



Artreach KNMA Teaching Fellowship Report [Summer 2022](#)

Shoili Kanungo

I planned a series of ten workshops for the students from the Rainbow Homes Programme as part of their Sunday recreation programme. We met at Umeed Homes in Mehrauli. There were about 20 students, mostly quite regular.

I was particularly struck by the work of young Kunsum from Khushi, and Aarti from Khilkari, because both of them are open to taking risks and trying out new things very freely, with spectacular results. Kunsum is only ten years old and made a very good figure drawing of her classmate which she said she had made for the first time. She also wrote a great story for the character and comic workshop. And I liked how cleverly she used the scissors to create the lion. I felt they have a natural and uninhibited talent which should be nurtured. Aarti is very free with her mark making, she loves expressing herself in her own way, her final collage painting was quite brilliant.

Shabnam from Khilkari is also very good, and did some excellent nature study drawings and should be encouraged to do more of those. Her portrait of an emotion was also very sophisticated. She is a little shy though, and also tends to veer into making copy drawings of well known characters which should be discouraged.

My overarching aim was to introduce the students to a set of ideas and methods that they could then explore further in their own time. In addition, I also wanted

them to think conceptually and to think freely - without inhibitions and judgement whenever they set out to draw something. I asked them if there were specific skills that they wanted to learn and set out to incorporate those in my workshops. The overall results have been remarkable. The students have shown immense creativity, and strong conceptual skills. This must be due to the cumulative impact of the many varied workshops and teachers they are exposed to.

My first session was about drawing our emotions, because emotions are at the heart of everything we do. I wanted the students to see that drawing was a good channel to express and understand our emotions. I first asked them to express a set of emotions through abstract lines alone. We compared results to see if there was a common vocabulary of lines and marks that represented a certain emotion. After this we created portraits of emotions. The results were very sophisticated. The students are deep thinkers.

The students mentioned they wanted to learn about shading. So in my second workshop I demonstrated that shading an object to give a sense of its three dimensional form was essentially about observing the patterns of light and shadow and how it falls on the objects around us and then trying to express that with our pencil marks. I introduced the value scale and also showed them some examples of how the outcome of shading need not be a clean neatly blended drawing. That even messy marks, and a variety of marks, could bring out three directionality in

an object. The students appreciated the process oriented structure of this class and responded well. They displayed a lot of curiosity when I gave them feedback on their drawings and showed them bits of light and shadow on objects that they might have missed noticing. They were mostly very attentive.

Our Third workshop was held online and was about creating characters and comics. While learning to draw the human figure takes a lot of study and practice, it is still possible to build a variety of characters and bring in basic locomotion and create stories, without knowing anything about figure drawing. This is what I intended to show here. We played around with building many face shapes, wire framing the face to place facial features, creating a variety of body types, and then, making the bodies move. I also asked to students to bring in aspects of our first class on emotions into these characters if they wanted to. After this, the students created small stories and comics which they narrated to the class. The stories were sweet and poignant.

In our fourth workshop we learnt to use black India ink, created a value scale with ink, and also explored brush marks. And then created mini accordion books on a single theme using just ink. I asked the students to reflect back on the light and shadow workshop to give form to objects if they felt like, because the concept of shading with pencil and with ink was the same. They did not really make the

connection in their work, though some might have. Overall they were just excited to splash about with ink. They love using wet media. Perhaps the fluidity is fun and therapeutic.

In our fifth workshop we focussed of color. Instead of drawing the traditional Newtonian colour wheel which is very structured, I asked them to explore and create a color library by mixing just the three primary colors in various proportions and also, mixing them with black and white to create tints and shades. They were very engaged with this activity. Once they had done this, I asked them to create small post card size paintings using some of the new colors that they had just created and juxtaposing them. I tried to draw them away from primary hues by explaining that even the new muted hues they had created by mixing colors and introducing black and white could be juxtaposed to give beautiful results. But I found that the students mostly went back to using the primary hues for their paintings. They seem to be attracted to sharp bold contrast. Many of them love making the background in one bright color and then making a black drawing on top of that. This is fine but it was not the purpose of this workshop. Perhaps they have brought in an idea from a previous workshop with someone else and juxtaposed it here. So in my eyes the final aim of this workshop, to introduce them to an array of muted colors created by them, and to use subtle colours and subtle contrast, and to show that just very few colors are enough for a painting that could

have multiple tints and shades, was not so successful. But they really enjoyed the workshop.

