

April 2009



Aaghaaz
Inspiring
CHANGE

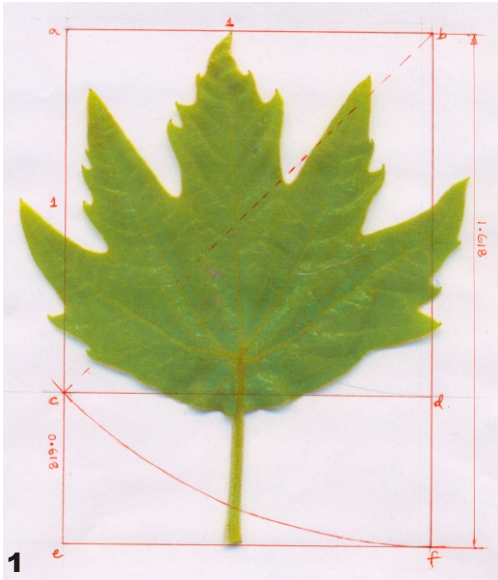
Have you really 'looked' at an old Kashmiri Jamavar Shawl?

The basic design module for craft managers & entrepreneurs has just concluded and it felt somehow right to reflect and capture some of my experiences and thoughts on it before it slips from memory.

While I have no doubt about just how critical having an orientation to visual form and perception is for professionals involved in various stages of planning new products, marketing, merchandising, the participants themselves seem to want instant solutions to what is a good form and what gives a 'good look' and so on.

The process of really 'seeing' and allowing for a dialogue between oneself and with the visual arrangement in front to take place seems to presume some kind of introduction to different aspects of visual form like shapes, volume, proportion and geometry, colour interaction. Most of all, it means developing an awareness of the continuous process of perception and interpretation within ourselves. Most students of visual form & perception either do not have the patience to sit through all the basics and do the prescribed exercises in a spirit of enquiry or are unable to relate it to real life application in their immediate and challenging roles and hence lose interest.

The recently concluded module has been a revealing experience for me, as their teacher. As we focused with half closed eyes on series of B&W compositions to show rhythm, harmony, movement and contrast, the black lines on the paper clearly appeared to be in motion before coming to rest on one side. The despair of the Kashmir winter and the hope that erupts with spring suddenly had a visual



logic. Small squares of red appeared bigger than they were and definitively small when bound by black on all sides. We were seeing faint traces of colors where we knew we have not added any! Mind does play tricks on us all the time...we experienced that and can prove it, too. Cushions can be made to look bigger than they really are and even the defects can be hidden! We know how. It was real fun.

The feeling of amazement that leaves on the stem were actually following a mathematical sequence of fibonacci, the petals of a local flower were following the mundane looking construction of a golden spiral on a cartridge sheet was very real. For students in Kashmir, nature has always been the teacher and will continue to be so in the future.

While there was an intellectual appreciation for the perfection of the Golden Proportion, also called the Divine Proportion by the Greeks, and the convenience offered by the Mean Proportions (A1, A2, A3 and A4 paper sizes) to the modern man, there was equally a sense that we do not know enough about the visual principles governing the design of our own homes, streets, mosques and *ziarrats* or the complex designs used in the well known Kashmir shawls. With initial exercises, we find that the *chinar* leaf fits perfectly into a square and into a golden rectangle, if taken together with its *danda*; that a floral *topi* is added by the artisan to visually balance the asymmetrical flower motif, *treburg* in sozni embroidery. And, that the *badaam Buta* or the paisley motif that has fascinated art appreciators world over for centuries follows a proportion of 1:2.4, 2.5, 2.6 ratio consistently in the classic period and 1:3, 1:3.1... during the later Sikh- Dogra period.

While the students were quick to conclude that Kashmir designs preferred these proportions, based on these miniscule efforts spread over a few hours, I can only say that it shows the huge lacunae in our understanding of the finer aspects of the Kashmir *badaam* or the shawls themselves for that matter.

Much of the European obsession for these shawls in the 1840's was to do with its visual character; and not because it took an artisan 10yrs to weave. The complex overlapping of layers created a visual illusion of unending space that also allowed many sub-themes to coexist simultaneously in the same shawl design and still be differentiated from each other in a totally visual manner. The superimposition of a million motifs within a defined space and having a definite visual grammar into artistic compositions that defied the visualization skills of the painters and designers at that time is what is special about these shawls. Further, all this was presented in a woven fabric of gossamer fine yarn and most lustrous texture! We can reproduce some of these designs with digital graphic applications available to us today and study how they have been put together.

It underlines the need for designers to focus our efforts to study Indian traditional material culture from a view to understand the basic elements and their arrangements to create an Indian or regional visual language research base to develop these indigenous cultural idioms without blind application of western notions of beauty and aesthetics.

There is now, at least, a vast directory of craft skills and products documented from all over the country. This information is accessible to research-



1. A chinar leaf fits into a square and follows a perfect Golden proportion when taken together with its stem. The ratio of ab:bf is 1: 1.618

2. A tapestry woven Kashmir *Kani shawl* from the Sikh period. SPS museum, Srinagar

THINK A WHILE

CREATING A MIND-MAP

Now we know the basics, how can we apply these to passing exams? The answer is "It's easy when you know how". Mind Maps can be used for both essay, and numerical style questions, the basics are the same for both and you can adapt them to suit your needs. Firstly, read the examination paper fully and choose the examination paper fully and choose the questions you wish to answer. Do not change your mind half way through the exam as this wastes valuable time and marks.

