

2010 - 2023

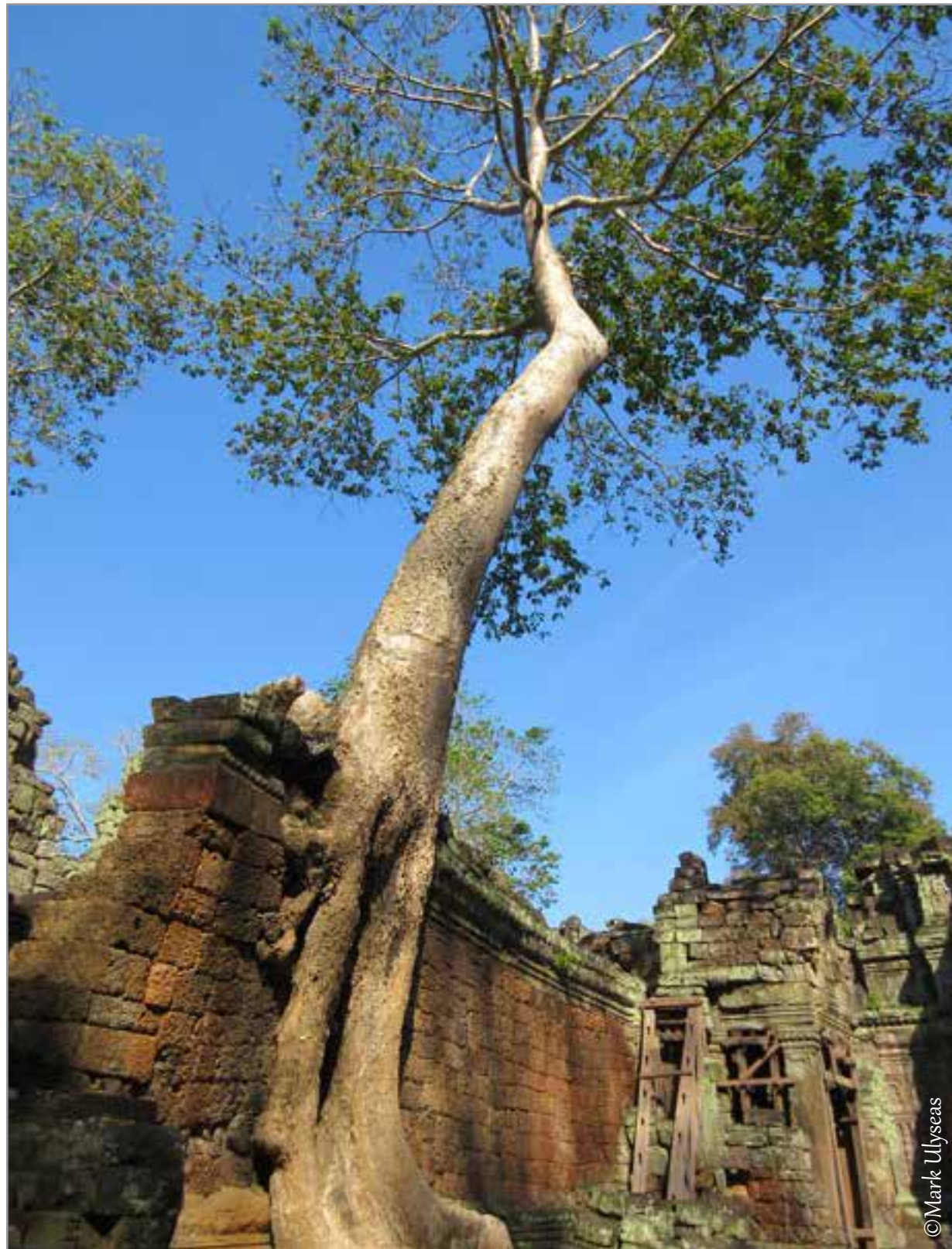


Live encounters

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
VOLUME TWO DECEMBER 2023



JOSÉ TRUDA PALAZZO, JR.
Behold the sacred tree(s)



©Mark Ulyseas

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



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Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Poets, writers, academics, civil & human/animal rights activists, academics, environmentalists, social workers, photographers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of:

Live Encounters Magazine (2010), *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing* (2016), *Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers* (2019) and now, *Live Encounters Books* (August 2020).

We are appealing for donations to pay for the administrative and technical aspects of the publication. **Please help by donating any amount for this just cause as events are threatening the very future of Live Encounters.**

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

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DEVINDER RAJ

José Truda Palazzo, Jr., a Brazilian writer and environmental consultant, has spent most of his 45-year career working for marine conservation initiatives, but is also a gardener with several books published on the subject of wildlife gardening, and an avid tree planter together with his grandson João Pedro. A former government delegate to international environmental treaties, he now serves as Senior Conservation Officer for IBRACON, the Brazilian Institute for Nature Conservation, and as Institutional Development Coordinator for the Brazilian Humpback Whale Institute, as well as an elected Member of the National Environmental Council of Brazil. A Life Member of both the Australian Conservation Foundation and the National Wildlife Federation of the United States, he also collaborates with task forces and specialist groups of IUCN, the World Conservation Union.

JOSÉ TRUDA PALAZZO, JR.
BEHOLD THE SACRED TREE(S)
*Within Every Living Tree Trunk
our Planet’s Soul Watches over Us*

It stood tall and lonely for hundreds of years, its undulating yet firm branches saluting travelers who went through the rolling hills of Northumberland in England, near Hadrian’s Wall. The sight of the magnificent sycamore tree never failed to inspire awe. That is, until modern barbarians decided to cut it down for “fun” a short while ago. In the blink of an eye, for no reason other than a crave for vandalism, it was gone.

The immense feeling of sadness that feel upon many people across the United Kingdom with the news of the sycamore’s murder reached my heart too, thousands of kilometers away at my home in Brazil, where most people couldn’t care less about trees, as the continued devastation of the once mighty Amazon rainforest so horrendously exemplifies. From the old sycamore vandals to the genocidal thugs felling rainforests for short-term profit across the entire tropics, our species has reached the 21st century without properly understanding the importance of these living entities to our own lives. And yet we should, especially in times of a warming planet.



José Truda Palazzo, Jr.