In the sixth workshop we went for a garden walk and collected stray twigs and dried leaves. We then arranged these leaves in variable patterns and applied the concept of symmetry to our patterns to see if we could generate strange creatures and monsters. The results were surprising and unexpected. I then encouraged the students to use some of the previous concepts such as shading to bring out form, and using just a few colours to bring out a range of tints and tones. Some students followed my suggestions others wanted to freely explore color on their own. All of them were very engrossed. I think they were also excited by how ordinary garden objects gave rise to these strange unique creatures and they spent a lot of time thoughtfully colouring and shading their creatures.

In the seventh workshop we set out to draw from observations the scenes around us. I introduced them to the idea of framing by sharing the works of many artists and how they had framed nature. The contrast between the macro view of petals that so particular to O'Keefe, to the vast landscapes of Turner. And then, the way Vangogh might use a black line to separate objects, while in Monet's landscapes color and light shimmer in a completely different way. The students enjoyed these examples and were inspired by them. I also taught them to make the square frame

to constrain what we are seeing and only draw what was visible within the frame. They really enjoyed using this device and some of the results were startling. They were automatically observing perspective in their drawings without really trying to do so. Shabnam's painting is really very good.

We had a long session for our eighth and ninth workshops. We used freestyle water color wash techniques to create a range of colored papers. I wanted the students to not rely on pre made coloured papers but to freely create their own. Once we had everyone's paper we placed it all in a communal pile, so we could share with each other and use the colours that best suited our drawing. We then use the concept of paradoilia as a starting point and created specific forms which we filled in with our communal collection of colored paper. I asked the students to use strange shapes such as wet patches on ceilings and cloud shapes to see if they suggested a familiar form. And then, to use that form as the basis for our paintings. Many of the paintings were excellent. They were very focussed and took a lot of trouble to complete their paintings diligently - although some said they found the process boring. But I think boredom is necessary too because it is the hard work and focus that they put in and persisted with, that gave rise to such great results.

In the final workshop the students learnt to be curators of their own work, by

selecting and displaying the work in specific arrangements and then talking guests through our work, explaining the motivation behind the works and the workshops and what we had learnt there. They also conducted mini workshops based on what we had learnt for the other students in the school. The students really enjoyed this. It gave them a sense of pride and accomplishment. They were very good at this, extremely articulate, able to explain the concept behind every workshop and also successfully conduct workshops for the other students. They managed to get quite a few recruits for the next workshop. The students were hoping that there would be more external visitors. I agree, it will be good if that can be managed. Because the exposure is good for them.

Overall, I like to follow a process based approach to my classes, because I believe that some prior explanation about why we are doing what we are doing, sharing of examples of methods and techniques, actually enhances one's enjoyment and perhaps makes us more excited to do what we are about to do - to actually first get a sense of the possibilities before hand itself and perhaps and see some examples of how other artists have worked with that method or material.

I also kept in mind things that we had learnt in previous sessions and tried to connect them in future sessions so that there was a loose continuity. I think the students really enjoyed this. Many of them specifically mentioned that they liked

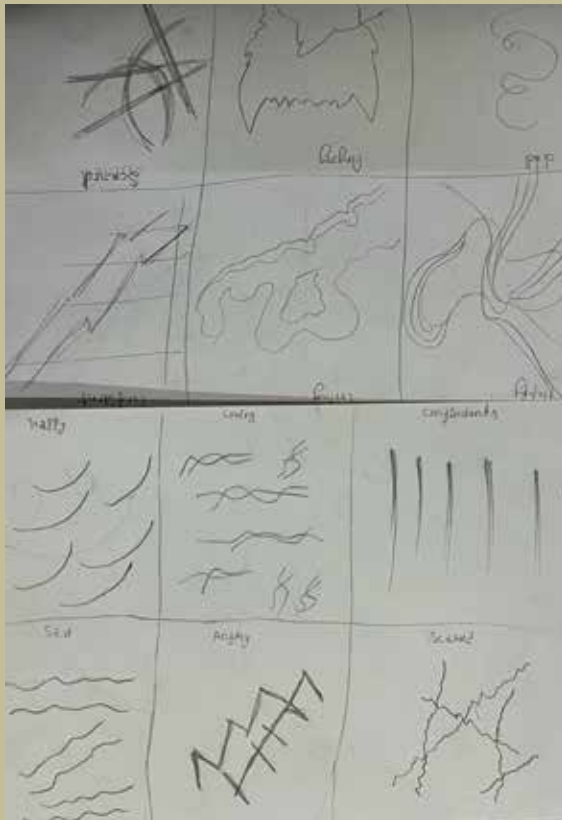
the way in which I explained things and the many examples I shared to explain what I was talking about. The works of other artists and so on.

