



Unblock Hundarman



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Booklet designed by Helene Thebault

Roots Collective

Cultural activation

The team gathers people from various backgrounds like architects, designers, social workers; each one is an explorer in his own way.

All are driven by the power of creativity to make the most of what is already there.

We value tangible and intangible patrimony both. Identifying potential in abandoned resources, we seek to maximize it to ensure an adaptive & proactive use.

An old site falling apart represents for us multiple opportunities:

- investigate on its history, and more importantly the stories of people around
- question the purpose of conservation, offering alternatives to oblivion
- sharing knowledge, experiment & awake scopes of action through educative workshops
- share our vision, reflect & debate during social events.



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Unlock Hundarman

Documentation & activation of the cultural patrimony of Hundarman

As the jeeps from Kargil ride up the Hundarman hill, leaving behind the mighty Suru river, sign boards appear warning people to watch out for landmines and possibility that the “ememy” might be watching.

These are memories from 1971, when India and Pakistan were at war and the village of Hundarman was claimed by India.

The villagers fearing the Indian army fled to Pakistan leaving behind their homes. They left their houses & left behind almost every possession they had, from their French coffee, Karachi biscuits, books from Lahore, medicines from Germany and cutlery from England.

Their homes are frozen in time since last 45 years. Only in the summer of 2015, team of Roots Collective opened it and found the stories of people scattered around the village.

Roots Collective conducted workshops to document the artifacts, the architecture and the stories of the people of Hundarman.

The findings were then shared with the public through exhibitions in Kargil Old TOWn, in Hundarman itself on the occasion of the IALS conference (2015) and in Delhi at India Habitat Center on World Heritage Day (2016).

These initiatives aim at raising awareness on Hundarman and its potential as a historic and cultural center. The vision of Roots Collective for the Unlock Hundarman project is to involve the inhabitants in an activation process to bring the site back to life, preserve it and generate resources from it. This process has started already, people can now visit the site and the “Museum of Memories” created by Roots Collective, students of CEPT University (Ahmedabad) and residents of Hundarman.

Hundarman

Hundarman village is a terraced settlement, located around 12km from Kargil, very close to the Pakistan border.

Since 1971 the houses are abandoned, a few families still live in their ancestors land and have formed a new Hundarman village, 200m up in the mountain from the original one.

People are still using the lower storeys of the old settlement for agricultural purposes, storing tools and grass.



Narratives of Ladakh

Documentation workshop in Kargil Old Town & Hundarman village

In collaboration with INDUS University (Ahmedabad) & Munshi Aziz Bhat Museum of Central Asian and Kargil Trade Artifacts, the workshop conducted in May 2015 aimed at documenting the tangible and intangible patrimony of Kargil Old Town and Hundarman village.

Participants investigated Kargil Old Bazar, meeting the shopkeepers, their family and friends, who shared a bit of their stories. The old Caravanserai, which is in advance stage of decay, was also documented with measure drawings and sketches.

In Hundarman, participants met the residents and learnt about their story through the Indo-Pakistan conflict. They documented these memories along with the architecture of the terraced settlement and the large number of artifacts left in the houses, witnesses of the historical events.

Image: Shop of Lala Amar Chand Devraj in Kargil. Lala Amar Chand came to Kargil from Hoshiyarpur in Punjab for trade. His business flourished and he was trading with Central Asian and Chinese merchants. His family still runs the shop. Kargil, 2015





