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Art Italia

Sanjiv Bathla gives a round-up of the Art School's Italian itinerary

The Art School gently crumbles, to take a new shape. We remember each corner, each wall that spoke to us, by way of the frescos and murals done by Mr. Khastagir. Bless the hands that put brick upon brick, the mind that planned the courtyard, where one could hear the whir of the potter's wheel, the souls that stroked the heart of every canvas and said, "Speak, if you can't write your dreams, paint, if you are speechless." From Khastagir to Rathin Mitra, Mr. Khan and now, Alope T. Bhowmick, all have held sway over this realm.

To expose young art enthusiasts to the wonders of Italian art and architecture, an art excursion comprising Tejasvi Mathur, Vivan Rai, Shashank Peshoria, Shashank Mittal, Nipun Mohan, Vidur Yadav, Jai Vardhan Swarup, Aditya Gupta, Abhishek Jain, Kanishk Gupta, Piyush Gupta, ATB and myself, took off for Mediterranean shores to be cast under the spell of the 'eternal seductress,' Italy. We were glad it wasn't the Ides of March when we ventured forth! An Etruscan soothsayer had warned Caesar to beware of misfortune that would strike him on the 15th of March, 44 B.C. We were in no hurry to hear the words "Et tu Bhowmick!"

It is often said that spring in Venice, autumn in Florence and Christmas and the New Year in Rome have inspired artists and poets down the ages. We Doscocs decided to juggle the order and visited all three, that too, in the very same season. It is due to the barbarian invaders, the Goths and the Lombards, the Byzantine emperors, that Rome chose to fortify itself time and again. It also celebrated its victories and triumphs by erecting grand monuments that have stood the test of time. Much of the marvellous architecture that one sees is a result of these events.

The guides were 'verri' professional. They exposed the drama of Leonardo and Michelangelo, the poetic moodiness of Giorgione, the classic works of Raphael. We were introduced to the Mannerist artists Angelo Bronzino, Jacopo Pontorno and Rosso Fiorentino, who revelled in the use of bold colours, as perhaps seen in the movie Krrish, when Hrithik Roshan touched a butterfly and transferred the yellow onto Priyanka Chopra's cheek! At this juncture, Kanishk Gupta thought it important to tell our guides the Oberoi House story and how it was built. Not to be left behind, Vivan Rai of Hyderabad House spoke about the present-day Nizams. The guides were duly impressed!

To get the flavour of art and its history, we began our ramble in Rome, City of the Soul. The landscape was enchanting, the sound of fountains and birds soothing. Wild poppies and moss growing between broken stone led us to the ruins of the Forum. We walked past the Arch of Titus, right into the heart of the Colosseum. The profusion of marble, the shine of gilt, the majestic gate of Rome and the touristy Spanish Steps, all were a feast for the eyes.

A day was spent in the world's smallest nation, the Vatican City, all of about 100 acres. A country of about 800 citizens, including the Pope, who possesses passport Number One, it is secured by Swiss Guards, enclosed by walls that only Tom Cruise managed to scale in MI 3. The Vatican museums and the Sistine Chapel are as impressive as they are famous. I remember the C-form boys boasting, "If Vati-can, so can we." They were referring to decorating the new Art School! The Vatican was as 'hole'y as it could get. Starting with making a hole in the pocket. It isn't that cheap to visit any place in Italy or the Vatican, *Habemus Papam* (home of the Pope). It is believed that the Pope steps out only on

Wednesday afternoon. However, ATB probably bumped into him on Monday when we visited. Through the secret passage, of course! The boys got a chance to shake hands with Amisha Patel, the actress, who happened to be visiting too. She was very glad to see Indians, especially the twosome from Jalandhar, Shashank Peshoria and Abhishek Jain. The Vatican is famous for its traditions and rituals, one of them being the white smoke that emerges from a chimney when a new Pope is elected. All those familiar with Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons* will know what I am referring to.

Next was a scenic train ride to Florence. Firenze as they call it, is full of aesthetic masterpieces, especially for Renaissance art and architecture lovers. The largest dome in the world, the Duomo, the Medici collections from which once Napoleon stole a few pieces, Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, symbolic statues carved by Michelangelo and innumerable wonders were on offer in this beautiful city. Across a series of stunning Tuscan bridges like the Ponte Vecchio over the river Arno, up towards the hill above Florence, sits a jewel-like church, San Miniato, from where ([Contd. on Page 2](#))

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Regulars

IB Visit

We welcome **Nigel Forbes**, International Baccalaureate's Associate Diploma Programme Manager, and IB Regional Representative (South Asia), **Farzana Dohadwalla** who visited the school from August 9-11. With them was **Christopher Durbin**, a Hong Kong-based educator. They were here in connection with the school's plan of adding the IB Diploma Programme to the curriculum.

