

# CHOKI TRADITIONAL ART SCHOOL



NEWSLETTER, SUMMER, 2023



## Principal Foreword



Kuzuzangpola!  
Happy Summer 2023!

Dear Students, Staff, Supporters & Family,

I am thrilled to greet you all through this special edition of the Choki Traditional Art School summer newsletter. As we celebrate our 25th anniversary, I cannot help but reflect on the remarkable journey that has brought us to this milestone. It is a moment of immense pride and gratitude as we recognize the unwavering support that has propelled our school to empower countless underprivileged youths in Bhutan and preserve our rich culture and traditions.

First and foremost, I extend my deepest gratitude to all our supporters. Your generous contributions and unwavering belief in our mission have been instrumental in bringing us to where we are today. Your dedication has transformed the lives of our students, enabling them to explore their artistic talents and find their rightful place in society. Through your support, we have nurtured a generation of skilled artisans who continue to enrich our cultural heritage.

I am particularly thrilled to share the tremendous success of the CTAS Trans Bhutan Trail Fundraising Challenge, initiated by Koenraad, Lynne and friends. This extraordinary event not only captured the spirit of adventure but also showcased the incredible work of our alumni along the trail. The challenge not only tested the physical limits of participants but also highlighted their unwavering commitment in this endeavor. The overwhelming response from participants and donors from across countries has been truly heartwarming. Thank you so much to each and every one of you for your generosity!

The impact of the Trans Bhutan Trail Fundraising Challenge goes far beyond its adventurous nature. The funds raised through this event are instrumental in constructing our much-needed multipurpose building, which is generously matched by Alan & Patricia. This building will address the existing space constraints for dining, prayers, and cultural activities. Furthermore, it will provide a space to enhance the sales of school products, generating revenue for its sustenance. Additionally, the funds raised will help us address the operational budgetary deficit, ensuring the sustainable growth and continuity of our school.

Looking ahead, I am confident that our commitment to continue empower the underprivileged youths, and preserve the arts and crafts of our country will remain unwavering. As we embark on the next chapter of our journey, we must remember that our accomplishments are not ours alone. They belong to every individual who has supported us, believed in us, and joined us in our pursuit of excellence. Together, we have created a legacy that will endure for generations to come. THANK YOU SO MUCH! And we look forward to your continued support to strive for excellence, foster creativity, and empower our students to become torchbearers of our rich cultural heritage.

With heartfelt appreciation

(Sonam Choki)  
Principal



# CTAS 25th Anniversary Celebration

On the 29th of March 2023, the Choki Traditional Art School celebrated a momentous occasion—its 25th anniversary since its establishment. It marked a significant milestone and a source of great pride for the school. For a quarter of a century, the institution has been dedicated to providing high-quality traditional art education. It has nurtured and trained numerous talented artists who have made noteworthy contributions to the field of traditional art. Founded in 1999, the school has been steadfast in its mission to preserve and promote Bhutan's traditional art forms. Below are key milestones achieved in the last 25 years.



Coinciding with the 25th Anniversary, the inauguration of the new classroom building named "Sherab Khangzang" took place. This magnificent structure, initiated and constructed through a generous matching grant by Alan & Patricia Bickell, has brought about a host of improvements. The spacious and beautiful building allows ample natural light for studying and provides sufficient classrooms, a staff room, practical rooms, and indoor toilets, enhancing the overall learning environment at CTAS. The school is immensely grateful to Alan & Patricia and all the supporters for making this possible. THANK YOU VERY MUCH! Although Alan & Patricia because of unavoidable circumstances could not attend the celebration, the school is grateful to have their son Rodger and wife Jeannie, along with friends attend the awaited event.





## 25th Anniversary; Inauguration of new classroom building

The inauguration celebration commenced with rituals and prayers, followed by a cultural program featuring mask dances and folk songs performed by the students. The event was graced by His Excellency, Hon'ble Minister Tandin Dorji, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in attendance was well-wishers, supporters of the school, local leader, community, friends and family.