You should prepare Mind Maps showing any thoughts that come to mind on reading the question. You may not use these thoughts in the answer itself, but they may help trigger more memories, which in turn will help you achieve top marks! You should then decide in which order you will answer the questions, and how much time you can allow for each answer.

Create a Mind Map to act as the skeleton of your answer. NB please remember to mark your Mind Maps as notes, these alone will not gain you marks, but will show that you have thought about your answer carefully and organized your thoughts in an effective manner.

The main image should depict the question, and how you intend to introduce your answer. Each of the main branches will provide sub-heading (you should be able to write at least a few paragraphs for each branch), which will form the main body of the answer. The leaves should give strong justifications for your answer jot down any quotes, theoretical models or examples to use as a back-up to the points you wish to make. Finally, you should write a brief conclusion, drawing on all the points you have used throughout the answer, to justify your final comments.

*Rouf Wadera,
Craft Development Institute*

References: www.mind-map.com
www.braindance.com

ers interested in the origin and evolution of the visual language used in them as well as its perceptual and emotive qualities. Several museums within the country and abroad have actual pieces and detailed catalogues, too. Some attempts already made in understanding regional architectural style & spatial language may be a good starting point. I believe this route would not only help in ensuring a distinct cultural and visual identity of our craft products in the market place but more importantly, it will help us to communicate with each other and express ourselves through our many-layered material, visual and practice-based cultural communication systems that are primarily non verbal.

*Renuka Savasere
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Do You Know?

The walnut tree is known as the "reserved tree" and it is illegal to cut it down before it is fully withered. It is then cut, sliced and kept in the open for two or more years to season.



Killen seasoning is not favourable for hand carving. Killen seasoning makes wood very dry and brittle, and thus carving becomes almost impossible. So hand carving is done only on naturally seasoned walnut wood.



News-in-Brief



Design & Technical Development Workshop in the area of Tapestry was started from 30th March 09 for 15 days. The workshop was organized and conducted by the Craft Development Institute, Srinagar and sponsored by the Development Commissioner-(Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India, New Delhi.

Ms. Sonal Dhama (Accessory designer) was engaged as design consultant towards design innovation techniques and methods of production in the tapestry craft.

Integrated Design & Technical Development Project in the area of Introduction of glass to Kashmir's hand painted crafts (papier mache) started from 1st April 2009.

Mr. Vijay Kowshik was engaged as design consultant for the said project. The project involves aspects of orientation & skill up gradation to the papier mache artisans. The objective of the project is to add new dimension to the Kashmir papier mache painting techniques by introducing new materials of applications which can lead to product diversification and add value to the craft to improve overall economic status of the artisans associated with the craft.

Joinery & Wood Working Programme, a 5 month training programme has started at CDI from 13th January 09, with the objective of introducing new designs and construction techniques of wood working to the persons associated with wood craft, joinery and furniture manufacturing.

The programme has been sponsored by the Office of DC-(Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India. The objective is to develop new joinery techniques, finishing, knockdown concepts, stack ability and modular furniture.

Creative Thinking Workshop was conducted for the faculty & staff of CDI from 23rd to 27th of March 2009. The objective of the workshop was to give a proper creative boost & bring out the creative potential in the participants and also to understand the role of creative thinking in our day to day life.

A Project regarding Languishing Crafts of Kashmir has been taken up by the Students of first batch. The objective of the project is to study the cause of its decline for various languishing crafts of Kashmir. The short listed languishing crafts taken by the students were Wagoo, Silver ware, Tapestry, Pottery, Jewellery, Numdah, Pinjra & Islamabad Gabba.

A Presentation was made by the Students of CM & EL Program (1st batch) to the faculty & students regarding their internship experience. The students were appreciated for their performance & growth.



1. Artisans working in tapestry workshop.
2. Glass Painting Workshop in progress.
3. Students busy working at the Joinery and wood working workshop.
4. Faculty and staff of CDI, busy solving a creative thinking puzzle.
5. A student making a presentation about her internship experience.

OPPORTUNITIES AT CDI

Inviting Design Professionals / Consultants.

Craft Development Institute has undertaken a professional project to establish a Design Bank for Pashmina and Walnut Wood crafts of Kashmir, with the objective of collating and disseminating related information in a digitized format.

With regards to the above, CDI invites qualified design professionals with at least 3-5 years of work experience, to provide consultancy services towards the said project. Design professionals, preferably with specialization in Industrial/ Textiles Design, must be graduates from NID/ NIFT/ IICD or other design institutions of national repute.

For more details please visit the CDI website at www.cdigr.org

Spotlight

Indian Festival Hindustan Mela 2009

Indian Festival Hindustan Mela 2009 will be held at TBC, Lithuania and Grote Kerk, Netherlands from Apr 17 - 26, 2009 and Apr 30 - May 04, 2009.

Exhibit product range includes: Handicrafts, Jackets in 100% wool fabric, Woollen Stoles/Shawls, Fashion Accessories, Silk Stoles/Shawls, Leather products, Bed sheets and pillow covers, Carpets & Rugs and Silk Cushion. Fair is open for trade visitors & general public.

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