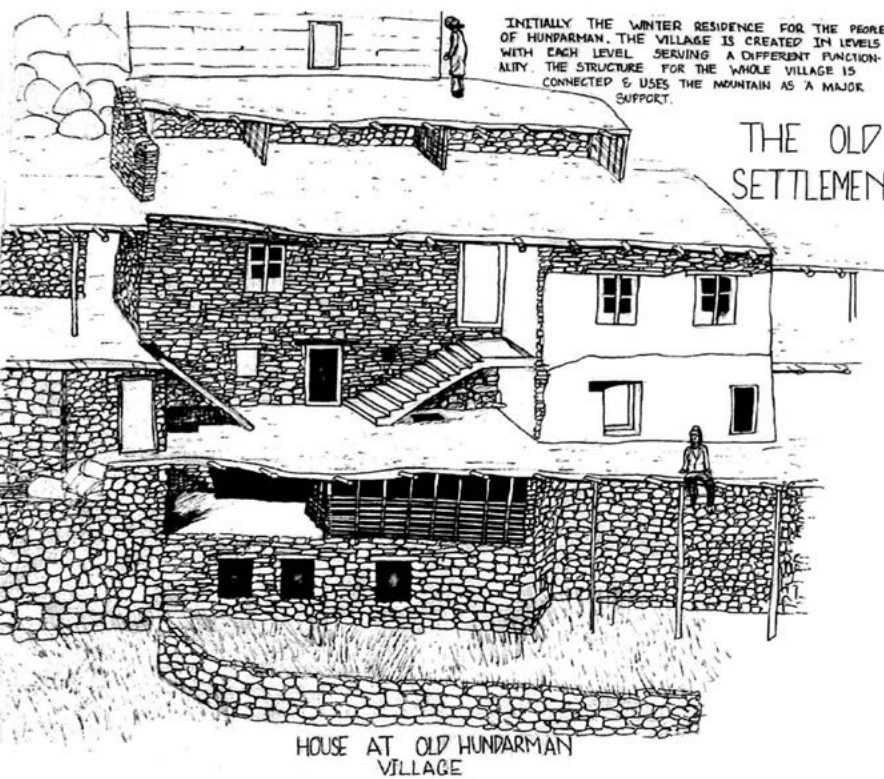
An old residence in the middle of Kargil Bazar was built probably in late 19th century. The wattle and daub 3 storey structure is an excellent example of Balti architecture style. The building is currently empty and might be demolished. Kargil, 2015



A Kargili shopkeeper proudly shows the photograph of his uncle who was in Skardu (Baltistan) during partition of India. The borders were closed and he could never return. Such stories of families being separated is very common in Kargil. Kargil, 2015



Team of Roots Collective exploring the houses of Hundarman. All the items found in the houses are photo documented and numbered. The total number of artefacts is 85. Hundarman, 2015



SPACES

THE OLD SETTLEMENT HAD COMPACT & CLOSELY DESIGNED SPACES. THERE WAS ONE ROOM USED AS A KITCHEN, STORAGE & BED ROOM, FOR MORE WARMTH. THE NEW SETTLEMENT IS OPEN & SPACIOUS. THERE ARE DIFFERENT ROOMS FOR DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS & MORE ROOMS ARE USED AS REQUIRED.

HEIGHT OF THE ROOMS

THE OLD SETTLEMENT HAD A VERY LOW ROOF HEIGHT OF ABOUT 1.1M. THIS WAS DONE TO STAY WARM. THE NEW SETTLEMENT HAS A HEIGHT OF 2-6M. THE HEIGHTS IN THE OLD SETTLEMENT VARIED ACCORDING TO VARYING FUNCTIONS OF THE ROOM.