During the celebration, Koenraad Foulon spoke on behalf of family, friends, and all those who have shown their unwavering support to the school. He acknowledged the profound impact the institution has had, and continues to have, on the lives of its students. He emphasized the privilege enjoyed by the students, coming from humble backgrounds but benefiting from not only excellent skills acquired at CTAS but also from living together as a strong community and family, sharing deep values, prayers, and respect. Koenraad reminded the students that, ultimately, a degree is merely a piece of paper, while their behavior and aspirations will define them and shape their future horizons.



The newly inaugurated classroom building 'Sherab Khangzang'



## 25th Anniversary; New Multipurpose Hall Construction

Amidst the joyous celebration of CTAS's 25th anniversary on the 29th of March 2023, the school took the opportunity to make a significant announcement regarding the construction of a new Multipurpose Hall, seeking blessings from all in attendance. This ambitious project has become a reality due to the generous support of Alan & Patricia Bickell, who have once again matched funds donated by other supporters, notably Koenraad & Lynne Foulon and their friends, through the CTAS Trans Bhutan Fundraising Trek.

The construction of the Multipurpose Hall aims to address two key challenges faced by the school. Firstly, it will resolve the space constraints of the current multipurpose hall and contribute to the school's sustainability by improving the sale of students' products. With the new hall, CTAS will have a spacious and versatile area for student dining, co-curricular activities, cultural programs, and hosting large-scale educational meetings and conferences. Additionally, a purpose-built exhibition room will enhance the sale of school products, further supporting CTAS in achieving its sustainability goals. The construction is anticipated to be completed by December 2024.

The school wholeheartedly expresses its gratitude to Alan and Patricia Bickell, Koenraad and Lynne Foulon, as well as all the other supporters who have dedicated their time, efforts, and financial contributions. Their immense generosity has not only created a more conducive learning environment but has also paved the way for the school's long-term sustainability. Their support fills CTAS with hope and inspiration to continue the beautiful journey that its late founder embarked upon 25 years ago.



Immediately after the launch, the construction work was started and we are pleased to update that the progress is good. The foundation work is nearing completion and the overall project is expected to be completed by Dec 2024.





## 25th Anniversary; Recognition of services

In conjunction with the momentous 25th anniversary of the school's establishment, a significant step has been taken to institutionalize a system for recognizing the dedicated service of staff members who have served for 20 years and 10 years at the school. This initiative provides an invaluable opportunity to acknowledge their unwavering commitment and loyalty to the organization. In line with this recognition, three esteemed staff members (below) were honored with the 20 Years Plus recognition for their exceptional service, while five staff members were commended for their 10 years of dedicated service. This recognition serves as a testament to their invaluable contributions to the school's growth and success.



Sonam Choki, Principal



Katru, Vice Principal



Gyem Bidha, ADM

Furthermore, the institution has also introduced the recognition of the best alumni performance and membership. Among the outstanding alumni, Sangay Tenzin, Chairman of the Alumni Association 2021, has been deservedly awarded for his remarkable performance as the best alumnus from 2015 to 2022.



## 25th Anniversary; Inspiration Award



In commemorating the 25th Anniversary, the school has introduced a new and inspiring initiative known as the "Founder's Inspirational Award." This is thanks to Lynne Fourie who has graciously taken the initiative to design a stunning and meaningful representation for this distinguished honor. This prestigious accolade aims to propel the school's growth and success in the years to come while paying homage to its visionary founder. The award will recognize the exceptional achievements of the finest student, serving as a source of inspiration for others to strive for excellence

and upholding the school's remarkable legacy. It is a testament to the school's continuous efforts to nurture outstanding individuals and carry forward the founder's vision for many more years to come.



# Trans Bhutan Trail CTAS fundraising Challenge

In an endeavor to raise funds for CTAS, which is one of the biggest challenge confronted by the school, while also showcasing to the world, the captivating beauty and rich cultural heritage of Bhutan, Mr. Koenraad Foulon & his wife Lynne, a significant supporter of our school, along with a small group of close friends embarked on a remarkable journey. They trekked 108 kilometers along the recently-opened Trans Bhutan Trail from March 30th to April 10th, 2023. This also offers an opportunity to pay tribute to His Majesty the King, who has made this remarkable initiative to restore this ancient and historically significant trails which dates back to the 16th century, when it would have been the only means of communication. Over time the trail came to play a major role in uniting the region's many kingdoms, culminating in the birth of Bhutan as a nation in 1907.

