

Dolls' houses tell Goa's stories

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Dolls' houses tell Goa's stories

By - Flexcia D'Souza

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Over 400 contributors from across Goa have got together to create a unique installation comprising 200 dolls' houses at the Museum of Goa in Pilarne. Interestingly, while the project is called the Giant Dolls' House, each house is a miniature artwork within a shoebox. But then, the many artists and their sensibilities have created a narrative that connects with Goa's vast and multi-faceted cultural landscape.

The venture is an international collaborative arts project founded by London-based architect, Catja de Haas. The project, which usually revolves around the idea of the home, took a different form in Goa, where different groups here were asked, 'What does Goa mean to you?' The boxes were created in response to the question. The project has travelled across the world before it came to Goa. The team conducted several workshops and invited many to be a part of the project, and were surprised by the sheer interest of people from all walks of life.

How the project took shape in Goa

The project was inaugurated on April 20 by Catja, where she shared the idea behind it with the audience. It was followed by a storytelling session with Rochelle D'silva who, with her stories, led the audience into the world of these miniature boxes and beyond.

The evening also had talks that included photographer David de Souza speaking on his and Charmayne's invisible house, architect Hyacinth Pinto speaking on why she loves building with rammed earth and social entrepreneur Ricardo Rebello speaking on creating a green and sustainable building in Panjim.

"The aim of the project is to make people aware of the importance of a home and a community for all and to celebrate diversity. It engages local communities. We try to engage with groups that would not normally be involved in the dialogue and the installations can be used as conversation pieces, to tell stories, or just to look at. In Goa, the experience has been pretty good — it was a great place to execute the project. It gave me a chance to explore Goa in a different way, by connecting to people and learning their stories," Catja told us.

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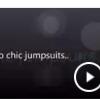
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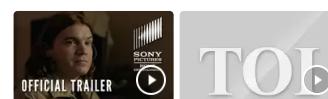
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students, migrant settlers in Indira Nagar, fishermen from Cacra, people from Bookworm community library, several schools, artists, architects, the Russian

community in Goa, tourists and orphaned children," says Noreen van Holstein, who brought the project to Goa and facilitated it by connecting with communities.

Varied stories in every shoebox

Each box has a story to tell, and all the boxes are connected with ladders, to represent one large community that forms Goa. "Some of the stories are very simple, like a six-year-old created her ideal home, her living room with her family. However, some focussed on more diverse topics like religion, culture, bio-diversity, festivals and architecture. Some depict contrasting scenarios like the beaches and the alcohol in the front and a more varied local culture in the backdrop," says Louise Ten Bosch, who facilitated the workshops and helped with the project.

The boxes are a riot of colour and unique designs. Then there are boxes depicting more serious issues like how capitalism is taking over in Goa, conflict between development and nature, and how Goa faces all sorts of abuse to accommodate the growing number of tourists and people who decide to settle here. "People are selling their land for quick money, and someone who loves Goa and wishes to get a holiday home gets one. But it all comes at a cost — all the greenery is slowly disappearing," said Noreen, explaining her eco-friendly box that pictured this reality beautifully.

There were boxes made by housewives, depicting their ideal home where their child is sleeping or sitting by themselves and they can take a break and just sit in their living room. "But then we've also had architects who came from Mumbai especially for the project and made miniature models of houses, using their expertise in the field," says Noreen. The materials used varied, including cardboard, plastic straws, buttons, used magazines, paper cups, earbuds, seashells and so on. "We encourage people to get their own material during our workshops. A lot of them have used natural local material, because you get a unique box. Some have gone eco-friendly by using just natural materials," says Louise.

End of the article

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