

Architecture Kids Burst the Bubble

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Abstract

Pottery Town was established when the Maharaja of Mysore allotted the land to a community of Kumbhas summoned from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Today, the main arterial Potter's Street is still abuzz on sunny afternoons. Five tenacious Kumbhar families remain and sell unglazed clay-ware. Business has shrunk and of the three original kilns, only one remains. We started calling it Collage House. It was on a plot alright, but a bizarre, amazing, put-together, place: a door in its frame halfway to the external staircase landing, an odd window making up the upper corner of a wall. We went to site every weekend, that semester. It was the first time we'd seen what a site study could be. During the length of the journey, we'd discuss what part of Pottery Town we'd explore next. We'd potter off for the next three or four hours. We didn't draw near as much as we should have. We talked a lot more than we should have, we didn't know what we were doing at all, we didn't even make notes. We went to Pottery Town so often, I think, just so we could lose some of our exotic otherworld fascination with the neighbourhood. For us, it was a different, vivid kind of place. The Collage House stood at the centre of our fascination.

Keywords –

Pottery Town, Kumbhas, Collage house, Clayware, Site study

Pottery Town is contained between the berms of a rail track on the south and the eucalyptus plantation on the north. What is now a naalah marking the eastern boundary of the neighbourhood, was once part of a rajakaluve network, depositing silt in the basin. Pottery Town was established when the Maharaja of Mysore allotted the land to a community of Kumbhas summoned from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Today, the main arterial Potter's Street is still abuzz on sunny afternoons. Five tenacious Kumbhar families remain and sell unglazed clay-ware to the odd curious customer passing through, or to the regular casual businessman who decorates to sell at a markup. Most of the orders though, some three hundred odd every weekday, go to restaurants in the city as single-serve curd pots -- these are the most time-consuming and labour-intensive with the lowest-gains. Business has shrunk and of the three original kilns, only one remains.

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We went to site every weekend, that semester. It was the first time we'd seen what a site study could be. We'd leave early in the morning with our metro cards and catch our buses and autos to meet at Yelachenahalli Station. During the length of the journey, we'd discuss what part of Pottery Town we'd explore next. At Majestic, we'd change lines, and stay near the doors for our stop at MG Road.

From there it was only a fifteen-minute auto ride to the junction of Bore Bank Road and Potter's Street. We'd potter off for the next three or four hours, walking around till we were exhausted. We didn't draw near as much as we should have. No one asked us to. We talked a lot more than we should have, although no one had asked us to. We didn't know what we were doing at all, but it was fun to have those long conversations with the folks there. During these, we didn't even make notes.

None of us were from Bangalore. We'd all moved here to live, at some point, but we were outskirts kids. Our world was made of gated apartment complexes, long school-bus rides, weekends at malls, and the odd cycle ride on potholed roads to neighbourhood vegetable sellers. We went to Pottery Town so often, I think, just so we could lose some of our exotic other-world fascination with the neighbourhood. For us, it was a different, vivid kind of place. The Collage House stood at the centre of our fascination -- we'd often stand and look at it for a while as we went this way and that. Later when The Architectural Review published an issue with slums as the main story, we understood that we were not alone in our obsession with that house.



Illustration by Krupalini S, 9th Sem