Trees have been around for at least 400 million years in one form or another if we define a “tree” as a plant with a solid trunk. First evolving into conifers and other pine- and cypress-like trees, they sprouted flowers probably like many other plants around 70 million years ago, and never stopped diversifying into an unfathomable array of forms and living habits, constituting forests that once spanned entire continents and becoming incredibly diverse at the tropics, where a single hectare might contain more than 450 species as in the critically endangered Atlantic Forest of Brazil. They have become self-sustaining, with the Amazon trees growing largely on a poor soil but enriching it with their own fallen leaves and branches (cut down the forest and in a short time the land becomes an impoverished, barren tract); a haven for wildlife, offering shelter, food in the forms of fruits, flowers, leaves and saps; and a rainmaker and thermal regulator for vast regions and even the entire planet, creating atmospheric moisture by their transpiration and nurturing springs and streams that become rivers, absorbing excess carbon from the atmosphere and releasing oxygen – all in all veritable life-givers to every other creature on Earth.

All these aspects of the truly sacred nature of trees, their intrinsic biological generosity towards the planet and ourselves, is magnified when we look at the urban environment where, for good or evil, most of humankind now lives. A single mature tree in a city can lower the temperature around it by a few degrees by shadowing the pavement; it can cut on your air-conditioning bill if placed smartly in front of the afternoon sun that hits your building. It can harbor a stunning diversity of animal life, from birds and mammals to insects and other arthropods, and it helps catch, slow down and infiltrate rainwater in the soil in a way that effectively reduces flooding.

Why is the vast majority of humankind, then, so indifferent - if not vigorously agonistic - towards trees then? Is it because we evolved into large societies heavily dependent upon agriculture and cattle ranching, both demanding extensively cleared lands to make (huge) profits? Or was it the biblical order to subjugate the Earth the absolution for our widespread environmental crimes? Or both, and more?



Photograph courtesy José Truda Palazzo, Jr.



©Mikyoung Cha

Photograph by Mikyoung Cha.



World-famous Sycamore Gap tree beside Hadrian's Wall, was cut down overnight on 27 September, 2023. Top photograph courtesy Tim Withnall_CC BY 2.0. Bottom photograph courtesy Ian Sproat [LINK](#)

Whatever the reason for our species' ingrained dendroclastic tendencies, it is time for us to abandon these. We must recognize that humankind can only survive on a planet with widespread, pristine and restored forests, including urban ones. And while we do need Amazon-sized green canopies to act as great repositories of biodiversity and planet-sized refrigerators and humidifiers for the Earth, we desperately need to reclaim green spaces in our cities and towns for our own individual health's sake and that of the creatures that insist on surviving around us. And although most landscape architects (what a pompous and technocratic term!) keep insisting on anachronistic rows of separate trees and geometrical gardens, what our urban environments need most is more "bush", more "scrub", more "piled up" trees! Yes, for creating these aggregations of native or mostly native tree and shrub species is the way in which we can accrue more benefits of urban tree planting. This has been proven around the world thanks to the initiative of Japanese Professor Akira Miyawaki, whose Miyawaki Pocket Forests are now being reproduced even in very small urban corners, highway roundabouts, and in every available space among the built landscape. Miyawaki-type forests are the best way to ensure biodiversity conservation and restoration in the urban environment, also raising the potential of all other benefits I already mentioned above.

Trees need a revolution. A revolution in our minds. Not only we should care about the fate of the distant, remnant tropical rainforests and temperate woods, using our power as consumers to stop buying products from deforestation (timber, meat, palm oil, whatever – invest a few minutes of your time learning where your daily consumption items come from and making better decisions!) but also, we need to realize that each and every one of us can do something meaningful by planting trees around our homes, workspaces, urban parks. Be it individual native trees from our own regions or creating little Miyawaki pocket forests with several species at every available corner. There's nothing as generous as planting trees; I am fully aware that I will never see most of those I plant reach a mature age and splendor. They are gifts for the future generations, and one of my great pleasures nowadays is to plant trees with my grandson, who fortunately already recognizes the sacredness of trees, the sacredness of planting. For each and every tree that survives our species' ravage is a miracle in itself, harboring so many other miracles in its daily churning of oxygen in the atmosphere by photosynthesis, in its underground internet of roots talking to other plants by means of fungal hyphae.

In its capacity to touch the hearts of at least a few of us in a manner as to make its felling a sin. To make the huge banyan trees, sycamores, oaks, kapoks, but also the slender palms, bignonias, and fruit-bearing myrtaceae more important than the moldy stone temples that illegitimately have taken their place both physically and mentally over time.

Perhaps it is time to abandon the heresy of worshipping so many unseen deities that over thousands of years have led us to war and chaos, and at last, at least for those of us who can see, find the sacred, the divine in the humble yet truly miraculous shadow of a garden tree. And don't be ashamed of hugging it – it deserves every day a hug, a prayer, and a thank you.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Jill Gocher has been living and photographing in Asia for around forty years. She has authored more than ten books and countless magazine articles and photographed for many magazines. She is now working on a book of India's tribal communities titled *Desert Folk*. Watch out for it.



JILL GOCHER

A FLASH OF RED

Photo feature

Leave the cities of Rajasthan and take to the countryside and everything changes. Red becomes the predominant colour – flashes of red stand out in the dun coloured landscapes of the semi-desert. Red turbans, matched with mostly white outfits are worn by many castes – the nomadic Bishnois shepherds, Raika, Rabari, Rajputs and many other men wear distinctive red turbans that are so useful in their daily lives.

The women wear predominantly red dupatta, which they use to great effect to hide their faces from curious scrutiny, they shift it around – so it becomes flirtatious, then again, another swirl and they are protected from the harsh desert sun.

Life is simpler in the desi, less complex. It revolves around the basic tenets, food, livestock, family. Men take to the fields with their goats and find time to load up a chillum and engage in a little story telling – a desi specialty.

The people are salt of the earth, with no time for the tawdry concerns of city folk. They know what they know, they see what they see. They always have time for a joke and to just enjoy the good things. And when a stranger visits their village they delight in telling tales about their neighbours. This man likes to drink. This man lost his wife and is looking after his children alone.

It's a harsh life but its good, a life where community is strong – banded together against the harsh elements they battle with daily life. While their children attend school and learn the new ways, the older folk keep the traditions and long may they continue.

Jill Gocher



1/ This delightful old reprobate was very cheery mostly due to the amounts of intoxicating beverage he imbibed as his neighbours delightedly informed me.