In general, freestyle or automatic drawing, tapping into one's subconscious as a resource for ideas and forms, is of great interest to me and I have tried to incorporate that in some of my workshop activities.

A note on the warm up exercises which we did before the classes began. I think they are very important and a good way to get into the mood of working together in the class. Shivangi introduced some excellent movement based activities and drawing actives as well. In addition I introduced some drawing exercises which were based on blind contour drawing - drawing objects and body parts without looking at our paper but just focussing on the object we are drawing. I also got them to draw using their non dominant hands and feet as well. These exercises are actually very important for learning to draw from observation as it takes mental focus away from the final result and gets students focusing on what the object they are drawing really looks like. I would encourage all students who are interested in learning to draw from observation, make this a part of their daily practice. We also did some communal drawing activities on large scrolls of paper. This was very popular and the results were beautiful. Even a simple activity like scribbling on a giant sheet of paper all together created a marvellous result at that scale. The large format communal drawings should continue.

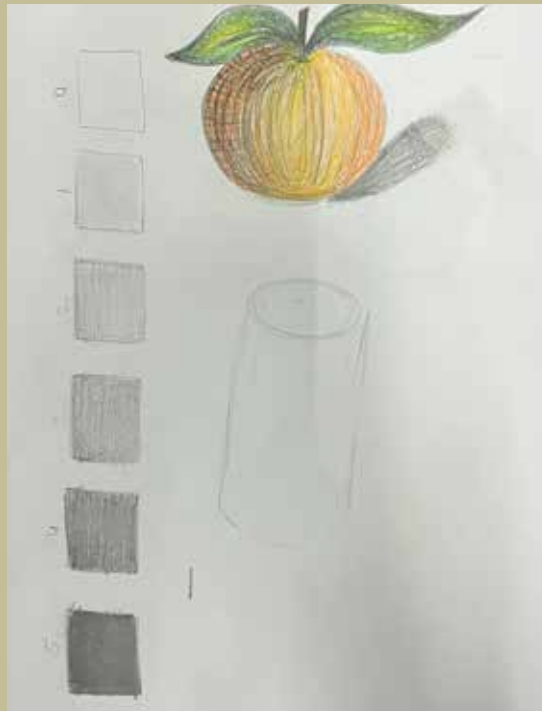
Workshop 1 **DRAWING OUR EMOTIONS 2.5 hours**

Emotions are at the heart of everything we do. We begin with an abstract mark making activity in which we explore the kind of Lines and marks we would make to represent a selection of emotions. We compare our results to see if there is a common vocabulary in the type of marks we have made. Following this, we drew portraits of emotions and also dual portraits in which we represented the same scene, character, or form, but in two different emotional states.



