

|ART|



A N A N T A P U R

ANANTAPUR ART WALK 2018

Leading Spanish artists came together to create an art route in Anantapur, AP The Vicente Ferrer Foundation (FVF) and its counterpart in India, Rural Development Trust (RDT), the unprecedented project that links India and Spain through the works of 14 leading plastic and visual artists from the Mediterranean islands of Mallorca, Menorca, Ibiza and Formentera is one of its kind.

Photographs by : Beatriz Polo lañez





Como Estas”, gushes a local to me as I enter the village of Anantapur, a two-hour drive from the Bengaluru Airport. Located in Andhra Pradesh, this city is the proud recipient to the generosity of many Spanish volunteers who work for the Rural Development Trust. I was invited to witness the art project, a call to bring art to public spaces, and while the journey was made to witness mavericks in their field bring to life their art works and speak to them, I came away with a lot more. I came away with a sense of joy at the thought of India and Spain inspiring each other.

The Anantapur Art walk, is a project which consists of three phases, two of them Spain and one in Anantapur (Andhra Pradesh), gearing up for the 50th anniversary of the foundation of RDT. The project aims to create a high profile Art Route in one of the most disadvantaged areas in India, chronically hit by drought. The art pieces were created at specific locations in or around the most significant buildings of RDT – hospitals, schools, fair trade workshops, sports campus– and will remain accessible to users of the facilities as well as to the general public. With an aim to highlight RDT’s work in the district, each creation will focus on a particular area of human development: healthcare, education, women empowerment, sanitation or inclusive education. The participating artists, who enjoy both national and international recognition, are: Júlia Ribas, Carles Guasch and Adrián Cardona, from Ibiza; Enric Riera, from Formentera; Joan Aguiló, Joan Costa, Luis Maraver, Manuel Menéndez Rojas, Mariano Mayol, Beatriz Polo, Esther Olondriz and Marián Moratinos, from Mallorca, and Paca Florit and Marc Jesús, from Menorca. The project has been curated by Antonio Torres, who will also accompany them during their stay. This cultural exchange has come to live thanks to the collaboration of the Institut d’Estudis Baleàrics (ILLENC), a cultural institution created by the Balearic Government to promote the region’s cultural heritage.

The initial phase of the project consisted in a fundraising event held in the Balearic Islands during autumn 2017. A collection of graphic art works, compiling three pieces for each artist, in different sizes, were exposed and sold at the FVF Fair trade shops as well as in collective art exhibitions. The artists managed to fundraise €8000 (approx. Rs. 6,3 lakhs) to build a school/community centre in one of the villages covered under RDT’s integral development programme. The second phase of the project will be the creation of a permanent art

route, which has been named ANANTAPUR ART WALK. This first experience of Spanish art in India aims to open a door to future collaborations between Balearic and Indian artists. The artists’ experience during their stay in India would be the inspiration to create other artworks back home, that will integrate a travelling exhibition through different galleries and cultural centres around the Balearic Islands and mainland Spain. This exhibition will also count with the support of local and regional institutions.

The jute workshop in Bathalapalli, which works with women with disabilities and produces handcraft jute products that are then marketed under the Fair Trade certification in India and Spain, is where artist Júlia Ribas, did her mural. She is a self-taught artist born in Ibiza, who is deeply rooted in her origins and surroundings, Julia Ribas uses in her work different techniques and materials. Some of them are organic –ashes, oxides or coal– to show the land of her origins. The light, the colours, the landscapes and the sea of Ibiza are the main inspiration for her work. She calls it “a window into the Mediterranean landscape that we all share”. Thus, the fig and the olive trees or the blue colours of the sea, the sky or the houses on her island are translated into the themes and colours of her artwork. She says, “I want the women here to smile when they walk into their work spaces, this is such a huge honour for me to be part of this project and make art that will inspire women who work here. The idea is to create a tree which is very much like a woman who is grounded to the soil but also bears fruits and nourishes others.”

