

TATA TRUSTS

A quarterly update on the programmes of the portfolio



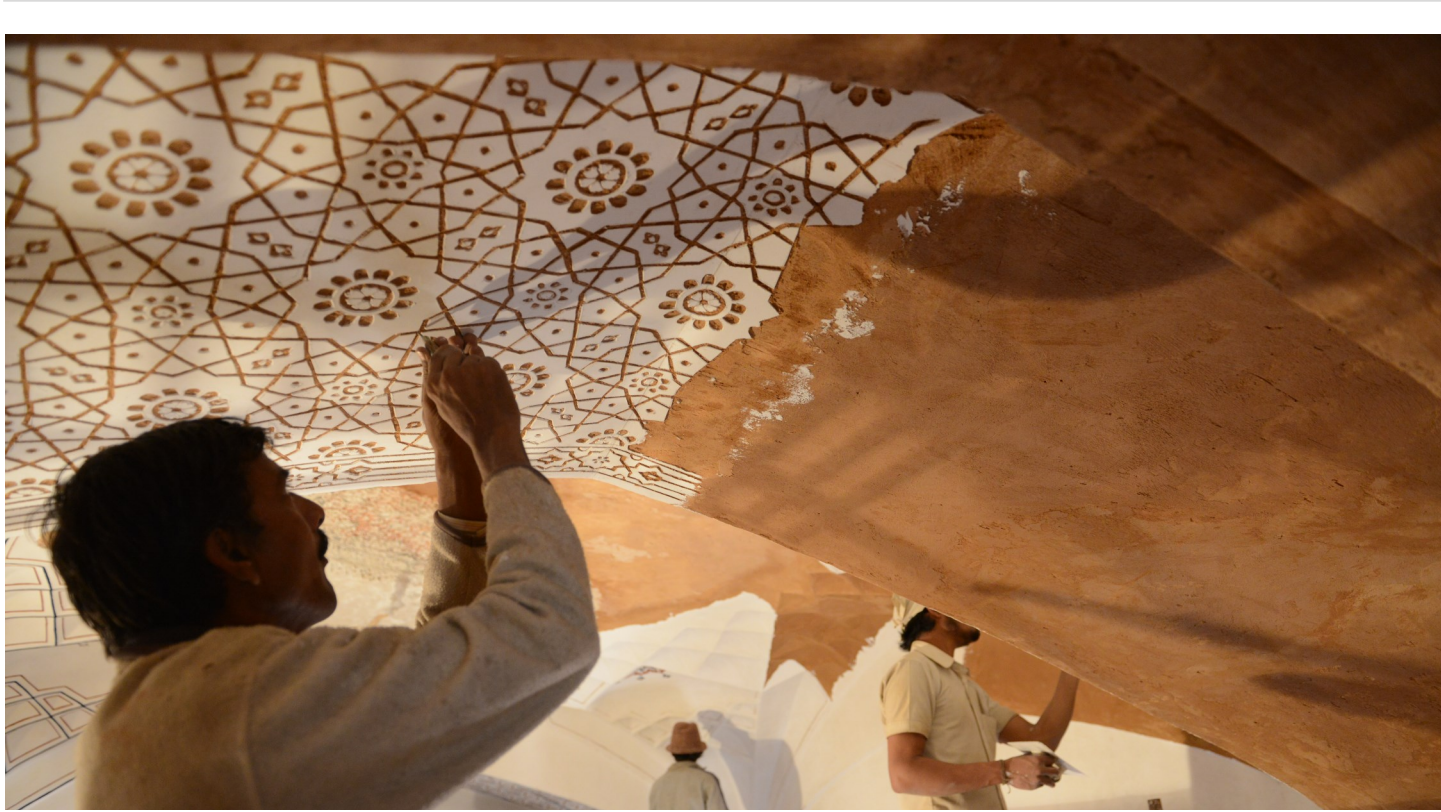
A participant conservator undertaking conservation of a blueprint, during the Training Course in Conservation of Paper: Prints, Drawings, Maps, held at Museum of Art & Photography, Bangalore, under the Tata Trusts Art Conservation Initiative.

The summer months of April-June witnessed steady progress of the Tata Trusts Art Conservation Initiative, despite the severe heat waves experienced in many parts of the country. The 3-month intensive Training Course in Conservation of Paper: Prints, Drawings, Maps was completed at Museum of Art and Photography (MAP), Bangalore; and two more courses are set to start in July: Training Courses in conservation of natural history specimens, and conservation of manuscripts and miniature paintings, at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS), Mumbai and Kolkata Institute of Art Conservation (KIAC), respectively. This newsletter highlights snippets from the Training Course at MAP, where five participants have graduated and are embarking on their one-month internships to apply their skills learnt. A directory of art conservators trained through the training courses completed in 2021 can also be accessed [here](#). As more courses are implemented through 2022-23, this directory will be updated quarterly.

