

Living
Home
India 2012

Project Brief

Living Home India is a trans-disciplinary studio to investigate the living needs of low-income housing dwellers in India. The project is a platform for developing innovative furniture and living systems for India's estimated 130 million-person user base. In particular, the team will explore opportunities to develop products and systems for use in the high quality, low-cost housing shells championed by our partner Ashoka--a global association of leading social entrepreneurs implementing solutions to the world's most urgent social problems. Beginning with a ten-day intensive research trip to Bangalore, India, the team will work with users first hand to understand needs and challenges of living in small spaces with high occupancy, and will interface with local craft makers and furniture manufacturers to understand local materials, processes and traditions. Driven by field research, teams will create innovative design solutions culminating in full-size working prototypes, towards manufacturing for real world implementation.

Field Research Topics

USERS:

Day In The Life
Aspirations / Struggles
Family Structure
Aesthetic Values
Space/Furniture Adaptation

CRAFTSPEOPLE

MANUFACTURERS

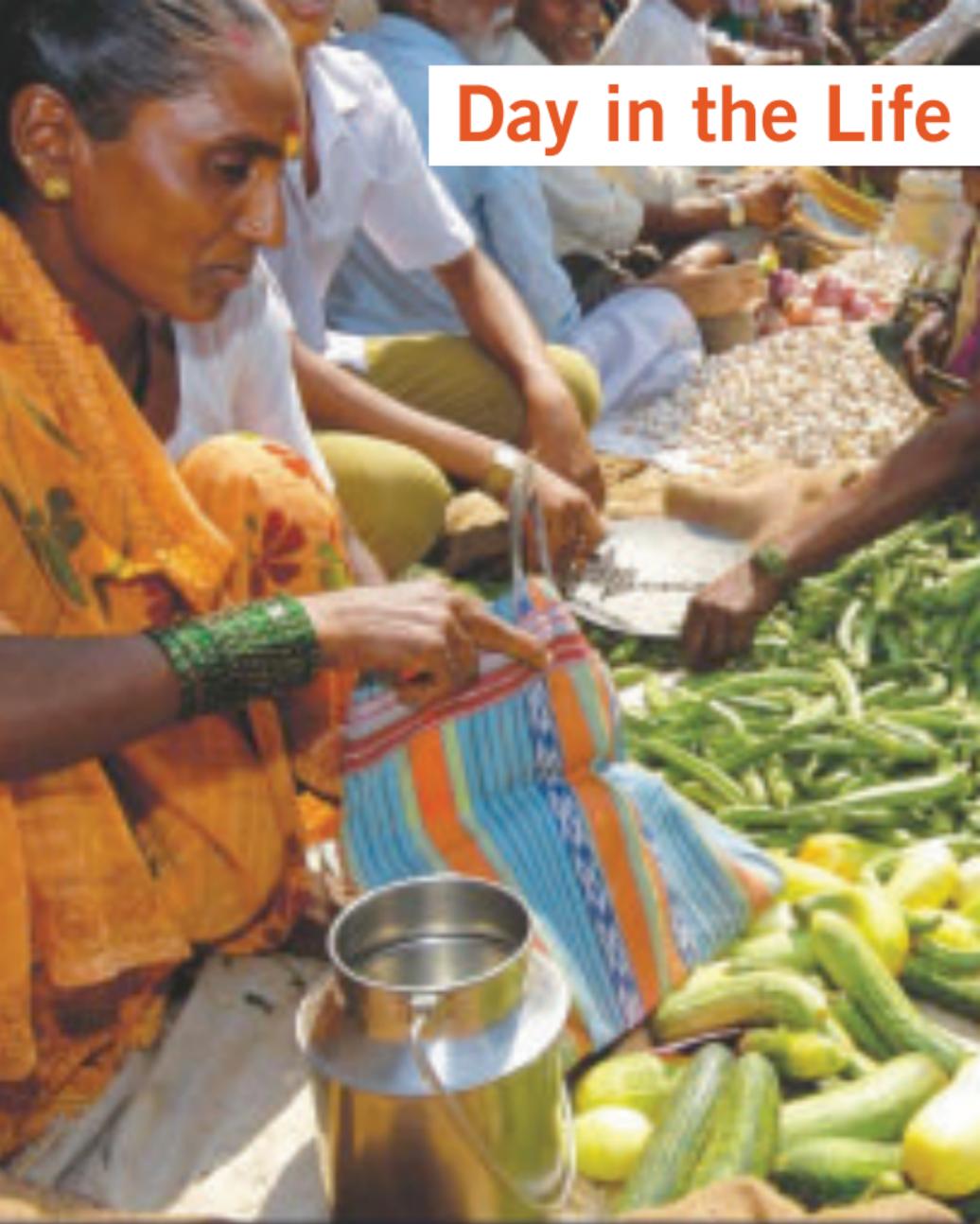


hosted by:
Environmental Design Department

designmatters

● Art Center College of Design

Day in the Life



Catalog a day in the life of individuals and families, with special attention to the role furniture and fixtures play in daily activities. How can design improve quality of life?

Day in the Life

Suggested Methodologies:

Sharing Photo Journals: Print & bring 10 snapshots of your family, design work, pets, etc. to share. Give inexpensive/disposable digital cameras to family members to keep a camera journal of their daily life, considering how they interface with their living space. Ask each family member to narrate the pictures.

Participate in daily activities: Participate in and/or observe daily activities (dining, relaxing, cooking, socializing, studying, etc). Ask “teach me how you eat or rest, etc?”

Quantitative Questions:

Aim for measurable answers. Ask questions like: How much time do you spend working at home? How much do you earn? How much do you pay for electricity? How much time do you spend with your family? What time do you wake up and go to bed? How much do you spend on decorating (pictures, art, rugs)?

Qualitative Questions:

