Season as School

Art1st Artist Educator Grant 2024



With Jeevan Shiksha Pahal,
Muskaan Bhopal

Grantee: Dhrubajit Sarma
In collaboration with Art1st

Staying alive for every species requires livable Collaboration. Collaboration means working across difference, which leads to contamination. Without collaboration, we all die

_The Mushroom at the End of the World

Introduction - Season/Unseason (A brief overview on my current practice)

My current practice explores the transforming landscape ecology of the Rani Forest Division by tracing subtle and sometimes startling **shifts in seasonality**. These disruptions—or the absence of familiar seasonal patterns—are reshaping local ecology, agrarian livelihoods, and non-human behaviors. Building on the Granary project, initiated by Anga Art Collective in 2022 to create a repository of eco-rural urgencies, my work weaves together observational drawings, oral histories, folk myths and songs, and ambient sounds to build a multisensory narrative that reflects altered temporalities across the region's ecological and cultural landscapes.

From this context, the idea of Season School emerged as a response to this historic moment of shifting relationships between nature, humans, and seasons. By placing the season at its core, it reimagines how art can adapt to and dialogue with the changing rhythms of seasonality.







আৱতৰীয়া বতাহ

(Awotoriya Botah, 2024)
Sharjah Biennale 16

The title — drawn from Assamese, where *আৱতৰীয়া* (*Awotoriya*) means “unseasonal” and *বতাহ* (Botah) means “winds” — evokes a poetics of temporal dislocation. It reflects the increasingly erratic rhythms of nature under the pressures of extractive economies, colonial legacies, and industrialized development. These “unseasonal winds” are both literal and metaphorical: agents of climate disruption but also carriers of ancestral memory. The work is conceived as a living archive — a dense assemblage of audio-visuals, found and manipulated objects, ephemeral architecture, bamboo crafts, stitched and knotted textiles, harvest residues, digital interventions, and printed matter.





The Full Moon - Still from the two channel animated video

Deep in the Sal forest, a full moon rises from the lake’s dark surface, scattering rice seeds salvaged from a dead elephant’s stomach across trampled fields. Farmers hold their breath, waiting.

Context

Pedagogical Approach

kNOw school
an initiative by Anga Art Collective
2020 and ongoing

We have started kNOw school as a pedagogical initiative in 2020. It is a nomadic, post-disciplinary learning space where the core principle is to nurture empathy – pedagogy of Care, as we call it. Here, instead of a strict methodology, we maintain **fluid approaches** that engage with the spatial and temporal dimensions of a place. As we navigate through different landscapes, and devise tools and procedures of **mutual learning**, we envision egalitarian learning environments to think about the **relationships between aesthetics, pedagogy, and ways of life**. In our post-disciplinary approach, we combine certain learnings from various disciplines with other ways of learning circulating among communities.



Methodology -

Site Exploration

Collective Reading

Collaboration

The course begins by fostering an immersive engagement with the surroundings of Muskaan School. Through the process of slow walking, students explore the flora and fauna along Menduri Road, reading the site with both drawing and writing. Gradually, this exercise developed into foraging, as students gathered edible and medicinal plants and introduced them to us.

This activity offered an opportunity to see the landscape through the perspectives of students from the Pardhi, Ojha Gond, and Raj Gond communities. It also helped us to articulate and locate the core idea of the course



During site exploration at Menduri Road, Bhopal







During site exploration at Menduri Road, Bhopal

Objectives -

Place-Based Learning

Bridging Pedagogy, Culture, and Ecology

To create a collaborative learning environment

To use food and daily life as mediums to reimagine the school as a space of belonging, dialogue, and transformation grounded in the lived realities of local communities.

To enable participants, particularly women teachers, to develop confidence and ownership in curating and presenting collective creative work through exhibitions and community engagement.

To advance a post-disciplinary art education model that values embodied, relational, and place-based learning, bridging pedagogy, culture, and ecology.