There are two main objectives of this trek. Firstly, it aims to visit the projects undertaken by CTAS alumni across the country, inspiring upcoming students by showcasing the impact of their work. Secondly, it strives to generate essential funds for CTAS, enabling the school to continue providing high-quality, free education to underprivileged Bhutanese youths while contributing to the restoration, preservation, and promotion of our country's rich and unique culture. This endeavor also serves as a tribute to the memory of the school's founder, Dasho Choki Dorji, who passed away in December 2022.

The trek was commenced on March 30th, 2023, departing from the CTAS campus. The day started with a traditional ceremony, encompassing cleansing rituals conducted by the lama and blessings bestowed upon all participants, wishing them good health and positive energy as they embarked on their trail.



The fundraising trek proved to be an overwhelming success. Not only did it raise a substantial amount of donations, but it also provided the team with an opportunity to witness the remarkable work accomplished by CTAS alumni.





## Trans Bhutan Trail CTAS fundraising Trek contd...

Koenraad and his team expressed their immense pride, stating, "We witnessed the astonishingly beautiful works executed by the alumni in various Dzongs and monasteries, serving as a testament to the school's invaluable contribution in preserving the cherished traditions." It served as a poignant reminder of how the fundraising efforts will profoundly impact the lives of students and contribute to the preservation of Bhutanese culture. On the way, apart from showcasing their work, the alumni hosted the guest with tea, snacks, and organized traditional wine offering ceremonies to appease local deities and ensure that the team members did not face any difficulties on the way. They also offered prayers for their good health and happiness.



The fundraising walk was successfully completed on 10th April 2023 at the historic Trongsa Dzong, which is one of the most important districts of Bhutan. The team received warm reception from the Governor, lam Neten of the Central Monastic institute and officials of the District for having completed an important mission for a critical cause. The school is immensely grateful for receiving such an honour.



The Alumni who contributed their art work in this majestic Dzong also came to offer their welcome to the team and expressed gratitude on behalf of all the alumni and students for making such wonderful opportunities to study at CTAS.





## Thank You

The School would like to extend its deepest gratitude to Koenraad and Lynne for the CTAS Trans Bhutan Trail Fundraising initiative, a pioneering endeavor. The school would also like to express immense appreciation to Susan & Jim, Anna & Ashley, Lucia, Martin & Isabella for their participation in the trek. To achieve resounding success in this initiative, numerous donors have generously made their contributions and have successfully raised an impressive amount of US\$558,336. Notably, this total includes a remarkable matching grant of \$250,000 provided by Alan & Patricia Bickel, whose generosity is truly commendable. These funds are for construction of the new multipurpose hall and assist in overcoming operational deficits.

The School therefore would like to sincerely express its heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you for your support (the names are listed below in alphabetic order). **Thank you so much!**

