



Message from the Principal



Kuzzanpo la! As always, it is a great pleasure for me to present this Summer 2015 issue of our Newsletter. All important events that have taken place during the first half of this year is presented in this edition. We would like to dedicate this issue to the successful graduation of the first batch of nine girls graduate.

First and foremost, our deepest appreciation and gratitude goes to Leila Foulon who came all the way from New York as our special Guest of Honour for the school's 16th Foundation Day. Leila was joined by her father Koenraad Foulon and Lynne Fourie to mark this special occasion. The students and the teachers all felt these moments very close and special to witness the very person who enabled the girls education at CTAS now awarding their first batch of female graduates certificates. Our girls indeed felt very honoured to receive their certificates from Leila after her first visit to CTAS since 2008.

Leila has always been a great inspiration for our girls and her story of how she and her friends, then as fourth year students at Francis Holland School in London, UK raised the initial seed money UK £ 700 to realize the girls' education at our school.

This fund was raised by these young students by baking and selling cakes at their school.

Moved by his daughter's commitment towards CTAS at such young age, Koenraad then supported and financed our girl's education at CTAS. This has, over the years, immensely helped many financially and socially disadvantaged young girls to avail the opportunity to study arts and crafts at our school. Otherwise, these girls are normally left with not much opportunities to improve their lives. We thank you Leila and Koenraad for opening this new window for these disadvantaged girls in Bhutan. Today these nine girls graduating from the school is the true testimony of the success and some of them have already found jobs.

2015 academic session saw an addition of 38 new students (26 boys and 12 girls) after being carefully selected from a total of 77 applicants. Another welcome news for the school was the completion of blacktopping of the rough Kabesa road by the government which now makes the travel to and from the city to the school very smooth.

This year, we are happy to kickstart a separate sustainability fund for the school which so far has raised US\$ 10,600. This fund, which was initiated by the school's alumni along with a few individual well-wishers aims to mobilize fund every year for the future sustainability of the school.

As always, we are happy to receive Mario Fontana at school who was accompanied by Ms. Lena who later gave a talk to the students.

Finally, we are happy to inform all our supporters that we recently received an official Certificate of Excellence 2015 from Tripadvisor recognizing CTAS as one of the best places to visit in Bhutan.

We would like to dedicate all these successes and achievements to all our supporters, friends and well-wishers within Bhutan and abroad. Wishing you a happy reading and we look forward to your continued support.

Sonam Choki
(Principal)



The 16th Anniversary Foundation Day Celebration

On the auspicious day of 20th March 2015, Choki Traditional Arts School (CTAS) celebrated its 16th anniversary of its founding, which was also the special occasion to award certificates to our graduates of 2014. This year's celebration was a very special to CTAS as we have for the first time, nine girls receiving the certificates from our school.

The joyous occasion was graced by Miss Leila Foulon who came all the way from New York as our special guest of honour. Mr. Koenraad Foulon, who is one of our main supporters, together with Ms. Lynne Fourie, joined his daughter Leila to mark this special occasion.

In Leila's address, she said no matter from where we all come from, it is important that we aim to lead an independent life and contribute and help each other in our societies. For this, she reminded the students that all must work hard and try to achieve the goals they hat set themselves.

The Principal of CTAS, Sonam Choki, thanked Miss Leila for always being a source of inspiration for the girl students and for her continued support of our school. The Principal also thank Leila and her father Koenraad Foulon for making it possible for the girls to study at CTAS.

The principal also thanked all other supporters within and abroad for their continued faith and support extended to the progress and success of the school. Special thanks and gratitude were expressed to Lam & Dieu Anh Nguyen Phuing for their generous support of the school.

The 20 graduates, including the nine girl graduates, were honoured to receive their certificates from Leila who also gave special gifts that she and her family especially prepared for the students. The day was concluded happily with a cultural program and the Tashi Labay.



Parents-Teachers meeting

The parents-teachers meeting was held on 7th March 2015. The purpose of the meeting was to share and discuss the school's rules and regulations, changes made in the school diary, leave procedures of students, the issue of students dropping out, and the importance of having maximum attendance to complete the program successfully etc. During the meeting, the parents noted these issues and expressed their full support and commitment from their sides to ensure the development of their children.

