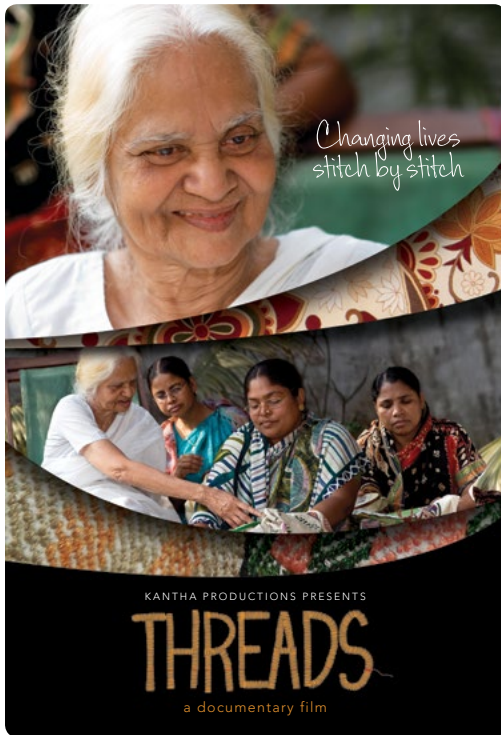


THREADS

Screening Event, Study & Discussion Guide

Kantha Productions LLC • Directed by Cathy Stevulak

changing lives, stitch by stitch



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ABOUT THE FILM

THREADS documentary film tells the story of how Surayia Rahman, a Bangladeshi artist, transforms the ancient Bengali quiltwork tradition of kantha to help revive it, and creates internationally recognized art. Using her story-telling designs, she teaches other women to embroider elaborate wall hangings. They rise from the despair of poverty to supporting their families, leaving a legacy of beauty and sustainable livelihoods for generations to come.

Surayia Rahman's designs, stitched by artisans of Bangladesh, have been gifted to world leaders and are also in the permanent collections of Royal Collection Trust (United Kingdom), Textile Museum of Canada, the Embroiderer's Guild of America, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum (Japan), and Powerhouse Museum (Australia).

THREADS touches on themes including women's economic opportunities and social inclusion, sustainability of artisan enterprise, evolution of indigenous design, historical influences for contemporary design, and intellectual property.

Running time 32 minutes

Produced by Kantha Productions LLC

Distributed internationally by Kantha Productions LLC and Collective Eye Films

Cathy Stevulak Director, Producer

Cathy is a Canadian filmmaker and international program consultant. Her interest in textiles and artisanship, women's economic and social well-being, and fashion for global development led her to direct and produce the award-winning film, THREADS. Prior to becoming a filmmaker, Cathy lived around the world and worked for organizations including United Nations Development Programme, Canadian International Development Agency, and CARE.

Leonard Hill Producer

Leonard was a U.S. diplomat posted to Bangladesh when he first met Surayia and became fascinated by her art. He has worked with Cathy to assemble a multinational team of award-winning filmmakers who are excited by the stories of Surayia and the women she worked with and by the prospect of telling their stories to the world.

Catherine Masud Co-Producer

Catherine Masud is an award-winning filmmaker with over 25 years of experience in producing, directing and editing. She has worked in both documentary and fictional genres. Her major credits include *The Clay Bird* (producer and editor), which won the Critics' Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, *Antarjatra* (co-director and editor), *A Kind of Childhood* (co-director and editor), *Song of Freedom* (co-director/producer and editor), and most recently, *Runway* (producer and editor). Her films have screened at major festivals, been theatrically released in many countries, and broadcast on such outlets as Turner Classic Movies, Channel 4 (UK), TV Ontario, Telequebec, and SBS (Australia).

Rita Meher Editor

Rita Meher, has been working as an editor in the video industry for 14 years. She made her debut in television as a producer in Japan. Born and raised in India, Rita made her first short film *Citizenship101* based on her own immigrant experience in the United States. She worked as an editor on *Nazrah, a Muslim Woman's Perspective* and the Nepali narrative *Highway*. She is the co-founder and director of *Tasveer*, a South Asian film and art organization. Every year she directs two major festivals called *Aaina: South Asian Women Focus* and *Tasveer South Asian Film Festival*.

