

# aMusées-VOUS

DakshinaChitra has a collection of 18 authentic historical houses with contextual exhibitions in each house. All the houses bought and reconstructed at DakshinaChitra had been given for demolition by their owners. The authentic homes in a regional vernacular style are purchased, taken down, transported and reconstructed by artisans ( Stapathis) of the regions from where the houses came.

DakshinaChitra Heritage Museum, a project of Madras Craft Foundation an NGO was opened to the public on December 14th 1996. The Museum is located twenty five kilometers south of Central Chennai, on the East Coast Road to Pondichery, Tamil Nadu, India.

It is an exciting cross cultural living museum of art, architecture, lifestyles, crafts and performing arts of South India.

We preserve, promote and present the rich cultural heritage of South India through curated permanent exhibits and a variety of public programming. Some of these include Traditional homes from different regions of South India have been purchased, dismantled and relocated at DakshinaChitra .The lifestyle of the communities that lived in these houses has been exhibited in each house. You can explore 18 heritage houses, amble along recreated streetscapes, explore contextual exhibitions, interact with typical village artisans and witness folk performances set in an authentic ambience. DakshinaChitra literally means – “a picture of the south”.

We organise collaborative International seminars to create platforms to sustain dialogue about issues of culture in our globalising World....

*From 10 acres of undulating sands to a vibrant heritage Museum ..*

It began as an effort to bring the hidden wealth of South India to light – to set up an institution to celebrate the myriad cultures of the numerous people of Southern India. In an era when the old and traditional are vulnerable and challenged, this nucleus of an idea triggered a cultural journey. Inspired by the artisans and folk artists of the villages, Dr. Deborah Thiagarajan, set out to found the Madras Craft Foundation (MCF) in 1984.

Madras Craft Foundation is a non-profit, non-governmental organization and DakshinaChitra was conceived as its main project. With the support of like-minded board members and volunteers and financial support from the Madras community, Dr. Thiagarajan and all others associated with MCF pursued the dream with perseverance and determination.

MCF received a Ford Foundation grant for research and education in 1988, a long lease of land from the Government of Tamilnadu came in 1991, followed by grants from the Development Commissioner Handicrafts (Government of India) and by the Ministry of Culture for the building at DakshinaChitra.

Matching donations came from industry. The Museum slowly became a reality and opened to the public in December, 1996.

Laurie Baker - the renowned architect, graciously donated his services to the Foundation. The spatial conceptualization at DakshinaChitra and his building techniques and process breathe his philosophy of empowering masons and craftspeople in the building process. Architect Benny Kuriakose who designed the public buildings and supervised the conservation and reconstruction of the heritage buildings, has also provided continued service to the Museum.