

Towards an Indo-German Centre for Experimental Architecture and Material Culture [EAMC] BMBF and DAAD, Germany – ‘A New Passage to India’

Mobility & Dialogue_Mr. Ibai Rigby’s Visit_23rd – 27th Jan. 2023

Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee, India



Photo 1: View of Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, India

Prof. Smriti Saraswat, Dept. of Architecture and Planning, IIT Roorkee invited Ibai Rigby, an experienced architect and currently enrolled as a PhD candidate, in the Department of Architectural Theory at RWTH Aachen University in Germany, for a visit during 23rd January 2023 to 27th January 2023, to discuss the further steps of the ongoing Indo-German Cooperation “Towards an Indo-German Centre for Experimental Architecture and Material Culture”, sanctioned by BMBF and DAAD Germany, under the Scheme “A New Passage to India”, established between IIT Roorkee, India (Prof. Smriti Saraswat) and RWTH Aachen University, Germany (Prof. Axel Sowa), during September 2019 -December 2023. Mr. Ibai Rigby was representing Prof. Axel Sowa.

The brief overview of the activities undertaken during this visit, are presented below:

1. Meeting with the Dean of International Relations



Photo 3: Meeting with Dean IR, IIT Roorkee



Photo 2: Memento presented to Mr. Ibai

On 24th January a meeting was held, Prof. Smriti and Ibai went to attend a meeting in the International Relation (IR) office of IIT Roorkee. The IR office is responsible for international corporations and has been actively involved with many universities across the globe for cross-cultural collaborations.

Prof. Arumugam, the then Dean IR, and Dr. Shantanu Wahal, were present at the meeting. During the meeting, further steps of the collaboration were discussed, along with the other possibilities of cooperation, in the near future, including expansion of the ongoing collaboration and building a consortium of Universities. The outreach of the findings of the ongoing project was also discussed.

The Dean also facilitated Mr. Ibai by presenting him with a memento. This discussion looks forward to further opening the channels for academics and research exchange between IIT Roorkee and RWTH Aachen University.

2. Interaction with the candidates, selected for exchange during June-July 2023

This interaction was held on 25th January 2022. This was organised by Prof. Smriti Saraswat. The agenda of the meeting was the formal introduction and interaction amongst the students selected for exchange and Ibai Rigby. The team comprises of two PhD Scholars, namely (Ms.) Namia Islam and (Ms.) Dikchha Tiwari and two Master students, (Ms.) Isha Dongre and (Mr.) Purussottam Nanda. Research scholar

(Ms.) Narinderjit Kaur, who would be a part of the project as a Research team coordinator was also a part of this meeting. The interaction shaped into a brainstorming session, focusing on the thematic areas and activities of joint research, which are to be accomplished in the coming year. The German exchange students are expected to visit IIT Roorkee in October 2023.



Photos 4a, 4b: Interaction and brainstorming session amongst the members of the exchange team of 2023

3. Meeting with Prof. Kamal Jain

On the morning of 25th January, Prof. Smriti and Ibai had a meeting with Prof. Kamal Jain in the Geomatics Engineering building. Prof. Kamal Jain is a Professor in the Civil Engineering Department of IIT Roorkee. He is famous for his cutting-edge research in the field of photogrammetry, GIS, and remote sensing. He facilitated the visit of his Lab, which was well appreciated by the visiting guest. Mr. Aditya Jain and Mr. Imran Bawa, two Master students accompanied Mr. Ibai to this Lab.

4. Visit to the Central Building Research Institute (CBRI)

Mr. Ibai along with Prof. Smriti, visited the Central Building Research Institute (CBRI), which is the premium research body in the field of building science and engineering. It has various high-end laboratories for research on various construction materials and technologies. Ibai also got a tour of the Rural Technology Park. This visit was facilitated by the Chief Scientist Dr. Ashok Kumar.

5. Presentations by M. Arch. and M. Des. Students

The session opened with the commemoration of Ar. B.V. Doshi, who had left for the heavenly abode. After this, Mr. Ibai was introduced to the audiences by MS. Narinderjit Kaur. At the onset, Prof. Smriti introduced the broad theme of the joint integrated studio (UG, PG and PhD), aligned with the ongoing collaboration, and invited for presentations, the M. Arch. and M. Des. students enrolled in the subjects - Interior Architecture and Material Culture and Interdisciplinary Design respectively. The presentations showcased students' works, focusing on 'Interior Architecture, Material Culture and Design' and 'Development of Documentation Toolboxes'. Prof. Shailesh Ganpule and Prof. Bibuti Ranjan Bhattacharjya, both from Dept. of Design also joined the session.