Based on the photographs and your observations, construct a storyboard of the family members' daily life. Observe how people eat, cook, store things, sleep, relax, socialize, etc. conversations.

Keep in Mind:

People can change behavior when they are being observed. Become genuinely interested in people's life and demonstrate sincere appreciation.

Aspirations / Struggles



What are people's goals and aspirations, and what keeps people from achieving them?

How can we best impact this area?

Aspirations / Struggles

Suggested Methodologies:

Collage or Card Sorting: Prepare a mini visual encyclopedia of images ahead of time & gather aspirational images from magazines in India. Ask participants to build a collage & to explain the meaning of their image choice and arrangement.

Family History & Future: Ask participants to look through family photo albums together, listen to stories about the past, and ask about hopes & dreams of family members in the pictures. What are any roadblocks along the way & how can they be overcome?

Quantitative Questions:

How much money people make vs. how much they need to get by. Create an itemized list of household expenses with needs vs wants.

Qualitative Questions:

Ask people what steps are they taking to achieve their dreams and goals. Find out what they believe are able to accomplish, at the individual and community level. Also explore what larger structural issues (policy, class, caste) might prevent them from achieving their goals. What could change, beyond the individual/community level that might allow them to achieve their desired future?

Keep in Mind:

Gather direct, unfiltered quotes.
Ask “why” 5 times, to get to the real why.

Family Structures



Document the social structure of family members living together in a household.

How can design best impact this area?

Family Structures

Suggested Methodologies:

Family Member Schedule & Interactions: Create a schedule of each family member's activities over the course of the day, and how they intersect.

Map Family Members' Daily Patterns: Map different family members sleeping patterns, eating habits, and other activities in the home. How do they interact with each other? How do they have personal time and communal time? What do they consider public and private areas of the home?

Quantitative Questions:

_ Document the unique physical needs of each age group/gender. How do these needs impact the design of furniture for the different household members?

_ Who makes specific purchasing decisions (husband / wife / grandparent)?