2/ This red turbaned gentlemen are just wandering through town with their goat herd, looking like extras on a film set.



3/ Milking the goats and looking like a painting.



4/ We came across this man sitting in a shelter just puffing on his chillum as he whiled away his time.



5/A swirl of Rajasthan red, makes these country girls look absolutely gorgeous.



6/ This delightful man has a herd of goats and a family of children he looks after all alone. But there is nothing that will fade his sweet nature.



7/ Evening time is the time to bring the goats in and milk them before settling them down for the night- safely locked up away from prowling predators.



8/ These tribal folk, no matter which community they belong to, have a great affinity with animals and treat them as part of the family.



9/ Pondering the universe.

Mikyoung Cha is a graduate in Oriental Painting from Hyosung Women's University, Daegu, South Korea. She has participated in a number of group art exhibitions in South Korea and Japan. In 2016 she took up photography – the camera becoming her paint brush. This globe trotting photographer is a regular contributor to Live Encounters Magazine.



MIKYOUNG CHA

HUNZA VALLEY, PAKISTAN

Photo feature

As a photographer once said:

*'If there's a hole in the sky
and we could see heaven
that place would be 'Hunza Valley'*

Northern Pakistan, deep in the Karakoram Mountains surrounded by snow-capped mountains is Hunza, a paradise of seclusion.

The fabulous Rakaposhi, Rangapar, Golden Peak, K2 and others are part of the majestic Karakoram mountain range in Gilgit Baltistan. The presence of snow at 7,000 mts year round creates an atmosphere of heaven on earth.

The natural beauty is only matched by the warmth and hospitality of the local people.

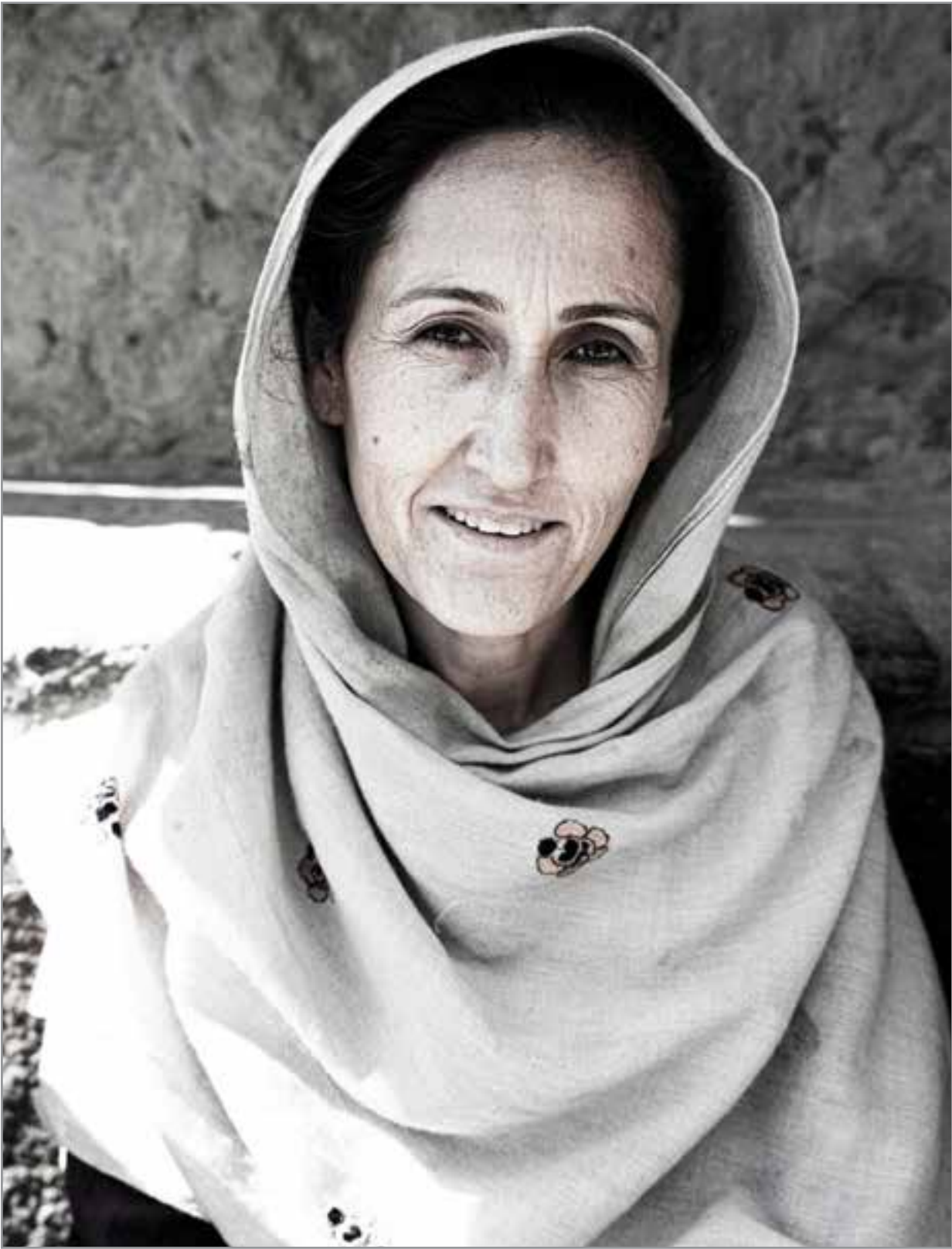
Mikyoung Cha



The girl who lives near Baltit Fort in Kalimabad, Hunza.



The old woman who lives in the Old Hunza Traditional Residential House below Altit Fort in Hunza.



The lady who lives in the Old Hunza Traditional Residential House below Altit Fort in Hunza.



The old man who lives in the Old Hunza Traditional Residential House below Altit Fort in Hunza.



The Hunza River, Karakoram Highway, and Mount Rakaposhi seen from Altit Fort.



Passu Glacier is linked with Batura Glacier and many other glaciers in Batura Muztagh mountain range.



Lady Finger seen from Eagle Nest.



View from Zero Point Karimabad, Hunza.

