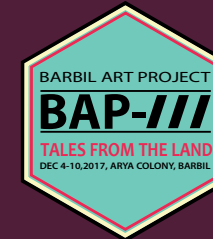




TALES FROM THE LAND

A community based
experimental art workshop



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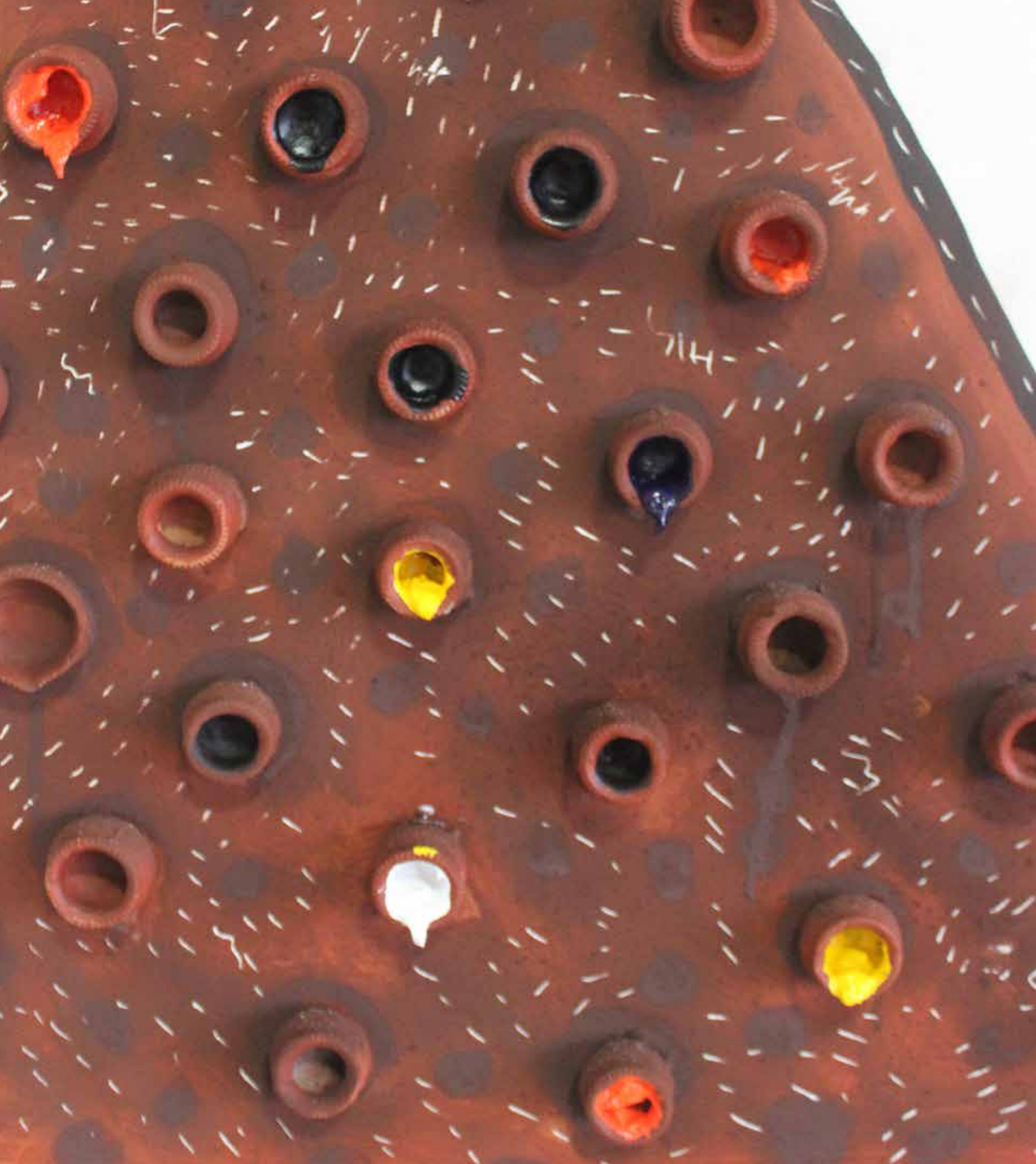
4TH - 10TH DECEMBER 2017

CURATOR

Ushmita Sahu

ARTISTS

Prasanta Sahu Arpan Mukherjee Joyraj Bhattacharya
Pratap Jena Jeetander Ojha Daina Mohapatra
Rabindra Patra Pinaki R. Mohanty Sidharth Mohanty
Ashis Mahakhud Arpita Akhanda Janhavi Khemka
Ruma Chowdhury Mukherjee



Curatorial Essay:

Ushmita Sahu

Knowledge Shared is Knowledge Gained - This motto highlights my conceptual approach towards Jagannath Panda's invitation to curate the third edition of Barbil Art Project, a collaborative biennial art event between Utsha foundation and AGF (Arya Group Foundation). The curatorial intent of this year's project lies in the various discussions and conversations conducted with Jagannath over several months and the realisation that the idea of mentorship and sharing is extremely important to both of us. Jagannath Panda has been mentoring for past seven years through his Bhubaneswar based foundation, while knowledge sharing and collaborations with young artists play a prominent role in my curatorial practice.