In the meeting, a few parents also thanked CTAS for providing free education for their children. The meeting concluded with the clear understanding of the needs and issues related to students and ways to overcome the problems collectively. The parents-teachers meeting is one of the annually recurring events at CTAS.



New Admissions

The enrollment tests for the new academic year was conducted on 10th March 2015 at the school campus. There were a total of 77 new applicants for the 32 available seats.

In the welcome and presentation meeting, the school's Principal briefed the applicants on the rules and admission procedures and stressed that CTAS' priority is to help and provide training to genuinely interested children who want to learn the arts and crafts of the country and who are of poor families.

Finally, a total of 38 students were selected, 12 girls and 26 boys. With these new students, the school today has 144 students (98 boys and 46 girls) studying at CTAS.



Freshers' Welcome Night

On the night of 13th March 2015, CTAS students welcomed the new students to the Fresher's Night show. The freshers' night show is one of the events in the school to welcome the new students to our school. The new students introduced themselves and then the senior students presented a welcoming cultural program consisting of traditional dances, modern dances, drama acts, songs etc. as a gesture of warm welcome to CTAS family and to ensure that the new students felt right at home.



Senior Students Take Part in the Contemporary Art Program in VAST, Thimphu.

The 11-days contemporary art program was held from 21st March until 3rd April 2015 at VAST, Thimphu by the Professor Benigna Chilla from USA. This program was done in collaboration with VAST and Ministry of Information and Communication (MoIC), the Royal Government of Bhutan. A total of 10 students from CTAS participated in the program. Other participants were the selected from the National Institute of Zorig Chhusum (NIZC), a few youths who have left their schools and a teacher from Taktse Institute of Language and Culture.

This artwork shop was aimed at helping the artists to learn new techniques and develop new ideas, to be more creative and to make the Bhutanese artists more acceptable in the current market. The program was also aimed at exposing the young artists to the wider art community both within Bhutan and abroad.

The Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Information and Communication, Lynpo DN Dhungyel who graced the closing ceremony stated that our youths must enhance the existing skills and their abilities for a better future and more opportunities.



Jamyang Pelzang Shares his Experiences with the Contemporary Art Program

As Jamyang Pelzang from Lhadi 6th level painting said, by participating in this program, he learned the different types of arts, the importance of a story, the style and its uses. In addition, he has also learned about how to convert the waste into a usable works of art. The school sincerely expresses its appreciation to MoIC and VAST for giving our students this wonderful opportunity.

Later, the 10 students who participated in the program gave a brief presentation to the teachers and the other students at CTAS about what they have learned.



A Separate Sustainability Fund for CTAS

We would like to take this opportunity to inform our supporters and well wishers that since our first formal alumni meeting held on 9th September 2014, the Alumni and the school have decided to make a joint effort towards raising a separate sustainability fund for the school. One possible and viable strategy developed was to establish a sustainable fund for the school completely out of the existing arrangements/system.

The alumni and the school aim raise funds towards fulfilling this important objective for the sustainability of the school.

Given the importance of establishing this fund, there is a need for additional sources of funds. We are happy to say that Mr. Casey Harnett, Founder of Choki.org and Ven. Lam Kuba from Thailand along with our alumni and a few other individual supporters have already started contributing to the fund. As an update, so far, we have raised US \$ 10,600.

Blacktopping of Kabesa Road

Welcome news for the Kabesa region as well as the school was the completion of blacktopping (with asphalt) of the existing road for the first time. The blacktopping of the road was a government undertaking to improve the access road in the region and to connect the gewog (block administration) office which is located to the north of CTAS campus.

The improvement of the road was appreciated by everyone in the area who has been traveling on the rough and dusty road for the last several years.



Teacher's Day

May 2nd every year is celebrated as teacher's day in Bhutan. This year too, our students took their own initiatives to make their own arrangements and surprised the teachers and staff of the school. All the students led by the captains organized a three-hour program where they held several speeches and expressed their gratitude to all the teachers as well as the non-teaching staff. The speeches were followed by presentations of some gifts by the students to the teachers and staff as a token of their gratitude. The students then performed some cultural songs and dances and a short stage play highlighting the crucial roles that teachers play in each student's life.

The day ended with students, teachers and other staff lighting the butter lamps and praying for everyone at the school.