Tina Claffey is an award-winning Irish nature photographer and author of 'Tapestry of Light-Ireland's bogs & wetlands as never seen before' in 2017, and 'Portal-Otherworldly Wonders of Ireland's Bogs, Wetlands and Eskers' in 2022. Her observations and unique perspective through her macro lens of the flora and fauna of the raised bogs and wet woodlands of the Irish midlands are celebrated in her work. She has exhibited in group shows in the US, Botswana, Zambia and has had solo exhibitions throughout Ireland. Her work is part of many art collections, permanent exhibitions, including the permanent collection at Áras an Uachtaráin, home of the Irish President. She has presented her work on many worldwide online platforms including the Wildlife Habitat Council Online Conference in the US and the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26) to promote the importance of the Irish bog wilderness. Find out more about Tina's work and order her new book 'Portal' here: <https://www.tinaclaffey.com>

TINA CLAFFEY

AUTUMN & WINTER'S WANING LIGHT

Photo feature

I love to get 'lost' in the bogs, eskers and wetlands of Ireland with my macro lens throughout the seasons.

As Autumn descends, the days become shorter, and the nights longer, it is believed that the veil between the physical and otherworld is at its thinnest. It is easy to believe this as I explore with my macro lens. This lens allows me to capture what cannot be seen by the naked eye, and capture scenes that defy our sense of reality, glimpses of other miniature worlds that co-exist with us.

Early Autumnal delights of blooming heather and Bog Asphodel and flowering Grass of Parnassus let us know that the light will be waning soon. White Beaked Sedge illuminate the bog like stars in the evening light. As Autumn takes hold, dark foggy mornings reveal bejewelled webs. Winter is soon upon us with the promise of its crisp golden light as the low sun illuminates the frosted lichen jewels within the living carpet of the bog.



Tina Claffey



Broom Moth Caterpillar on Bog Asphodel.



Jewelled Dreamcatcher.



Frosted Devil's Matchstick Lichen.



Blooming Heather Sunset.



Autumn Breath.



White Beaked Sedge.



© Tina Claffey

Grass of Parnassus.

Tang A Pau is a professional photographer living in Saigon. He has 15 years of experience. He is a volunteer photographer with ICF Asia (International Crane Foundation) and of some National Parks in Vietnam. Tang's stories are usually about the natural beauty of places, and species at risk, and encourage environmental awareness. He hopes through his experience and photographs he can highlight all the great benefits that Nature has to offer in Vietnam. Publications: 2021 - Co-author, *Birds of Vietnam*. Co-author, *Atlas of Cattien National Park*.

Special thanks to Nguyen Thuy Hoa.

TANG A PAU

WILD VIETNAM - BIRDS

Photo Feature

The following images are but a few of wild Vietnam. A country that is home to 962 species of birds.

Vietnam’s rich natural heritage is on show, performed by the exotic birds that inhabit its wilds.

Nature in all its glory.

Come, experience wild Vietnam with Tang.



Tang A Pau



Hooded Pitta.



Black-hooded Laughingthrush.



Red-tailed Laughingthrush.



Collared Babbler.



Blue Throated Rock Thrush.



Bar-backed Partridge.



Indo-Chinese Green Magpie.



Silver-breasted Broadbill.



Red-billed Blue Magpie.

Katie Costello was born and raised in Hubbard, Ohio, USA. Her greatest passion in life has always been to help animals. She is lucky enough to be a licensed veterinary technician and owner of *The Canine Campus Training and Wellness Center* and *The Canine Campus Bed and Biscuit Inn*, where she helps animals through behavior work, does training of all types including aggression, fear, and service dog work. A vegetarian since she was 6 years old and a vegan for the last 15 years, she currently has 7 dogs, 5 cats, 7 chickens, 3 roosters, 1 very special turkey and 2 farm pigs that are amongst her dearest friends. She is founder of 2 non-profit organizations, K-9's for Compassion (Co-founded with her father), a therapy animal group and *The Together 3 Journey*, a service dog organization. She has been on the board of many animal organizations throughout her life, including *Happy Trails Farm Animal Sanctuary* and C.H.A.I.N. (Community Helping Animals In Need) and SVBT (Society of Veterinary Behavior Technicians). She enjoys freelance writing about (mostly) animals for different magazines, with her favorite being *Live Encounters!*
<https://thecaninecampustraining.com/>

KATIE COSTELLO

ALMOST HEAVEN

Photo feature

Recently I was in Hawaii and 3 of the islands in French Polynesia. Particularly in French Polynesia, the culture still very much intact in tact, you could feel the presence of spirituality. We went to the sacred Marae "Taputapuatea" while in Raiatea. This Marae, now a UNESCO site thanks to the Polynesians fearing that their ancient oral culture would be completely lost. Their history had always been an oral history. In the mid 1800's, with the takeover by France, Christianity was introduced, the Marae was left in ruins, and the oral culture had stopped. Pilgrimages continue to this sacred location, and the natives have brought back what they can of their culture. Our guide was from New Zealand, and very passionate about Mana, or life force. He declared that mana is everywhere, it is in nature, it is everything. We are all alive. We all need water to survive. This concept is held close to my heart. This experience was life changing to be amongst this culture and take in some of the ancient beliefs. It was simple, and so beautiful.