Details related to Surayia Rahman

Surayia Rahman was born in the early 1930s in Calcutta, India. She moved to East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, when she was seventeen years of age. In the days when few women artists sold their work, Surayia painted and created other forms of art to support her family. When Bangladesh became an independent country in 1971, Surayia helped to revive *kantha* by refining it as elaborate wall-hangings for interior decor. Her technique and designs were revolutionary innovations.

Surayia co-founded a project to train young mothers to stitch her designs for income-generation. Despite many obstacles that she faced, Surayia continued to bring women together to create *kantha* textile art for over twenty-five years.

Surayia lives in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and has retired from her lifelong artistic practice that changed lives for women and their families. The sustainability of their work is now up to the generation of artisans that she guided.

Further information about the film story and team is at kanthathreads.com

Thank you to Joshua Williams, Chair of the Fashion Merchandising and Management program at Berkeley College in New York City for developing this Screening Event, Study and Discussion Guide. Joshua has been working since 2004 in the fashion industry, primarily in brand marketing, content development, and e-commerce. Since 2008, he has been teaching at the university level, and has a Master's Degree in Global Fashion Management from the Fashion Institute of Technology, where he leads the *Faces & Places in Fashion* lecture series, bringing together speakers on diverse topics ranging from design, marketing and sustainability.

SCREENING & DISCUSSION OVERVIEW

This screening and discussion guide provides a context and structure in which to view and discuss THREADS documentary film and to discuss the overarching themes as they relate to a specific audience.

THREADS tells a story set in Bangladesh. The concepts raised in the film can be applied globally.

THE FILM

THREADS documentary film tells the story of Surayia Rahman, a visionary leader and innovative artist living and working in Bangladesh who frees herself and hundreds of other women from poverty and social hardships by creating timeless works of art. Surayia's story highlights the opportunity and dignity women have by working together and employing their creative skills to better their economic stature and to improve lives for their families.

KEY THEMES

- **Women's economic independence and social change**
- **Artisan enterprise**
- **Social entrepreneurship and sustainability**
- Use of historical design in contemporary culture
- Intellectual property

AUDIENCE

This film is appropriate for general audiences. While this guide was developed primarily for use in the classroom and public screenings and forums, it can be adapted as appropriate to the audience.

- **Education:** university, high school, home school, continuing education
- **Public, Community Screenings and Forums:** community groups, clubs, associations (service clubs, women's organizations, film clubs, etc.)
- **Businesses:** fashion and interior design businesses that want to encourage artisan enterprise in their supply chains; social entrepreneurs
- **Conferences:** women and the arts; textile arts; women, leadership and economic opportunity; social entrepreneurship; international development
- **Non-profit organizations**
- **Governmental and international organizations**

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Key learning outcomes from this screening event may include participants being able to:

1. **Communicate the role and impact of artisanship** as a driver of women's economic opportunity in a global context.
2. **Recognize challenges and opportunities for designers** related to historical design and traditional arts, within a multidisciplinary framework, for sustainable growth in the global artisan sector.
3. **Identify opportunities and roles of individuals** in developing, supporting and purchasing artisan works.
4. **Interpret key roles, responsibilities and policies of governments and the private sector**, including corporations, for women's enterprises, cultural preservation and appropriation, as well as intellectual property.
5. **Describe the key elements** of the kantha art form.

ARTISANSHIP & WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE

According to research from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), if the global creative economy were a country of its own, it would already be equal to the fourth largest economy in the world with the fourth largest workforce and rank ninth in the value of exports of goods and services. In fact, the overall **artisan economy is the second largest employer in the developing world**, after agriculture. It is a **driver of economic opportunity**, particularly **for women** and their families. Between 2002 and 2012, international trade in artisan goods doubled to total over \$32 billion per year, according to the Alliance for Artisan Enterprise.

ART, FASHION & COMMERCE

In some countries, the **artisan sector** overlaps with the **fashion sector** when the work of artisans is introduced into the **supply chain for fashion**, such as for garments and accessories.

Art is not typically made specific to a price point, or for a mass consumer. Usually it is made regardless of those things, or specific to one person. The unique character of art, the **connection to the artist and the handmade aspects of the work** contribute to its **sustainability**; whereas, fashion is usually about commerce first and art second – made to be sold at a particular price point to a mass consumer. When artisans are involved in the creation of fashion, art and commerce can take on more equal emphasis.

