nature of collage, she expressed how the way collage is made with freedom and playfulness gives a chance to make and create things. Listing the different kinds of collage like paper collage, print collage (of material from newspapers/books/magazines), photo collage (from photographs).

She started with an introduction to the work and techniques used by Eric Carle whose work uses bold forms by using paper collage. She also mentioned Indian artist Sigrun Srivastav whose work she admired. The technique she noted forces the artist to simplify the form without wondering about style and realism. The white background of his compositions created for his colorful collages to stand out. His book, 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' published in 1969 makes for one of the most iconic reads in children books of all time. Next she showed illustrations from 'Mister Seahorse' which uses collage to make detailed compositions. She explained the colored papers like tissue papers, became something he used to collect and paint further; these papers became his palette itself. How he made a book influenced by artist Franc Mark, 'The artist who painted a blue horse' to think about the possibilities of using color in ways beyond the representational or as seen within the frame of 'realism'.

Next she shared one of his statements to think about simplification as a process in children books -

“If you are a novelist, I think you start out with a 20 words idea and you work at it and wind up with a 20000 words novel. I start out with 20000 words and reduce it to 20”

After this she spoke of the artist Henri Matisse who was considered the most important artist of the Fauvist movement. Matisse who had become wheelchair bound, found himself wanting to explore an art form where he could sit and make art. This started with cutting paper to make cutouts later becoming the art of collage. She noted that the art practice of Matisse had a definite impact on the artwork of Eric Carle. She then showed her own work, which she had made (after being given a pamphlet given by her editor) influenced by the collage art of Matisse.

Taposhi presented her own picture books with an intention to speak about the ways she had used the technique. The whole presentation was to connect the class with various ways of creating their own illustrations. Showing the illustrations from ‘Mud-baby’ she explained how she used different techniques of tearing, folding and cutting to make collages all creating different effects overall. How she used different materials like photographs from a magazine, handmade paper she had collected on her travels, cloth. Sharing the overall layout of the book, she asked the students to focus on aspects of font, layout of title covers along with the front and back cover very cautiously. She used objects to print smaller details like water bubbles, textured paper with overlaid drawings and paintings. How while making the work many decisions are made and the medium allows for a far more flexible process. That drawing is still needed even when making collage art, is something she stressed on. In fact, letting go of details while making a collage is not necessarily the way to go, wherein she listed the examples of paying special attention to representing local flowers like ‘dhutro’ in her illustrations. Talking about the close up of the figure of ‘Parvati’ in the book, she notes how the aspect of layout is important in order to create suspense and avoid repetition. To create dramatic pictures, one can use color in a subdued way after bold colors, similarly one can transition between the softness and the solidity of paper forms. She shed light on the way she pastes the paper, making sure some cuts of certain paper forms are visible while also practicing the layout of the illustration in the process.

Speaking about ‘The Story of Hanuman’, she details how in this book, she employed the medium of collage to re-invent the age old mythological story of Hanuman. How using this medium, she made many different kinds of illustrations in this particular book sometimes using painting as well. How she used contrast between one double spread to the next to offer drama. The book has components of a game/puzzle which she decided must have a different treatment whenever such a double spread appeared. Overall, the technique created for her a possibility to experiment and playfully treat the subject matter at hand while selecting a particular paper for the particular illustration.

The class resumed their individual work, while in the evening, Dileep showed the class a presentation of photographs clicked by Chandramohan and himself. He urged the students

to routinely share the images that they were clicking with him to collectively look at the photographs.

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Dileep addressed the class on the final day with thoughts and reflections on the session with the students. He expressed that the overall standard and the quantity of the students' works was quite good. He urged that even though the structure of the session has changed to students working on their material around the campus, they must come together at some time collectively as a group. He asked the students to keep a record of all the illustrations that the students have made so far with the text that they needed to illustrate – to remember the number of illustrations that they make through the course of the year for commercial projects or otherwise. Talking about sizes, he urged the students to think about the layout and design with guidelines on margins. Then he asked the students to suggest movies for collective viewing as well as make it a point to think outside the frame of popular cinema to be viewed together. Saying that the students have spent a lot of time in understanding the text, he expressed concern that there are still some gaps in this area came out from the reflections shared by Room to Read team. He asked the students to share their ideas on visualizing two stories which he then read out. Finally, he took a stock on who all have what work in the class and decided to give out stories/poems for those who didn't have it. Sagar expressed that three to four assignments with individual demonstrations and discussions was a good structure to follow.

Next Chandramohan addressed the students, reflecting on the session and complimenting the students' works. He first asked the students to speak about their discussions with Room to Read team. Students spoke about their experience of negotiating with publishers. Some expressed discomfort with the way the duo from Room to Read, had given directions with the text for illustration, for illustrators. Chandramohan asked the students to in the future, speak about these issues right when the publishers are present. Some students said that the experience was good to think about future meetings and negotiations with publishers. Taposhi joined in the discussion, calling on the students to think about the negotiations and openly discussing their issues with the publishers.

Atanu asked the students to share the terms and conditions of the contract with the rest of the class. Debarati explained the process that they were told to follow – starting with sending over initial sketches and color demos after which the illustrators can ask for contract and advance. The full lump sum amount will be paid to the artists after they have sent their original artworks and illustrations are submitted. Taposhi asked the students to think of making a dummy before finalizing the technique or medium of the book. That there is need to create a continuity between the pages. Finally, she asked the students to think about the multiple possibilities of illustrations, and making dialogue with the publishers. To re do the work on behest of publishers is required many times and that compromising with the needs of the publishers. That in the phase of just starting out, the illustrators can and must think of professional compromises. Taposhi expressed concern over original artworks being taken and

the copyrights of the artist's works and Chandramohan and Dileep assured the students that the mentors will be involved with the process with the signing of the contracts.

The rest of the day went in students working on their pending assignments and saying goodbye until the next time.