

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
CELEBRATING EDUCATION FOR ARTISANS IN INDIA

Judy Frater, Founder Director Emeritus of Somaiya Kala Vidya with Adil Khatri, a bandhani artist, and Pachan Siju, a weaver, both graduates of the design program will discuss their respective experiences as director and students, of traditional artisans learning design. The talk will begin with their understanding of traditions and the value of cultural heritage (why craft traditions in the first place?) The three will then discuss the role of markets and innovation, and the impacts and implications of formal design education.

Copies of the book, and the artisan participants' exclusively designed collections of scarves, shawls and kaftans in cotton, silk and wool will be available for appreciation and sale.

Artisans by Design chronicles the journey of developing the first design school for artisans in India and fifteen years of artisans learning design. Spanning 50 years, the story is told in vignettes of artisans who were part of the journey, intertwined with the author's story. Through this dialogue, the reader experiences what happened, how and why, and what its impact has been on traditional artisans in the contemporary world.

A rare, intimate portrayal of artisans, the book offers personal connections to people usually glimpsed from a distance and insights into tradition, craft, and the creativity of traditional artisans. It provides textile aficionados and people concerned with sustainability an authentic, fresh approach to development, illuminates sustainability as cultural heritage and presents development as human centered.

The book will be published with Schiffer Publishing LTD on October 28, 2024.

Ashoka Fellow Judy Frater lived with artisans of Kutch for

three decades, where she founded Kala Raksha Trust and Museum, Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya, the first design school for artisans, and reinvented the school as Somaiya Kala Vidya. She has been honored with the Sir Misha Black Medal for Design Education, the Crafts Council of India Kamla award, the Designers of India Design Guru Award and more. Previously Associate Curator at The Textile Museum, author of *Threads of Identity: Embroidery and Adornment of the Nomadic Rabaris*, and *The Art of the Dyer in Kutch*, she has written and lectured extensively on craft, and has an over 8,000 following. She now lives in Santa Fe.

Adil Mustak Khatri

Adil revived his family tradition. After twelfth grade, he learned bandhani, then took the KRV design course to learn more. He pushed as many boundaries as he could, creating airy resort wear highly textured with bandhani and shibori. “I lost mental limitations,” he said. “Now I think I can do anything in bandhani.”

Winning awards for Best Collection, Best Presentation, and Best Student, Adil signed up for the pilot SKV graduate course in Business and Management. He created Nilak, envisioning it as a global brand. “The course taught me that ethics is as important as good quality work,” he recalls.

Adil married his classmate Zakiya, and they started a joint business, beginning an ever-evolving collection inspired by Islamic architecture. Adil learned natural dyeing and continues to experiment with natural fabrics. Though Kutch has hundreds of bandhani artists, and bandhani is ever-present in markets, Adil and Zakiya’s work is memorable.

Adil won the 2015 Gujarat State Award for Excellence in craft, and in 2018 the Crafts Council of India created the Kamala Award for Young Artisans in his honour. He received the World Crafts Council seal of excellence, and in 2020 and 2022 was juried into the highly competitive International Folk Art Market| Santa Fe. In 2021, Adil won the first AIACA NextGen Entrepreneur award. In 2022 he traveled to Oaxaca to conduct workshops through the Museo Textil de Oaxaca. In 2023, he participated in an artisan exchange with Denmark

and traveled to Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

An avid photographer, Adil adeptly translates concepts to contemporary designs. But he cares deeply about his tradition.

Outraged at screen printed copies of bandhani and dubious about mass production, he says artisans must do what machines can't: quick innovation, with excellent skill.

A renowned weaver, Pachan's father told his sons weaving had no future. When he passed, Pachan had to weave. Then, seeking better income, he worked the night shift at a mining factory.

The pollution affected him, so he returned to weaving.

Meanwhile his brother Puroshottam studied design at KRV, and the three brothers began their own business. Pachan knew weaving but had little exposure. In 2015 Puroshottam sent him to SKV. In one design class, he learned that education did not mean reading and writing. "This is a course for me!" he declared. He graduated with the award for Most Marketable Collection. Designer Ritu Kumar showed his collection at Rajasthan Heritage week.

"Before, I thought design was a fixed notion," Pachan reflected. "Now I am able to play! More than livelihood, weaving is art, a source of respect, and a thread that links me and my brothers."

He designed a logo **Three Threads**, symbolizing warp, weft and extra weft-- and the three brothers, now their brand.

In 2018, Pachan mentored women weavers in Kumaon. "We had to really grasp what we knew," he said. He realized that teaching was building creativity and confidence. On return, he designed and wove two saris inspired by the pinecones he had seen. More impressive, he wove a collection of one-of-a-kind saris. He later mentored women artisans in Ladakh and participated in a co-design project with Oaxacan artisans.

Pachan Premji Siju

Pachan's next collections using intricate extra weft figures to express his concern with climate change, the imagination in clouds and the wisdom of his mother were juried into the International Folk Art Market 2020, 2022 and 2023.

In 2022 he traveled to Oaxaca to conduct workshops

through the Museo Textil de Oaxaca, and in 2023 he attended IFAM in Santa Fe.

“I have woven all my life,” he said. “What I have done with my weaving is what is important.”