

CEPT CONSERVATION SITE SCHOOL

an initiative by CHC, CRDF supported by donations

Annual Report

January 2022



The exterior facade of Tankshal ni Pol Masjid, Kalupur 1 within the *World Heritage Property* of the 'Historic City of Ahmadabad'. (Image Source: base photograph by Khushi Shah)



Over the last year at Site School: Tankshal ni Pol Masjid, a range of activities have been conducted. This report summarises these activities from Site School's launch till January '22. We thank all the donors and contributors for supporting this initiative.



1. CEPT Conservation Site School at Tankshal ni Pol Masjid was launched on 26th September '20 requesting support for the cause through donations, contributions, and outreach.

2. While Site School received donations and support, recording activities and regularly monitoring of the site were initiated to study it's condition, vulnerabilities, and urgent areas of intervention.



3. On 1st December '20, the initiative was presented to students of the Department of Archaeology at the University of York, UK.

4. In January '21, work on site was commenced with the clearance of debris, identification of the vulnerable areas, and investigation of the requirements for the structure's safeguarding process.



5. For the 2021 Spring semester, the tutors of the Architectural Conservation Studio (Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR) at FA, CEPT) visited the site in the December '20 and January '21 to plan virtual documentation training exercises.



6. The first set of safeguarding material for the site: metal props, F frames, U-jacks, bracing members, wooden planks, and timber wall plates were generously donated by Mr. Pavan Bakeri. They were brought to the site on 3rd January '21.



7. From 9th February '21 onward, site preparation for the upcoming Open House was initiated. Activities undertaken were that of safeguarding the site using props, placing the Site School placard at the entrance, and collecting voices from the community around.



8. Open House on 20th February '21: Site School was opened for visits from the community around and other interested individuals (students and professionals), along with the screening of a presentation by Dr. Tutin Aryanti. The Open House concluded with a virtual session in the evening for online participants.

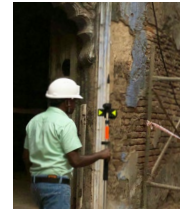
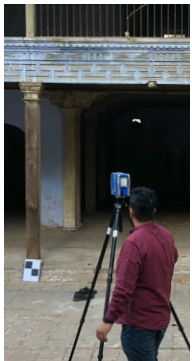


9. In the first week of March '21, the site was prepared for a 3D LiDAR Scanning Workshop. The site's exterior facade had ad-hoc additions that needed to be repositioned for scanning activities.



10. From 12th March '21, a four-day workshop: '3D LiDAR Scanning for the Documentation of Historic Buildings' was organised with support from the team at Shayona Management Services Pvt. Ltd.

*Images by Volunteers.



In light of the rising cases of COVID-19 in the walled city, site activities were temporarily suspended until the situation improved. A notice was put out on 25th March '21 and the focus was shifted toward online activities.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

With rising COVID-19 cases, we are temporarily discontinuing all on-site activities barring the current workshop.

We shall resume all activities as soon as the situation permits.

We are as excited as you are for our future endeavors. Keep an eye on this space for further updates.

11. As Cyclone Tauktae approached Ahmedabad, mitigation measures were carried out at Site School on 17th May '21. The most vulnerable corner of the structure's exterior facade was covered, furniture was shifted to safe interior locations, the site was cordoned off, and signs of danger were installed to alarm pedestrians.



12. In June '21, the Site School's safeguarding works (phase 2 after February '21) were undertaken in order to prepare the site for the upcoming monsoon season. Weak walls were strutted and the roof was covered to tackle excessive water ingress.



13. On 13th August '21, an orientation session was held for the students enrolled in MCR at FA, CEPT. Activities included an introduction to Site School, educational activities for the semester, and an icebreaker session between the students & tutors.



14. Our essay submitted for the 'Call for Participation: Counter Stories' within Our World Heritage (OWH) Diversities and Genders Group, was awarded an *Honorary Mention* and published in August '21. The essay, titled 'Counter Stories: A case of Conservation Site Schools in Ahmedabad' (authored by Dr. Jigna Desai, Nigar Shaikh, and Zeus Pithawalla) was presented at the Genders and Diversity Conference, during a virtual Roundtable on 30th March '21.