Intra-House Extra-Curricular Competitions - Volleyball and Quiz

In order to enable the wholesome development of our students, CTAS organizes several extra-curricular activities every year. In the first half of 2015, an intra-house volleyball tournament and quiz competitions were held on 25th April and 6th June respectively. In the volleyball competition, the Druk House won while the Tag House won the quiz competition. One of the main objectives of organizing such activities is to encourage students' to participate in extra-curricular activities thereby enabling them to gain exposure and confidence later in their lives.



Mario's Visit to CTAS

On 21st May, Mario Fontana, the President of Fontana Foundation and Ms. Lena visited CTAS. The school's founder Dasho Choki Dorji, Principal, staffs and all the students extended a traditional welcome and Marchang (wine offering) ceremony. After the ceremony, the students sang the newly composed CTAS song.

In her welcome address, the principal thanked Mr. Mario for his continued support of CTAS and also provided an update on the school's development and news. The students then performed a short culture program as a token of appreciation. Mario visited the wood production unit, classrooms and exhibition room. The school's safety members then presented fire safety drill in the presence of Mario and Lena which was initially encouraged by Mario and Elsa Fontana.

Later in the evening, Miss Lena gave a talk to the students and shared her experiences conveying the messages such as the importance of having passion in what one does in life and tips based on her experiences on how to become successful in future. The Principal on behalf of the students and school thanked Lena for imparting such words of wisdom to the students.



School Rimdo (Annual Ritual / Puja)

The annual school rimdo (a Buddhist ritual ceremony) was performed on 28th April 2015, coinciding with Zhabdrung Kuchhoe at the school's multi-purpose hall. For the first time, CTAS performed this special rimdo with a retired Lam Neten (Chief Abbot) Ugyen from Dagana Dratshang presiding the ceremony.

Such rituals are normally performed for the well being of all sentient beings - especially all our supporters, donors, well wishers and for our own school's future. Students, teachers and a few outsiders joined the rimdo, which went very well, to everyone's satisfaction. The school has decided to make this ceremony a recurring annual event from next year.



Wood Production Unit Now has Proper Storage of Wood Seasoned & Additional Storage

We started the Wood production Unit (WPU) in March 2013 with the support from Koenraad Foulon and Capital Group of Companies with the goal to produce high quality wood and improve our carving qualities, repairing our furniture and also to generate some additional income for the school as this unit will help to diversify the carving products with more items that will have a larger market.

We are glad to inform our supporters and well-wishers that since we started this unit, we have been able to improve the quality of our wood carving products and enhance the effectiveness of the carving class.

Nonetheless due to lack of proper storage of the seasoned wood it was very difficult to achieve the above mission. We would like to thank Mario, Fontana Foundation for providing this support towards the extension of the wood storing project. This extension project is now completed in April 2015.