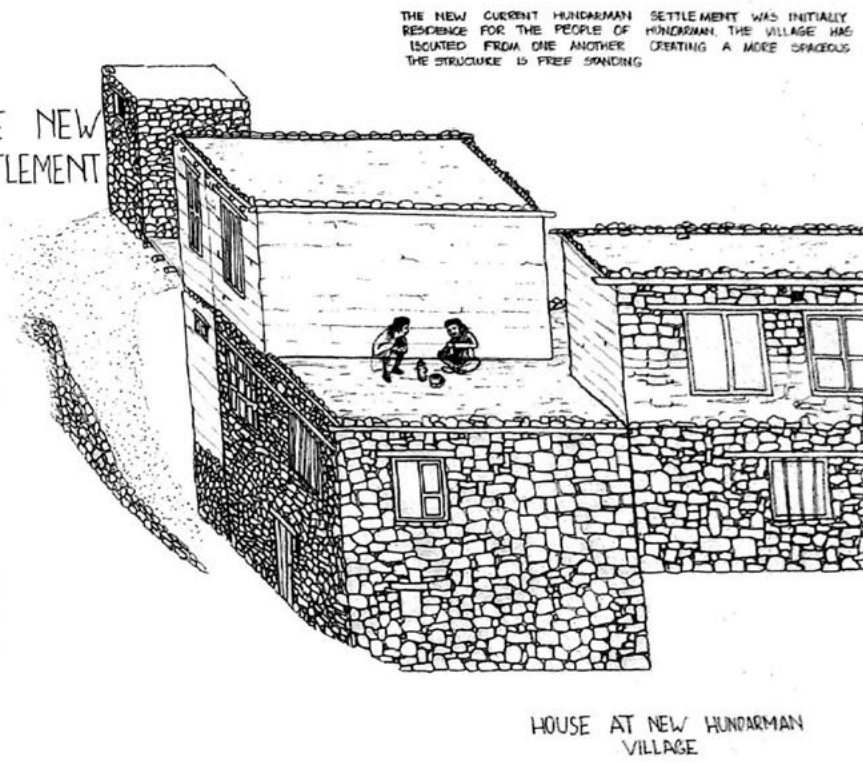
THE NEW SETTLEMENT

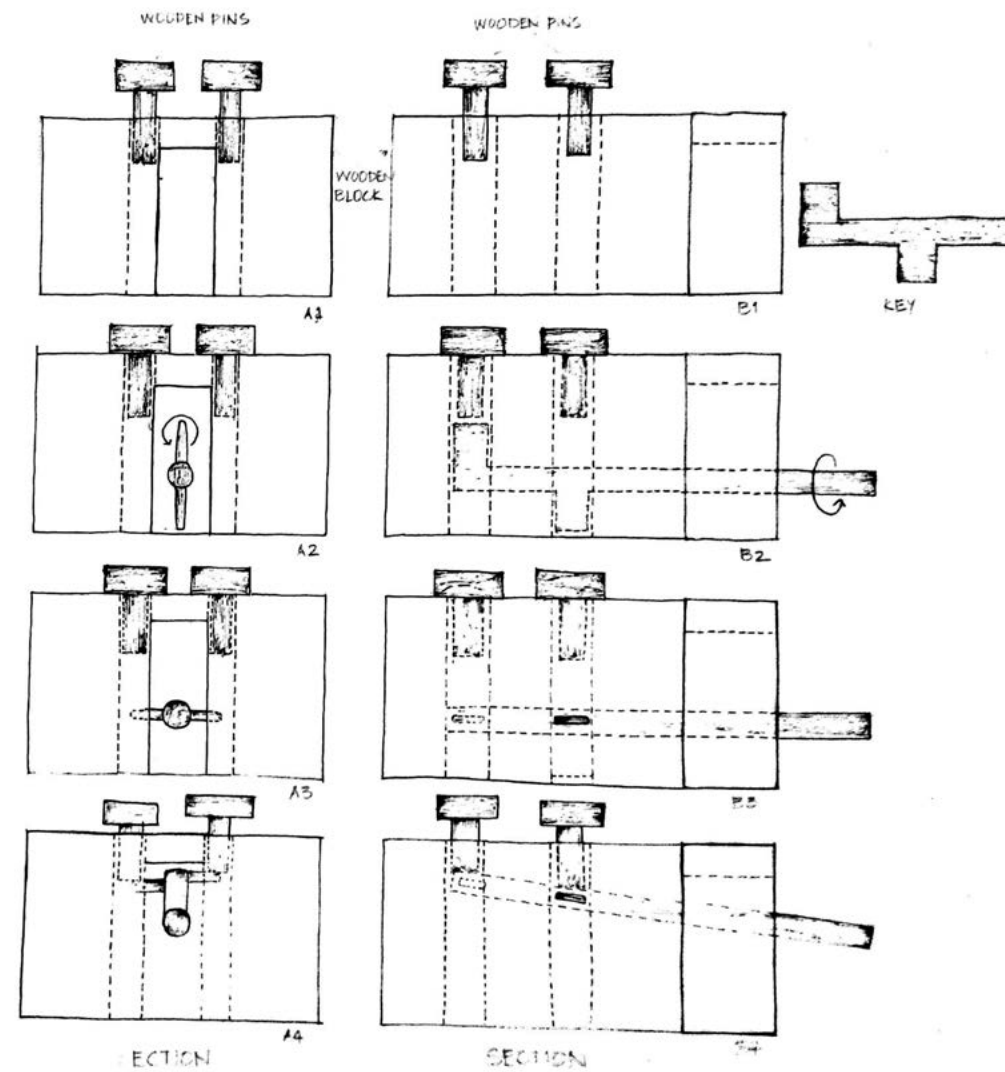
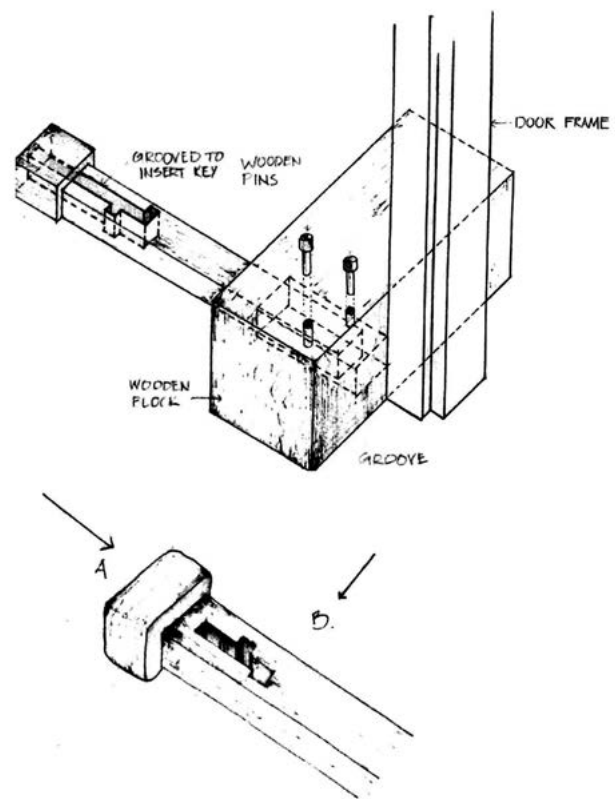
BUILDING MATERIALS

THE OLD VILLAGE USED STONE WALLS & WOODEN COLUMNS TO TRANSFER THE LOADS. THE ROOF USED WOODEN BEAMS LINED WITH TWIGS & MUD. THE NEW VILLAGE ONE CAN SEE A VARIETY OF BUILDING MATERIALS. THE CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES & MATERIALS OF THE OLD VILLAGE ARE STILL USED BUT NOW CONCRETE IS ALSO USED FOR ADDITIONAL STABILITY.

WINDOWS

THE WINDOWS AT THE OLD SETTLEMENT WERE SMALL & HENCE THE ROOMS WERE QUITE DARK. THE WINDOWS AT THE NEW SETTLEMENT ARE BIGGER & HENCE LET A LOT OF LIGHT IN LIGHTENING UP THE ROOMS.