A recipe book on display during the Zayka Ka Safar exhibition



Students exploring the uses of various medicinal plants



An elderly person with a Khandara at Rajiv Nagar



Mapping session back at school

Exploring the idea of indigenous knowledge, we organized a field visit to Ganganagar and Rajiv Nagar, where most of the students reside. During this visit, students collected information on medicinal plants, dietary traditions, and local material practices. By bringing together these different forms of knowledge through a mapping session, we arrived at the idea of creating a Khandara book—a collective resource to document and share local wisdom

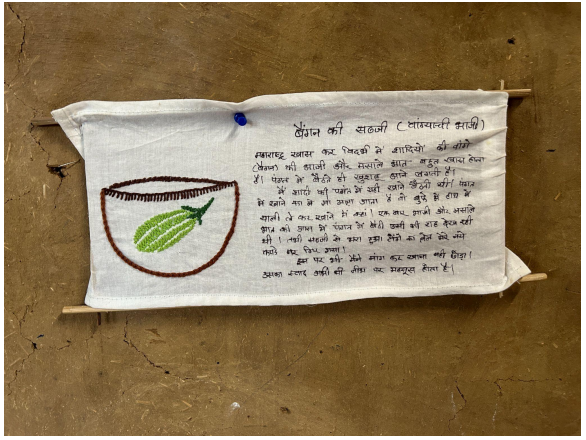
Art in Everyday - Memories Transforming into Material

How do we understand art beyond established norms and disciplinary boundaries?

Exploring Course Theme and Lesson Plan

A group of women teachers explored artistic activities in everyday life, such as cooking, decorating, embroidery, and gardening. These exercises encouraged them to reflect on their cultural practices and translate them into creative outputs like poetry, notes, and artwork. This exercise leads them to designing lesson plan that incorporate their experiences of transforming memory into material (artworks).







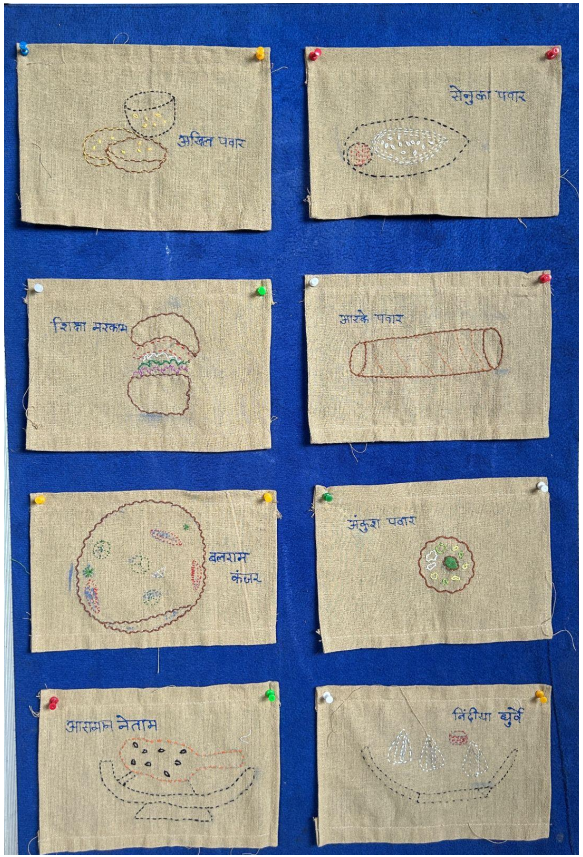
Artwork developed by Rekha ji, Megha ji and Lata ji during material exploration exercise session.



Megha ji developed a lesson plan where she integrates her material exploration exercise experience of transforming a food related memory into an embroidery work.







Art in Everyday

Site Specificity in the general classroom learning

Sharing solidarity

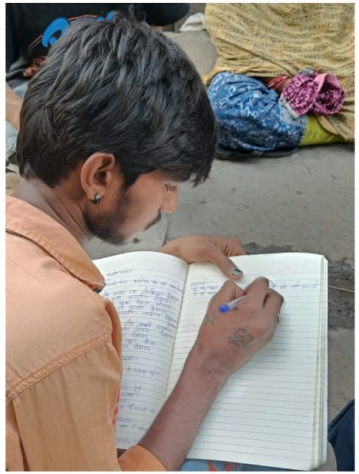
Building commoning

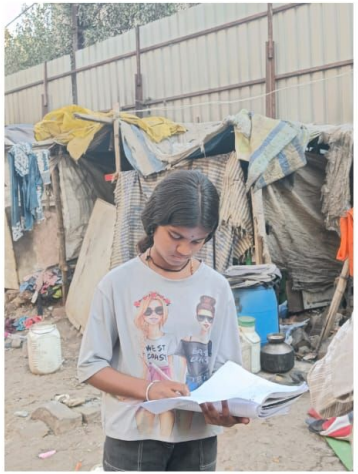
Lata Ji devised a lesson plan that investigates non-vegetarian food habits in marginalized communities. To research this theme, she visited two bastis, Ganga Nagar and Gautam Nagar, with a group of students. The students interviewed community members and documented various food practices, the benefits of consuming animal meat, and how these practices have significantly changed in recent times. They discovered that people living in the basti often eat chicken organs and fish heads, which are typically considered waste.