OWH's D&G Conference : Panel 5 Roundtable

To read, visit: <https://www.ourworldheritage.org/counterstories-results/>



*Image: OWH Website

Screenshots of the Essay by CHC, CRDF

COUNTER STORIES
A case of Conservation Site Schools in Ahmedabad

Authors: Jigna Desai, Nigar Shaikh, and Zeus Pithawalla
Center for Heritage Conservation (CHC)

... heritage management and conservation plan being laid out to protect the OUV. There, however, is a constant negotiation between the histories, places, and people that the inhabitants consider valuable and what is intended to be conserved through formal processes. While the narrative of Ahmedabad's history is presented as a multicultural character with layered community life, most of the policies and projects introduced in this part of the city since 2010 (the Historic City was nominated in the Tentative List in this year) distinctly privilege a clean, ordered, legible narrative of history that can create a sense of wonder for the visitors who are uninitiated to the messiness of the Indian cities (Desai, 2019, p. 197). That heritage places can involve a distinct sense of



Figure 1. Tankshah ni Pol Masjid (sourced from Wikimedia Commons, November 2020)

(mandavi) were located. Tankshah-ri-Pol, similarly, had a mint (tankshah) and both these pols were populated by families of traders and administrators closely linked to these structures, at times specially invited by the king or the roblemten. And as evident through the wooden mosque, each of these groups of people had a unique trajectory of migration before they settled here, whose histories are not a part of the dominant narrative.



Figure 2. Elements of Sultanate architecture, typical of mosques featured in the city's dominant narrative of World Heritage. (left to right: Ex-bada Masjid, Ahmed Shah's Tomb and Mosque, Sid Saiyyed, Jama Masjid)



Figure 3. Interviewing visitors in and around Tankshah ni Pol Masjid to understand the site's counter stories.

Mosques in Ahmedabad, as identified in the World Heritage narrative, are built in sand stone, ornamented with jalis, with iconography of various craft traditions and are exemplars of Sultanate architecture, built under patronage of the kings and the roblemten. The mosque located in Tankshah-ri-Pol is not that. Apart from the obvious difference in the materiality of the mosque, Dr. Gauri Bhanat, architectural historian observes, "The mosque had an upper level that was used as a jamkhana, a place of gathering among sects such as the Ismailis, for instance. More interestingly, the mihrab was semi-circular in plan with a semi-circular arch and the enclosed, pavilion-like



... welcoming. He remembers the day when the attack on Muslims took place in 1850. He says, "no one from the neighborhood would hurt one another, we all were too close and had respect". According to him, "a large group of people from outside came in, in the neighborhood Hindus, who saw them coming from afar, or heard about them, came into our homes and made sure we all left the neighborhood safely before the attacks took place." He narrated instances when a local Hindu



Figure 4. Violence in Ahmedabad shown through riots and protests. Source: Outlook India

back alley, or sometimes through a house. Women, usually used these alleys for movement to subvert the gendered restrictions. During the riots, when the main gates were slammed shut for people of the other community, women interacted with another were and were often active agents of peacocking.



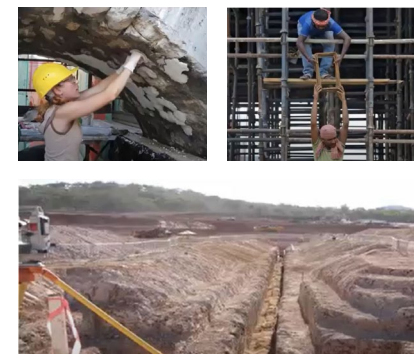
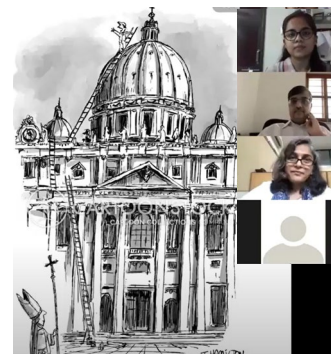
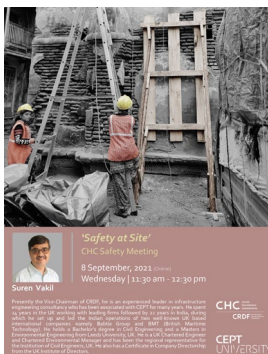
Figure 5. Gender movement within the pols. Source: Dr. Jigna Desai and Miral Shah

... was the presentation by Dr. Anyanti, who spoke of production of women's spaces in mosques. One was left wondering, in a place that has uncomfortable memories, can introduction of women's narratives bring reconciliation? This, considering that the neighborhoods in the historic city have a substructure, where women's interactions with one another have always been crucial for the city to get back to life after an event of destruction or disturbance. The Tankshah-ri-Pol Masjid promises to be a complex and layered lesson in conservation.



15. On 8th September, Mr. Suren Vakil was invited to deliver a lecture on 'Safety at Site' for CEPT Conservation Site Schools.

*Images by Suren Vakil.



Personal Protective Equipment Protection

- Hard Hat
- High Visibility Jackets
- Steel Toe Footwear
- Gloves – when necessary
- Safety glasses or visors
- Other PPE as required in Risk assessment

There is no romance in injury or death!

16. On one of the periodic site visits on 14th September '21, it was observed that part of the decorative element along the entrance door had broken off, cracks along the structure's exterior south-east wall had grown in width, and the structure's dampness had increased as an effect of the ongoing monsoon season.