The project thus, focused on mentorship and the areas were identified between artist and art student, emerging artists and young adults, or artist and local communities, two major mentor/mentee areas. A) An active artistic engagement in grooming young emerging art practitioners/art students from various art colleges of Odisha. B) An interaction between artists and the local community of Barbil (children, young adults and adults) in a dynamic dialogue that aimed at exploring the idea of art as a catalyst of change within small non-art related communities. The latter also envisioned the possibility of creating ongoing dialogues within the local community through the introduction of low-cost sustainable ventures such as paper making for women's self-help groups and woodcut printmaking for school children.

The discussions also brought to fore a dialogue or exchange between our roots; consequently, the selection of artists was also informed by the notion of belonging. Hence, within the project, Odisha and Santiniketan were silent factors underscoring the concept of locale, where several artists could trace a connection to Odisha or Santiniketan or both. The inspiration of locus also inspired my nomenclature for the project especially with regards to where the workshop was held, in this case, Barbil, a well-known iron-ore mining town located in the Keduajar District of Odisha. With time, it gradually became clearer that in order to explore the connection with the land/locale each artist would have to interact with the material, source, concept, technology, human and natural resources available and sourced locally, and ultimately this became a connecting factor holding the varied languages and multiple genres of the artists together.

The workshop was designed around the thirteen participating artists, their divergent skill sets and use of medium and methodologies. The various genres included were- Painting, drawing and mural workshops (to make accessible skills, creative thinking and diverse artistic experience), Alternative methods of photography (providing knowledge of archival photographic methods using easy to make home-made cameras), Theatre and performance (as a bridge between traditional cultural practices and a more engaging social community based dialogue), Video workshops (to document, create and present alternative methods of narration), Woodcut Printmaking (for school children to explore inherent creativity and story-telling abilities), Papermaking workshop (sustainable vocation aimed towards creating commercially viable products from waste material), Sculpture & Installations (using locally available and readily sourced materials).

Artists, art student volunteers and Utsha staff congregated at Arya Colony, Barbil on 4th December. Induction to the week-long workshop began with an introduction and welcome session between artist and staff members of Arya Group conducted by Shri Ajit Kadambande, Senior General Manager (HR & Admin). An afternoon visit to the Arya Group's massive 1.2 million ton P/A capacity iron pelletisation plant on the first day, along with a visit to the K N Ram Mines on the subsequent day, the continuous vibrations and sounds of the huge machinery, the red dust coating every surface as far

as the eye could see and the realisation that this was a space where humans had literally moved mountains set the tone for the workshop. So it came as no surprise when these areas became conceptually and materially crucial for several artists.

Along with various site visits, the diurnal activities also included slide presentations by the artists about their own practice - an engagement of sharing and discussion which is of prime importance in artistic growth. Opinions of peers can open avenues within one's oeuvre and in this instance too it proved a fruitful experience for all concerned. In addition, as an extension of Arya group's CSR program, various expositions were planned to encourage interactions with the locals. These included presentations about Barbil Art Project III as well as works of the artists along with cultural programmes aimed at promoting indigenous art forms from Odisha. Notable among these were a puppet show by Hon Padmashree Maguni Kuanr and group, Gotipua Dance by State Awardee Shri Lingaraj Barik's troupe and Odissi/Sambalpuri dance forms performed by Rudraksh Dance Group.

Any community-based workshop is essentially participatory in nature. Here, understanding the participants and custom designing a project to suit their needs is of utmost importance. For a successful workshop, the experience/knowledge has to provide a sense of common purpose which creates an atmosphere of exchange and spurs participants to not only learn new hands-on skills, but also motivate them to carry it further on their own. The community projects planned for BAP III were papermaking, printmaking, theatre & performance workshops and clay modelling for little children. These aroused a great deal of curiosity and enthusiasm in the neighborhood. Mornings and afternoons saw droves of participants ranging in age from kindergarteners to pensioners arrive from both inside and outside the colony. The residents of Arya colony volunteered their services and young adults, despite ongoing examinations, were quickly drafted into the workshops. These engagements took place in and around the Clubhouse which not only served as studio space for several artists but was also the venue for exhibiting all the works for the open house on 8th and 9th of December. The open house was visited by Mrs. Tripti Arya and also (or accompanied?) by the dignitaries from various companies in Barbil, locals, residents and school children from several local schools.