Bangladesh is the second leading ready-made garment exporting country in the world. There is also a strong tradition of artisanship in the country. Women make up over 80 per cent of the workforce in both sectors. There is some overlap between artisanship and fashion, less so in the export-driven, ready-made garment industry than in the domestic fashion industry. Comparisons between incomes in the ready-made garment sector and the artisan sector are difficult as artisan work is often home-based and piece work, not necessarily full time.

ABOUT NAKSHI KANTHA

The **kantha** (pronounced variously *kantha*, *kaentha*, *ketha*, *kheta*) is an indigenous quilt, made in Bangladesh and West Bengal traditionally from old saris, *dhotis* and *lungis*. Everyday kanthas are used as coverlets, wrappers for books, clothes, and other articles. For special occasions, kanthas are embroidered with scenes from legends, folktales, contemporary life, religious, floral, and symbolic motifs, and border patterns. Embroidered quilts have come to be known as *nakshi kantha*, a term popularized by the poet Jasim Uddin in his narrative poem, *Nakshi Kanthar Math*, translated into English as *The Field of the Embroidered Quilt*. The main stitch used is the running stitch, but in a variety of ways, creating a variety of designs and textures. After a period of dormancy, the nakshi kantha has seen a revival. It is no longer solely a domestic folk art meant for family members, but is also an art form for public display.

Surayia Rahman's pieces follow the kantha tradition but have ushered in several changes. Thus, instead of old cotton, she uses locally-produced silk. She also draws the designs of the entire piece before it is given to be embroidered. The running stitch is used for the empty spaces between motifs or scenes, but the motifs themselves are filled with the bhorat filling stitch. She has also drawn scenes from rural life, history, as well as occasionally contemporary events for her pieces.

The revival of nakshi kantha stimulated appreciation of this indigenous folk art of Bengal, and helped to provide livelihoods for tens of thousands of women.

KEYWORDS

artisan enterprise economy, social entrepreneurship, sustainability, cultural preservation, cultural appropriation, craft, cross-cultural collaboration, design innovation, creative process, design, culture, community art, intellectual property, women's economic empowerment, social inclusion, leadership, mentorship, quality vs. quantity, worth, value, consumer, engagement, activism.



SCREENING & DISCUSSION EVENT

PROPOSED AGENDAS

ONE DAY EVENT Total time: 60-80 minutes

1. Pre-Screening Introduction/Discussion of *THREADS* documentary film (5-20 minutes)
2. *THREADS* documentary film screening (30 minutes)
3. Post-Screening Discussion (15-30 minutes)

TWO DAY EVENT Total time: 120-135 minutes

Day One:

1. Pre-Screening Discussion (15-30 minutes)
2. Introduce an Assignment or Workshop Theme (10 minutes)
3. Introduce *THREADS* documentary film (5 minutes)
4. *THREADS* documentary film screening (30 minutes)

Day Two:

1. Group Conversations or Workshop Practice related to Assignment or Workshop Theme (20 minutes)
2. Post-Screening Class Discussion (40 minutes)

THREE DAY EVENT Total time: 160-230 minutes

Day One:

1. Pre-Screening Discussion (30-60 minutes)
2. Introduce an Assignment or Workshop Theme (10 minutes)
3. Work on Assignment in Class (20 minutes)

Day Two:

1. Introduce *THREADS* documentary film (5 minutes)
2. *THREADS* documentary film screening (30 minutes)
3. Post-Screening Discussion (15-25 minutes)
4. Introduce follow-up Assignment or Workshop Theme (10-20 minutes)

Day Three:

1. Group Conversations related to Assignment 2 or Workshop Theme (20 minutes)
2. Post-Screening Class Discussion (40 minutes)

SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS

For group or public screenings, we recommend the event take place in one sitting. Because the film has a short run time, this will allow participants to engage in conversation immediately, capturing immediate reactions. In addition, please allow enough time for the audience to be seated and to exit when arranging a screening room.

For group or public screenings, we have found that post-screening roundtables or feature discussion (such as a panel and/or Q&A with the filmmakers) can help to facilitate an exchange of views specific to the audience. When this is appropriate, we recommend extending the total running time of the event to at least two hours.

For classroom screenings, we recommend two to three classes to fully discuss and screen the film, in addition to related assignments. All agendas assume a classroom time of 60-80 minutes.

