

There are many successful professionals in our city who also 'dabble' in art, quite lucratively



Padma Shri Thota Tharani

By Aswathy Dayanand

THERE must be something about success and art, for it isn't easy becoming a successful artist. It isn't easy having a successful career either. Doing both with a panache is quite commendable.

It seems that Chennai is swarming with many of these multi-talented professionals. Maybe the secret of their success, as Sampoorna (a counselling psychologist an amateur artist) puts it, is, "Art or any kind of creative expression is therapeutic and it leads to an individual's holistic development."

That seems to explain their success with this juggling. Just check out this list of successful dabblers: Padma Shri Thota Tharani, a national award winning art director; Alexander Zachariah, CEO of Rubecon (the advertising

The art of being an artist

agency that won the best agency award this year at the Ad Club awards); Deb-datta Deb, Senior Creative Director at HTA; Illango, Maths Professor; S Kanthan, Branch Manager of Indian Bank; Lata Gopati, international client servicing executive with Saregama.com; Sampoorna, who along with an associate, runs Oneiric, a counselling centre for counselling and behavioural modification; Murali, French to English interpreter. And the list goes on.

They all take to art for a variety of reasons. Take National Award winner Thota Tharani for example. He works about 20-22 hours every day, and he doesn't like to waste time. "Once my work is done for the day I rush back to my studio and start painting. I work with several themes so that I don't get bored."

For Lata and Sampoorna it is more a way of unwinding after a long hard day, a kind of meditation. With Kanthan, it is his deep-rooted interest in temple and architectural forms, while Deb gives vent to his creativity outside work by thinking up themes on subjects that have touched him.

You will find many of their works in MNC offices, other corporate offices and with private collectors. Sure it is a hobby, but a paying hobby and many of them have different reasons for selling them. "My friends just flick them from me," says Lata, who has her works displayed at Li Fungs, American Express Bank and Clari-

ant. "There isn't enough space to have them around. My friends pick them up, but I am quite astute and wrangle the money out of them," says Murali.

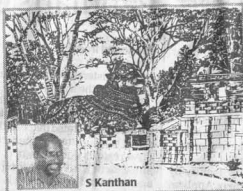
They can all get quite coy when you ask them how much they sell their paintings for. "You don't just give them away," says Thota Tharani. With a little pushing and probing it works out to a minimum of Rs 500 and a maximum of Rs 25,000, depending on their size.



G Sampoorna

None of them really do any commissioned work but most have had exhibitions. Deb's exhibition was sponsored by Grindlays. Murali held a joint exhibition with his friends and he advises, "You have to be very careful about the way you price your pieces." Kanthan, who's works can be seen at the Taj Coromandel, Chola Sheraton and various banks has held solo exhibitions at the Values Art Gallery and Apparao Gallery and has done illustrations for *Kumudham Bhakthi* and *Ananda Vigadan*.

But whatever the magic behind these success stories, they wouldn't trade their professions for a full time career in art. Kanthan, who hasn't even considered that as a possibility, says, "But I already have a job." Zachariah says, "My work allows me the kind of artistic freedom I need and I have no yearning for pure art." And Lata sums it up when she says, "It would take that sheer joy out of it when you start to look at art as a means to earn your living."



S Kanthan



Lata Gopati