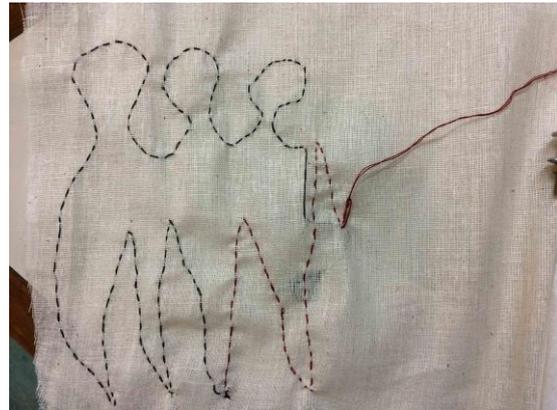


Embroidery - The Heritage craft of Fabric

[Part of Epic channel series on Heritage]
Saturday, 30th January 2016, India Habitat Centre
Age-group 12yrs to 18yrs



Self-Expression towards self-realization - of becoming aware of subconscious patterns - to change or accept, has been the mantra of my practice as an artist. In my workshops I do some exercises with the participants to open them up to expressing in a way that bypasses the mind towards the subconscious. This time was no different, but there was quite a difference in the work done. As this workshop was part of a Heritage series, I deviated a bit from the usual workshop format to bring in a little history before we did any sewing/stitching/embroidery, with a slide-presentation to inspire the youngsters to use embroidery, decorate cloth, learn to sew, and play with fabric to understand its nature. The historical dimension was a real inspiration - as much as looking at the work of some exceptional contemporary artists across the world, can be.

What I find most rewarding about teaching children is that they just need a little nudge and their creativity flows. In a short afternoon session they managed to do quite stunning stuff. And if the effort is sustained the results are quite special. Fabric lends itself well to their handling of it, even if the skills are limited. They were encouraged to make uneven stitches and little mistakes, stitch the edges, play with coloured threads, patterns and lots of sequins. To use fabric to express themselves, work with threads - with or without the needle, to visually articulate thoughts and feelings and re-orient the self towards thread, fabric, embroidery and collage, to incorporate new ideas and techniques and simply re-look at the ancient tradition of embroidery.

This workshop had a significant participation from girls who are learning sewing from a NGO Ritanjali. They came from a low income group of society and it was difficult for them to respond to questions or even articulate what they were observing. Some merely reiterating what they'd learnt at Ritanjali and not what was unfolding in front of them. And at the end, when they were doing a creative piece - after a creative visualization technique that I've evolved, I found that their work was very naive and child-like, compared to other more articulate and privileged participants.

Their visual thoughts - representative of what they saw in their minds eye, seemed to speak of unfulfilled childhoods. And along with this, there was a distinct shift - not for all but most; who were now chatting and discussing and even engaging with me in a proactive way. I didn't need to prod anymore. It was a moment to pause and think - to consider how one can realistically take this forward to allow them to come into their own - do it in a sustained and meaningful way.

For more details:

Facebook Event Page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/970804129653720/?ti=icl>