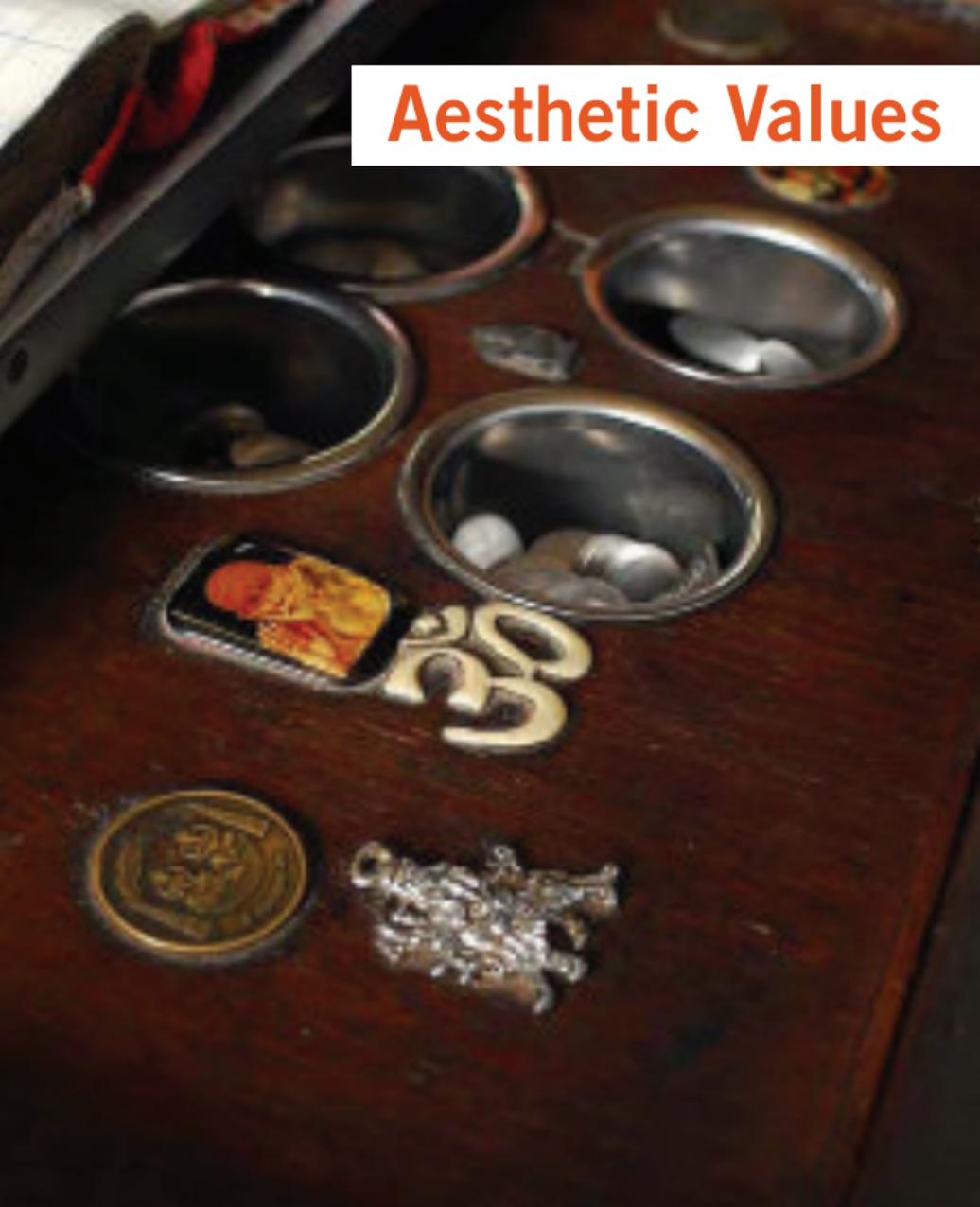
Qualitative Questions:

_ What are the values/desires/cultural associations of each age group in the family (children, young adults, parents, elderly)? How are these shifting? Also consider the role of gender.

_ Is privacy important? How is privacy created?

_ What are individual vs group spaces? Public vs private spaces?

Aesthetic Values



What belongings do people most value? Why? How are tastes developed at different socio-economic levels? What are current trends & how do consumers learn about them?

