

Strokes that speak

It wasn't until recently that Leena Swamy began calling herself an 'artist'. She has always leaned towards drawing and painting, since her school and college years. At work too her visually appealing presentations were quite a hit. But it ended there and she never had the desire to become an artist, nor did she think she would ever be one. It happened much later, rather organically, during her self-imposed sabbatical from work, after the birth of her son.

'Kaleidostrokes' is an art portal that started in 2013 and serves to showcase her artworks. Leena says, "Kaleidostrokes" actually started off on a whim. I had all these art pieces lying around and one day I decided to create a Facebook page to share them. I named it 'Kaleidostrokes' to capture my 'artistic state' at that time – when I was still finding my ground, trying out different art forms and media. Slowly the page gained more followers, I started getting orders for custom work and that's what prompted me to focus on 'Kaleidostrokes' as a venture entirely."

'Kaleidostrokes' offers her artwork for sale – celebrity caricatures, custom personal caricatures, o-mate illustrations and customised bottle art. "During the sabbatical, I started exploring my otherwise dormant interests and over time realised that I wanted to take my art more seriously. So at home, I started drawing and sketching every day. It was by sheer accident that I stumbled upon a few caricature artists on Facebook, and I have been hooked



ARTISTIC A caricature of 'The Beatles'.

to the art form from that time. Since then, I have been practicing and experimenting with caricatures. O-mate illustrations are nothing more than refined doodles that I incorporate into caricatures and typography. Bottle art was something that I had been doing off and on for quite sometime and graphic design is an extension of my artistic expression," she says.

Caricature, to Leena, is an attempt by an artist to capture the 'essence' of a person. For her, the person whom she is caricaturing is always the inspiration. She is also inspired by other talented artists in terms of style, technique and presentation. A lot of times, events happening around the world also help her conceive an idea for an artwork. She says that it is quite difficult to choose a favourite from her creations. But caricatures of 'The Beatles' and 'Marilyn Monroe' are special to her. "There are so many great caricature artists and illustrators around the world who inspire me. To mention a few who are particularly special to me are Mac Garcia, Mario Miranda, Walter Toscano, Jota Leal, Anthony Geoffrey, Kerby Rosanes, Denis Zilber, Al



Leena Swamy

Hirschfield, Thierry Coquelet, Efrain Malo and Xi Ding," says adds.

She feels that there are a lot of avenues to do caricatures in India. "Live caricaturing at events, celebrity and political caricatures for newspapers and magazines, custom personal caricatures for individuals, working at street markets, exhibitions and pop art events all provide a platform for exhibiting caricature art. The internet and social media are also very vibrant platforms

for artists to share their art."

Leena reminisces about an interesting incident with her grandmother. "When growing up, never did I or those around me ever imagine that I would become an artist. Only my grandmother believed so. She had told me on a few occasions that I would one day display my artwork at exhibitions. I had laughed and brushed that comment away then! But now, when I reflect on what I do and how it came to be, I always think of her and her prophetic words. I am sure she is smugly smiling down at me from heaven!" she sums up.

Preethi Ravi