Another Welcome

We would like to welcome back **Manoj Pandey (MNP)** to the Hindi Department and the school. We wish him a fruitful tenure.

Slam Dunk!

Abhinandan Rajan, Rishabh Chatterjee, Shiva Gururani and Harsh Verma represented Dehradun in the **Inter-District Sub-Junior Basketball State Championship, 2006**. Dehradun was victorious in this championship. Well done!

Say 'Cheese!'

National award winning photographer, **Bhumesht Bharti** visited school on August 8 and gave the students of the Photography Society a talk on camera lens techniques.

Debating Circuit

The following represented the school in the **Shri Debates** held at the Shri Ram School, Gurgaon:

Shikhar Singh
Chinmay Sharma
Ashish Mitter
Akshit Batra

Thirteen schools participated in the debate. The school won the first two rounds and then lost to La Martiniere Girls', Kolkata. Akshit Batra bagged two Best Speakers and a Second Best Speaker award. Shikhar Singh and Ashish Mitter were jointly adjudged Second Best Speakers in the debate.

The following represented the school in the **Frank Anthony Memorial Debate** held at La Martiniere College, Lucknow:

Ashish Mitter
Kushagra Kumar

The school emerged victorious and has qualified for the final round of the debate. Ashish Mitter was adjudged the Best Speaker of the debate.

Aditya Ajmani represented the school in the preliminary round of the **Outlook Debate**. He stood first and has qualified for the next round. Congratulations to all!

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the sunset and the city view are breathtaking. Down the slopes, through the alleys, one passes by Casa Buonarroti, a house once owned by Michelangelo which contains his *Madonna Della Scala*, executed by him when he was only sixteen. A little further down is an old prison Bargello, now converted into a gallery, which hosts works of Donatello, Cellini and Giambologna. To counter the overwhelming choke of art (arti-choke!) we moved west, an hour's journey away, to climb up the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Unfortunately, one could not make the trip to the Tuscan Chianti wine estates due to paucity of time.

The next city covered was Venice, Queen of the Adriatic, built on lots of tiny islands connected with over 400 bridges. Here were more marvels for us- Rizzo's sculptures of Adam and Eve on the façade of the Doge's Palace, the Bridge of Sighs, Piazza San Marco, the Grand Canal flanked by Byzantine, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque style palaces. Paintings by Picasso, Bacon, Kandinsky, Braque and also some by Dali, were spread across various museums. It is lovely to take the gondola; less romantic is the public waterbus. The streets suggested mystery and promised romance. Thanks to PCH, who insisted on it before we left, we visited the tiny island of Torcello, to see the remains of the very first Venetian community. The experience was really worth it. En route, ATB and a few boys leapt out of the boat on to a barren island by mistake. Panic buttons were pressed. I was reminded of Tom Hanks in *Castaway*, except that our art master would have had some company! Other islands that were a treat were Murano and Burano, as was Lido beach: Murano for glass blowing, Burano for weaving lace, so that people on Lido could at least wear something!

Any trip to Italy is a cultural *tour de force* and mention must also be made of the food and the music that we enjoyed. For Italians, a meal is a celebration of life itself. Each region has its own cuisine. Hundreds of years after the Arabs left mainland Italy, the sorbets and sherbets are still popular. Most liqueurs get their secret formulae from here. Stuffed or sun-dried tomatoes as antipasti with slices of fresh mozzarella dressed in olive oil and topped with sprigs of basil is the stuff dreams are made of. Thrushes, larks, buntings, quails are eaten as whole, bones included. Pigeons wrapped in bacon, roasted and served with green olives, nutmeg and Parmesan...I guess they eat anything that moves or flies. The vegetarians amongst us had their own tale to tell. Pasta, more pasta and pastani moro, much 'moro', and even 'tomoro'! The ice-creams were out of the world. We could eat one before and after anything.

Unfortunately, we were unable to enjoy the opera, but thanks to our Music School and the assembly notices, we could identify the seductive strains of Verdi and Vivaldi, the lush strings of Rossini. I guess our school can boast of its own Pavarottis and Puccinis as is obvious by the sounds emanating from the H House

Social Service News

Professor M.S. Swaminathan, an internationally recognised agricultural scientist, widely known as the 'Father of the Green Revolution' in India, visited Fatehpur, the village adopted by the school and HESCO, on June 7, 2006. He dedicated the mini-hydel water mills (generating 5 kilowatt of electricity) to the community while praising the school's involvement and commitment to the upliftment of this area. He was accompanied by KPB, MCJ and a team of Masters and DoscOs who have been actively involved in the school's social service programmes. A report will follow in a subsequent issue of the *Weekly*.

bathrooms at bathtime! The one thing we were glad to give a miss was the Mafia, which, by the way, means 'protection' in Arabic.

