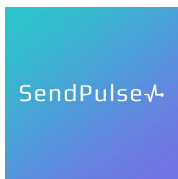


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Over 400 locals were involved in the creation of 'The Giant Dolls House', an art installation which is part of an international initiative by Catja de Haas and is now on display at Museum of Goa, Pilerne, finds NT BUZZ

CHRISTINE MACHADO | NT BUZZ

After many years of working as an architect, mainly on housing projects, London-based architect Catja de Haas decided to do a PhD by design about housing. It was there that she first became interested in exploring miniatures in detail. Miniature, as opposed to the architectural model, explores the minutiae of life, she states.

And thus the idea of the Giant Dolls' House Project first came about. "I became interested in miniatures and the dolls' house as a way of putting forward and exploring ideas about what people make and are interested in," she reveals.

The aim of the project which engages local communities is to make people aware of the importance of a home and a community for all, and to celebrate a united diversity. "Participation in the Dolls' House Project means you are part of the community. The project shows both, the importance of each and every house in an ideal community, as well as the fact that all people are equally idiosyncratic," says de Haas.

The first project was held in October 2014 at the Doodle Bar in London as part of another exhibition conducted by de Haas. From there on, 20 such installations have been organised in Dubai, America, Jordan, and several in London as part of the London Festival of Architecture. The project has generated

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some memorable responses, from a woman telling de Haas that she saw herself live in one of the houses to a surprise visit by a Syrian artist in Dubai “who made a poignant box”, and a student who stayed away from her phone for four hours when she was making her box.

De Haas has also presented her work at several universities around the world including the American University of Dubai (AUD), and the Chelsea College of Arts. And recently the project journeyed to Goa with work beginning six weeks ago, which included conducting various workshops around Goa mainly led by Louise ten Bosch. Over 400 people worked on the Goa-based installation where over 200 boxes were made all with the question in mind: What does Goa mean to you?

Participants included students from the Goa College of Architecture, Bookworm Library attendees in Cacara and Indiranagar, the Women@Work group from Pilerne, the Green Meadows School (Saligao), Ish Kripa Home (Siolim), participants in other MOG workshops, and several local artists and architects.

De Haas who was conducting workshops at the Za’atari refugee camp in Jordan only came down a week ago to assemble the installation. She also gave a talk on her research and work in miniature on April 14 at Museum of Goa, Pilerne.

Apart from being great to look at, the installations can also be used as conversation pieces, to tell stories. As was the case with some of the dolls’ houses created in the Goa project.

“Different boxes from the architecture students addressed issues such as waste in Goa and also depicted the lovely Goan houses. Both of these could start conversations about the traditional houses in Goa or about how to tackle waste,” says de Haas, adding that participants are also encouraged to use recycled materials. This demonstrates how materials can be reused and encourages creativity.

De Haas states that they were impressed with the diversity of dolls’ houses that were created in Goa and the multiple stories they told. “What surprises us each time is that all people are creative and they will always surprise you,” she says.

The project is also said to be a tool for change. “We hope to address specific issues through the stories that come out of the project in a lecture evening, and through the variety of people we invite to participate,” says de Haas. “We don’t envisage radical change but a slight change in perception by the people who see the project and read the stories.”

(The exhibition will be on view till May 14.)

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