

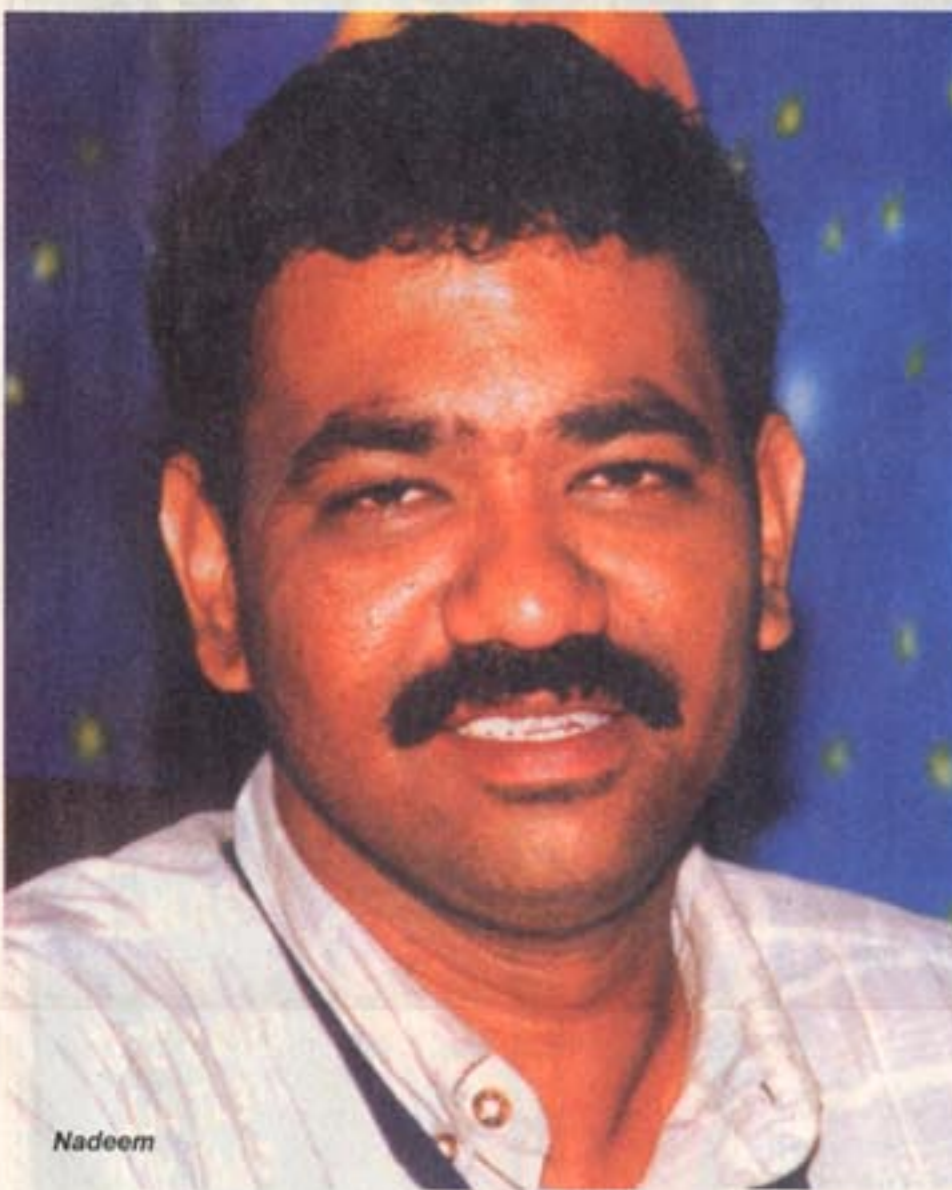
LOOKING FOR Straight Lines



Ashrafi Bhagat



Photos: Seven Shot



Nadeem



Bhagwan and G L Sampoorha

Mumbai's J J School of Arts training. On his faculty are former students of his.

But the art classes run by many a smaller operators fill an important niche. There are quite a few of them in the city. There is one run by the State Lalit Kala Akademi - Ovium Nunkalai Kuzhu, from the Government College of Arts and Crafts Campus, every Sunday from 11.30am to 4.30pm. This caters mainly to hobby painters, housewives, working professions and others. A professor from the college is chosen to take the classes, a new professor every year, so that the participants do not get tired of interacting with the same person, and also get fresh inputs.