Lata ji's transform the classroom activity to a research based project using artistic inquiry as a mediation. Her performative gesture of having food with the community members at the Basti also teaches us that art is not something limited to ideas. It also opens up a space to share solidarity and build commoning and question/critique the established beliefs and norms.



Students in conversation with the resident of Ganganagar during field research





Students at Gautam nagar during the field research



Cooking Chatan for the whole group



Paper mache sculpture develop by the students during the class exercise



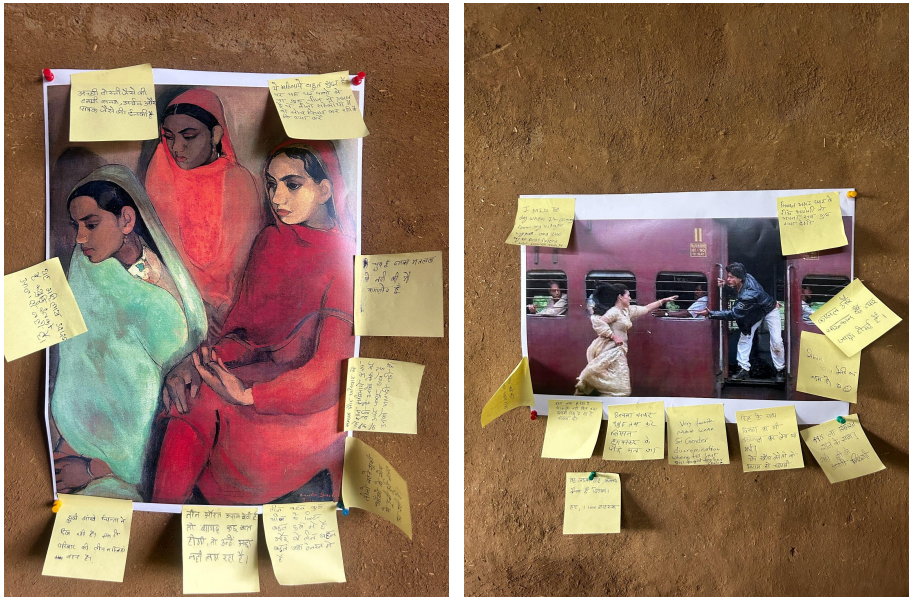


Paper mache sculpture develop by the students during the class exercise

Everyday in Art - Art Appreciation Session

In Amrita Sher-Gil's painting, the teachers noted that all the figures appear to be in a **captive situation**, as if someone has asked them a question and they are unable to respond. Lata ji elaborated on the intricate details, pointing out the **cast shadows** of the figures, which suggest the scene takes place at night, with a **lamp** in front creating sharp shadows on the wall. Megha ji observed that the figures wear **printed fabrics**, adding further detail to the artwork.

This exercise encouraged the teachers to research the lives and art of other artists such as Frida Kahlo, Vikrant Bhise, and more, broadening their understanding and appreciation of artistic expression and narrative.



Participatory art appreciation section during the final exhibition

“Zayka ka Safar” an Exhibition of artworks, stories, poems, recipes books, food and performances

Finally the pedagogical framework culminated in the two-day exhibition “Zayka ka Safar”, which showcased artworks, stories, poems, recipes, and performances developed over the year. Women teachers led the spatial design of the exhibition, returning to the initial idea of learning through everydayness. Their layout reflected rhythms of cooking, singing, crafting, and storytelling—turning exhibition-making itself into a participatory act of meaning and ownership.

The exhibition presents layered narratives that span a broad spectrum of practices and experiences. It reflects the cultural and culinary knowledge of the Pardhi, Ojha Gond, and Raaj Gond communities—capturing their dietary habits, understanding of medicinal plants, craft traditions, and material culture etc.



