

An artistic spin to **ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Shivani Virani, the owner of Mumbai-based art gallery Artistree, has been able to translate her love and passion for arts into a profit-making business venture



Shivani Virani

POOJA SOLANKI

“The only time I feel alive is when I am painting.” These words by painter Vincent van Gogh hold completely true for Mumbai’s Shivani Virani. She took her obsession with arts to another level by opening an art gallery, known as Artistree, with the sole aim of promoting arts. Being an artist herself and also an art curator, Shivani Virani founded Artistree in the year 2003 in Mumbai. When asked why she chose to open an art gallery, she says, “Before I started Artistree, whoever wished to buy or sell artworks contacted art dealers operating from their homes. In the early 2000s, there were many old and prominent art galleries and they still continue to rule the art world. These art galleries have served the purpose of artists as well as art collectors. I learn from them daily, and want to take Artistree to the position where these galleries stand. This is the inspiration behind starting Artistree.”

Artistree has a website, www.artistree.biz, and buyers can conveniently purchase artwork from the comfort of their home by accessing the website which has been in existence for many years now. To take her arts’ business

step forward, Shivani has decided to immensely popularise her online marketplace. She says, “In the recent years, online shopping has rapidly flourished. Moreover, it’s economical. Hence, I want to see Artistree growing as an e-commerce portal for art collectors.” Keeping in mind the sole motto behind setting up Artistree, i.e. the promotion of arts, Shivani not only wants to create awareness of art in the country as well as abroad, but also educate people about art and make them realise its importance in the nation’s cultural history and modern times.

I don’t follow any business or marketing strategies. People have come to know about my business only through word of mouth.

Her love for art dates back to her childhood days as she has been drawing and painting since the very young age of five. Born and brought up in the picturesquely beautiful Kashmir, her love and passion for art grew even deeper and stronger. “When I was ten years old there used to be a British lady, Edna, who had stayed back in Kashmir after India got independent. She broadened my perspective on arts and history,” Shivani says. She reminisces that she used to participate in every drawing and painting competition in her school, and managed to top them, following which she studied Applied Arts at Delhi Polytechnic. She’s previously been into set designing for films

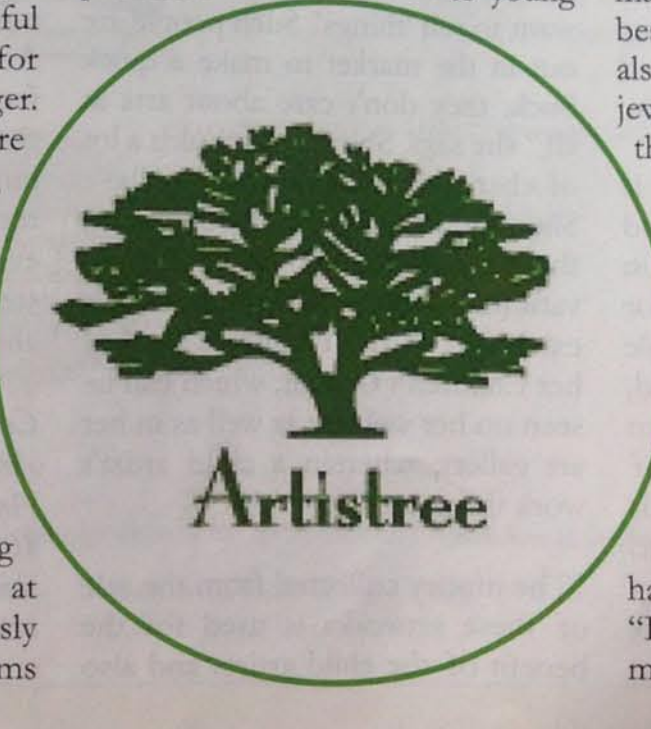


and TV commercials and had even opened a production company, First & Ten Production with her director husband, Rajeev Virani. But in order to fulfill her fervent desire of celebrating and promoting arts, she decided to step down from the production company and start Artistree.

Talking about the artists who display their artworks at Artistree, Shivani says, “I am keen on providing a platform to young

artists to establish themselves in the industry. I have many well-established names too as my sellers. Senior journalist Prakash Joshi, who is a well-known artist these days, has been my seller for years now.” Her clientele is not only based in India but also abroad and she has many young international artists displaying their work on Artistree’s website. There also are many buyers from various parts of the world who shop for artworks from the online market of Artistree. Interestingly, besides selling paintings, Shivani has also started the sale of artefacts and jewellery. Consumers can browse through various products, and there’s everything for everyone in every price range. The cost of low-priced products can be seen online whereas the cost of exquisite, highly-priced products is revealed only by request.

Talking about Artistree’s success story, Shivani says her business has grown by leaps and bounds. “I don’t follow any business or marketing strategies. People have



Art

Business for all 50 October 2014



Primary colours

Though children learn to draw before they can write, parents rarely encourage them to continue. Now, gallery owner Shivani Virani wants to help young talent bloom

The marketing hoopla around Mother’s Day is in full swing. But what’s not being said is that many parents discourage their children from drawing and painting. Shivani Virani, owner of Artistree art gallery, says that she has seen many children who are talented but whose parents have discouraged them from pursuing a career in art and up to the age of 10, she has seen them stop. “A child learns to draw with a crayon before she learns to write but most of us tend to push her to write rather than the other way round. And very often we look at what a child has drawn or painted, give a few words of encouragement and then we stop her,” she says.

it’s lent for charity. If a painting is priced at Rs 1,200 and is sold, half of the amount goes to the child and the remaining half goes to actor Rahul Bose’s charitable organisation, ‘The Foundation’, she says. By doing so, Shivani hopes that the young artists get a platform and stimulation to come up with interesting works of arts, and become renowned artists in the future, further fuelling her passion of promoting arts. In fact, Shivani’s association with arts is not just confined to Artistree. She has a tie-up with Colorado-based BharArt, and is an Indian representative of ArtSlant, a worldwide contemporary art network.

Her wish is to reach out to as many people as possible through Artistree, and engage them in the fantastic world of arts. “My biggest mission in life was, is and shall remain art education; the primary reason why I started Artistree. And even in the coming years, I shall strive to inform and educate people about arts,” she adds.

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“The money collected from the sale of these artworks is used for the benefit of the child artists and also

to know about my business only through word of mouth,” she adds. Though coming from a financially stable family, taking Artistree to what it is doing was not an easy task for Shivani. “Artistree’s success has been possible because of my efforts and the motivation and encouragement I received from my family. Also, my clients’ faith in me has helped Artistree grow every day,” she says.

Her biggest support system is her husband. Being a director and writer, Rajeev helps her a lot in managing and creating content for the website. They both have flexible timings. When Shivani is not around, Rajeev takes care of their children and house, being a part of the film industry, Rajeev is friends with many Bollywood actors who come to attend Shivani’s art shows and workshops. “Manoj Bajpai is our very good friend. He does make