The other regular course is being conducted by G L Sampoorha and Bhagwan Chavan from Royapettah and Kilpauk. This has also been in existence for around the same period of time - four years.

Their course goes under the name of *Studio One*, and they have a loosely structured course of thirty modules - two hours for adults and an hour for the younger participants.

The difference perhaps with the *Studio One* courses is that most of the participants not only learn a skill, but Sampoorha being a psychologist, there is a gentler nurturing process for the people who attend these workshops.

But there does seem room for more institutes that impart art education. Because none as yet seem to offer an overall in-depth study course that is appropriate for the times, suitable to existing industry needs. But to keep with future trends, classes and institutes have to sustain themselves and improve their course content so that promising young artists emerge.

• Ranjan De

LOOKING AT THE ART EDUCATION SCENARIO IN CHENNAI AND WHY IT IS SERIOUS BUSINESS

IT'S a mushrooming business. Lots of players and lots of claims. The business of art education. The established art colleges and institutes versus the brash young counterparts, who claim to impart the real skills. And nestled somewhere amongst them, are the art classes for the Sunday painters.

The established players are the Government College of Arts and Crafts, Egmore which started way back in 1850 and the Department of Fine Arts, Stella Maris College, which started in 1948. A relative newcomer, situated in the campus of the Loyola College, is the Department of Visual Communication that imparts mass communication design, which began in 1986. There is also the Fine Arts Department of the Kalakshetra School, which in recent years have been turning out some very fine talent.

The Faculty of Fine Arts Stella Maris was started off by Dr Sister

Edith Tomori who set up the course itself and Sister Sylvestra who drew up the practical aspects to the courses. As Ashrafi Bhagat the Head of Department of the Fine Arts faculty of Stella Maris, will have you know, those students who go through their Bachelor of Arts(B A) and Master of Arts(M A) courses presently, get a well-rounded education and an excellent grounding in art theory along with appropriate inputs in art disciplines, in keeping with trends in the industry of visual communication. Students also get an in-depth exposure to either Textile Designing or Graphic Communication in their M A course. But as things stand, most students who join these courses are in it as an

extension of their further education after leaving school, and only a small percentage of them actually pursue art as a vocation. The batches are kept small, so that the teacher to student ratio is 1:20, and all the students get individual attention.

Take for instance the students from the oldest art institution in Chennai - the Government College of Arts and Crafts. They are indeed skilled in drawing and the other fine arts, but when it comes to fending for themselves in the real world of communication, they tend to fail. This is because they have not been armed with the means of articulating and explaining their work, and so are at a loss for words. In today's competitive

world, communication is indeed an essential tool and the lack of it, is a drawback.

Stepping in to fill this large gap are a few swank institutes who claim to give the students all the inputs that the more academic courses in the city miss out on. Courses like Nadeem's Institute of Design and Julius Macwan's Institute of Fine Arts and Painting. Nadeem's course is the more well-rounded of the two. It has a faculty of specialists, and a host of visiting faculty gleaned from the who's who of the visual communication and fashion designing industry.

Julius Macwan's course is centered on his methods of teaching - modified methods of the basic from

THE BIGGEST OF 'EM ALL

THE Government College of Arts and Crafts was originally established as the School of Arts by Dr Alexander Hunter M D at Pophams, Broadway in 1850, for the purpose of training Industrial Draughtsmen, Modellers, Craftsmen and Printers for the then British Indian Government and to meet the growing needs for the same on the Industrial Arts in India. E B Havell, was responsible for introducing wood carving, carpentry and metal work in 1877. He later left to become the director of the other honoured art institution the Calcutta School of Arts. He encouraged the study of India's own fine art traditions and was supported by eminent painter Abanindranath Tagore. In due course, the Madras School introduced water-colour painting, oils on canvas, life model drawing and clay modeling and sculpture, as was the ongoing tradition then in western art schools.

In 1929, a brilliant student of Abanindranath Tagore, Devi Prasad Roy Chowdhury, became the first Indian principal of the school. In 1957 K C S Panicker took over the reins of the school. In 1961, it was under Panicker's tenure that it was upgraded to the status of a college.

A long line of able senior students who graduated from here have since then become principals of this institution - among them are L Munuswamy, A P Santhanaraj, C J Anthony Doss, Alphonso A Doss, and recently, R B Bhaskaran.

A few of the students from this honoured institution have made their name in all of India and abroad. But of late, it seems to have become a victim of its own apathy - not just the way its courses are conducted, but also the quality of students who emerge from the once revered portals.

• R D