The current phase of the joint initiative focuses on developing toolboxes, concentrating on material culture in India and Germany, and decoding it by exploring diverse media, such as - films; visual art; design; design-build; festivals; games; crafts and techniques such as- drawings; illustrations; notations; inventories; intuitive methods; emotions etc. The Figure above gives the conceptual representation of the same, where material culture is explored both as an enquiry and an object of study, through diverse lenses, accommodating varied perspectives.

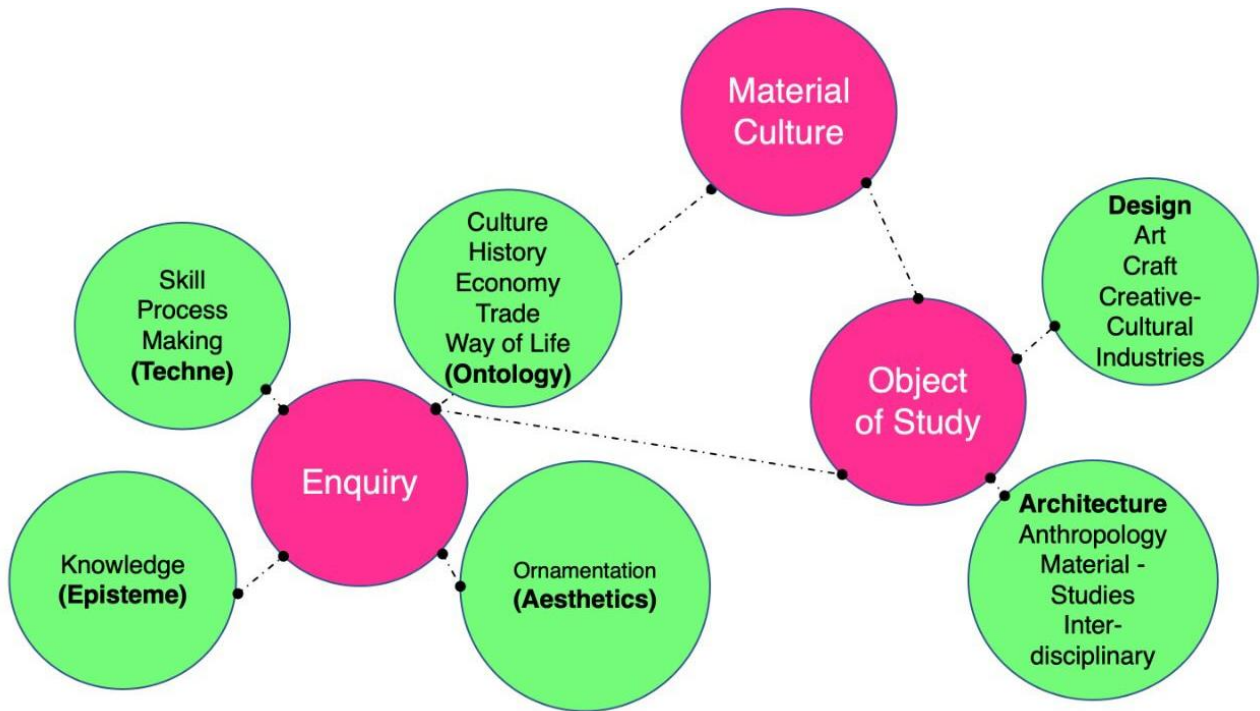


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the design Exercise

The students of M. Arch., M. Des., PhD and B. Arch. are working in terms by identifying relevant cases, decoding them into templates guided by selected parameters, and developing tool-boxes based on them.



Photo 6: Introduction to the Session



Photo 5: Presentation by Prof. Smriti

- The first group (photo 7) has taken up chariot as their study. The chariot is an integral part of chariot festival held every year in Odisha, India dedicated to Lord Jagannath. They aim to analyse the micro-architecture and making of the chariot. This age-old tradition has some very important concerns to answer one of which being the loss of trees and causing alarming environmental issues on one hand while loss of employment and skills on the other. The outcome of their study would be in form of multiple foldable guidebooks.



Photo 7: Presentation on Chariot

- The second group (photo 8) aims to study Vishrambaug Wada in Pune built by Peshwa Baji Rao II. They intend to understand the typology of a wada and its making, thereby developing a toolbox to make people learn about it through Lego. At present such toolboxes are available for some of the world-famous monuments such as the Taj Mahal. These young minds intend to bring in some of the not-so-famous architectural masterpieces thereby making the public learn about them.