Tejasvi Mathur tried playing the violin in the subway and was lucky to have one Bangladeshi coin thrown his way. Most of us were throwing Indian coins in an Italian wishing fountain, hoping to visit Egypt on the next art trip. I am sure KPB will encourage it, wonder if the *Mummies* will!

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Popular Talk

The following is an extract from an interview conducted by **Ashish Mitter** and **Akaash Pathare** with **Dr. Bishwaroop Sen** who delivered a talk in school on popular culture in India. He is also the author of the book, *'Of the People'*

Q. Tell us a bit about yourself.

A. I grew up in Kolkata and studied in La Martiniere College, and then at St. Xavier's. After that, I moved onto JNU and completed my Phd, from the University of Illinois. I taught for a short time at the State University of New York and moved on to take up various jobs in the private sector as well as in non-profit organisations. I now teach at the University of Oregon.

Q. Have you ever thought of coming back to India?

A. Yes, I have thought about it, but then, 99.5% of the Indians in the United States don't come back. I suppose the reason for this lies in the fact that life there is easier and more comfortable. Moreover, there are more career opportunities in the US. One of the reasons I haven't returned to India could be because I'm not brave enough to do so; it's difficult to uproot yourself from a comfortable life.

Q. In your talk, you spoke about sport as a part of popular culture. How would you explain the dominance of cricket in India?

A. I think to understand just why cricket is so popular in India today, one has to look at the past. Cricket as a sport became popular in the mid-19th century in England, where public schools consciously chose cricket as the game they would use to help create an English upper class.

Cricket quickly became a game for the elite, and by 1880, football had become the most popular game in England, primarily because, unlike a game of cricket which lasted for four days, a game of football was over in hours.

When cricket arrived in India, it arrived as the game of the elite and was initially taken up by princes and westernized Indians striving to be seen as part of the British elite. As a result, not only was cricket a game for the elite, it became a sign of elitism. The burgeoning middle class took up cricket with great gusto in an attempt to differentiate itself from the lower classes.

After 1947, cricket (which was still a white man's game), served as an index by which we judged our progress as a nation as compared to the developed western countries, namely the UK. Hence, Indian cricket received great support. After liberalization in 1991, when private investment was allowed in sport, money poured into cricket, and this sealed cricket's status as India's most popular sport.

Q. What has resulted in the decline of hockey and soccer in India?

A. The main reason for the decline of hockey and soccer is ignorance. Gandhiji, when approached to support the cause of Indian hockey, asked what hockey was. Sadly, many people share Gandhiji's ignorance in the field of hockey. The reason for this lies in the fact that, primarily, hockey has been a game played by the minorities – Anglo-Indians in the 20s, Muslims in the 30s, Sikhs in the 60s, and tribals now. Hockey has never had the support of the majority community and hence the sport has suffered from gross under-funding. Soccer, on the other hand, remained popular in three states only, namely, West Bengal, Goa and Kerala. Here the sport was fundamentally linked with a strong sense of regional identity. For a Bengali,

Mohun Bagan was as much a part of his daily life as Rabindra Sangeet or *rosogullas*. To many other Indians, this cultural affinity with the sport seemed absurd. Between 1947 and 1991, these sports survived on state patronage, but with liberalization in 1991 and the introduction of a capitalist system, funding to hockey and soccer dried up, basically, because they didn't possess the all-India appeal that cricket did.

Q. Moving away from sport, we come to another aspect of popular culture in India – films. Why do you think the song-dance routine is so popular in Indian cinema?

A. Many people, both in India as well as in the West, think that Indian films are silly and that the songs in them are sillier. I don't agree with them. Indian films are more popular than American ones, and songs have been an integral part of Indian cinema for years. Anything which is so crucial to an art form cannot be called escapism or silliness. Madhav Prasad, in his book, *Ideology of the Hindi Film*, shows how most Indian movies are a tussle between feudal, patriarchal value systems and modern, capitalist value systems. There is a constant conflict between individualism and family values. Since the basic plot of most Hindi movies is the same, the song and dance sequences allow the directors to introduce something new, something which has not been seen or even heard of in India. A perfect example of this is the 1964 Raj Kapoor movie, *Sangam*, in which Kapoor expresses his desire to go to a cabaret and is persuaded not to go by Vijayanthimala, when she decides to do a cabaret show of her own. Such a bold step was unheard of in Indian cinema, where kissing was very much taboo. And so it was introduced through the medium of a song. All in all, I feel songs are a vital part of cinema.