For community events, a pop-up artisan market, artisan demonstrations and/or reception could complement the screening, as appropriate. There are opportunities to extend to a multi-day event: gathering various stakeholders to discuss artisan opportunities and issues; hands-on learning workshops; sharing of best practice in craft creation and sustainable livelihoods.

Broad outlines for pre-screening and post-screening assignments are below.

ORGANIZING AN EVENT

When organizing a public screening and discussion event, we recommend the following:

- Ensure the screening space provides comfortable theater-style screening and proper projection, screen, and sound. The film is available in various formats including digital streaming, DCP, BluRay, MP4 and DVD.
- Identify a host who is familiar with this topic for the event that can lead the pre and post discussions.
- Provide a lectern with proper lighting and microphone for the host.
- Begin marketing the event at least a month in advance. We recommend a variety of methods including posters, email invites and social media. When appropriate, an RSVP list can also be helpful.
- Reach out to the film's team to inform them of the screening and to request their film graphics templates for your promotion of the event. Often, there are additional opportunities and outlets to support the screening. www.kanthathreads.com
- Reach out to key people and groups in your community that might be willing to provide additional support, particularly women's, business, schools, libraries and arts groups.
- Ensure a time in advance of the screening for a technical check to test the film projection and sound level and to position the screen so that the audience can read the film's subtitles.

PRE-SCREENING GUIDE

The following questions are meant to encourage discussion around general themes from the film, and personal experience, in order to establish a common baseline of information before viewing the film. The discussion should be open and inclusive.

Personal Context

- What are driving factors in determining what you purchase?
- Do you place **higher value** on items that are described as art or **artistic versus mass produced**?
- **What does the word artisan mean** to you?
- Do you **consider the process** by which goods you purchase are made?
- Do you **consider the person or people** who make the goods you purchase?
- Does **gender** play a **role** in the types of products you purchase?

General Concepts

- What is the difference between art and commerce?
- In what industries is art and commerce commonly interrelated?
- Are there conflicts of interest in combining art and commerce?
- What is intellectual property and how does it relate to artists?*
- How important is protecting an artisan's original ideas or creations?
- Are traditional crafts and traditions worth preserving in a contemporary context?
- What are the roles of local and non-local designers, consumers and others in keeping traditional arts alive?
- Innovation and creativity can be inspired by art and ideas from other cultures. Under what circumstances is it appropriate for other cultures to use traditional arts and crafts that are not their own?
- Should corporations be responsible for paying cultures when using their indigenous arts and crafts? If so, how?
- Should local, regional or national governments protect or subsidize arts and crafts?
- Should women artists and craftswomen be provided additional support by governments and corporations?
- Does supporting women artisans specifically have any added benefits to society, socially or economically?

**Intellectual property rights are complex; the film introduces the concept to encourage research and discussion.*

Related Global Statistics

- According to Alliance for Artisan Enterprise, the **overall artisan economy** is the **second largest employer** in the developing world, after agriculture.
- According to Alliance for Artisan Enterprise, the artisan economy is a **driver of economic opportunity**, particularly for **women** and their families.
- Between 2002 and 2012, **international trade in artisan goods doubled** to total over **\$32 billion per year**, according to the Alliance for Artisan Enterprise.
- Of the estimated **630 million working poor**, the **majority are women** (ILO 2009)
- Approximately **75% of garment workers worldwide are women**.*
- Approximately **60 million people** are employed in **garment, textile, and footwear industry** (2014), up from 20 million people in 2000.
- Top three **garment producing countries** are: 1) China, 2) Bangladesh and 3) India*
- Top three **garment importing countries** are: 1) EU (38%), 2) US (20%), and 3) Japan*

* All statistics, unless otherwise stated, were taken from the "Global Garment Industry Fact Sheet 2015" compiled by Lina Stotz and Gillian Kane and distributed by the Clean Clothes Campaign.