Sl. No	Name	Sl. No	Name	Sl. No	Name
1	Alan Bickell	34	George Tsatsos	68	Mirjana Schellenberg
2	Alge Redko	35	Gerald Stabler	69	Morris Pixley
3	Anna Dunster	36	Gudrun Nawritti	70	Naomi Kobayashi
4	Artem Paredes	37	Ian Cameron Isabella	71	Natalia Kamysheva
5	Ashley Dunster	38	Diaz Plata	72	Natasha Braginsky Mounier
6	Assad Moufarege	39	James Ho	73	Nate Herpich
7	Babar Khan	40	Janice Ho	74	Natia Abramia
8	Barnabe Piggott	41	Jean Michel Broun	75	Olivia Norman
9	Benson Branch	42	Jennifer Bidwell	76	Patricia Bickell
10	Bernard Le Gall	43	Jennifer Puyear	77	Phyllis Bergman
11	Bhutan Telcom	44	Jim Mc Guigan	78	Raphael Michel
12	Bjorn Schellenberg	45	Joana Schlieman	79	Richard Bridges
13	Cally Michel	46	Jonathan Gillbanks	80	Robert Ronus
14	Campbell Janine Vici	47	Jonathan Sackson	81	Robert Sasson
15	Capital Group	48	Justin Hruska	82	Roman Kurowski
16	Cargyll Family	49	Karina Collis	83	Rosalind Gravatt
17	Charles Platt	50	Karma Dema	84	Sandi Swinford
18	Charlie Cator	51	Kate Dunster	85	Selim Gucelik
19	Charlotte Foulon	52	Katherine Bidwell	86	Silvia Armanetti
20	Choki Family	53	Kocho Schellenberg	87	Sonam Phuntsho
21	Dimitri Latil	54	Koenraad Foulon	88	Sophia Krevoy
22	Dokhampa Rinpoche	55	Leila Foulon	89	Stevie White
23	Ejona Murataj	56	Lisa Cartwright	90	Susan Mc Guigan
24	Elena Jacobson	57	Lorenzo Enriquez	91	Suzanne Hawskesworth
25	Elena Sirghi	58	Lucia Diaz Plata	92	Svetlana Bekova
26	Emily Blavanik	59	Lyn Bidwell	93	Symon Visser
27	Eric Foulon	60	Lynne Foulon	94	Tania Hordiyevych
28	Estefania Renaud	61	Mariette Visser	95	Thamar Jedlicka
29	Evelyn & Steven (Bofa Architecture)	62	Mario Fontana	96	Theo Fennel
30	Firouzeh Foulon	63	Mark Astley	97	Thomas Trueb
31	Francisco Pena	64	Markus Ballauf	98	Tom Trimborn
32	Franz Nawritti	65	Martin Bidwell	99	Ursula Van Almsick
33	Gary Miles	66	Martin Diaz Plata	100	Walter Zahnd
		67	Mikhail Ksenia		



## CTAS Alumni

The alumni of Choki Traditional Art School (CTAS) have made significant contributions to the preservation of arts and culture in Bhutan, which is a vital asset to the nation. Their exceptional skills in art painting and wood carving are showcased in the intricate designs adorning monasteries and Dzongs throughout the country, serving as a testament to their dedication and efforts in keeping traditions alive.

The CTAS alumni have played a pivotal role in maintaining Bhutan's cultural heritage through their artistic creations. The art paintings and wood carvings they have produced can be found in various sacred sites, including monasteries and Dzongs, where they beautifully depict Bhutanese religious and cultural motifs. These artistic masterpieces not only enhance the aesthetic appeal of these structures but also serve as a means of transmitting stories and values across generations.



The impact of the CTAS alumni's contributions was vividly evident during the trans Bhutan fundraising trek undertaken by the CTAS team and supporters. As they journeyed through the country, they witnessed firsthand the magnificent monasteries and Dzongs adorned with exquisite art pieces created by the alumni. This experience further reinforced the profound influence that the school and its alumni have had on the preservation and promotion of Bhutanese arts and culture.



The remarkable contribution of CTAS and its alumni is made possible by the unwavering support of generous donors and supporters. Their financial assistance and encouragement have played a crucial role in enabling the school to provide high-quality education and training to talented individuals, empowering them to become skilled artists and custodians of Bhutan's rich artistic heritage.

The alumni of Choki Traditional Art School have made significant strides in preserving Bhutan's arts and culture. Their breathtaking art paintings and wood carvings adorning monasteries and Dzongs across the country stand as a testament to their dedication and the enduring value of Bhutan's traditions. The invaluable contributions of the school, supported by its generous benefactors, have played a pivotal role in nurturing and sustaining this important asset of Bhutan.