Detail drawing of Hundarman doors locking system. Each house has its own door lock and corresponding wooden key, a unique detail in Ladakh region. Hundarman, 2015



Street exhibition in Kargil Balti Bazar, showcasing the work done during the workshop, comprising of measure drawings, sketches, etc. The exhibition revealed the tangible and intangible patrimony of Kargil & Hundarman in a semi-historical, semi-fictional narrative. Kargil, 2015



Roots Collective exhibited the content of the "Narratives of Ladakh" workshop once more in July 2015, in Hunderman itself, on the occasion of the IALS (International Association of Ladakh Studies) conference held in Kargil. The exhibition was an explorative and participatory experience during which people shared sketches, poems and visions about the settlement. Hunderman, 2015

Unlock Hundarman

memories & impressions

On the occasion of the World Heritage Day 2016, Roots Collective presented "Unlock Hundarman, memories & impressions" an exhibition on the cultural heritage of Kargil at India Habitat Center in Delhi. The exhibition was supported by DRONAH Foundation and the Department of Culture of Jammu & Kashmir Government.

The exhibition explored Kargil region as a crossroad of the Silk route, being equidistant from Srinagar, Leh and Zaskar. The caravanserai in old Kargil town housed numerous traders from Kashmir, Tibet, China and Central Asia. The business activities brought with them rich cultural exchanges one can still witness in Kargil today, from food habits to crafts and dresses.

Hundarman village is a testimony of these cultural exchanges. A lot can be learnt from the socio-cultural practices of the terraced settlement through its architecture and the numerous artifacts left in the homes, frozen in time since last 45 years.

In this exhibition Roots Collective shared the findings collected through explorative research, revealing the potential of Hundarman as a cultural center, sharing its vision for its future.

Image: Poster of the exhibition. Delhi, 2016

Unlock Hundarman

memories & impressions

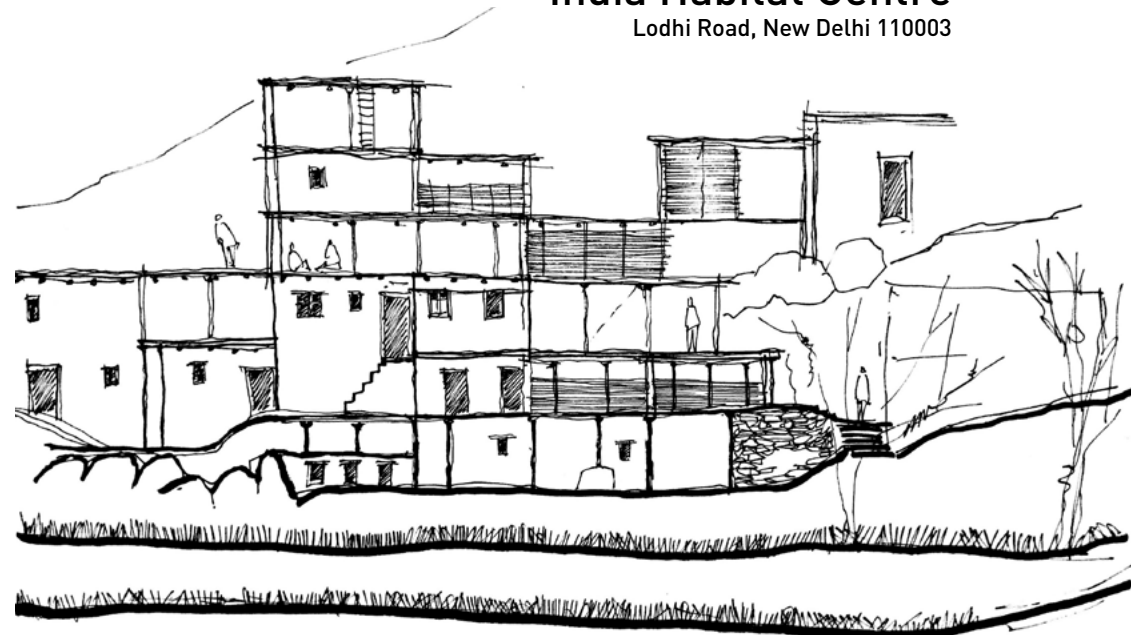
an exhibition on the cultural heritage of Kargil