Bangladesh statistics

- National Crafts Council of Bangladesh has 350 member organizations working for and with craftspeople across the country.
- Aarong, the largest artisan organization in Bangladesh, reports involvement of 65,000 artisans, 85% of whom are women. (2016)
- According to the Bangladesh Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh Economic Review 2014, citing the 2003 Handloom Census, there were 510,000 handlooms in the country, of which 310,000 were in operation and 200,000 were closed due to non-availability of working capital. The handloom sector employed 1.5 million people.
- The ready-made garment industry in Bangladesh employs approximately 4 million people; 80% of the workforce are women. (2016-7)*
- Bangladesh is the second largest clothing exporter in the world; exports rose from \$5 billion in 2002 to \$28.1 billion annually in 2016-7.*
- Exports of ready-made garments was 81% of the total exports of Bangladesh in 2016-7.*
- Sixty-three percent of the export contracts of western brands are with European buyers and 22% with American and Canadian buyers.*

* Source: Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA)

SCREENING GUIDE

THREADS documentary film breaks down into the following chapters:

- 00:00** Program start
- 00:02** Introduction of the artist Surayia Rahman
- 01:39** Scenes of Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 02:03** Introduction to the Skill Development for Underprivileged Women project
- 03:24** Introduction to Surayia's artwork
- 03:55** Surayia's early life and inspirations
- 06:40** Overview of kantha art revival and Surayia's innovation
- 08:33** Boat Race art scene
- 08:52** Design inspirations and elements, face embroidery
- 10:15** Surayia teaches
- 11:27** Gypsy Wharf art scene
- 12:07** More about the Skill Development project
- 12:38** Surayia's adult life, paintings and other art forms
- 14:56** Art and Intellectual Property
- 17:27** Arshi, a women's social enterprise
- 21:02** Art and Intellectual Property, continued
- 21:37** More about Arshi
- 22:59** Collage of artworks, the making process
- 24:07** Surayia and the artisans' current situations

POST-SCREENING GUIDE

It is recommended that discussion topics be tailored to the participants using the questions provided below. Questions are organized into three categories, Personal Responses, which focus on how the viewer felt and learned viewing the film, Film-Specific Questions, which focus on the characters and situations presented in the film, and General Questions, which focus on the film's topics in a broader sense.

While all three categories can be used simultaneously, the first two are recommended for younger audiences and the latter is recommended for college-level courses, or fashion and interior design industry specific audiences and community screenings.

Personal Responses

- **How do you feel** after seeing the film?
- For you, what were the **major themes** in the film?
- What do you think the **filmmaker's objective** was in making the film?
- Did you **relate to the main character**, Surayia, in the film? Why or why not?
- How does this film **affect your view on women-based businesses** and their role in society?
- How does this film **affect your views on artisans**?
- How does this film **affect your views on art versus commerce**?
Or how they intersect/work together?
- Does this film effect **how you** might **make purchases** in the future?
- How do you see a **connection** between the **lives of the women** portrayed in the film and **your own**?

Film-Specific Questions

- How did Surayia use her artistic, leadership and business talents to solve problems for herself and the women around her?
- What is the intersection between Surayia's own artistic output and the traditional motifs and methods she used?
- What techniques did Surayia put in place to ensure that her business was sustainable? What do you think were her challenges for sustainability of the economic and social value of her artisan enterprise?
- Who were the people and institutions with whom Surayia had to engage in order to sustain her art and economic self-sufficiency for herself and other women? Did you feel that Surayia was treated fairly by these people and institutions? What further information would we need to know to determine this?
- What issues did Surayia face in protecting her artistic designs and collaborations?
- What type of support from government, NGOS or other institutions could have helped Surayia to avoid these challenges?
- How could Surayia ensure that the women in her organization get paid sufficiently to support their wellbeing?

General Questions

- What is the intersection between handwork textiles and the textile, apparel and interior design industries? Where can these skills be best applied?
- What are the differences between handmade products versus mass produced products (example: weaving machines versus hand loom)? How has introducing machinery changed the creation of products, negative or positive? Can there be a middle ground between both?
- How can the supply chain be better linked to include artisan collectives with the overall textile, apparel and interior design industries?
- While some artisan workers have shifted to mass manufacturing jobs, how can collectives continue to survive and provide for the needs of a 21st century customer?
- How do artisans determine value of their products, price them and then get paid fairly for the work they do?
- What are the challenges to growth for these types of artisan enterprises?
- What are the challenges specific to female-based businesses and collectives?
- What type of support from local government, NGOs and corporations could ensure that women's businesses are sustainable?
- How can the sustainability of small artisan-based businesses be ensured, while simultaneously protecting traditional arts and crafts, and providing meaningful incomes?
- How could artisan designs be applied into the fashion industry? Or the interior design and home goods industry? What other applications exist?