## 21st National Design and Art Competition

During the 21st National Design and Art Competition organized by the Royal Textile Academy on April 16, 2023, the school is proud to inform that some of its alumni have emerged as winners in the national competition. Mr. Ugyen Dorji (graduated in 2011) was awarded the 1st Prize in Wood Carving, while Ms. Deki Choden and Ms. Phub Gyem, graduate of 2021 was part of the team that secured the 2nd prize in the Embroidery category. The exhibition was inaugurated by the Royal Patron, Her Majesty Gyalum Sangay Choden Wangchuk.

This art competition is an annual event organized by the Textile Museum under the Ministry of Home Affairs, in collaboration with the Royal Textile Academy of Bhutan. Its primary objective is to promote the unique arts and crafts of Bhutan by encouraging artisans and providing them with a suitable platform for recognition. The competition aims to celebrate and preserve Bhutan's rich cultural heritage.

It is worth mentioning the significant contributions of Mr. Alan Bickel and his wife Patricia, who have been long-time supporters of the school and this art competition. Their unwavering support has played a crucial role in preserving the cultural heritage of Bhutan. The school takes great pride in their commitment and dedication.



Ugyen Dorji's wood carving was stunning and the school is very proud of him. His carving was on Choepi Lhamo, goddess of offering. It shows us the importance of practicing the act of offering as one of the best ways to earn merit. Traditionally a group of either eight or sixteen offering goddesses are included in the retinues of many Buddhist deities. They are bodhisattvas who strive for enlightenment through their immense compassion towards sentient beings stuck with unclear minds and souls in samsara. Their true goal is to guide us to the pure nature of our mind. These goddesses are commonly placed upon a raised red platform that surrounds the five-colored walls of a mandala palace.





## Thugten story



Thugten hails from the eastern region of Bhutan, specifically Trashiyangtse, and enrolled in Choki Traditional Art School (CTAS) in 2001. After dedicated years of study, he successfully graduated in 2007. Currently, he holds the esteemed position of Chairman in the CTAS Alumni Association. Thugten is happily married with a child. What sets Thugten apart is his remarkable achievement of securing a government job, a rarity among CTAS alumni. In 2019, he joined the Department of National Property and is presently engaged in executing art projects at the Royal Palace, Thimphu. Thugten expresses immense happiness and gratitude

towards the school and all the supporters who played a vital role in enabling him to lead a comfortable life. He reflects on the fact that without the school, he might have been toiling away on a village farm or struggling to find employment, making life incredibly challenging. His dream of becoming a painter would never be realized. He thanks all the supporters for this opportunity.

## How you can help?

HELP EDUCATE AN UNDERPRIVILEGED YOUTH

**You feed them for a lifetime**

- USD 2.6 can cover three meals, lodging and tuition for a day
- USD 2850 - 5700 can support a student from three to six years.
- Help make a difference in the life of a young Bhutanese youth.
- Help a student become a professional painter, carver, embroider and weaver and succeed in life
- If you have any questions, please email [sonamctas@gmail.com](mailto:sonamctas@gmail.com)

Your support so far has transformed lives of many underprivileged youths and preserved the cultural integrity of Bhutan. We look forward to your continuous support in sustaining the program.

Please support us through any of the contacts below, which are tax deductible and will go in full to support the deserving students at CTAS:

**A - [Himalayan Youth Foundation US](http://www.hyf-us.org)**  
106 S. Interlachen Avenue # 619  
Winter Park, FL, 32789, USA  
[www.hyf-us.org](http://www.hyf-us.org)

**B - [Himalayan Youth Foundation UK](http://www.hyf-uk.org)**  
7 Hallam Mews, London  
<https://www.hyf-uk.org>  
Email: [info@hyf-uk.org](mailto:info@hyf-uk.org)

**C- [Fontana Foundation](http://www.fontana-foundation.org)**  
Sunnhaldenstrasse West 42,  
CH-8704- Herrliberg, Switzerland  
[www.fontana-foundation.org](http://www.fontana-foundation.org)

OR, you may directly contact the school:  
[sonamctas@gmail.com](mailto:sonamctas@gmail.com)/[dorjiwangmo197@gmail.com](mailto:dorjiwangmo197@gmail.com)  
[www.chokischool.org](http://www.chokischool.org)

**THANK YOU! KADRINCHEY LA!!!**