



Where the Thames and Hooghly meet: Journey of surprises ends with a spectacular finale at Victoria Memorial Hall

16th December 2017

#SilkRiver

Silk River has been in the making for over two years, involving 20 communities along the banks of the rivers Thames and the Hooghly, engaging thousands of participants and teams of artists in both the UK and India. On Saturday 16 December 2017 the Silk River journey will come to completion with a spectacular finale at Victoria Memorial Hall.

Key members from the 10 river Hooghly communities (Murshidabad, Krishnanagar, Chandannagar, Barrackpore, Jorasanko, Burrabazar, Howrah, Kidderpore, Batanagar and Botanic Gardens) will join the 18 UK delegates to parade the 20 hand-woven hand-painted Murshidabad silk flags with dancers and musicians to the Eastern Quadrangle of the Victoria Memorial for a closing ceremony to mark this incredible coming together of communities through the Silk River programme of cultural exchange. The scrolls will be on show and a mela will also take place with entertainment provided by Banglanatak.com.

Silk River in India has been brought together by Kinetika, UK and partners in India – ThinkArts, Murshidabad Heritage Development Society, Rural Crafts Hubs of West Bengal, Crafts Council of India West Bengal, Jungle Crows, West Bengal Tourism, Future Hope. It is supported by Arts Council England and British Council.

Sir Dominic Asquith KCMG, British High Commissioner to India, Alan Gemmell OBE, Director British Council India, Dr Jayanta Sengupta, Secretary and Curator, Victoria Memorial Hall will be at the closing ceremony.

There will be an exhibition of the 20 scrolls in the Central Hall of the Victoria Memorial Hall from 19-31 December 2017, on all days except Mondays and designated holidays.

About Silk River

www.silkriver.co.uk

Silk River is an ambitious project which explores the unique relationship between London and Kolkata through artistic exchange between communities along the Thames Estuary and India's Hooghly River. Kinetika's Artistic Director Ali Pretty, with associate Artistic Directors Korak Ghosh and Ruchira Das (Think Arts, India) and an international team of artists, writers and photographers, capture and interpret the experience of journeying along these two mighty rivers.

Working in 20 locations from Murshidabad to Batanagar (Hooghly) and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew to Southend (Thames) to reinterpret a shared heritage, Kinetika's Silk River raises cultural awareness of the Indo-British relationship through engaging diaspora communities who live alongside both rivers.

Silk River culminated along the Thames between 15-24 Sept UK Walks:

<http://www.silkriver.co.uk/UK-walks/> and the Silk River India walk took place along the Hooghly 6-16 Dec 2017. The stories of the 20 locations will be revealed to local, national and international audiences through the showing of 20 giant hand-painted Bengali silk scrolls and accompanying performances.



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Silk River India Walk

In December 2017, a twelve-day performative walk took place alongside the river Hooghly, India, from Azimganj, Murshidabad to Batanagar, Kolkata. On boat and by foot, participants engaged with contemporary artists, historians, writers and musicians, and participated in curated events comprising of talks, workshops and film screenings. More details can be found here:

<http://www.silkriver.co.uk/india-walks/>

Kevin Rushby, an eminent travel journalist for The Guardian joined the walks and has written a daily blog – see his posts from the Silk River walks here: <http://www.silkriver.co.uk/latest-news-blog/>

The Silk River India Walk began on 6th Dec 2017, jointly with the Murshidabad Heritage Festival at the historic location of Azimganj. The next two days saw an international community gathering together to discover and explore the rich heritage of the region through walks, seminars and cultural programmes.

The journey from 8th to 10th Dec was an opportunity for artistic exchange using Silk River as a case study. The salon on 8th was led by Ali Pretty, artistic director Silk River, independent cultural producer Elizabeth Lynch, Korak Ghosh, artistic director Silk River India and Ruchira Das Silk River India project director. Indian artists were invited to this exchange with 15 visiting artists from the UK, as they traveled from Krishnanagar to Chandannagar.

Ali Pretty, Kinetika's Artistic Director said: "It was my first visit to India in 1984 that inspired me to work in the arts, using them as a tool for social change and community development. Silk River builds on my experience over the last 30 years, bringing together communities from the UK and India for a meaningful exchange of stories and ideas. By sharing and celebrating the similar histories and narratives between the River Thames and India's Hooghly River, the Silk River Project encourages the celebration of rich local history, and engages communities to take part in re-imagining the river."

Korak Ghosh, Silk River India Walk Director said "Silk River is to me 'a tale' of two cities. Many set aside a particular time every year to remember their mutual interdependence with their river. London, among other festivities has a month-long celebration with Totally Thames. I want the same for Kolkata, and my involvement with this unique event, Silk River, gives me an opportunity to remember our Hooghly. We are sure that this will go a long way in making people conscious of the river, its importance and its heritage. Hopefully, it will also help us all to reinterpret and understand why we need to preserve this special bond.

Ruchira Das, Artistic Director, ThinkArts said "Silk River has provided all of us at ThinkArts, an opportunity to engage with children, work with artists, and discover stories of our heritage – each of these being elements of our core philosophy. We have particularly enjoyed working with school students along the river. Silk River has enabled them to rediscover their own town, heritage, culture and their connection to the river, they are eager to share their responses with people during the walk in December."

Alan Gemmell, Director British Council India said: "Silk River has threaded communities and craftsmanship along the rivers Hooghly and the Thames, creating curiosity about the rivers, the people and their culture – achieving exactly what the Year of Culture between UK and India sets out to do. The project connects, inspires and celebrates the two countries in a unique way and I am certain the India Walks in December will be remembered as a milestone in the city's cultural calendar.



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- Silk River website: www.silkriver.co.uk
- India Walks: <http://www.silkriver.co.uk/india-walks/>

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/silkriverkinetika/>

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<https://twitter.com/SilkRiver2017>

Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/kinetikapeople>

Silk River Walk India take place between 6-16 December 2017

<http://www.silkriver.co.uk/india-walks/>

About Kinetika www.kinetikaonline.co.uk

Kinetika is an internationally renowned company with an 18-year track record of combining world-class design with community projects to produce spectacular outdoor events that engage diverse audiences wherever they work. Founded by artist Ali Pretty in 1997, and inspired by her training in carnival arts in Trinidad and India, Kinetika now has an unrivalled reputation for working with local communities on projects that change the way people feel about where they live. From local community events in shopping centres, ceremonial boulevards and local high streets, to the Great Wall of China and the heart of Kolkata. The charitable arm, Kinetika People, is known for its high quality community engagement work, running participatory programmes, workshops and artist training schemes, which aim to nurture new artistic talent and engage communities, raising aspirations and building a sense of place. The commercial arm, Kinetika Design Studio, has been commissioned to create work for ceremonies at high profile events including FIFA World Cup 2009, the London Paralympic games/Team GB Parade in 2012 and the European Games 2015.

About UK/India 2017

UK/India2017 is a year-long celebration of the long-standing relationship between India and the UK, which will see a vast programme of cultural exchange and activity take place in cities across both countries.

Silk River is part of the UK/India 2017 programme. Working with a huge number of partners and institutions, the British Council is developing a programme of cultural activity which will connect and inspire people in both countries; and strengthen and celebrate the UK and India's cultural ties. For more information on UK/India 2017 please visit www.britishcouncil.in



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