

Who would have thought an old David Hockney drawing would yield a hospital in India and a clinic in Mexico? **MARGIT BISZTRAY** profiles Michael Daube and his extraordinary organization, Citta.

A Beautiful Mind

IN 1994 ARTIST MICHAEL DAUBE WAS rummaging through a Dumpster near his Jersey City loft, looking for sculpture materials, when he came across a drawing in a rickety frame signed with a funky DH. Having taken an art attribution course, he had an inkling that it might be a David Hockney. A professional confirmed his hunch, and Daube, then 30, sold his find for \$18,000.

With the money, he took off for India, where he'd traveled six years before. The son of a steel worker and a housewife—neither a high school graduate—Daube had survived a sometimes turbulent family life by dreaming of cultures far from his rural upstate New York home.

On his first trip, Daube was struck by the Buddhist concept of compassion—a love that makes one's own suffering and happiness inseparable from those of others—which he'd witnessed while working at Mother Teresa's mission in Calcutta. When he returned after the Hockney sale, he went back to Mother Teresa ▶



An eye for possibility:
Michael Daube
in his New
Jersey loft.



Students of Citta's school in Juanga, Orissa, in their new uniforms.

and asked her how he might practice compassion \$18,000 richer. She suggested opening a school in the country's poorest, most heavily tribal state, rural Orissa. Prone to floods and cyclones, it's an area about which even devoted aid workers ask, "Why would you go there?"

Daube soon found out what they were talking about. "In Orissa, people with extremely sick babies approached me begging for any kind of medicine, even aspirin," he says. "I saw a man in a basket hanging from bamboo poles held by two skinny men who intended to carry him more than 18 miles through mud to the nearest hospital. Instead of building a school, I began to build a hospital."

It quickly became clear that Daube would need more money to complete the project, so he returned to New York in search of work. In a stroke of good fortune, a friend introduced him to musician David Byrne and artist Adelle Lutz, who ended up giving him odd jobs. ("They knew I could help with art projects as well as fix a fence," says Daube.) Over the next two years, he would work for Byrne and Lutz until he'd saved enough money, then travel back to Orissa to add a floor or roof to the hospital. In 1995 Byrne performed a concert to raise funds for a clinic he and his assistant convinced Daube to help them

build, in Chiapas, Mexico, to serve the Mayans. With both projects to manage, Daube formed an organization he named Citta, the Sanskrit word meaning "mind-heart"; soon director Jonathan Demme and actress Thandie Newton lent their support.

Most recently, Citta has thrown a lifeline to the poorest regions of Nepal, where women used to leave newborns in the snow to die rather than watch them starve. Now mothers support their families making jewelry and doing bead- and needlework commissioned by New York designers. More medical centers, as well as orphanages and schools, may follow. "After we are involved in a region, it usually becomes apparent what else is needed," says Daube. "Our approach is holistic. There is never just one aspect that allows a community to emerge from poverty."

These days Daube is on the road most of the time, but he's become the unofficial big brother to Babu, an eight-year-old Orissa boy. Abandoned in a temple as a child, Babu now hangs out at the Citta hospital in Orissa, which serves 60,000 people, and he's learning to read at the newly completed school. From that original discovery of the Hockney, Daube has opened up an entire world of beauty and possibility.