

PUDUCHERRY

Breaking new ground in art



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Art Break Day helps bridge communities and people

A friendly blue elephant against a backdrop of swimming colours. This was Marissa

Classen's interpretation of the theme 'wish', given to participants at the Art Break Day, held at Auroville on September 5.

"The elephant is what I have been expecting to see ever since I reached India nearly a month ago back, but somehow I have missed out on. The day I went to see the temple elephant Lakshmi in Puducherry, she was not there," says Ms. Classen, an art therapy student from Germany who is volunteering at Sankalpa, which organised the event here.

Annual global event

The Art Break Day, organised by US-based Art is Moving, is an annual global community art event, with art sites set up in 30 cities around the world. Participants are provided art supplies and encouraged to take a break with art. This is the second year of the Art Break Day in Auroville.

The Art Break Day at Auroville brought together Aurovilians, visitors and people from the surrounding villages. Quite a few school children from the neighbourhood also came in.

"It is a beautiful and unique event as it helps make bridges between communities and different kind of people. It also makes bridges within, of the mind, body and soul," says Krupa Jhaveri, art therapist and director with Sankalpa.

The idea behind the event is to help realise art provides a foundation for expression and art can be for oneself and not just a commodity, adds Ms. Jhaveri.

For ecologist Neena Sengupta, the event was a definite 'breather'. Her painting of a bird

depicts a 'flying spirit' she says. In fact, quite a few of the paintings depicted birds and the urge to fly.

"At Auroville, we are grounded. This perhaps shows the need for release," says Ms. Sengupta. Enjoying her day, she even painted a second one, showing the need for a 'regenerative earth'. The Art Break Day helped to introduce participants to some elements of art therapy, which focuses on expressing feelings.

Art therapy

"Art therapy is non-verbal and helps to externalise feelings which one may not be comfortable in expressing. In my work here, I have observed it helps children with self-esteem and gaining a sense of mastery," says Ms. Jhaveri, whose organisation Sankalpa works in the area of art therapy with women and children from villages around Auroville. The organisation has also held sessions for children who have suffered abuse, in which case art therapy has helped in finding coping response, bringing catharsis and healing, says Ms. Jhaveri.

Sankalpa plans to organise an exhibition of the art work produced at successive editions of Art Break Day.

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