Aesthetic Values

Suggested Methodologies:

Guided Tour: Ask people if you can accompany them on a guided tour of belongings that they value. Note what people collect and why; how they store or care for valuables; whether they prefer heirloom/traditional objects or new/contemporary objects.

Market Visits: Visit markets/shops where people at different socio-economic levels buy furniture. Note differences/similarities in colors, styles, displays, how they pay, etc? Or, ask: if we were to go shopping together for furniture, what would you look for?

Emergency Scenario: Ask: in an emergency, if you could only save three belongings, what would they be? Why?

Qualitative Questions:

_What are trends, styles, and color preferences at different socio-economic levels (i.e BoP / middle / upper classes)?

_Where do you get ideas for the home? Where do aesthetic references / aspirations come from (i.e. soap operas, films, magazines, etc)? What is the role of tradition / religion? What is people's awareness of contemporary design?

_Do you see furniture as a fashion? In your opinion, are there different styles of furniture?

_What's more appealing: old/classic furniture? Or brand new?

_How long do you keep furniture? Would you prefer to spend more on a piece of furniture to last a lifetime, or save money on something that won't last as long?

_What is the meaning of sustainability in this context?

_Visually record colors, form & materials.

Space Adaptation



Document the low-cost housing organization. How have families adapted furniture & space to fit their needs? What are people's biggest challenges & how can design address them?

Space Adaptation

Suggested Methodologies:

Map Home: Create rich plan diagrams that show materials, colors, furnishings, dimensions, as well as paths family members take to perform daily activities. (See Family card)

Ideal Home Layout: Draw a home plan, with all existing furniture. Ask the head of household to rearrange her current house, utilizing all the same furniture, and create her ideal configuration. Ask why & what's missing that would make it better?

Co-creation: Ask families take pictures of issues / problems with furniture & areas of the home. Print out the pictures, and draw over them to co-create solutions; or use local materials to mock up a simple solution to a specific problem the family identifies.

Hacks & Mods: Ask people to show you the adaptations they've created to their current homes. Discover their motivations.

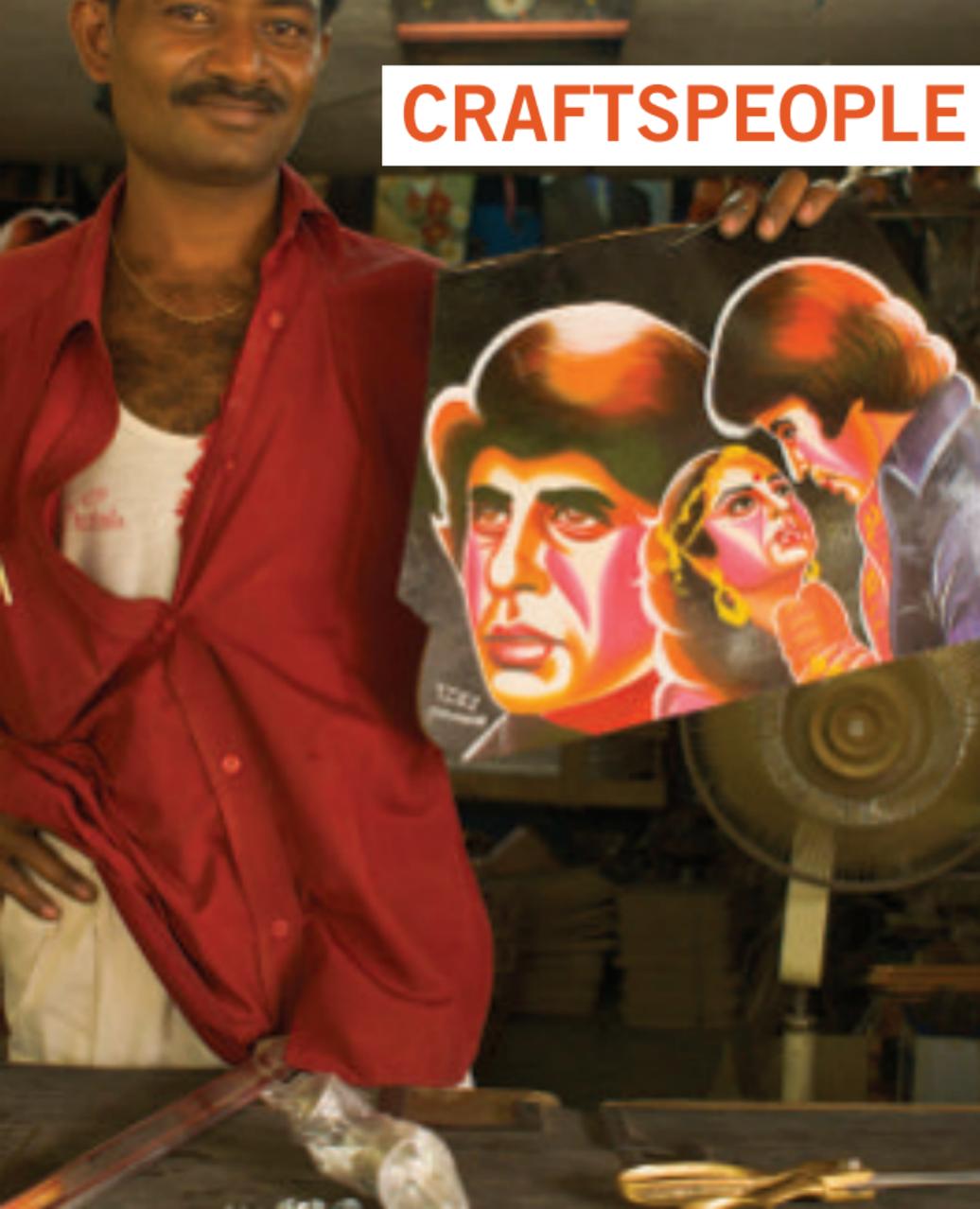
Quantitative Questions:

