

## Igniting the fire of creativity

Akshaya Pillai



**Latha Rajeev**

After years of waiting, Latha Rajeev found an old house in the capital city that struck a chord. Doors were termite-eaten, windows creaked and cobwebs hung all over the place, but it was a house with a soul.

When she decided to transform the house into an art gallery, she chose Sabu Sivan, a renowned set designer, for assistance. Latha, who has invested all her time, experience, knowledge and love of art into this gallery, says, “I never compromise; I have waited so long for things to be perfect.” She adds that she believes in Paulo Coelho’s theory that when you really want something, the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it.

Situated in Nanthencode, Thiruvananthapuram, Gallery 360, with its white-washed walls, wooden frames on pillars, glass doors, wooden textured tiles and cosy chairs, is a work of art in itself. Ask her whether the chicken came first or

the egg, she says it was the artist who came first.

It was after meeting Smitha Menon, a Dubai-based artist, that she decided to revamp the place and get going. “What we lack is exposure to aesthetics and beauty. Once you have seen beautiful things, you can’t go back to the ugly,” she adds.

Every art lover in the city is familiar with the name Latha Rajeev. This art curator, under the banner of Gallery 360, has previously conducted shows in the premises of the restaurant Flavours, which includes the screening of Geethu Mohandas’s film, *Kelkunnundo*, Gigi Scaria’s video art and Rajan Krishnan’s art work. She also worked as an art history professor at the Fine Arts College, Thiruvananthapuram and was very active in the Kerala art scene.

It was she who initiated Black Cube, an interactive session that showcased digital video works of artists for the first time in the 3rd International Documentary and Short Film Festival of Kerala. “The Gallery 360 symbol has four elements of nature except fire, which is within me,” says the art lover, who has studied in Shantiniketan.

The logo on the glass door says ‘The Blue Mermaid Picture Company’, which produced national award winning films like *Shesham and Jalamarmaram* and is an in-house venture by Latha and husband Rajeev Kumar, a filmmaker.

She plans to take the gallery to a higher level by inviting foreign artists, conducting video/film screening, theatre acts and performance shows. “I have a lot of things planned but I need sponsors for that. How long can I depend on my husband to fund me,” she says with a smile.

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