opening on 18th April, 6.00 pm
18th - 30th April 2016

Open Spaces, Visual Arts Gallery, Gate No. 2

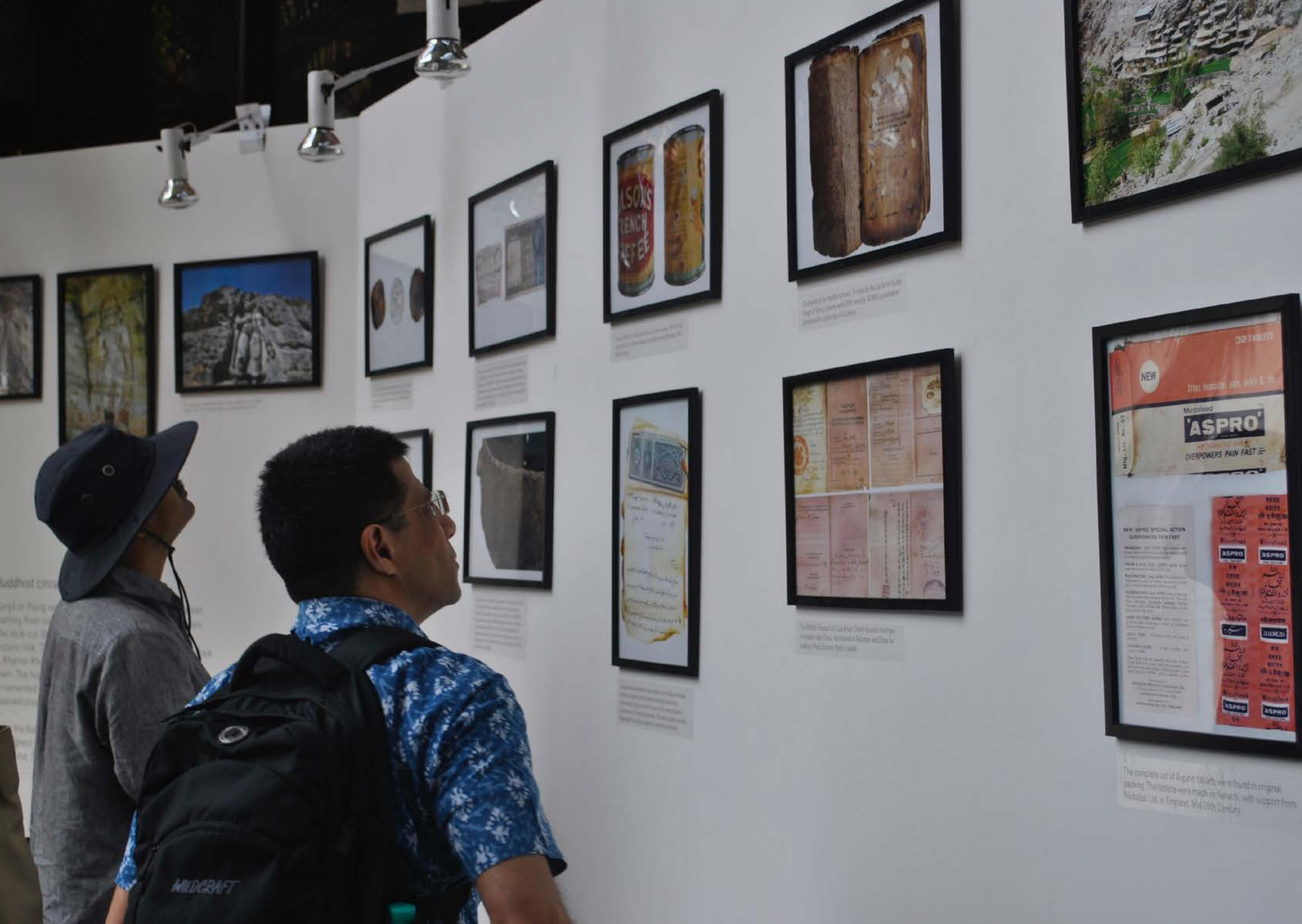
India Habitat Centre

Lodhi Road, New Delhi 110003



Initiative of Roots Collective / supported by Dronah Foundation
& Dept. of Culture, Government of J&K

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Acknowledgements

God is the most merciful & compassionate, a Kargili way of starting to thank people who have helped us in our endeavors.