As one entered the exhibition area, the first work to hold the gaze was a twelve-foot high garland made from clay pots hung on the wall over the main doorway to the Clubhouse. A creation of Vadodara based artist Jeetander Ojha and his trainee Barun Behera from the Utkal University of Culture at Bhubaneswar, this 'necklace' made from locally procured clay pots of varying diameters, decorated with iron ore and bentonite from the factory was threaded on a jute rope. The artist believes that the piece titled Love at first Sight is his offering to the nameless labourers who can move mountains or construct such colossal factories which inspire awe by their scale and scope. Ojha also painted a wall mural titled Eye Ball near the auditorium entrance.

The next work that captured the sight was a sculpture by Pinaki Mohanty, who works a lot with found objects in his native place Chilika. Here also Pinaki has used a large stone that he found in the horticultural garden of the colony to create an art piece, which he titled Mere Desh Ki Dharti Sona Ugle...

Ugle Heera Moti (Immense treasures originate from my land). Pinaki collaborated with the Arya factory workers to weld an iron stand and a funnel-like structure mimicking the factory chimneys. Dry plant roots also sourced from the garden and stuck to the bottom portion of the stone perhaps hint at unrootedness of all life. The sculpture could also be read as an ode to the land and the might of industry.

Artist Prasanta Sahu, who is also teacher in the Painting Department of Kala Bhavana, Visva Bharati University, depicts snippets of daily detritus from the humdrum life of an unknown laborer in his acrylic on canvas painting titled Study 03122017. Images of a kerosene lamp, the momentary flare of a match before it is snuffed out, a pile of rocks and a peephole view of a sky hide a million poignant tales within their fold. Sahu, assisted by his mentee Asanta Das from Govt. College of Art & Crafts, also painted a large eight by six feet mural titled Study 08122017 on a niche wall in the Clubhouse. Sahu depicts stark images of an excavator arm next to a larger than life human arm. By visually juxtaposing the mechanical and the organic, Sahu raises existential questions about human power and its relationship to its own mechanical creations.

From the entrance of the auditorium, on the far side of the clubhouse Pratap Jena's untitled terracotta wall mural made in collaboration with his protégé Susanta Sahoo of B. K. College of Art & Craft, uses local materials in the form of terracotta pots, lamps and bowls which were ground and cut to create visuals of factory and its workers. Jena and Sahoo also conducted a clay modelling workshop for the young children of the colony, which proved to be a great hit judging from the crowds, laughter and numerous small models strewn across the tables on the lawn.

Rabindra Patra a young sculptor, based in Delhi has a keen interest in the transformation of known objects through artistic intervention, also worked with found objects collected from the colony residents. The household items such as plates, bowls, light bulbs, wooden door knobs, boxes, even a nail polish bottle were all covered in a fine dusting of russet toned iron ore. These objects arranged on a tea table over a bed of coarse iron ore gave rise to multiple readings; to the locals, it symbolized the red dust which coats everything in the region. It may also raise comparisons with the archaeological excavations and the process of understanding human past, especially taking into account the large-scale mining pits in the region.

Arpita Akhanda's Saga of the Red Earth, a thirty feet long photomontage is inspired by two completely different genres with surprising visual similarities - the panoramic photography technique offered by every mobile camera today and the continuous narration of Far-Eastern scroll paintings. Arpita took numerous panoramic photographs en route from the Arya factory to the mines. These were printed, joined and displayed as a narrow, long panel. The work is a nuanced reading into a journey of change; as one factory personnel pointed out 'we make the trip daily but today we have seen it with new eyes'. Arpita, who is one of the younger artists within the project with a background in performance and installation art, is a trained Odissi Dancer. She was also chief collaborator in the theatre workshop with Joyraj Bhattacharya theatre actor and director from Kolkata. The dance-theatre workshop was made possible by the active involvement of nine young adults from

the colony. Inspired by the intrinsic link between human civilization and industrial growth, the piece titled Bearable Lightness of Being, used staccato body movements, sounds of iron pellets rolling in steel vessels, recordings of machine sounds from the Arya factory including walkie-talkie conversations of factory workers to create a fascinating piece which was presented in a dark room lighted by torch lights- harking back to the idea of mines and headlamps. On a white screen, a shadow puppet projection also carried forward the notion of factory and moving machine parts. Sumiranjan Lenka of the B.K. College of Art & Crafts made the puppets out of old x-ray films sourced from the local medical centre. The resulting shadows created a thought provoking visual of human bones within machines.