- How can artisan-based businesses positively affect countries with large mass manufacturing capabilities? What role can they play in providing more value to a region?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of women working in textiles in the formal sector (factories) and the informal sector (home-based workers)?
- How does the maker's movement (quilters, knitters, embroiderers, etc.) correspond to Surayia's business model? How can makers learn from Surayia? What could be applied from the maker's movement to more traditional collectives?
- What role does sustainability and eco-consciousness have in artisan-based businesses? Are there applications from kantha and other art forms to recycling, upcycling and reuse?
- What role does community building and social cohesion play in artisan-based businesses? And how does the internet change those processes?
- How can artisans market their work domestically and internationally?
- If you are an artist/artisan/maker, how does seeing this film influence your own practice?
- Who has the power to allow for use of cultural elements in products designed for non-local cultures?

Once some of the above questions have been asked, it may be appropriate to open the floor to questions from the audience. Below are frequently asked questions:

1. What happened to Surayia? Where is she today? What is she doing?

When her hands could no longer draw, Surayia retired from teaching in 2007, transferring her goodwill and designs to the Salesian Sisters in Bangladesh. Surayia lives in Dhaka.

2. How much competition did Surayia have from other local artisans?

Surayia's innovation to put kantha on the wall as art spawned a new genre of kantha art that became known as 'nakshi kantha tapestry.' Several leaders in the craft community were involved in kantha revival and they also worked to develop income-generating opportunities for artisans. 'Nakshi kantha tapestries' are now produced by many organizations in Bangladesh. Surayia's designs, per se, are used by at least four artisan organizations.

3. Did Surayia teach the women more than how to stitch?

Did she also teach them social skills and other means to empower them as business women?

Surayia guided the women about much more than stitching, including the importance of saving their earnings; the fact that high quality would build reputation and sales; that punctuality and reliability are important for their everyday work.

4. How exactly was Surayia's business set up?

Was it a co-operative with shared profits or another model?

The first organization that Surayia co-founded, SDUW, was set up as a non-governmental organization, with a Board of Directors, a project manager and a project designer. Craftspeople were paid by the amount and quality they stitched. Surayia founded her second organization, Arshi, as an independent social enterprise. Volunteers, primarily from the expatriate community, helped her and the women with their marketing and, in some cases, with the process of production.

5. How did the women market their work?

In the first project, SDUW, the work was produced and sold at a central workshop, with some sales at retail shops. At Arshi, the work was produced in the women's homes and brought to Surayia's home. Volunteers would sell the work at pop-up sales in their homes and at craft fairs. In both cases, the Government of Bangladesh presented these artworks as State gifts.

6. How did Surayia ensure continuous innovation, adaptation and learning?

What were her challenges to sustainability in this regard?

Surayia made new designs, and changed elements and colors within her range of designs. She constantly taught about the need for quality work, paying bonuses for excellence. Surayia did not, however, teach the women to create their own designs or about marketing channels, which now poses challenges for the sustainability of their work.

7. How can we develop the creative capacity of the artisans?

Non-local designers and marketing experts can encourage collaboration with artisans rather than strict imposition of a design for fabrication. Governments and non-governmental agencies can reinforce the importance of artisanship in today's world, building its stature and thus the will of artisans and future artisans to invest in this career. Surayia dreamed of having a school where artisans could come together with other types of artists, to learn and create together.

8. What happened to the other women featured in the film?

Two of the women featured in the film continue to produce Surayia's designs and to teach others. One has retired. About 50 people work with Surayia's designs (2015), though some of the most well-established artisans have now taken jobs with a bank and a shrimp farm, for example. There is also attrition as some artisans go to work in the garment industry, and others retire.

9. What were the end effects of the intellectual property lawsuit?

The copyright case went to the High Court, and Surayia was judged to own only one of the designs that were in the petition. For detail, it is best to read the case judgment. As a general summary: Surayia co-founded the SDUW project and was paid a salary by the project. The court decided that Surayia was an employee of the project and therefore the project owned the designs. See resource section below for citation of the case judgment.

10. How has this film affected Surayia and the other women in the film?

Late in her life, Surayia understood that she was receiving recognition for her many years of work. Other women in the film saw it screened in Bangladesh in 2017 and were publicly applauded. They were able to discuss their dreams and challenges with senior policy makers and other artisans. As well, the artisans were able to meet and share their inspiring life stories with young women and girls living in difficult environments, offering them hope and alternatives for the future.