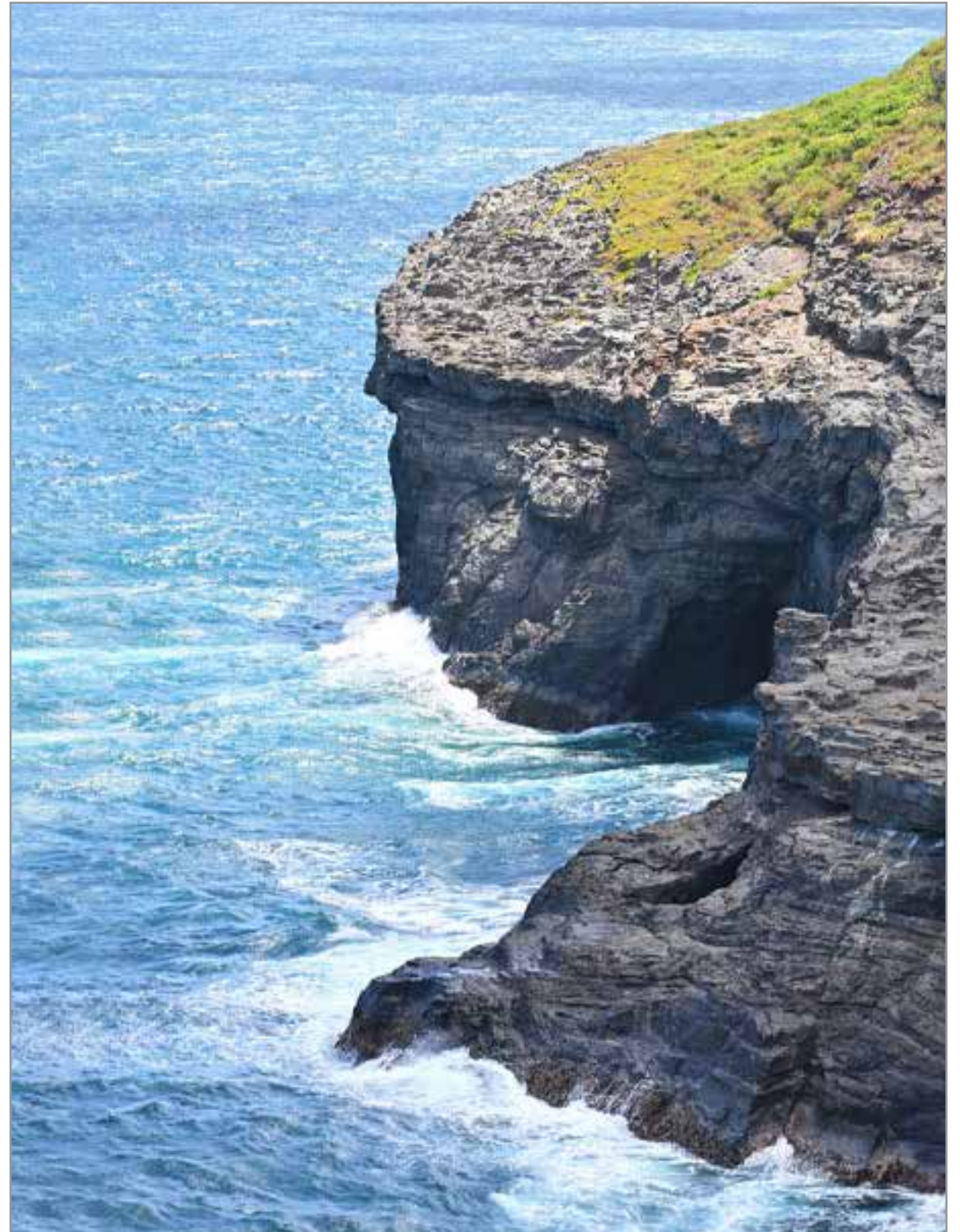
It was difficult to take a bad picture there. Everything was very pretty and picturesque. Enjoy my photo tour touched by "Mana". Now that I am home I have my memories, pictures, and a tiki to remind me of the far away island something close to heaven.



Katie Costello



Red-Crested Cardinal in all of his glory!



Cliffs off of Kilauea lighthouse area in Kauai, Hawaii.



Wimea Canyon in Kauai, Hawaii.



Brown Anole in Raiatea, South Polynesia.



Chameleon on a trail in Maui, Hawaii.



View of Raiatea.



Ae'o, or Hawaiian black-necked stilt in Maui.



Cattle egret in a field on The Big Island of Hawaii



Sunset in Papeete, South Polynesia.

Gopika Nath is a textile artist-craftsman who stitches and writes, threading her syllables into poetry, creative non-fiction and art reviews, where her art practice provides a mirror to the self. Her writings have been published in Bengalaru Review, Brown Critique, Lakeview International Journal of Literature, 100 subtexts, Garland Magazine, Varta, Verve and others. <http://gopikanath.co.in/A> Fulbright Scholar, alumnus of Central St. Martins School of Art and Design [UK], Gopika lives and works in Goa, India.



GOPIKA NATH

DRAWING FROM NATURE

Essay

Scrolling down my Facebook news feed, I came across a friend's post. He was photographed, seated behind a Frangipani tree, holding its flowering branches close to his body, as if 'fig leaves' covering his nakedness. Dheeraj's torso was bare but he had swimming trunks on. It was possibly an attempt at humour which somehow escaped me. I was reminded instead, of the heady fragrance of the *Champa* and how aromatic the hot summer evenings in Gurgaon were, especially after the sun had set. The flowers' scent, heightened by the veil of night, lingered fragrantly beneath summer's dark sky. As I glanced at the picture, I relived moments of just a few nights ago when I had cycled past a cluster of *Champa* trees; and then stepped into memories much farther back in time.

This Facebook image, of green leaves, camera lens zoomed in to show off their finely etched veins reminded me of an afternoon in 1982, during a power outage in the month of June. Those days we had neither inverters nor generators and just endured the blistering heat. Power-cuts were scheduled daily and usually at the hottest hour of the afternoon. Decades later the power situation has not changed much, if anything, has worsened. But residing in a condominium with the luxury of power back-up, I barely register when the electric power comes or goes - living on the eighth floor I do not hear the cranking up and down of the gensets. When I think back, I really marvel at how we did manage back then in the 1980's.

It was probably around 2 o'clock in the afternoon when I sat on the verandah of my parent's home in New Delhi, some thirty-five years ago, deeply absorbed in depicting the fine veins of the *Champa* leaves. In June, the temperature can rise above forty-five degrees Celsius. I was home for summer vacation before I returned to London in September. I always loved to sketch and that afternoon, I drew with sharpened lead pencils ranging from HB to 6B, intent on capturing every leaf vein in its shaded perfection. I worked with deep concentration, oblivious of the heat and when electricity was restored, for when I looked up the sun was setting.

Gopika Nath

I've always been drawn to details, be it through stitching, drawing or weaving. And now, decades later, a different kind engages me. After five days in hospital recuperating from ailments brought on by stress, I'd been home three days but not quite strong enough to swim or exercise much, but craved some out-door-ness. So that May evening in 2016, I went for a stroll, barefoot, in the park. It had been a hot day - the hottest May since 2010 and, a dust storm was also brewing. The sky was hazy with the grime of earth particles carried by the hot and dusty wind, and the earth was near parched. A few patches of grass still held dregs of moisture left over from a liberal watering of the lawn, but for the most part what I felt, was akin to dry straw underfoot.