Daina Mohapatra is a Delhi based painter who working with gender-based issues using staged arrangements of her own images to create a dialogue on body politics. In her acrylic on canvas painting Oxymoron, Daina creates twin self-images frozen in a strange embrace. A common trope within her oeuvre is the image of a bald woman. Equating baldness with rebellion, Daina wishes to raise questions about societal norms of beauty. While one of the figures holds a compass, both appear to conceal secrets behind their serene smiling demeanor. By placing these women against a background of arched steps of a mine, the artist creates an enigmatic allegory with homoerotic undertones and like its title, the painting uses self-contradiction to illustrate paradox.

Multi-media artist from Hyderabad Asis Mahakhud collaborated with workers from Arya factory to make a video documentation of how they workers perceived their individual areas of work. Asis made numerous visits to the factory, to build a rapport with the workers. After identifying six interested men, he asked them to document what they perceived as their own within the anonymous factory space. Allowing outsider perspectives to enter an artist's final work is a true democratization of the process of creativity; a collaboration in the true sense. Asis also proposes to use his experience as an animator to add some more layers to his video Workers Vision I.

Arpan Mukherjee an avid photographer, who is also a teaching faculty in the Printmaking department of Kala Bhavana Visva Bharati University, created a photo essay Loha Daba Chitra (Iron Box Pictures). This is a suite of 22 Cyanotype prints on paper which were created using x-ray films inserted in a pinhole camera made with iron sheet. Furthermore, inspired by the iron ore around him, Mukherjee decided on the Cyanotype method of printing; this uses an iron salt based process that turns images blue and white. Mukherjee and his mentee Viswajyoti Sahani, a student of B.K.College of Art & Crafts, photo-mapped the factory and its surrounding areas such as the nearby railway tracks, the Karo river and the colony of migrant labourers, adding another layer to the larger narrative about the land. The printing of the images was done in situ by converting a green room at the Clubhouse into a makeshift darkroom.

Banaras based young printmaker Janhavi Khemka's project titled Freedom was a collective woodcut printmaking workshop with a difference. In collaborating with the school chil-

dren of Matkambheda High School, located a few kilometres away from the Arya Colony, Janhavi not only taught them a new way of expression but also sets an example to the young impressionable girls and boys that the sky is the limit if determination is present. Janhavi is hearing impaired however she has never let this hold her back. She also created a video of the workshop which was screened at the exhibition alongside the works by the children. The collaboration was so fruitful that the school expects her to return to conduct more such workshops. She also exhibited her own palatography and woodcut print Mirror which represents her daily lip reading practice in front of the mirror.

The other key collective workshop was Ruma Choudhury's paper making from waste sugar cane fiber sourced from nearby villages. Ruma has been researching various techniques of papermaking for use in her own artistic practice. Although here, in Barbil she conducted a step by step demonstration of the complete process starting from overnight soaking of the waste fiber, to processing it with caustic soda, boiling it on open wood-fire and then using the pulp to create beautifully textured handmade paper. She was supported by Asanta Das of the Govt. College of Art & Crafts, Khallikote. Her project aroused great enthusiasm and several self-help groups visited the campus to learn the process. Mrs. Arya too tried her hand at lifting paper. Ruma also used the paper, natural dyes from grass and iron ore to create her own series of drawings titled Nature and Life.

Sidharth Mohanty a Bhubaneswar based designer and dancer firmly situates his work Mine Mine within the history of the industrial revolution by connecting Denim (his material of choice for the project) as a fabric used by factory workers since the early nineteenth century. Taking inspiration from the mine visit, Mohanty unraveled the cut pieces of old jeans, which were then distressed and weathered with iron dust and embellished with patchwork, applique and other stitching techniques using iron pellets, metal wire, found objects to create a topographical/aerial view of the dust-ridden, fractured landscape of Barbil. Several artists, volunteers and women from the colony collaborated with him in his project which finally took the shape of a wall mounted quilt, completely transformed from a wearable object to objet d'art. Mohanty also collaborated with Joyraj Bhattacharya in his dance theatre.

In view of the manifold works created in the week-long workshop, it would not be wrong to say that Tales from the Land was, therefore, an appropriate heading for a project which proposed to create layered, nuanced and interesting areas of investigation into what constitutes the concept of land. The Barbil Art Project III concluded with a presentation and gathering of artists and cognoscenti at Utsha Foundation Bhubaneswar on 10th December 2017.