11. Have any of the women created their own businesses?

After Surayia retired, the filmmakers were told that some of the artisans started their own independent businesses to sell 'nakshi kantha tapestries.'

12. Do the artisan women want their children to continue their mother's legacy? Or is the goal to ensure children are able to get an education and pursue other paths?

The artisans who were interviewed for the film had a goal to educate their children so that they could pursue paths other than artisanship.

13. What changes are happening in Bangladesh and other places in the world around artisan work? Cultural appropriation? And Intellectual Property?

More governments, corporations and non-governmental organizations, as well as designers and consumers are paying attention to artisanship and to ethical, sustainable fashion and interior design. There is much yet to be done, and opportunity to make a difference. These subjects invite further research on trends.

14. What is the purpose of this film? How is this film being used to positively affect the individuals in the film and other artisans?

The film can be used as a tool to generate greater awareness of:

- the value of artisanship for social change;*
- the importance of bringing artisanship into discussions of international development and the fashion and interior design industries;*
- the influential role consumers play by thoughtful purchases of goods and services.*

15. How do I get involved? How do I make a difference?

*That is a good question. See points below in the **Take Action...Have Impact** section on page 19.*

SUGGESTED ASSIGNMENTS

These assignments are suggestions of how assignments can be created that relate to the topics and learning outcomes shared in this Study Guide.

PRE-SCREENING

ART & COMMERCE

This assignment can be modified as needed for student level.

Students will visit a local art gallery and then a local clothing boutique.

Upon visiting both locations, the students will be asked to complete the following questions:

- What was the difference in presentation between the gallery and the store?
- How were the two locations the same? How were they different?
Consider the lighting, music, smells, ability to touch and other environmental issues.
- What was the difference in prices between the two venues?
How were the prices shown in each venue? What were the differences?
- How did the presentation change the value of the product, or the amount a customer was willing to pay?
- Were there any applications for the artwork in the products you saw in the store?
- Were there any gallery applications for the merchandising that happened in the store?
- Consider the tensions between art and commerce that were discussed in class. Give a scenario of how you think the store and gallery could successfully be combined. Include pictures and sketches if this helps to visualize your idea.

POST-SCREENING

ARTS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

This assignment can be modified as needed for student level.

You have been hired by a famous fashion brand to develop a special line for a holiday pop-up store in a high-end shopping center. You are asked to develop three unique products that represent the holidays from other cultures. In doing so, you ensure that you are ethically sourcing your materials and manufacturing, you are being sensitive of the cultures you are representing, and properly pricing your products to ensure all parties in the supply chain are properly paid. Finally, you must be able to properly merchandise the products for your local customer. Your final project should include the following:

- a. Picture of the Product, with explanation of its importance and history.
- b. A biography of the manufacturer.
- c. A pricing chart that includes cost, wholesale price and retail price.
- d. A merchandising plan to successfully market and sell the products.

TAKE ACTION...HAVE IMPACT

While this film focuses on Surayia Rahman and her story, it also highlights general themes related to arts and commerce, women's rights, intellectual property, cultural appropriation and economic sustainability. As global citizens, each of us have the responsibility to be aware of how these issues affect our own lives, and the lives of others. **What we choose to buy, wear and decorate with has a ripple effect across the planet.** Our actions can just as well lead to job creation and opportunity, as they can lead to human rights violations and environmental disasters. **By being active participants in our economy we have the ability to facilitate positive change for the people who need it most.** As highlighted in the film, simply providing opportunities for women to employ skills they already have, can be enough to put food on the table or provide an education to their children. **Change will happen if we want it to.**

Here are several ways you can help:

- **Host a screening and discussion of THREADS.**
- **Let the filmmakers know how you are taking action.**
- **Become part of the THREADS community by sharing the film link on social media.**

- **Support** craft artists and handwork.
- **Shop** for sustainable, artisan-made products.
- **Gift, sell or trade artisan work.**
- **Stay informed**, ask questions. (Where does the product come from? Was it made by one person, or many? Was an artisan involved?)
- **Invite friends** to discuss creative expression and women's empowerment.
- **Make something by hand.**
- **Celebrate and exhibit** the work of artists through music, films, events, festivals, exhibitions and stores and offices.
- **Wear** one article made by an artisan each day.