The parched grass was covered with *Gulmohur* blooms fallen off the trees, in shades of her fading glory, from scarlet to orange and yellow - bright and insipid. I walked among trodden petals and recalled the branches overhead in radiant bloom, just two weeks ago; sighing at the inevitable transience of things. The flowers shall fade and humans shall age but, through nature one notices the simultaneous presence of growth and decay, recognising beauty in every state.

A few steps from where the carpet of green was mottled with *Gulmohur* reds, lay browned leaves that had fallen off my favoured *Champa* trees. From a distance they could be mistaken for giant geckos waiting to pounce - a terrifying thought. Because the chameleon family which includes the much dreaded household chipkali or lizard, give me the creeps.

Each evening I like to spend a few minutes getting up real close to the *Motiya* and *Champa* flowers for a must-have whiff. Their heady scents are like breathing in a moment of bliss. I braved the mock-geckos, hoping a real one wasn't lurking among them, and tried to find a bloom close enough to hold and inhale its aroma. Looking intently, I found myself peering into tender green leaves similar to those I'd painstakingly sketched some thirty years ago. iPhone in hand, I captured this with a silent click and realised that while the phone-camera had made photographers of all of us, we had lost, not just the knack of portraying nature but also, the capacity to be mindful of little things.

Drawing from nature, transforming nature into art, was at one point in time contentious – suggesting that man was trying to reproduce the creator's munificence and therefore blasphemous. The aniconic art that came as a response to Islamic ideals of non-representation demonstrated extraordinary levels of creative excellence without depicting living forms.



©Mark Ulyseas

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas

Although antipathetic to this interdiction, Christian iconography, Chinese painting or Indian icons, though representational, were not constructed to function biologically but considered “a kind of diagram, expressing certain ideas and not as the likeness of anything on earth.” The Indian maker was required to be a yogi, eliminating the distracting influence of his or her emotions to “realize a complete self-identification with it.” If the painter or sculptor missed something, it was attributed to lapsed concentration or imperfect absorption of the subject represented. This idea found common ground with Dante, the Italian poet and philosopher who said “who paints a figure, if he cannot be it, cannot draw it.”

Clearly, the ideal in all kinds of art was about merging with the subject and not just representing the physicality of form. Even though depiction of nature is no longer blasphemous or even a subject of debate, I wonder if our response to looking through (the now) ubiquitous phone-camera could come close to ideals which presented the artist as yogi. Could we extend our looking through the camera lens, to go beyond the mere recording of physicality of form to perceive the divine essence; and, what or how could that be done.

There is so much in contemporary art that just does not satisfy me and I often wonder how art may be a vehicle for deeper connections with the universal essence. I realise that portrayal of the figure as Dante would have us, is now passé because the instant click of the digital camera isn't about capturing a true likeness. Thinking of whether there could be another way of connecting and merging, I went to sit by the pool-side.

Later, I took another stroll in the garden accompanied by a young girl whom I'd never met before. But, it seemed as if our energies were enjoined - she was in a state of trauma and most likely drawn to the healer in me and perhaps, had also come to help mend some part of me. For within minutes of chatting, she poured her heart out - all the woes of accidental, prescribed medicine complications which had resulted in severe neurological damage, sexual harassment and more. I'd met her at the swimming pool while dangling my legs in the cooling waters, as I reflected on various concepts of art.

She was sitting on a chair with a book in hand. Within moments of exchanging smiles, she abandoned her book and plastic chair, walked over to where I was, turned up her jeans and sat beside me. Dipping her feet in the pool, and without much preamble, she began unburdening her mind.

At first the chatter was grating but I as paid attention I found parity with the babble in my own head - of anger, resentment and unending words trying to make sense of things. Much of this had been suppressed because I was fed up with the non-stop inner harangue. Wanting to put an end to the internal rant, I ignored it – distracting myself with work, which had predictably resulted in the physical ailments.

Empathising with her agitation, I asked her to turn her back to me, placed my palms on the back of her heart chakra and began channelling Reiki. At first, I could feel her drawing the energy in, but then not so. Perhaps she was questioning the lack of inhibition with which she had opened up to a total stranger. Knowing how things within can be reflected back through others, I wondered if it was me who had closed my mind again. I could see from the strange glances that people were beginning to notice the awkward hand position – it wasn't 'normal' social behaviour to clasp palms, on top of the other, placed on the middle upper back region of another to channel healing energies.

As if on cue yellow wasps started hovering around the pool edge so I suggested a stroll in the park. I thought I could introduce her to the fragrant Frangipani; that may cool her hurting heart as it did mine. As we walked out of the pool area onto the lawn, towards the trees on the far edge of the park, intuitively I bid her walk in silence and pay heed to the grass underfoot. She was too agitated and resentful and within seconds was babbling again. I put a finger on my lips signalling the need for quiet. I hadn't been inwardly peaceful myself but in that moment, I was able to listen. Hearing her outpouring had calmed me in inexplicable ways. Whether it was on hearing oneself through another's chattering confusion, or whether seeing her greater agitation made me feel calmer, I was happy to be quiet and just tune into the vibrations of the grass beneath my unshod feet.

Taking off from the early years of concentration in pencil drawing, my penchant for detail continues, but it's another kind that fascinates me - to go beyond the mere observation of the outer form as one did in art class of yesteryears. To be able to listen to the unspoken messages that life whispers in her breeze, her touch, and her aromas. For what I then heard and communicated to the young girl, stopped her in her tracks, providing a much needed moment of reprieve. Its wisdom was pertinent for me too. Just as I had thought earlier, despite her wounding she was an angel sent to heal me too.

I had tried to get her to walk mindfully, taking one step at a time, breathing in and out, feeling the grass, really feeling it through the pores in her skin, upwards through her legs and up the root of her *muladhar* (root) chakra into her spine, but she was unable to stop talking. With a tread that was not mindful either but racing ahead of me. However, when I conveyed what the grass suggested, her rant stopped. Those words, whose verbosity hadn't let her grieve the abuse she was walking around and around in her head, were silenced as she paused to absorb the sagacity of the grass that never says "you're walking all over me I'll never be able to heal". It silently carries on its process of growth and decay. The nature of grass doesn't change because we trample it under our feet. It simply grows back green, soothes the senses and grounds us on our planet earth. If the grass can grow back, if the flowers bloom year after year despite being ravaged by the wind, why does the human mind resist letting its healing nature in?