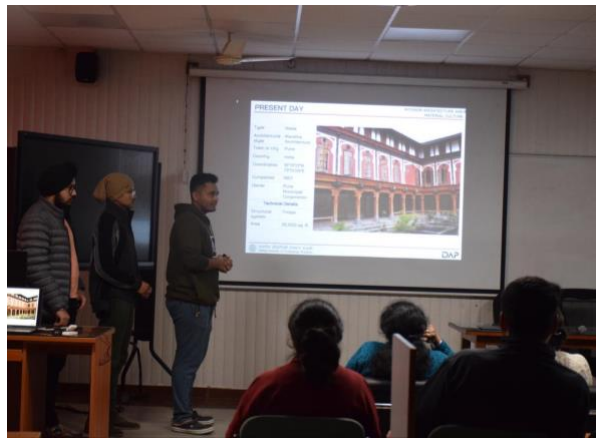


Photo 8: Presentation on Vishrambaug Wada

- The third group intended to unfold India's oldest surviving cast iron building which is in the Kala Ghoda area of Mumbai. This is the Watson Hotel. The group is also looking at cast iron buildings in Shimla. Cast iron is one of the focus areas for the exchange program as well. Hence insights from this work shall be crucial for the project.



Photo 9: Presentation on Chess Board

- The fourth group (photo 9) has taken up the chess board as the object of study, in which they have analysed the evolution of chess boards

around the world. Also, they studied the colour, pattern, number, grid and sequence of geometry on the board. The students also presented the design of various chess pieces and their analogies. The interesting part of the presentation was the live demonstration of using the chess board during the presentation.

- The next group (photo 10) has taken up the topic of hygiene during the menstruation period. They aim to develop a toolbox for the same by decoding the topic through different movies discussing female hygiene issues. The discussion was interesting from the gender equality perspective. It will also help to increase awareness among the population.



Photo 10: Presentation on Films & Movies on female hygiene

- The last group (photo 11) has taken up the metal craft of Bidri, to be decoded and captured through a toolbox. It is a well-known metal handicraft which uses the soil found in the geographical area of Bidar, which gives it a black finish after oxidation. Nowadays, this craft is on the verge of extinction. Hence studying its history; various elements; tools and making process will help us to better to understand the problems faced by artisans as well as proposals that can be done for its revival. Also, this documentation will create a record of each decoded step which can be reciprocated in the future.



Photo 11: Presentation on Bidriware handicraft

6. Discussions over dinner

The following evening was a get-together on a lighter note. Prof. Smriti offered a dinner gathering at her place (photos 12a, b). This dinner was attended by Ibai, Narenderjit, Namia, Dikchha and the family of Prof. Smriti. It was a warm experience of homemade food and Indian culture for everyone. The discussion topic

during the dinner was a bit informal such as culinary habits in Germany, Spain and India, and other cross-cultural similarities and differences were discussed.



Photos 12a, b: Dinner at Prof. Smriti's residence

7. Excursions

On the morning of 26th January, the team of four persons namely, Prof. Smriti, Mr. Ibai, Ms. Narinderjit and Mr. Atul, who is assisting Prof. Smriti in the Master Studio, went on an excursion to nearby areas of Roorkee. The first place to be visited is the Solani Aqueduct (photo 13), which is famous for its detailing, and was built in 1846 over Ganga Canal. It is a brick masonry structure over the Solani River. The structure is considered the engineering marvel of its time. After this place, the team visited the Chilla Dam, which is a hydroelectric power generation dam between the route of Rishikesh and Haridwar. The reservoir area of the dam is open to the public and is a major recreational area for the neighbouring populations as well as tourists. The team was awestruck by the implicit sense of serenity.



Photo 13: Visit to Solani Aqueduct

The team also visited the two cities near Roorkee, which are Rishikesh and Haridwar (photos 14 a – 14d). Both cities are famous for spirituality and tourism. The holy river Ganges flows along these cities, and many temples are present along the *Ghats* (riverbanks). Some of these temples are more than a century

old. Haridwar is also famous for its *Ganga Aarti*, which is a devotional ritual performed on the ghats as the offering to the river. The team observed the cultural landscape and various activities of pilgrims. It was a very fascinating experience for everyone.

After the end of the day, everyone returned to the IIT Roorkee campus.



Photo 14a – 14d: Glimpses from the excursion to Chilla Dam, Haridwar, and Rishikesh

On 27th January, Mr. Ibai had a tour of New Delhi.