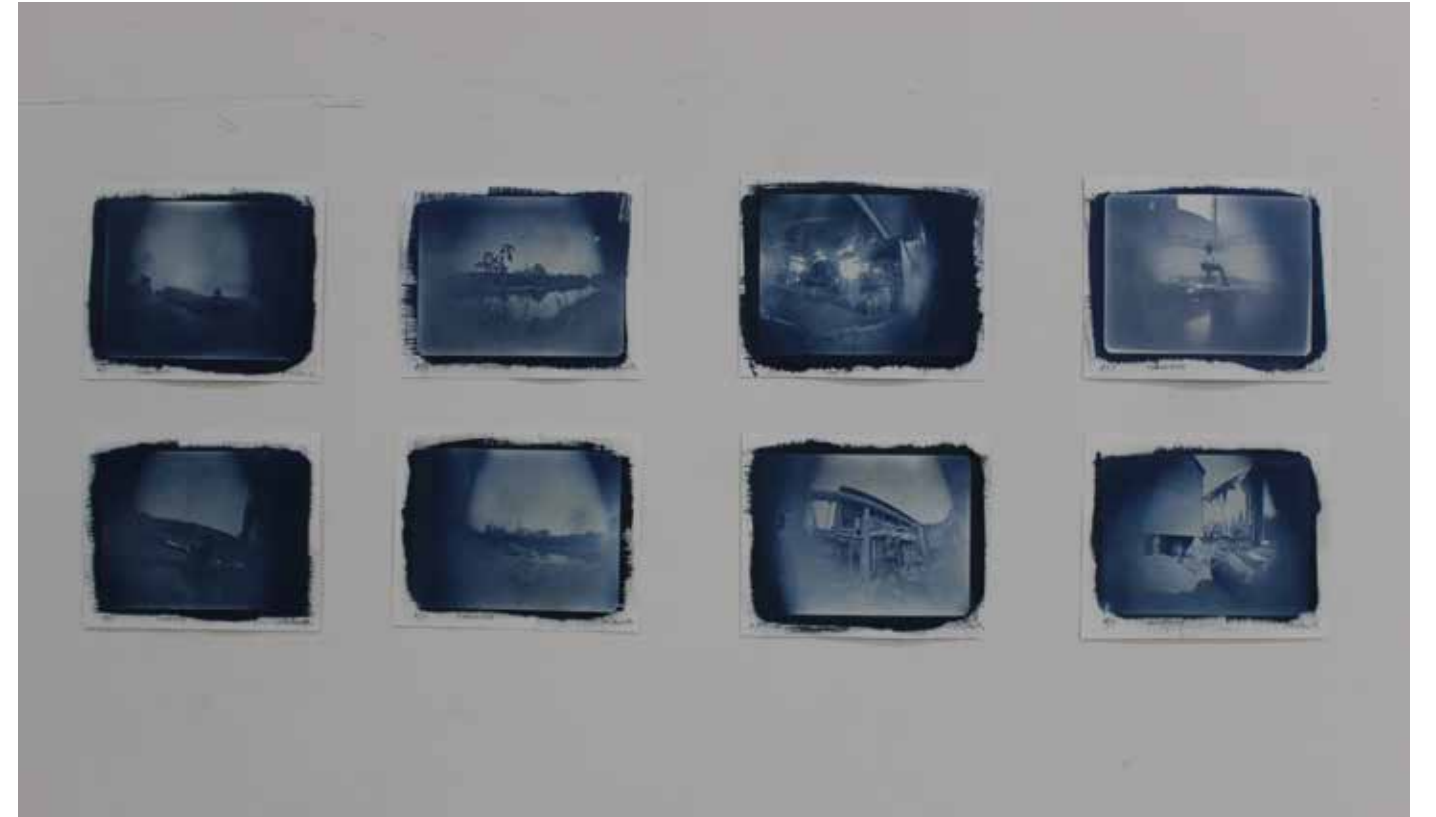
Ushmita Sahu

Curator

Barbil Art Project III – Tales From The Land

4th -10th December 2017

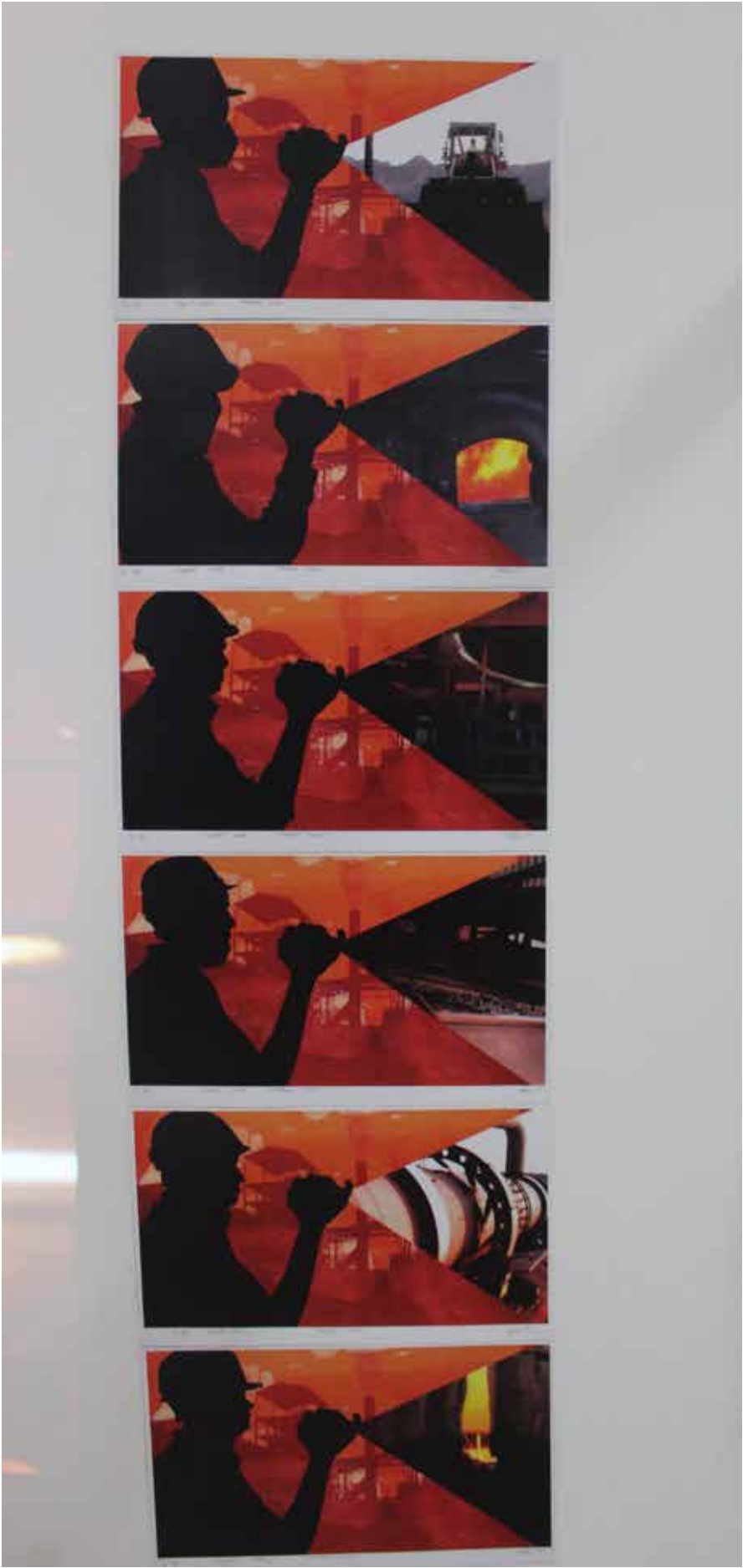
Arpan Mukherjee



Arpita Akhanda



Ashis Mahakhud



Daina Mohapatra



Janhavi Khemka



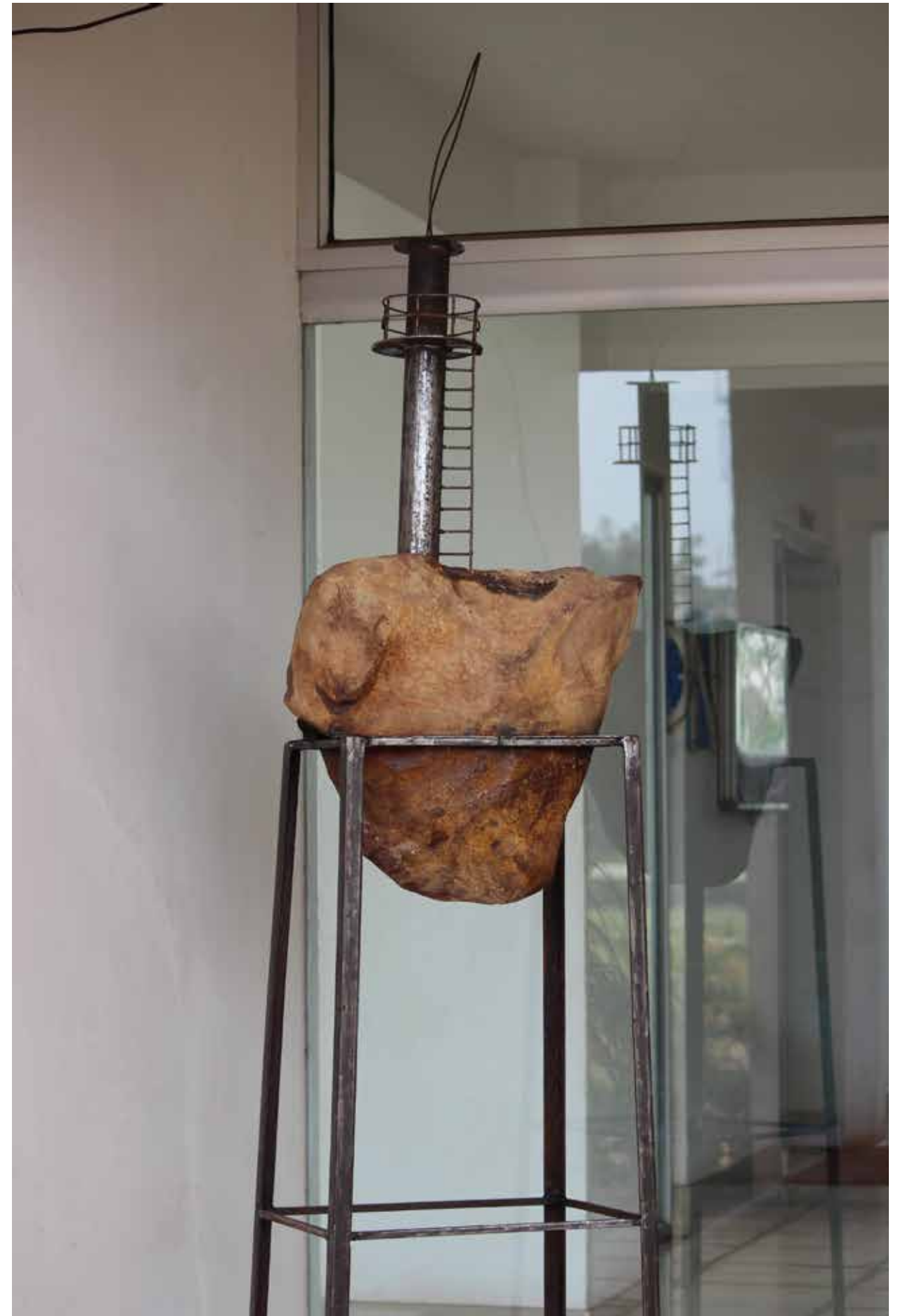
Jeetander Ojha



Joyraj Bhattacharya



Pinaki R. Mohanty



Prasanta Sahu



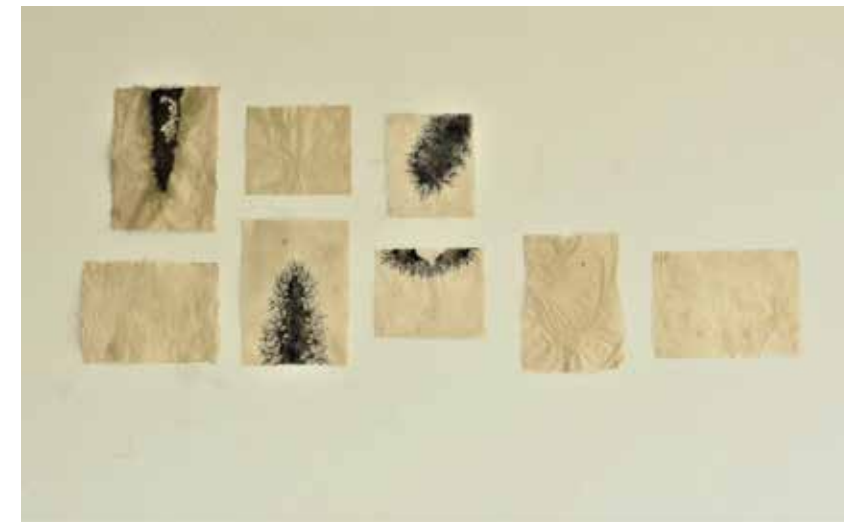
Pratap Jena



Rabindra Patra



Ruma Chowdhury Mukherjee



Sidharth Mohanty



Forward note

Utsha has always worked with the aim of making art an instrument to share knowledge and celebrate the artistic spirit. It is a non-for-profit organisation with an objective to mend the much talked about gap between artists and the society.

Barbil Art Project started off as a unique open platform for visual artists to realize their creative potential in a unique environment of red earth and forest. Now, Barbil Art Project has become a much-awaited art program on the Utsha calendar.

This year's 'Barbil Art Project - Tales from the land' was conceptualised in a unique way in order to realise the importance of mentorship and thought sharing of multiple approaches to art production. Barbil Art Project was mostly focused around learning, sharing and utilisation of natural resources available around the project location.