I was as surprised, as her, to hear these words manifest through me. Words I wasn't aware of till I spoke them. In just focussing on the feel of grass through the body, becoming silent enough to sense the vibrations that pass through everything in and around us, seemed to make infinite sense that evening. Later, as we parted and I walked home, something lifted in my heart. It was as if all the thoughts that had been judging and berating me had been stopped and the burden of not being able to cope with life well enough was relieved. I felt light in step and better than I had in the preceding days. My unknown companion, went back to the nowhere she had come from, wanting to stay connected. But I knew that we had done for each other what we could, the rest of the journey to wholeness we had to go our separate ways. Our connection was no longer in the physical realm but, a return to the divinity that had brought us together to walk barefoot in the park, to inhale the heady scent of the Frangipani and listen to the wisdom of the near parched leaves of grass.

Neither the phone camera nor graphite pencils were needed, just one's momentary attention was enough to connect with consciousness itself, drawing upon the wisdom of its all-pervasive nature.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Timothy lives and works in Abbotsford, Victoria. He studied Art History at Monash University and trained formally as a painter at The School of Encouragement in the late 90s in Byron Bay under inspirational teachers and painters, Lise Temple and Roland Weight. Timothy paints the light and colour of Australia and has an abiding love of these qualities in Van Gogh, The Australian Impressionist School and abstract painters of the 20th century such as Pollock, Kandinsky and Rothko. Timothy is the recipient of numerous awards and prizes and has sold work in Australia, the U.S and the U.K. He has completed 3 en plein air painting tours at Mornington Peninsula in 2018, Gippsland in 2020 and Northern New South Wales in 2022. He now creates large abstract works in oil with paint applied gesturally and impasto, with an emphasis on colour, light, texture, repetition, space and overall design. He has developed a unique approach to these formal qualities over his 27 years of practice and seeks always to explore more deeply the relationship between painting and music.

TIMOTHY DELL

ABSTRACT INTERIORS FROM MELBOURNE

Artworks

The Abstract Interiors are an exploration of spaces and objects broken down and recreated from fragments into designs which reflect my confinement during and after the Covid lockdowns in Melbourne. More generally they bring to the fore the fragmentary nature of existence and the fragmentary nature of contemporary life.

The dark orange and red hues of the paintings address the intensity of isolation.



Timothy Dell



ABSTRACT INTERIOR #8 83CM XX 100CM

ABSTRACT INTERIOR #3 76CM X 76CM



ABSTRACT INTERIOR #1 120CM X 120CM

ABSTRACT INTERIOR #4 122CM X 92CM



ABSTRACT INTERIOR #5 83CM 100CM



ABSTRACT INTERIOR #7 120CM X 120CM

ABSTRACT INTERIOR #2 61CM 76CM



Nguyen Huy Hung was born 1981 in Cam Pha, Quang Ninh. He currently lives and works in Hanoi. Prior to founding *Mixed Art*, a creative art space for all people, both children and adults, in Hanoi, Nguyen Huy Hung spent a number of years perfecting his art. He paints both in oil and other materials. His passion is traditional Vietnamese lacquer artwork, which requires a high degree of technical ingenuity.

NGUYEN HUY HUNG

The Keeper of Timeless Traditional Vietnamese Artwork

This Vietnamese artform is a lengthy and tedious process that requires painstaking attention to detail. The onslaught of modernity is, in a manner of speaking, diluting the essence of age-old traditions. Thus, the artist sees himself as a *Keeper of Time* – someone who is faithfully preserving an artform for posterity. There is a story in the artworks that the artist feels should never be forgotten and what better way to do this than to use the Vietnamese lacquer technique.

The following images of artworks are but a glimpse of the rich soul of the Vietnamese artist.



Nguyen Huy Hung



Thanh bình - Peace - 50 x70cm.



Hoa thiên điều - Bird of Paradise Flower - 50 x70 cm.



Hoa chuối chín cúi đầu - Ripe banana flowers bow - 30 x 40cm.



Giờ nghỉ trưa - Break time - 35 x 45cm



Ô ăn quan - Mandarin square - 60 x 60cm



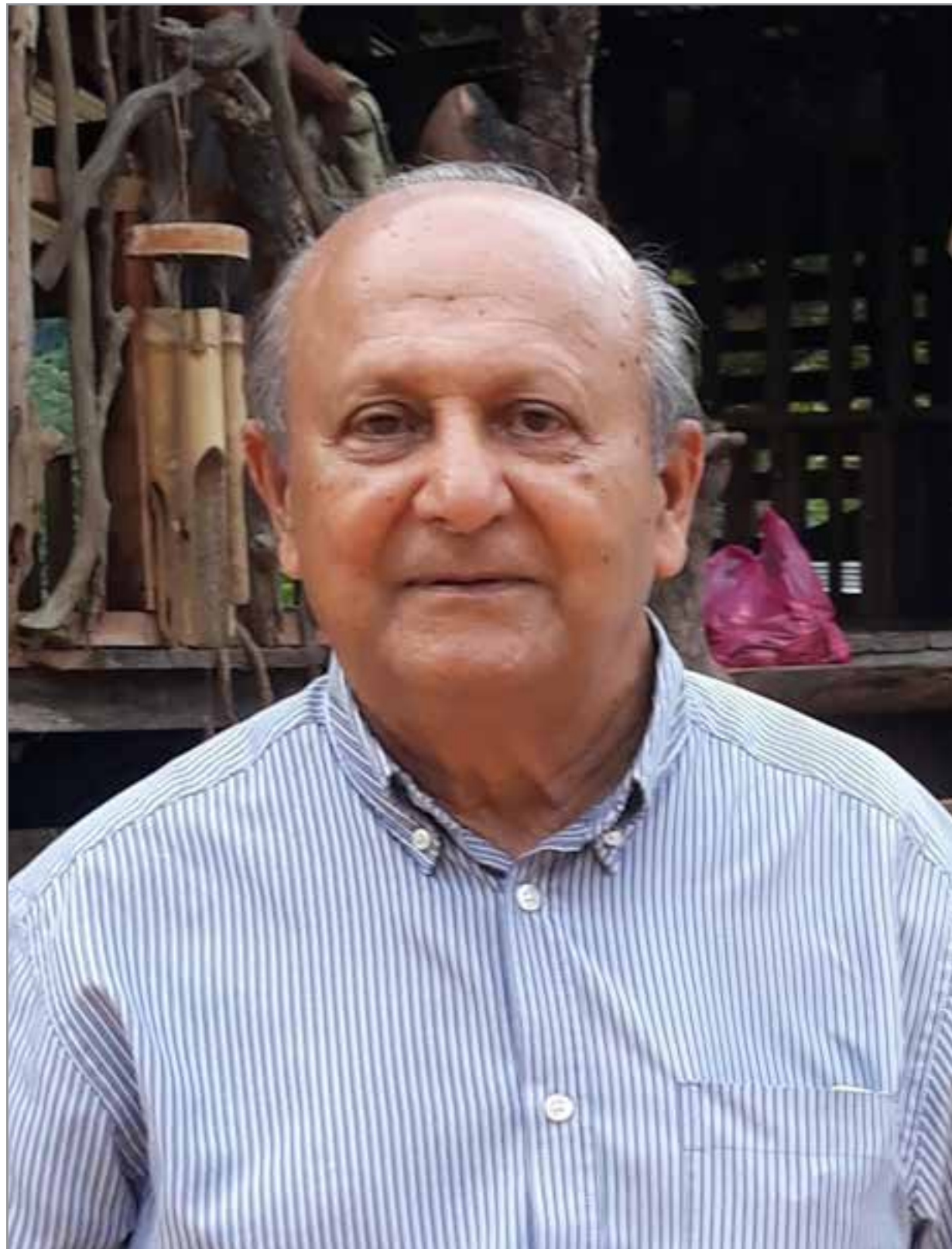
Hội làng qua ngõ - The village festival through alley - 44 x 60cm