The VICENTE FERRER FOUNDATION RDT is a non-governmental organisation committed to the progress of vulnerable and disadvantaged communities in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, in Southern India. Since its inception in 1969, the organisation has endeavoured to improve the quality of life of the rural poor, with a particular emphasis on women, children and people with disabilities. It has progressively implemented comprehensive development programmes involving all areas of development. In 1996, the Vicente Ferrer Foundation was established in Spain to guarantee the financial stability of RDT’s welfare schemes. RDT partners with rural communities in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to ensure development leaves no one behind.

They implement an integrated development programme designed to ensure access to quality education, primary and





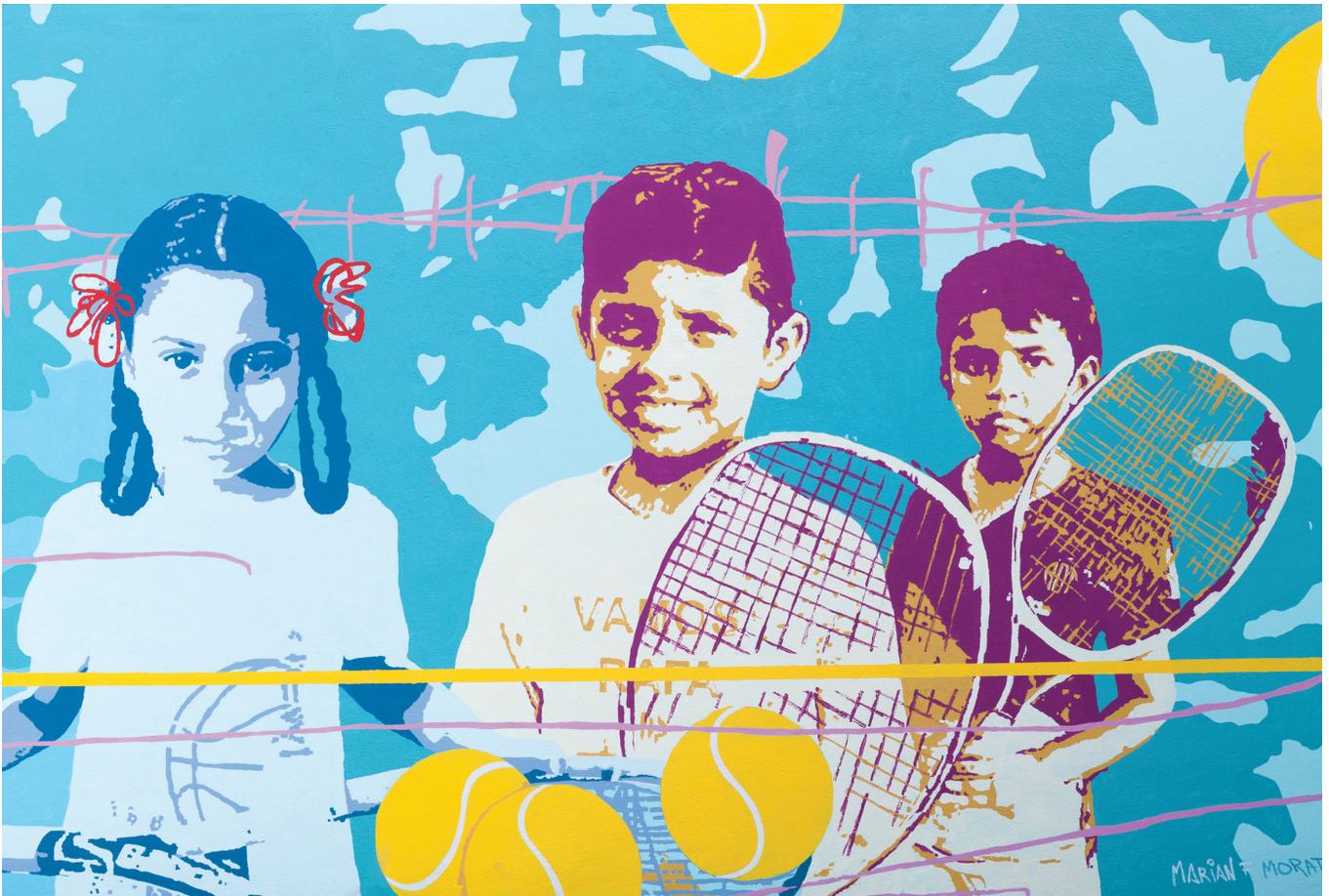
hospital health care, housing and basic services; to support the empowerment of women, people with disabilities and tribal communities, and to unleash the full potential of future generations through culture and sports. RDT works in partnership with the communities, other grassroots organizations and the Government to provide long-term solutions that contribute to eradicating poverty and reducing inequalities.

