

Trash to Treasure

As we celebrate World Creativity and Innovation Day on April 21, we learn how textile designer-turned artist Anuradha Kapoor gives a new lease of life to anything that can bypass the waste bin.

Smitha Sadanandan

What may appear like trash to you and me is a treasure to Anuradha Kapoor. To her, almost anything discarded and durable is potential art material. Perhaps, it is the innate love for shapes and colours that enable this Gurgaon-based artist transform waste – be it metal, glass or plastic – into interesting artworks. Under the label, Wonder Waste, Anuradha now sells utilitarian eco-products fashioned from trash.

How it all started

“As a kid, I barely threw anything.” Anuradha says she always came up with new ways to make something useful out of waste - be it a pencil shaving (used to decorate cards), paper (cutout and made into flowers) or a piece of cloth. “It was all self-inspirational I guess. I used to make small pouches from colourful pieces of cloth, and store coins and knickknacks,” Anuradha recalls.

The artist initially ventured into creating the artworks as a hobby three years ago and, when she had enough designed pieces to put on display, participated in the Good Housekeeping Show, a Christmas Carnival organised by the Swiss Embassy and the fair at Epicentre, among others. Today, ‘Wonder Waste’ has developed into an eco-friendly business, motivated by the vision of her customers. Often, Anuradha asks her friends and relatives to bring her discarded glass bottles of various shapes and colours, cans, lids and just about anything they can lay their hands on. The artist then pulls ideas from the world around her, and from books, travels, crafts and fairs.

A few months ago, designer Poonam Bhagat asked Anuradha to paint 30 metal kettles to be given away as ‘return gifts’ for the designer’s 50th birthday bash.



Transforming wastepaper into artworks.

“Poonam wanted me to paint the characters from P.G. Woodehouse’s books on the kettles. The paintings came out really well.” Incidentally, the heavy metal trunks, which Anuradha laboured over, has found many takers. Sometime ago, a diplomat gave me an old was a time-consuming task, but I enjoyed working on it.”

Inspiration

The waste material itself acts as the inspiration, she says. “I am also drawing inspirations from Indian motifs and Bollywood. I hope to come up ‘Jai Ho’ and ‘Dil Hai Hindustani’ themes shortly.” Anuradha is toying with various ideas for her next set of kettles, tea cups, bird houses, tiles, watering cans and wall art. Characters from Tintin, Asterix and Archies comics as well as the Panchatantra all figure in her ‘would-love-to-paint’ list.

The art and culture of Africa and China are yet huge sources of inspiration for this artist. “I have been to these places and picked up a lot of stuff from there. The

indigenous art of Africa is raw and inspired by nature.” Art in China, observes Anuradha, is subtle, intricate and delicate. She wants to delve further into the realm of Indian folk art as “there is so much creativity in there.”

Green aspects

Recycling and reducing carbon footprint is in and there is also an increased awareness among the people about the need to be eco-conscious. “Recycled materials have seekers, but it is a niche market. It is not easy to break into that niche area.” Has this current trend helped bring in more buyers for her works? “Not everyone wants to buy something made out of waste. However, such artworks help prolong the life of scrap materials like glass bottles, lids, metals and inspire people to look towards sustainable practices like reuse. Of late, people too have been accepting this concept,” says the artist, whose products are available at Maximum Store and Creative Garh in Shahpurjat.



Passionate about the craft.



DO IT YOURSELF

Make a papier-mâché pencil holder

Things you will need: A clean empty plastic can (curd container), newspaper, water, gum, enamel, acrylic paint. Optional: beads, yarn, buttons, sequins.

Method: Tear the newspaper into smaller strips and soak it in some water for a day. Then boil it in a vessel for 30 minutes. When it gets cooled, grind it into a paste in a mixer. The mixture’s consistency has to be right for it to become a paste. Add water, a little at a time, as required. Scoop out the paste and mix it with plaster of Paris (available in hardware stores), some linseed oil and gum. Knead well to make small batches of dough, as it dries quickly. Smear the papier-mâché over the plastic container swiftly. Smoothen the paste with water each time you mould it over the container’s surface. Let it dry well in the sun. Apply two coats of enamel and let it dry again. Now, paint any pattern you like with acrylic paint. You could also stick fancy buttons, beads on the holder to jazz it up. – Inputs Anuradha Kapoor.