Career Call

The careers' notice board will concentrate on the Indian Army this week. All those interested in wearing the olive-green must check it out.

Opinion Poll

Do you consider school to be 'a home away from home'?



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Letter To The Editor

Muzukuthurai Revisited

I would like to compliment Ashish Mitter on his interesting article in The Doon School Weekly that summarized our social service trip to Chennai. However, I would like to add a little more about how the dark clouds of trauma hung heavily above the tsunami-affected village of Muzukuthurai. One could easily sense the fragile emotional state of the village, even though the children laughed and life went on undisturbed. Over 80% of the surviving population of the village had been working far away in order to earn a better income. Little did they know that they would never see their families again when they returned home with their pockets full of money. No amount of compensation can fill their homes with the presence of those whom they have lost.

Those who survived the giant wave continue to look down upon 'the lucky ones', those who entirely missed the tsunami as they were either in Singapore or Malaysia. One can literally feel the missing portion of a victim's soul while talking to him. The situation remains sad and forgotten, as those who were lost continue to occupy one's daily thoughts and what one does for the future betterment of the society, only a few will remember.

Another thing I would like to share with the school is an experience – a trip through mangrove forests by boat to a town called Pichavaram. Ever wondered what travelling through the Amazon is like? This boat trip through dense forests and beautiful stalk-like mangroves was like a small-scale version of the gigantic South American forest one sees in movies. We spent a good 45 minutes admiring nature's grandeur.

Another unusual experience was visiting a floating fish market: out on the open seas, us in one boat, and the fishermen-sellers in another. The best way of ensuring fresh fish on one's plate!

In the end I would like to thank AKC, ASH and AKS for organizing and escorting us on this memorable trip.

(Ayyappa Vemulkar)

Roving Eye

Thunder, lightning...enter Pathare. "Where art thou Jamwal? We have a score to settle."

The nightmares of most D formers came sooner than expected as they were shifted to the Main Houses at the beginning of this term. The nesting of the Eagles in their original House was cut short, and, with clipped wings and sullen faces, they were all back to square one (we mean the holding Houses). We suspect that KLA's ultrasonic sound waves caused the Jaipur House wreckage. Let's rewind and go back to the holz...

Back in Bombay, our very own Zidzain (with a silent 'z' and broken leg) was shown a red card by the manager of a computer store because of his PDA (he specialises in loops). They were seen scurrying to the loo after that. The computer programmer in question, has suddenly lost all his zeal in loops after contracting a certain rash in the city of floods. We wish him all the best.

While you read this, the prefects have gone on a special bonding camp with the HM and Dy. HM. We're not sure if they'll come back with a 'special' bond with the Doc and the Deputy or with the 'Hopies.' Bofaroy, in particular, left with his antennae at full height. Our very own Chief Ed was looking for HIS very own Chief Ed. I wish him all the best but also remind him that his loyalties lie in another school. (I'm really sorry Ch Ed but I am sure you won't do anything to me because you must maintain a clean record till Special Assembly!)

Brokeback Mountain: 'The Broken Heart' starring Abhijeet 'Boss' Sawant and Zain 'Many Colours' Rehman. The pick-up line for Brother Ro's stag entry in the movie is, "The name's Ro, Bro Ro."

Now for an update on Independence Day, I'm sorry, Social Day. One thing's for sure, pleasure will come before duty, which is pardonable in a teenager. Swapi will be looking for his Krrishni after being inspired by the movie Krrish. Neelu does not want to be left in the wilderness, so once again, he sends out a warning that he attended Charm School this summer. (We are dying to see him in action!)

The poison in the pen is fast depleting and we have decided to save a few drops for the next instalment featuring the Socials Hungama!!!

Unquotable Quotes

Check out the rain, its raining.

Pranay Budhraj broadcasts the overcast.

Hold your ships.

RSF launches a new idiom.

I want concrete work submitted at the end of the classroom.

RSF hammers home his point.

There will be no schools after classes tomorrow.

Shaurya Kuthiala sets the timetable.

What is the price of the cost?

SDA inquires.

First you cut one chest and then you cut the other chest.

Saurav Sethia fantasises a double murder.

I was doing misbehaving.

Shubham Gupta the naughty boy.

In Delhi, a Dosco decided to BREAK ties with his faith, and was aptly renamed Brother Ro (do we need to elaborate?). Brother Ro is now directing a remake of

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