The RDT Hospital in Bathalapalli, where Joan Aguiló did one of his wall paintings (Paediatric Department), is the largest hospital in RDT's hospital network. They run three general hospitals (Bathalapalli, Kalyandurg and Kanekal) and a Hospital of Infectious Diseases, which is a referral hospital in South India for HIV/aids.

Speaking about his art work and experience as an artist, Joan Aguiló from Mallorca says, "I studied fine arts and illustration but when I saw street artists and saw their work, I realised it was a great way to give a message, I started working on big walls in Mallorca, I work with murals and I am inspired by the place and people. Here in this hospital, I had no time before I got here to visualise so I saw some pictures and spoke to the volunteers, I decided to pick the images of traditional dancers. So if someone walks by for a minute they can smile and forget about their illness and pains. I have done street art before in a refugee camp as part of my Anonymous heroes' project with my girlfriend. We try to find daily things that are important to an area, like a bakery, and my girlfriend finds texts, songs and traditional verses and we make art and put it up on the street. So everyone can reflect, art in public places makes it more democratic, in a gallery you are forced to like it. The thing about public art is, you may turn a corner in your city one day and be met by a beautiful piece of art that moves you and it becomes part of your story and your life."

Per day, RDT hospital network treats more than 2.500 patients. In Bathalapalli (general hospital + Hospital of Infectious Diseases), RDT has 340 hospital beds. People from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka make use of the hospital services. RDT works in the same lines as the government and international institutions promoting access to the right to health for all the children, especially the ones living in rural areas, families with low income and those children living with disabilities.

The photographer for the project, Beatriz Polo Iañez who is also working on a series on women, says, "For a country to progress, the women need to be empowered and made strong, this is what my photographs will capture." In addition to documenting the performance of the different artists who participate in this project and the general environment of the place, she will blend for a few days into the daily life of the patients and healthcare workers of RDT-VFF's Hospital in Bathalapalli. A selection of pictures will be then printed and permanently



displayed in the corridors of the hospital to show the hospital's role in the promotion of institutional health care for the most disadvantaged families in the region.

The Nursing School, where Marc Jesus did his wall painting, was established in 2004 as a solution to the lack of health staff in rural India. Each batch is formed by 40 women that receive training during three years. The students are selected by the government and RDT and the fees are subsidized. His style is figurative and luminous, with clear Mediterranean influences. In his last exhibitions, he has exposed his paintings of women, which he represents in blue tones and in sensual and relaxed attitudes. The paintings have been recently featured well-known brands in national and international marketing campaigns as a representation of the spirit and joy of the Mediterranean life. "I wanted to make Indian the work that I am famous for, so the girls are in Indian clothes and have flowers that show a bit of India. The landscape you see behind them is very Indian. My artworks are based on Greek mythology and it was interesting for me to adapt it to this colourful Indian landscape."

The Anantapur Sports Academy was born to promote everyone's inclusion into society through sports. Nadal Tennis and Education School is an RDT project, sponsored by the Rafa Nadal Foundation. 210 children from Anantapur and its surroundings attend the school daily before and after government school. They learn tennis, English and computer skills and receive nutritional support. Artist Marian Moratinos, from Mallorca had the daunting task of covering the expanse of a tennis court wall with her work, "I asked them to send me pictures of children in the project and the space, and some of the children in my art work are still here. I made a pattern and design in London and brought it here. The children were visiting me while I worked and they were thrilled to see their faces in such a big scale. A boy in my work came with his parents to show himself on the wall. I wanted the children of foundation to be the star of my piece. I usually do screen printing, and I use flat colours but because of size of the project, I designed it to be screen print on paper and then we projected the images on the wall. I am quite pleased and surprised at how it turned out because I have never painted a wall like this before."

