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From fashion to art, Smitha carves a niche

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Smitha with her paintings

Sitting before a stretched-out canvas and conceiving an image effortlessly in her mind, Smitha Menon reaches for her paintbrush at 7 in the morning. She stays with her tools and works on till dusk, till all that came to her mind was on the paper.

Women in white and green, with matching flowers, and traditional attire, looked back at her from the canvas. Derived from mythology, that interested her since her childhood days, the characters took the form that popped into the mind of this Dubai-based artist who hails from Thiruvananthapuram.

“I used to sketch since I was three years old. If I need to think or relax, I’d always come to painting. However, I have taken it up as a profession since last year,” says Smitha, sitting at the La Gallery 360 in Nanthancode, Thiruvananthapuram, at her maiden solo exhibition.

Smitha, fondly called Tina by friends, began her career in the fashion industry. “I studied at the Fashion School in Delhi and worked as a fashion journalist.

But later she had a change of heart and pursued software engineering. She worked as a graphic designer in US for a while before deciding to go back to fashion. This time, she went to Dubai and ran a fashion school for five years. Finally, she realised that she wanted to paint for the rest of her life.

Reading mythology as a youngster, Smitha was awed by mythical characters. “Indian mythology is interesting with lots of characters and stories,” she says. One of the first books that inspired Smitha was ‘Siddhartha’ and she got into painting Buddhas.

“Before that I used to draw Lord Ganesha. I loved his form,” adds Tina, who has also sketched most of Shakthi’s incarnations including Lakshmi, Saraswathi, Madurai Meenakshi, Durga and Kali.

Most of the paintings she has placed in the gallery were painted over the past one and a half years. “I take about three to four days or a week to do a painting,” she says. Kerala gives her the liberty to do what she wants to do.

“They will accept you as an artist here. You have your freedom in Dubai too. But at the end of the day you are an expat. I wish to come back to Kerala some day and settle down here,” she says.

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