You may also want to consider learning more about:

- Artisan empowerment and engagement
- Artisan Enterprise -- What is it? How to stimulate it?
- Social Entrepreneurship -- What is it? How to stimulate it?
- Women's Social and Economic Opportunity through the art of craft
- Human Rights issues, especially as they relate to women workers
- Flexible work models and hours
- Home-based work issues (ie. child labor, safety standards, lack of institutional social benefits)
- Government, non-profit and private support organizations

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

MUSEUMS

World Crafts Council North America (list of crafts museums)
wccna.org/index.php/museums-a-organizations

Surayia Rahman's designs, stitched by artisans of Bangladesh, are in the permanent collections of Royal Collection Trust (United Kingdom), Textile Museum of Canada, the Embroiderer's Guild of America, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum (Japan), and Powerhouse Museum (Australia).

ORGANIZATIONS

World Crafts Council

Alliance for Artisan Enterprise – allianceforartisanenterprise.org

International Folk Art Alliance – folkartalliance.org

Weave a Real Peace – weavearealpeace.org

Ethical Fashion Initiative – intracen.org/itc/projects/ethical-fashion

Textile Society of America – textilesocietyofamerica.org

Skoll Foundation (social entrepreneurship) – skoll.org/issue-areas/economic-opportunity/livelihoods

WEIGO: Women in Informal Employment – wiego.org

Based in Bangladesh:

Aranya – aranya.com.bd

Banglacraft – banglacrafts.org

BRAC/Aarong – aarong.com

CORR-The Jute Works – cjwbd.com

Dhaka Handicrafts Ltd. – dhakahandicrafts.com

Ekota National Fair Trade Network of Bangladesh – eftfbd.org

Kumudini Handicrafts

Prokritee – prokritee.com

Official Bangladesh website with trade reports – sid.gov.bd

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA)
– bgmea.com.bd/home/pages/TradeInformation

WEBSITES & BLOGS

UNESCO/Culture/Crafts and Design – unesco.org/culture

Cloth Roads – *Kantha: Ancient Hand-Stitch Revival*
– clothroads.com/kantha-ancient-hand-stitch-revival

Eco-Fashion Talk – ecofashiontalk.com

Fashion Revolution – fashionrevolution.org

Zady: The New Standard – zady.com/thenewstandard

BOOKS

Bengali Kantha: Embroidered Quilts: Its Past and Present
Published by Fukuoka Asian Art Museum

Kantha: The Embroidered Quilts of Bengal
Published by Philadelphia Museum of Art

Ahmad, Perveen
The aesthetics and vocabulary of nakshi kantha: Bangladesh National Museum collection

Chen, Martha Alter
A Quiet Revolution: Women in Transition in Rural Bangladesh

Kuldova, Tereza
Luxury Indian Fashion: A Social Critique. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016.

Littrell, Mary Ann., and Marsha Ann Dickson
Artisans and Fair Trade: Crafting Development. Sterling, VA.: Kumarian Press, 2010.

Zaman, Niaz
The Art of Kantha Embroidery

ARTICLES & RESEARCH REPORTS

Bangladesh Economic Review – mof.gov.bd/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=372&Itemid=1

IDB, *The Orange Economy* – publications.iadb.org/handle/11319/3659

The World Bank Open Data with World Development indicators – data.worldbank.org

Ellis, Simon

Measuring Traditional Skills – Taking Stock of What We Have Before We Lose It: Craft Statistics – A Way Forward

static1.squarespace.com/static/52669d1fe4b05199f0587707/t/584ac93815d5db55bb27c686/1481296191458/MEASURING+TRADITIONAL+SKILLS.pdf

Zaman, Niaz and Cathy Stevulak

The Refining of a Domestic Art: Surayia Rahman
digitalcommons.unl.edu/tsaconf/886/

Lipson, Elaine

The Slow Cloth Manifesto

digitalcommons.unl.edu/tsaconf/711/

International Trade Center/WTO and the World Intellectual Property Organization

Marketing Crafts and Visual Arts: The role of intellectual property.

wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/intproperty/itc_p159/wipo_pub_itc_p159.pdf

Mrs. Suraiya Rahman vs. Skill Development for Underprivileged Women, 49 DLR (HC) (1997) 222

Contact the Producers: kanthathreads.com/contact/

Facebook: [KanthaThreads](https://www.facebook.com/KanthaThreads) and **Twitter:** [@kanthathreads](https://twitter.com/kanthathreads)

Visit the film's website for more information: kanthathreads.com

Thank you