Anantapur Football League (AFL) for Girls continues to

grow as the third edition of the league has come to an end after receiving a great response from the local community members of Anantapur. In September 2015, Anantapur Sports Academy (ASA) started the Anantapur Football League (AFL) for girls, a community sports league to engage girls from the rural areas of Anantapur through football. In the initial edition, 11 teams participated in the league lasting three months which laid the foundation. In 2016, the teams grew to 13 with the league being played over five months. Artist Adrián Cardona did his wall painting at the football stadium.

RDT works with persons with disabilities to help them become the main actors in their own development and to achieve equal rights and opportunities that give them the tools to live their lives with dignity in a society free from stigma and discrimination. The Primary School for Inclusive Education, where both Paca Florit and Joan Costa have set their wall mural/installation, was inaugurated in July 2016. This residential school provides primary education to hearing, visually impaired children, children with physical disabilities and children without disabilities. Speaking to me, artist Paca Florit from Menorca said, "When I found out that the space was a dorm for an inclusive school and the children were visually impaired, I wanted to create something that was tactile. The ridges from the tiles I have used can be felt by the children. I am inspired by the rangoli in India and as you can see, there is a lot of green and flower patterns are from the rangoli I saw. I brought materials from Spain, blocks of tile, which the children helped me break into tiny pieces. The technique I use is famous because Gaudi uses it, it is called Trencadis, it is a type of mosaic based on assembling pieces from broken glazed ceramic tiles in different colours, and I wanted to bring a bit of Spain to India through this technique and my work. The little white houses are inspired by the Balearic islands." A short distance from her colour mosaic wall is the art work by Joan Costa who is from Mallorca, "I normally use olive tree branches and melt it with aluminum but this time I have used bamboo which is more culturally specific and found here in India. I wanted the material to be safe for children and since it is a primary school, I wanted the children to be able to interact and play with it. When they walk past it, the sticks rub against each other and make music."





The mammoth task of bringing these artists together can be credited to the curator, Antoni Torres Martorell, who was introduced RDT while working on a fund-raising event in Spain for the NGO and was then invited to collaborate. “I saw the infinite shadow video about the project and was greatly inspired so this project is about killing shadows and eliminating barriers. The artists were selected basis on the Balearic islands but also the criteria was that they be the best in their field, high profiled, with some international exposure and also have a history of having worked probono. Since March last year, we have been meeting with all the artists and preparing for this beautiful project. I wanted the project to really represent the islands and respond to the art scene there. They will create few art pieces that are inspired by the India project and we will travel with the exhibition throughout Spain. The experience here has been spectacular and it’s good to be welcomed here. I am personally very happy with the art being left behind here.”

Enric Riera, Formentera, about his art work says, “Lately I have been using turquoise stones in my art work, there is a lot of this colour in India. Such a happy coincidence for me. So I took this as an inspiration and created the art work. There is no way to express the joy to be here and make art here. I am a very minimalistic and monochromatic artist which is the opposite of what you find in India so this was a great project for me to be part of and experience.”

Other projects include, the High School for the Hearing Impaired was established in 2008 and offers adapted education (sign language) for girl and boy students of 6th to 10th grade. Luis Mar aver has his art piece in this center. The Integrated Development Trust is RDT’s Fair Trade project, it has around 240 women with different disabilities and coming from disadvantaged communities have access to a dignified job through this project. The Shelter Home is part of the Women Sector at RDT. It is a safe haven for women and girls victims of gender violence, such as girls who were forced into child marriages. Carless Gash did a painting to be displayed at the center although it is the only art piece that cannot be visited (for obvious reasons). Joan Aguiló also did a wall painting inspired on Swatch Bharat. RDT has partnered with the Government to build more than 20.000 toilets in Anantapur and Kurnool districts.

Just before I leave Anantapur, I sit down to talk to Judit Alguero, International communications coordinator for the Vincente Ferrer Foundation who says, “We hope that this will bring light to the shadows of Anantapur and people will come to enjoy the artworks here and see the work we are doing. We are very happy with the way the artists have come forward to help channelise their creativity in such a positive and uplifting manner.” □