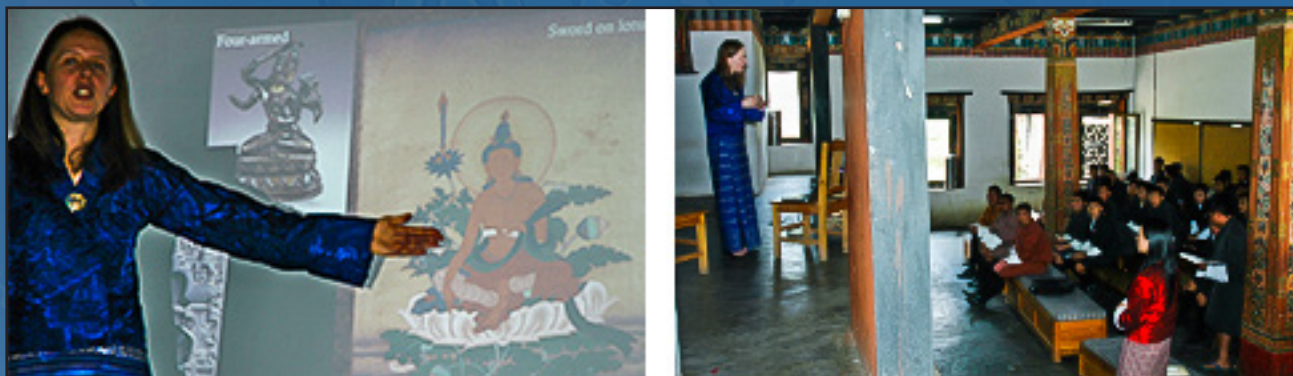


Dr. Ariana Maki Pansa Gives a Talk to the Students

Dr. Ariana Maki, who has a Ph. D in art history with a specialization in Buddhist art, gave a talk to our senior students and teachers on 9th June at CTAS. Dr. Ariana Maki is currently a lecturer in Art History and Religious Studies at the University of Colorado Boulder. She is also Associate Curator at Himalayan Art Resources and maintains a research affiliation with the National Library and archives of Bhutan.

In her presentation to the students and teachers, she shared her knowledge of some of the iconography on Buddhist arts and crafts, the palm of manuscripts, the indication of colors, the weapons used by other deities, saints, etc. Ariana's talk has helped our students and teachers to better understand and get a deeper meaning of the Buddhist iconography and its purposes.

We sincerely thank Dr. Ariana for sharing her time and for volunteering to share her knowledge about Buddhist iconography.



AN ALUMNI SHARES HIS STORY

As a regular feature of every newsletter of CTAS, we encourage one student, preferably a senior student or an alumni, to share his or her story with our readers. In this issue, we are happy to present Nim Tashi's story below. Kuzuzangpola. My name is Nim Tashi and I am from Urala from Wangdi district (Central Bhutan). Both of my parents are farmers and I have one elder sister and two younger brothers and sisters.

I have studied till class six (primary level of school) and then I left school as I couldn't do well in my exams. I therefore, left school and decided to help my parents in the village. Later, as I grew up, I really wanted to learn how to create traditional craft products, especially the wooden products, but couldn't get an opportunity to enrol in any of the government run arts and crafts institutes.



However, I came to know about Choki Traditional Art School (CTAS) and the fact that the school gives preference to youths like me gave me hope to get enrolled in the school. Fortunately, I was able to get admission in the school and finally got the opportunity to learn what I wanted to be in my life.

I studied for four years the Patra (carvings) and even completed additional training by participating in a professional program on verifying my skills and learning from other experts in the same field. Thereafter, I was one of the nine proud graduates of 2011.

After my graduation from the school, me and three of my friends got a job offer to work in a private traditional furniture company called Jattru Furniture Unit located in south of Thimphu city. Today, I am a happy employee of the same company, earning a decent income that is not only able to sustain myself but also help my parents and my siblings.

None of what I have achieved would have been possible without the valuable skills which I was able to learn during my five years at CTAS.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank CTAS' Founder Dasho Choki, the school, all our supporters and our teachers for giving me and my fellow alumni this golden opportunity to become successful and independent citizens in the country. I can never forget this kindness, trust and love given to me and my friends.

My advice to all the students at CTAS: Please listen to our teachers and obey the school's rules and regulations as it is only through collective efforts that we can achieve our dreams of attaining a gainful employment while contributing to the preservation of our country's rich cultural heritage. Please work hard and try to keep up the good works for today, tomorrow and for all the years to come. With this, I pray that may CTAS shine and may the school continue to help many more youths like me in the coming years.

Thank you and Tashi Delek!

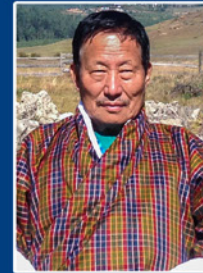
This year, we are pleasantly surprised as well as proud to receive this certificate from Trip Advisor:



CTAS at a Glance

(Established: 1999)

Founder: Dasho Choki Dorji



School's Location:
Kabesa, Thimphu, Bhutan



The School's Logo

Academic Session: March - December of each year

Number of Staff & Students: 16 Staff & 144 Students (98 boys and 46 girls)



CTAS staff and students during Koenraad and Leila Foulon's Visit, 2015

Courses Offered:



Pima (Drawing)



Pima (Drawing)



Thazo (Weaving)

Courses
2015



Basic Computer Course



Tailoring Courses



Themso (Embroidery)



Thangka (Scroll Painting)

A traditional painting of Buddha Tsoukhorsum (Buddha & his two disciples) by Singay, 5th level Lhadri (Painting)



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