Artwork and lesson plan on display



Student foraging Karmata plant



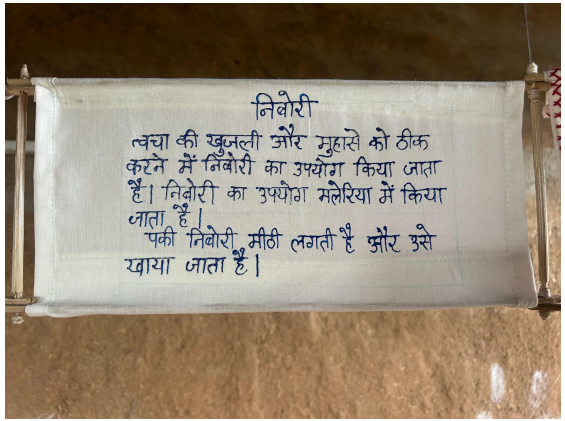
Preparation for the display



Installation process

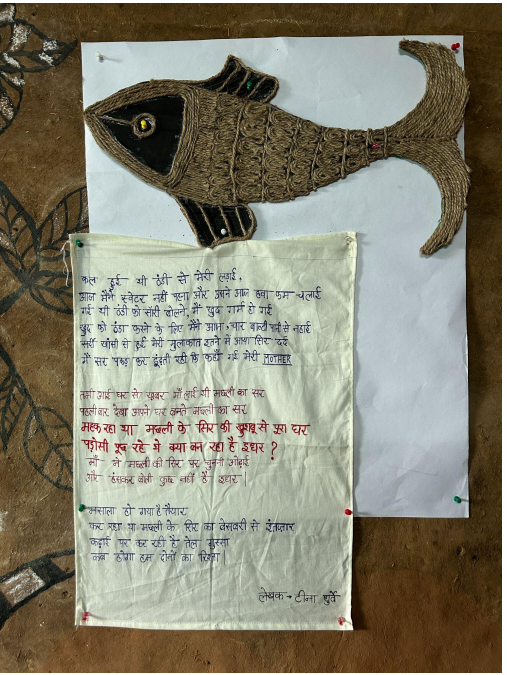








Khandara book on display



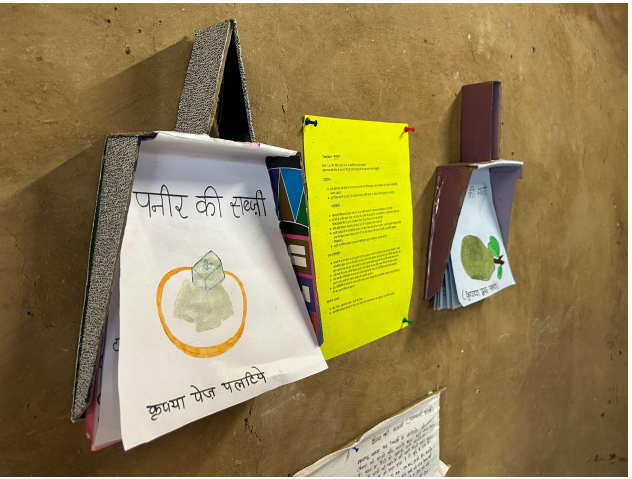
Display of artwork and poem



Various local residents including the parents of the students visited the exhibition



An eco printing station at the exhibition

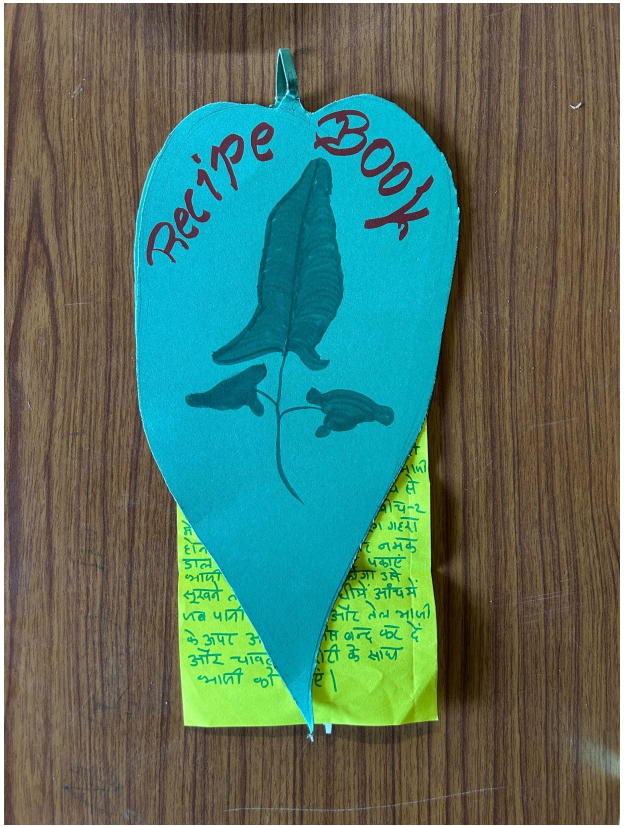






Recipe books







Recipe books



Community kitchen



Open mic session

Conclusion

The Season School evolved through a collective process, where facilitators, teachers, and students came together, shared ideas, and shaped the experience collaboratively. The overall outcome of the course stands as a testament to what becomes possible when art education grows out of everyday practices, relationships, and shared creativity.

Thank you!

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