Lũy tre làng một ngày đã cũ - The old village bamboo hut - 30 x 40cm



Phố hoa - Flowers street - 60 x 80cm.



Devinder Raj grew up in Malacca (Melaka), where he attended Malacca High School. He furthered his education by completing his Teacher Training at the Malayan Teachers College in Kuala Lumpur. Subsequently, in 1970, he earned a degree in Chinese Studies from The University of Malaya. In 1982, he pursued a Diploma in TEFL at the University of Sydney. Devinder Raj has enriched his educational journey with extensive international experiences. He participated in four, 4-week courses on teaching English in the United Kingdom, supported by the British Council. Throughout his career, Devinder Raj has been dedicated to education. He began his teaching career in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, Malaya, where he taught English and geography. He later transitioned into roles at the Ministry of Education in Malaya, serving as a Language Officer in the Schools Division, and at the British Council in Kuala Lumpur, where he worked as an English Language Projects Officer. He also contributed to education in Beijing, China, at Beijing Inti Management College, and at the National University of Laos, where he volunteered for two years. His professional journey culminated in his role as an External Verifier for Language programs for City & Guilds in Kuala Lumpur, covering the Asia-Pacific Region. Presently, Devinder Raj dedicates his time to writing books on Malayan history. His published works include “Where Eighty-Four Languages Were Once Spoken: An Account of the History of Melaka from 1400 to 1824,” “The Influences of Early History on Multicultural Melaka,” and “Linkages: A Brief Description of the Kingdoms of the Malay Peninsula and the Kingdoms of Southeast Asia.”

DEVINDER RAJ

Teaching English in Asia

Teaching English in an Asian country is a journey that offers a blend of personal and professional rewards while presenting unique challenges. This venture provides an unparalleled opportunity for cultural immersion, allowing you to experience local customs, traditions, and ways of life firsthand. Embracing these cultural differences, rather than being critical of them, can be a remarkable advantage. Additionally, teaching English in Asia can enhance your language skills, not only in English but also in the local language. It requires delving deep into your linguistic toolbox to convey messages effectively.

The challenge lies in working with students who may have limited proficiency in English, making it difficult to convey complex ideas and concepts that may be unfamiliar to them. However, this experience is a valuable addition to your resume, demonstrating your ability to communicate adeptly and adapt to diverse teaching.

In some countries, classrooms can be overcrowded, making it challenging to provide individualized attention and feedback. With proper training, you can utilise group activities and educational apps if available, to reach out to your students effectively. Some Asian countries offer a low cost of living, allowing you to save money for travel adventures within the country and neighbouring regions. Nevertheless, in some places, suitable living accommodations near your workplace may be scarce, as I experienced when teaching in the outskirts of Beijing. I was provided with an apartment on the fifth floor that did not have a lift and inadequate heating.

Devinder Raj

The experience of teaching English in a foreign country can make your resume stand out to potential employers. It showcases your ability to work independently, adapt to new environments, and communicate effectively across cultural boundaries. For instance, my experience teaching at a college in Beijing and volunteering at the National University of Laos helped me secure a job with City & Guilds as an External Verifier for language-related programs in Southeast Asia when I returned to my hometown in Malaya.

To be an effective English teacher in Asia, you must localise your teaching materials by incorporating local names, issues, and stories relevant to your students. Use visual aids, gestures, and simplified language to help students connect with your lessons, especially if they struggle with cultural references and idiomatic expressions. Encourage students to practice speaking and listening outside the classroom, providing opportunities for them to communicate during group and pair work activities.

Adopt a variety of teaching styles to cater to different learning preferences among your students, utilizing visual, auditory, and kinesthetic activities. As a teacher ensure that the lesson time in the classroom is not dominated by the teacher talk. Time must be provided for the students to ask questions and present their views and some writing work.

Encourage students to watch English language media at home to improve their listening skills and pronunciation. In cases where classes are crowded, take the learning experience outside the classroom with activities like treasure hunts, role playing and project work.

In some countries, rote learning is prevalent, as seen in China. It is not uncommon for students to memorise and reproduce essays in exams, which can pose challenges for teachers and administrators in ensuring fair assessment. Cultural differences may also lead to students seldom asking questions in class, creating an interesting dynamic to navigate.

Some schools in Asia may lack suitable resources, requiring teachers to create their own materials. Additionally, traditional assessment methods in some countries may not effectively gauge students' communication skills, making it necessary for teachers to engage in constructive dialogue with administrators.

Navigating administrative requirements and red tape within Asian education systems can be time-consuming and frustrating. Despite these challenges, English teachers can take several steps to succeed: staying updated on language trends, employing effective teaching methods, and establishing a positive classroom environment. Building strong rapport with students, adapting to their specific needs, and emphasizing clear and effective communication are keys to success in the dynamic world of teaching English in Asia.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas

2010 - 2023

13
YEARS

Live encounters

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