The project initiative ranged from new media to pinhole photography to hand cutting terracotta tiles. A team of six established artists took the lead to work with a few art students along with local participants in Arya colony, Keonjhar.

I wholeheartedly thank to UshmitaSahu, curator of this program, for making such wonderful works by bringing a bunch of brilliant artists together. I am also deeply obliged for the enthusiasm and participation by all the individuals in making this event successful. Special thanks to Mr. AjitKadambande and the entire team of Arya Group for their contribution, some of who have been instrumental to the project from inception to execution.

On behalf of Utsha, I would love to express my heartfelt appreciation to Tripti and PuneetArya, for their invaluable time and commitment to the cause of making brilliant art accessible to the community.

This is a thoughtful initiative that has been paving the path in the upliftment of local artistic culture. The incessant belief in Utsha Foundation by all the people associated with this initiative is highly commendable. We look forward to their future association with Utsha in redefining the state of art in Odisha.

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Barbil Art Project (BAP), a Community Based Experimental Art Project, an eclectic & novel project, showcases the original art of artists & art volunteers from across the country exhibit their skills & creations & making art accessible to the local community, is presented in association with Shri Jagannath Panda.

Being ardent fan of art & culture BAP was my dream that came true & Arya Group Foundation (AGF) is proud to be associated with Mr. Jagannath Panda in organising Barbil Art Project, the first milestone of Barbil Art Project was achieved in the year 2012 followed by the second milestone in the year 2014 & the Third milestone in the year 2017.

In the first week of December 2017, Arya Group Foundation (AGF) & Arya Iron and Steel Company Pvt. Ltd. (AISCO) organized BARBIL ART PROJECT III, a 7-day residential workshop at Arya Colony, Barbil titled TALES FROM THE LAND, focussing on the motto Gain Knowledge to Share Knowledge. This workshop was presented by UTSHA Foundation & curated by Ms. Ushmita Sahu, an artist, writer and independent curator based in Santiniketan West Bengal.

All the art works were produced in the workshop used locally available materials & resources to create interesting investigations into the idea of what constitutes land. Various genres of art explored within the project included Painting & Drawing workshops, Alternative methods of photography using pin hole cameras, Theatre & performance, Video workshop, Printmaking, Paper making from waste sugar cane fibre, Sculpture & Installation.

I really thank Shri Jagannath Panda, Ms. Ushmita Sahu, Project Curator, all artists & art volunteers from across the country & the team of Utsha Foundation for showing such enthusiasm in presenting such a wonderful workshop, which has encouraged not only me but also the entire family of Arya Iron & Steel Company.

Arya Group Foundation (AGF) & Arya Iron & Steel Company Pvt. Ltd. (AISCO) look forward to continued progress toward our goal of making art accessible in our community & beyond.

Tripti Arya,
Managing Trustee,
Arya Group Foundation

BARBIL ART PROJECT
DEC 4-10 2017

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ARYA GROUP:

The Arya group is a leading Iron & Steel Industry in Odisha. It has set up Arya Iron & Steel Co. Pvt. Ltd (AISCO) a pelletization plant of 1.2 MTPA capacity at Barbil in Keonjhar district of Odisha - the First Plant in Odisha to use Grate-Kiln technology. It has also set up 1.8 MTPA benification plant named International Mineral Trading Co. Pvt. Ltd, adjacent to AISCO.

Arya Group has been playing a dominant role in the socio-economic development of peripheral area and recognizes that, its business activities have direct and indirect impact on the society. The company in consonance with Arya Group Foundation (AGF) is working on safe drinking water to all, promote quality education, encourage sporting activities, health, promote traditional art and culture of Odisha and maintain ecological balance. In short, CSR activity means transparent business practices that are based on ethical values, compliance of legal and statutory requirements, local development; care and respect for people, communities, their culture & the environment. In short we strive to be a “Good Citizen” of the country & the “Good Neighbor” within its host community.

UTSHA FOUNDATION

Utsha is a non-for-profit making organization registered in Bhubaneswar, dedicated to the art fraternity in Odisha, Chaired Jagannath Panda, it has a vision to promote and nurture the art and culture of the region.

Utsha supports a growing network of art practitioners, organisations, galleries, students, researchers and other people. It is unique in the sense of connecting local and traditional practices to global and contemporary creative circuits respectively. It is more concerned with local, ethnic and regional practices that come from remote areas. It also functions internationally to realise objectives through dialogue with people around the world. It embodies a continuing engagement with creativity in different communities and locations.

Barbil Art Project is the beginning of an oeuvre that will set new paradigms for generating alternative spaces for creativity, dialogue, action, exchange and performance.