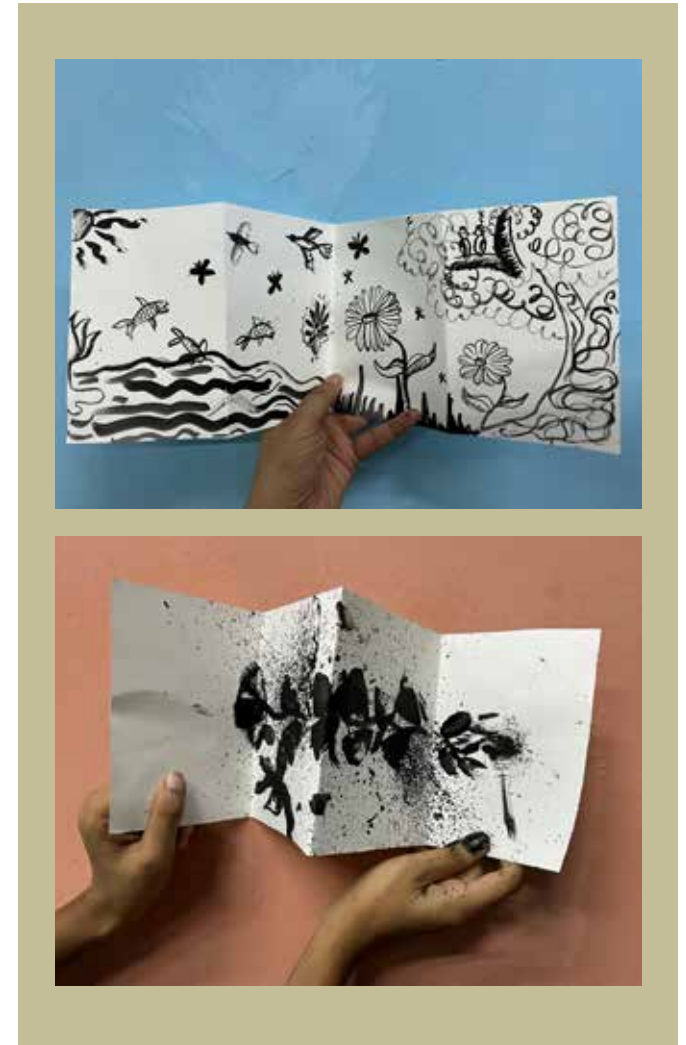
Workshop 2 **EXPLORING LIGHT AND SHADOW 2.5 hours**

The students wanted to learn shading. In response I designed this workshop in which we explored light and shadow. We drew the value scale to understand how to differentiate between different degrees of lightness. We observed how light and shadow forms on basic objects such as cubes, spheres, and cylinders and how to represent this in two dimensions. Finally, we observed objects around us and learnt to differentiate the multiple ways in which light and shadow forms patterns creates a 3 dimensional form.



Workshop 4 **INK MINI BOOKS 2.5 hours**

We learnt how to use black india ink by exploring different brush techniques, and also, diluting the ink to different values of black - something that was in continuity with the exploration in our light and shadow class. Following this, we planned a 4-frame mini book in which each page of the book had to be linked to the other pages under a unifying concept.



Workshop 5 **EXPLORING COLOR** 2.5 hours

We used just the three primary colors along with black and white, and mixed these colors freely in various proportions to form a range of tints and shades which we expressed in our color libraries. The aim of the workshop was to restrain ourselves to just the three main hues and understand how those led to a range of muted colors - without depending on the formality of the newtonian color wheel. After this activity we made small postcard size paintings in which we used some of the new colors we had created.



Workshop 6 **TWIGS AND LEAVES MAKE MONSTERS 2.5 hours**

We went for a garden walk and collected stray twigs and dried leaves. We then arranged these leaves in variable patterns and applied the concept of symmetry to our patterns to see if we could generate strange creatures and monsters. The results were surprising and unexpected. We tried to color these creatures using some of the notions we had studied in the previous classes such as light and shadow, and how we can use just a few colors to create a range of textures.



Workshop 7 **FRAMING AND SKETCHING OUTDOORS** 2.5 hours

In the seventh workshop we set out to draw from observations the scenes around us. I introduced them to the idea of framing by sharing the works of many artists and how they had framed nature. I also taught them to make the square frame to constrain what we are seeing and only draw what was visible within the frame. They really enjoyed using this device.



Workshop 8 and 9 **WATERCOLOR AND COLLAGE 4 hours**

We used freestyle water color wash techniques to create a range of colored papers. And then, using the concept of paradoilia as a starting point we created specific forms which we filled in with our communal collection of colored paper. I asked the students to use strange shapes such as wet patches on ceilings and cloud shapes to see if they suggested a familiar form. And then, to use that form as the basis for our paintings.



Workshop 10 **CURATING AND EXHIBITING OUR WORK, WALKTHROUGH AND WORKSHOPS 5 hours**

We learnt to be curators of our own work, by selecting and displaying the work in specific arrangements and then talking guests through our work, explaining the motivation behind the works and the workshops and what we had learnt there. We also conducted mini workshops based on what we had learnt for the other students in the school.