17. Conservation students of the Urban Regeneration studio within MCR at FA, CEPT, conducted community discussions outside Site School in September and October '21, to understand the voices of Tankshal ni Pol as a part of their third semester studio.



*Images by MCR Students.

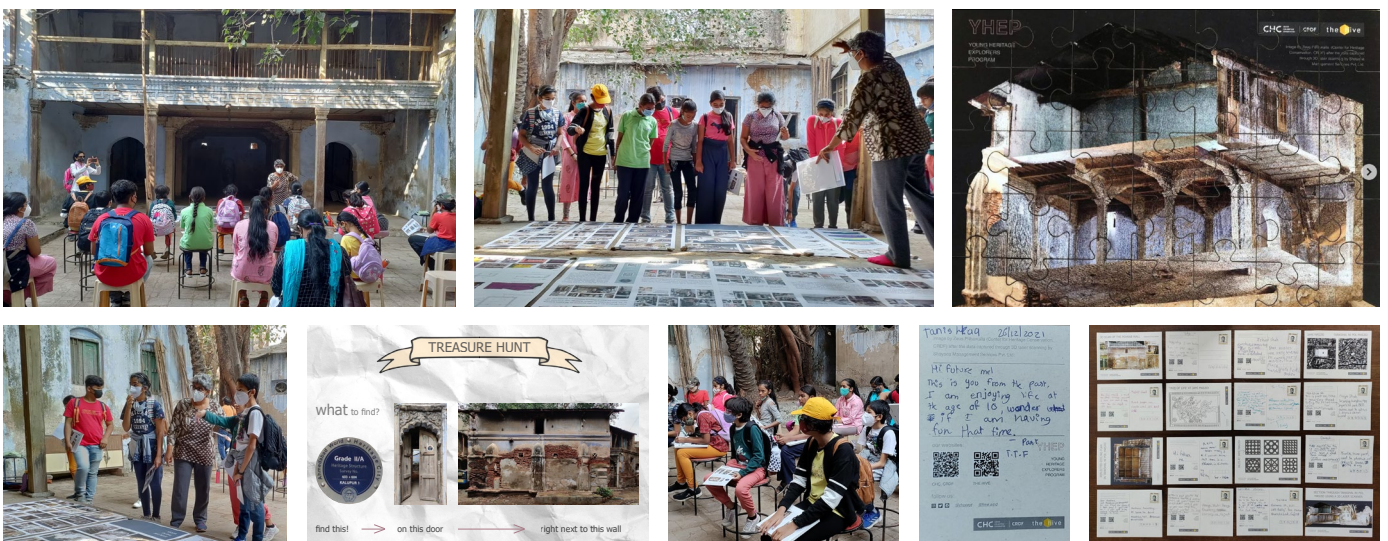
18. On 1st December '21, students of the Urban Regeneration studio within MCR at FA, CEPT had their Final Jury at Site School. At the end of their juries, students invited a few individuals of the community to discuss their semester output and receive feedback.



19. On 1st December, in the second half of the day, the site was opened up for individuals from the community around and other interested individuals to visit: Open House 2.0. The Open House displayed select 3D output data from the 3D LiDAR Scanning Workshop, One Year at Site School, a film on 'Counter Spaces', and MCR Final Jury work presented in the first half of the day.



20. On 26th December, YHEP (Young Heritage Explorer's Program hosted by Gauri Bharat, CHC, and The Hive) on the theme of Ideas of 'Sail', hosted a treasure hunt followed by a talk within the structure's courtyard about Ahmedabad, trade, and the unique wooden mosque. The building's 3D scans were also displayed to the children.



21. Since February '21 we initiated a blog for regular updates on activities at Site School featuring pieces from our team, volunteers and experts visiting the wooden mosque. The blogs are by Deepthi Varghese, Gauri Bharat, Jigna Desai, Mehul Shah, Nigar Shaikh, Nityaa Lakshmi Iyer, and Prakul Sardana.

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 An initiative by Center for Heritage Conservation (CHC), CRDF



Latest from the blog



Cyclone Tauktae – Mitigation Measures

January 4, 2022
 By Nigar Shaikh Cyclone Tauktae was the first extremely severe cyclonic storm of the 2021 North Indian Ocean cyclone season. The Cyclone was monitored by

[Continue reading](#) —



Developing skill through knowledge sharing

May 11, 2021
 By Nityaa Lakshmi Iyer "In the present world where technology is changing rapidly and there is a need for individuals to keep upgrading their skill

[Continue reading](#) —



The puzzle of a wooden mosque in Ahmedabad

March 16, 2021
 By Dr. Gauri Bharat "What is interesting about the Tankshal Mosque, obviously is that Ahmedabad is quite far from the coast!" I first heard about

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CEPT Conservation Site School, Website Powered by WordPress.com.