The background research and documentation for this exhibition was initiated in 2014 but ground work started in the summer of 2015 in form of a Summer Workshop Narratives of Ladakh Tales of the Silk route.

The participants of the workshop from around the country and INDUS University, Ahmedabad roamed around old Basars of Kargil and dark basements of Hundarman village to unearth these treasures. We would like to thank all of them for coming all the way to the high mountains.

Ijaz Hussain Munshi and the team of Central Asian Museum, Kargil for his help and guiding us in every step. Your enthusiasm can only be matched by your immense love for history and we are lucky to have you with us.

Md. Ilyas Hussain from Hundarman has supported us whenever we visited his village and opened the doors of his forefathers for us to explore. Thank you Ilyas to help us unlock Hundarman.

DRONAH Foundation is supporting this exhibition by Roots Collective as part of taking forward its initiative of documenting India's Lesser Known Heritage Sites launched as an online archive on its website - www.dronah.org on April 18, 2015.

This is a platform to showcase the hidden gems of India's rich heritage and has been taken forward through an exhibition series. Unlock Hundarman by Roots Collective is second in this series, the first exhibition was on Gangayasar - a hidden gem of the Shekhawati region in Rajasthan, exhibited at JKK, Jaipur on World Tourism Day in 2015.

The way ahead

This exhibition is an attempt to bring forward the lesser known heritage of this country, Kargil, primarily associated with Indo-Pak conflict. There are opportunities to share for researchers, students, and even seekers or a casual visitor.

We do not look at the past as a chain of events, which can only be succeeded or not. We see it as a process to be preserved in the museum, a chain of intertwined events, which can only be succeeded or not by people.

...ing a cultural center in
...res. We aim to restore
...art residencies
...and the local

Places with
Books



A photograph showing the backs of two women looking at a large mural of a Buddha face. The woman on the left has short brown hair and wears a red sleeveless top with a brown leather backpack. The woman on the right has long brown hair, wears a black hat and a black top, and is holding a small blue object. The mural is set against a teal background and depicts a large, weathered Buddha face carved into a rocky cliff.

Buddhist circuit of Kargil



Museum of memories

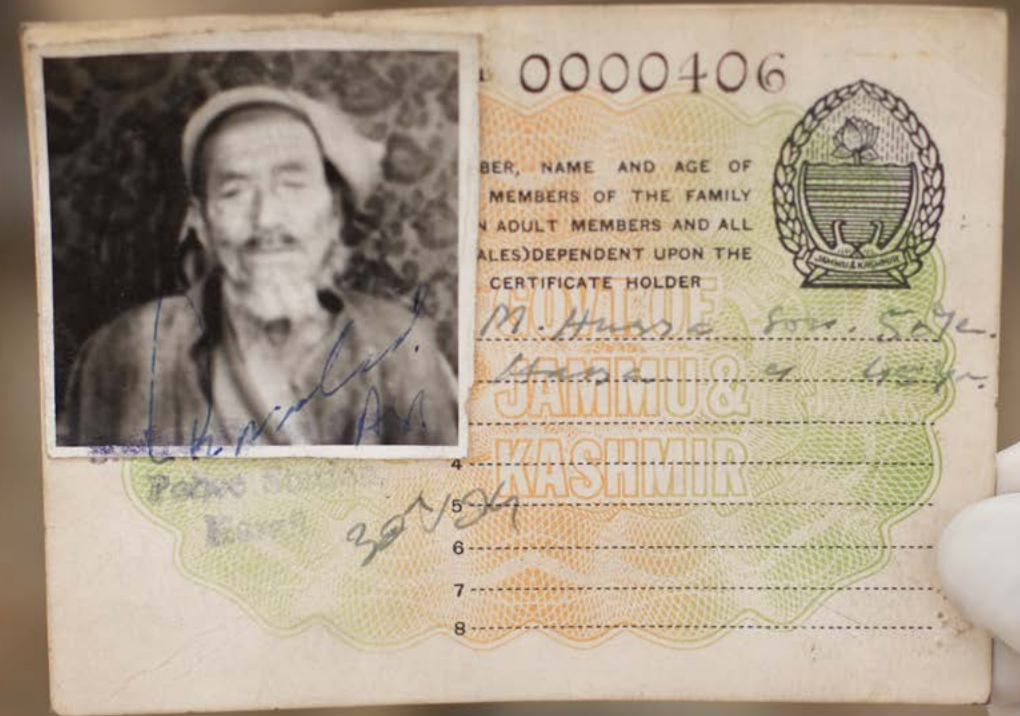
In association with CEPT University (Ahmedabad), Roots Collective initiated another workshop to continue the activation of Hundarman.

