

Course Name: Exploring Screwpine craft of Kerala - products and possibilities

Artisan Name: Mrs Mary Joshy

Campus: Bengaluru



शिल्प संगम



About Craft

Screwpine weaving has been one of the traditional crafts of Kerala, using the leaves of the screwpine plant (Latin name Pandanus Utilis, and called kaitha in Malayalam, and kevda in Hindi), an evergreen tropical plant, which are split into strips and woven, primarily to make mats of various types and purposes.

The screwpine craft relies almost entirely on the hand skill of the artisan. After the splits of screwpine are generated through a process involving cutting and slicing followed by chemical treatment, they are hand woven using a simple weave to build rectangular mats of various shapes and sizes, which is their base product. Subsequently, the woven mat becomes the base for making various types of products like boxes and cases of various shapes and sizes, bags, purses, pencil holders, file covers, dustbins and other sorts of containers.

However variations in the weaving techniques (twill weave, denim weave, etc) and other techniques can be used to create a variety of forms like circular forms, long tubular structures, cuboids, etc to develop products like circular mats and wall hangings, and also three dimensional products like cases and bags of different shapes and sizes, purses and lamps. Dyeing the screwpine strips in colours can generate interesting colour combinations in the products.

The simplicity of the crafting process makes this craft fast to learn and easy to explore, but exciting to develop a range of product directions.

About Artisan

Mary Joshy (51 years) hails from Kottapuram in Kodungallur district in Kerala and has been practicing the craft of making screwpine mats and products as well as other natural fibres (like water hyacinth) for over twenty years now. She has participated in multiple workshops and trainings, the most significant has been the Samarth Training for 50 days under Ministry of Textiles, and the USTTAD workshop conducted by NID for Ministry of Minority Affairs which spanned over 45 days. She has participated in multiple exhibitions in and outside Kerala, the most significant of which has been at Dilli Haat in Delhi and WDC exhibition at Marine Drive. Mrs Joshy will be assisted by artisan Krishna KS.

Course Objectives

- Through hands-on engagement, the students will learn the simple technique of weaving with screwpine strips - first the basic weave and then with variations (braiding, twill weave, etc) to create different patterns of the flat mat, and then to build three-dimensional forms.
- Through reflective dialogues and conversations, participants will explore the multifaceted nature of craft—its rituals, cultural significance, and contemporary relevance.
- Through collaborative projects with the artisans and fellow students, they will be able to create various decorative and utilitarian objects showcasing and celebrating the uniqueness and possibilities of this craft.
- The students can explore outcomes that celebrate diversity in thought and contemporary themes in a traditional setting
- Exploring the possibility of intercraft collaborations with other crafts on the campus to create complex product/s

Course Methodology

- Demonstration by Master Craftsperson
- Learning the basics of the craft,
- explorations of traditional forms
- Developing contemporary themes for contemporary narratives and new possibilities
- Making prototypes
- Finishing and displaying new outcomes to encourage

Maximum Number of Participants - 12 to 18