We are happy to announce the publication of the Specifications Manual for Built Heritage Conservation, accompanied by two volumes comprising the Schedule of Rates and Analysis of Rates. Developed in partnership with Aga Khan Trust for Culture, the manual offers a comprehensive collation and analysis of data and processes related to conservation of built heritage specific to Indian regions. The manual can be accessed on our website, and we hope for its active dissemination, use and adoption within the conservation community, as well as within the governmental agencies and funding bodies.

This newsletter also goes back to some past Trusts-supported projects to highlight how archives, in all their myriad forms, strive to become accessible, sustainable and relevant to contemporary research methods. A five-year project with Marg Foundation that saw the digitization of their quarterly journals dating to 1946; and a visit to the Mumbai Police Archives where, two years after our engagement ended, work continues by committed police volunteers in preservation and archiving.

We end this newsletter with a tribute to Mr. Karni Singh Jasol – the erstwhile Director of Mehrangarh Museum Trust – whose untimely demise has left a deep void in the museum and conservation sector in India.



Specifications Manual for Built Heritage Conservation

Tata Trusts, in partnership with Aga Khan Trust for Culture, developed a Specifications Manual for built heritage conservation, accompanied by a Schedule of Rates and Analysis of Rates.

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From the Arts and Culture Archives...

Creating a sustainable digital archive: How the Trusts support to The Marg Foundation enabled digital access to their quarterly journals dating from 1946.

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Surprise visit to the Mumbai Police Archives

On a recent surprise visit to the Mumbai Police Archives, where the Trusts supported a paper conservation and archiving project from 2018-19, it was heartening to witness that the work continues unabated, albeit at a slower pace.

Read about the project, and how the archives are being managed and records conserved since the completion of the project.

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Training Course in Conservation of Paper

The third 3-month Training Course in Conservation of Paper: Prints, Drawings, Maps, was successfully completed at Museum of Art & Photography, Bangalore, under the Tata Trusts Art Conservation Initiative.

Five participants were trained in the course, under the tutelage of senior paper conservator Mr. Lalit Pathak. See some highlights from the course in this photo essay.

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Tribute to Karni Singh Jasol

Scoping for institutes to work with for the Tata Trusts Art Conservation Initiative in 2018, brought me to Mehrangarh Museum, Jodhpur, and the first meeting with its director, Mr. Karni Singh Jasol. In that first meeting, there was an immediate understanding of our program, at a level deeper than any other institute head, and led to a start of a collaboration in art conservation. Over several visits and conversations one got to know more about the museum and his leadership and in his passing in April 2022, we have lost one of the country's finest museum directors.

One who quietly established practices ahead of their time – fundraising through shops at the museum that catered to all, whether an air conditioned space or an inclusive outdoor marquee shop; restaurants that dotted several levels, including a nimbu paani and biscuit kiosk at the very top for all to quench their thirst – this sensitive inclusion of every visitor was carefully considered and not loudly trumpeted.

He understood conservation as a practitioner. Involved in conservation outreach to schools, he talked about young students asking about careers in conservation, and a sector we both discussed, that was as yet, ill-equipped for this demand. In the first meeting, the museum's plans for expansion was explained, how the Mehrangarh Museum Trust had run an open competition for architects in envisaging the complex to house a new conservation centre and the visitor's centre. Mehrangarh Museum has had a conservation centre for years, but Mr. Jasol understood the urgent need for training in newer technical skills and sustainable modules, for an upgradation of the lab space that allowed for newer equipment as the field had advanced so much.

The storage of the museum's rich textile collection is remarkable. In having an in-house Scholar's Retreat, in RIFF Jodhpur a "roots music festival" and in the World Sufi Festival in Nagaur - in all of these, Mehrangarh Museum Trust is a first in many ways.

As a curator, he enabled exhibitions like "Garden and Cosmos: the Royal paintings of Jodhpur" at the British Museum and at the Smithsonian, and more recently "Peacock in the Desert" at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, both critically acclaimed. Again, I cannot think of any single Indian museum having showcased their collection internationally, as Mehrangarh Museum has done under Mr. Jasol's leadership.

Many have mourned his loss to the museum community and he will be missed acutely, but more importantly, the sector will find it hard to fill his shoes. We can only wish all at Mehrangarh the best, in continuing his legacy of thorough scholarship, innovation in administration and his deeply ingrained understanding of his public and the multidisciplinary approach needed as a custodian of heritage and in re-calibrating it for our times.

In our last conversation, we discussed the forthcoming wall painting training module under the Tata Trusts Art Conservation Initiative to be held at Mehrangarh later this year. We will miss his presence, his quiet elegance and his deep understanding. He didn't dwell in the past but worked in the present to keep heritage alive and relevant – perhaps the training module for new conservators that does this, can be our tribute to him.

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Image Credit (from the top): Museum of Art & Photography, Bangalore; Aga Khan Trust for Culture, Delhi; The Marg Foundation, Mumbai; Tata Trusts, Mumbai; Museum of Art & Photography, Bangalore; Mehrangarh Museum Trust, Jodhpur.

Previous editions of the newsletters can be accessed [here](#)

Deepika Sorabjee
Paroma Sadhana
Arts and Culture, Tata Trusts



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