Following the discovery of the site, the documentation of its architecture, details, social organization and the abandoned artifacts, the team wanted to assemble all these elements to tell the story of the site and its people.

Roots Collective and the workshop participants proceeded to a few structural repairs in order to welcome visitors more easily. A stairway from the main road was also built, as before the access to the site was only possible through a dangerous path in the mountain.

Ilyas Ansari is the owner of two rooms in Hundarman and had first opened the doors for us in 2015, permitting the discoveries and the initiation of the Unlovk Hundarman project. It is in those two rooms that the participants installed the "Museum of memories", telling the story of the place, the daily lives, the Historical events and consequences on the residents.

People can visit the museum as the residents maintain the entry with ticket system. A tea stall has even appeared on the approach road, desert until then, a promising sign for the future of the site.





Traditional jewelry, Hundarman, 2016



*Traditional kitchen converted in one of the Museum of memories spaces,
testifying of daily lives in the settlement, Hundarman, 2016*



Collection of drawings, sketches and photographs showcased in the Museum of memories, Hundarman, 2016

Project leaders



Muzzamil Hussain Munshi,
Co-founder & President
at Roots Collective



Debasish Borah
Architect,
Co-founder & Program Director
at Roots Collective



Helene Thebault
Designer,
Co-founder & Managing Director
at Roots Collective

Collaborators



Ijaz Hussain Munshi
Curator,
Central Asian Museum, Kargil



Ilyas Ansari
Resident of Hundarman



Jagrut Raval
Artist

The way ahead

The project is an attempt to bring forward the lesser known heritage of this country. Kargil, primarily associated with Indo-Pak conflict has many more opportunities to offer for researcher, conservators, adventure seekers or a casual visitor.

We do not look at heritage as an artefact to be preserved in the museum, but as a continuous moving chain of interlinked events, which we are a part of. Conservation processes can only be successful if “heritage” belongs to people.

Roots Collective’s vision for Hundarman is to create a cultural center and a museum of memories. We aim to restore the historic village and offer avenues like art residencies, cultural festivals to flourish in the village and benefit the local community directly.

Roots Collective is committed to work in places which are forgotten in time. If you want to support Roots Collective in any of its avenues, please drop an email at

rootscollectiveindia@gmail.com

Thanks !

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Thanks to INDUS University & CEPT University (Ahmedabad) and the participants of the workshops (*Narratives of Ladakh*, 2015 and *Museum of memories*, 2016) for the great work and attitude. Thanks to all of them for coming all the way to the high mountains.

Thanks to our volunteers, Purvika Sharma & Ipsita Mallik for their help documenting the *Museum of memories* workshop.