Gallery

Open House at Tankshal Ni Pol Masjid
 20th February 2021



Lecture by guest speaker, Dr. Tush Arjant during the first session (Image Credits: Sarvesh Abhi)



Safeguarding measures at site (Image Credits: Zeus Pithavala)

Activities



Dakshay Bhagwati in conversation with the participants (Image Credits: Harsh Nandi)

Workshop on Use of 3D LiDAR Scanning Technology for Documentation of Historic Buildings

The workshop was held from 12th to 15th March 2021 in collaboration with Shreyas Management Services Pvt. Ltd.

[Read more...](#)



Interactions during the Open House (Image Credits: Sarvesh Abhi)

Open House at Tankshal Ni Pol Masjid

Open House was held at the Tankshal Ni Pol Masjid on 20th February 2021.

[Read more...](#)

CEPT Conservation Site School **BLOG**

“ Documentation of the existing system and mapping of distress in the structure will create the basis for the detailed investigation in form of testing. ”

Mehul Shah

To read the complete blog titled "Possibilities of the Future" Visit the link in our bio —

CEPT Conservation Site School **BLOG**

“ One was left wondering, in a place that has uncomfortable memories, can the introduction of women's narratives bring reconciliation? ”

Dr. Jigna Desai

To read the complete blog titled "Creating a Counter Space" Visit the link in our bio —

CEPT Conservation Site School **BLOG**

“ The presence of the wooden mosque, and the apparent similarities to a very different mosque tradition hints at a historical plurality that is often forgotten, or at least muted in dominant narratives. ”

Dr. Gauri Bharat

To read the complete blog titled "The puzzle of a wooden mosque in Ahmedabad" Visit the link in our bio —

CEPT Conservation Site School **BLOG**

“ In the present world where technology is changing rapidly and there is a need for individuals to keep upgrading their skill sets, the CEPT Conservation Site School is a much-needed addition of space that facilitates skill development through knowledge sharing ”

Nityaa Lakshmi Iyer

To read the complete blog titled "Developing skill through knowledge sharing" Visit the link in our bio —

CEPT Conservation Site School **BLOG**

“ The process of documentation started with the site observations and sketches for a better understanding, followed by setting up the datum and recording the measurements. ”

Prakul Sardana

To read the complete blog titled "An experience worth remembering" Visit the link in our bio —

CEPT Conservation Site School **BLOG**

“ During the jacking process, even the slightest vibration affected the weak parapet wall. ”

Nigar Shaikh

To read the complete blog titled "Site: A new challenge. A new experience" Visit the link in our bio —

CEPT Conservation Site School **BLOG**

“ The trabeated construction system suggests the work of local, indigenous craftsmen. This was rare in the Mughal era when the essential style of the building underwent a change and craftsmen had shifted elsewhere. This mosque is one of the very few extant brick and timber mosques in Gujarat. ”

Deepthi Varghese

To read the complete blog titled "How elements and materials reveal history" Visit the link in our bio —

To read the blogs, visit: <https://ceptconservationschool.wordpress.com/>

Team: Ashna Patel, Deepthi Varghese, Jayashree Bardhan, Dr. Jigna Desai, Juhi Bafna, Lakshmi R., Mrudula Mane, Nigar Shaikh, Saatvika Pancholi, Sarvesh Alshi, and Zeus Pithawalla from Center for Heritage Conservation (CHC), CRDF (CEPT Research and Development Foundation) along with the team at Ahmedabad Sunni Muslim WAQF Committee.

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We thank Chintan Mewada, Drashti Nakrani, Hitarth Nandi, Khushi Shah, Nitya L.Iyer, Paridhi Goyel, and Taral Patel for volunteering their time and skills towards this initiative. We extend this thanks to the participants of the '3D LiDAR Scanning Workshop' and the students of the Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR) program at FA, CEPT that have contributed through workshop/studio processes.

Experts in the field have lent their support to Site School. We thank Dr. Aryanti Tutin, Dr. Gauri Bharat, Khushi Shah, Mehul Shah, Pavan Bakeri, Suren Vakil, and the team at Shayona Management Services Pvt. Ltd. for their time and effort.

We are grateful to all the well wishers who have kindly donated to this initiative: Abbas Mansuri, Christopher Benninger, Deepak Kaw, Gaurav Desai, Girish Dariyav Karnawat, Harsh Bafna, M and R, Mehul Bhatt, Muhammad Ahmed Khan, Pervin Desai, P and G, Quaid Doongerwala, Radhika Dhumal, Ratna Shah, Sarvesh Alshi, Shipla Ranade, Shobhit Tayal, Sunil Alshi, Surya Kakani, Swapna Desai, Trupti, and all the donors who wished to keep their identities anonymous.



*Pictures used in this report are credited to the team members of Center for Heritage Conservation (CHC), unless specified.