_Measure your stride & pace out distances. Take flat-on façade/ material photos with scale reference & stitch together panoramas.
_Where do people purchase furniture? How do they pay? Transport back to their homes? Where do the goods come from?

Qualitative Questions:

_What do people want and need from their living spaces? What are problems people see with current fixtures & furniture? What do they wish for? How do people currently transform their spaces over the course of the day?

CRAFTSPEOPLE



Explore local craft traditions, and craftspeople's processes and techniques.

What are key inspirations and opportunities for your design?

CRAFTSPEOPLE

Suggested Methodologies:

Visual & Material Catalogue: document the craftsman at work. Notice technique, details, materials & colors. Gather physical samples, if possible. Photograph similar colors and details around the city – look for a common visual & material vocabulary.

Quantitative Questions:

_How much do your pieces cost to produce (materials / labor / overhead)? Wholesale and retail price?

_What is your markup & how do you determine it?

_How could you make a bigger profit?

Qualitative Questions:

_What do you enjoy about your work? What do you dislike?

_How did you learn your craft?

_Do you feel like your work is appreciated by society?

_Do you have competition? How do you differentiate from your competition? (i.e. quality, price, style, etc)

_How & where do you sell your wares? How do you reach your customers?

_Investigate the history of craft techniques, the role of tradition, and any contemporary adaptations.

_Compare these craft processes to the furniture manufacturers.

MANUFACTURERS



Explore furniture manufacturing techniques & processes. How do manufacturers define their market?

What are key resources and opportunities?

MANUFACTURERS

Suggested Methodologies:

Production Process: Map the process of building a piece of furniture as it goes through the factory.

Supply Chain/Distribution: Map the manufacturer's supply chain and distribution channel (include costs).

Quantitative Questions:

How much do your pieces cost to produce (materials / labor / overhead)? What is wholesale and retail price?

Qualitative Questions:

_ Compare & contrast manufacturing processes with those in the US? With local craftspeople?

_ How does a manufacturer differentiate itself in the market? (i.e. quality, price, style, customer service, etc)

- What is the manufacturers top priority - function, aesthetics, price, or.....?

_ How do furniture manufacturers define their market? Who is their customer? How to they advertise / reach their customers?

_ What are current sustainable practices? And opportunities for improved sustainability?
