

# Friday

MARCH 19-25, 2010

## In stitches

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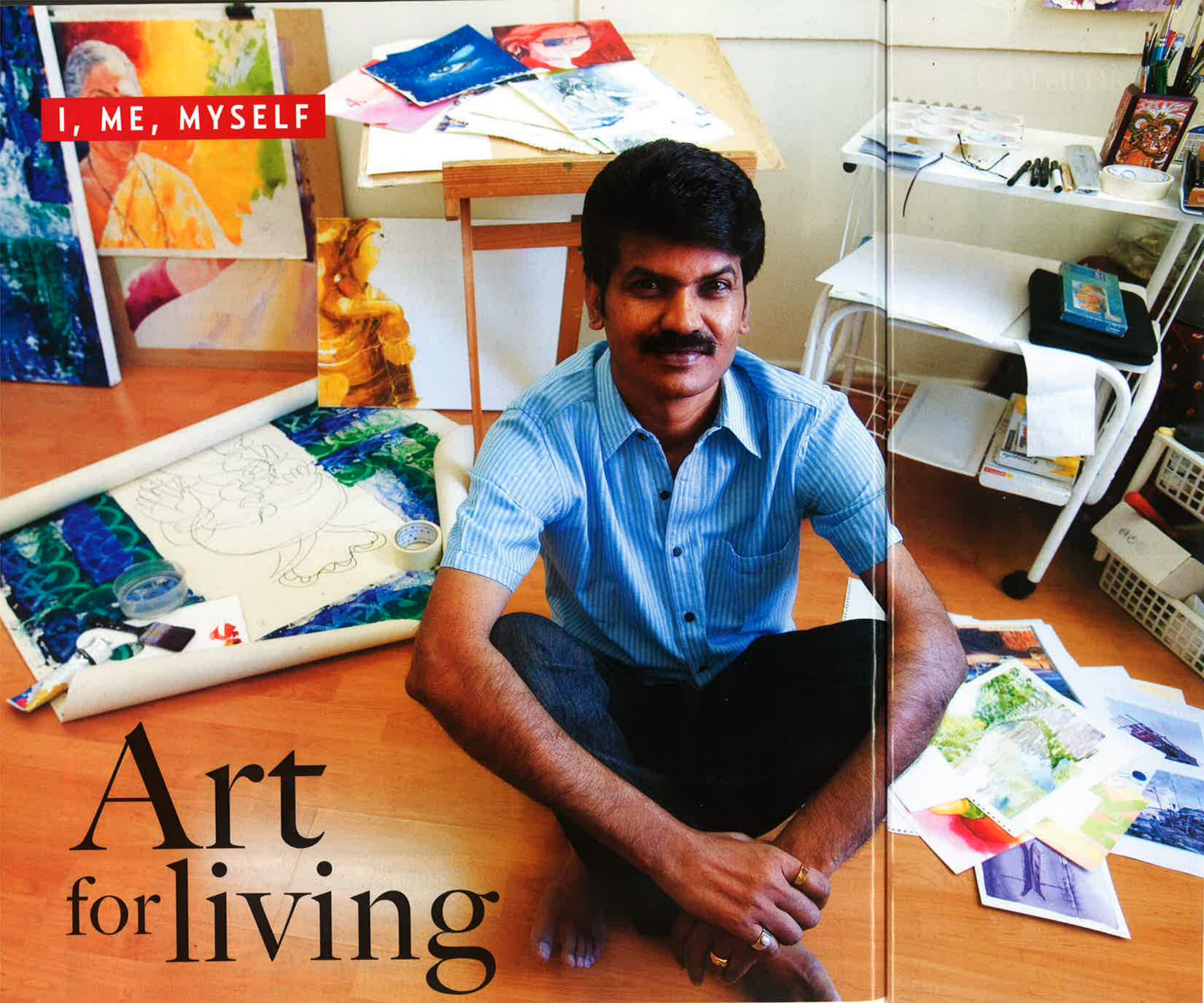
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HINA



I, ME, MYSELF



# Art for living

**H**E BELIEVES THAT AN ARTIST WHO CAN COMMUNICATE POSITIVE social change through art is a true 'artist'. Atul Panase always has something to explore. He shares ten life lessons he learnt through art with **Veathika Jain**

Atul Panase knew he wanted to become an artist very early on in life. Nothing gave him greater joy than sketching and experimenting with his paintbrush. He hails from the small town of Bhilai Nagar in Chhattisgarh, central India.

However, his parents would have none of it. Ironically his father was passionate about art, but his parents wanted him to pursue a career that

would give him financial stability. And so it was that Panase enrolled in an engineering college.

He completed a programme in mechanical engineering, but he secretly yearned to pursue a career in art. Realising that he has a deep and unshakeable passion for art that simply couldn't be ignored, his brother encouraged him to pursue his dream.

For Panase, this encouragement offered a light at the end of the tunnel. He completed a five-year course in applied art at Nagpur University and then worked for a little while at an advertising agency. Thereafter, he decided to become a full-time artist.

Panase has come a long way and is glad to have followed his heart. Today, he is a well-known artist in the region. He has participated in a number of exhibitions in Dubai and has also won several competitions and awards.

"I enjoy working in all sorts of mediums," says Panase, although he adds that water colours, inks, pastels and acrylics are his favourites. He also experiments with different forms of art, such as portraits, landscapes, compositions, sketches, cartoons and photography.

Among the achievements he is quietly proud of is the fact that he has imparted his skills to more than a 1,000 students (comprising more than 30 nationalities). He holds classes at the Dubai Community Theatre and Arts Centre and at the Dubai International Art Centre. His classes at the University of Sharjah and other institutes (as a visiting faculty member) are also extremely popular with students.

One of his more unusual endeavours is using art as a form of therapy. He has used this particular therapy to overcome depression and believes that he can help others benefit from it.

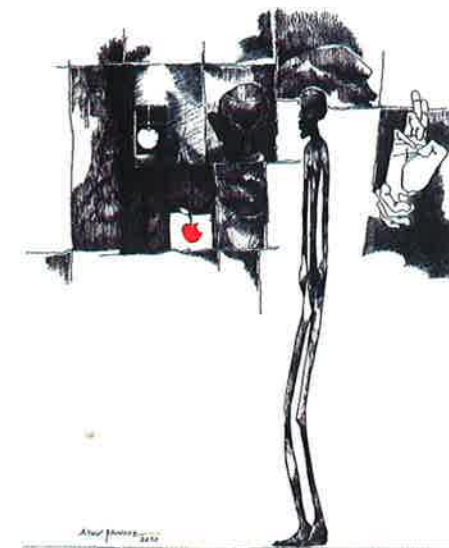
The art therapy courses he conducts are a result of insights he has gained from his parents. They played a crucial role in helping him develop his art therapy course. This is when life came full circle for Panase.

"It's basically a combination of [the interests] of my parents - my father has always been passionate about art, while my mother was a doctor."

As an artist, Panase believes in social service. His personal definition of an 'artist' is one who can communicate positive social change through art.

He is currently working on a few subjects such as Time and Landscapes of Dubai for several upcoming exhibitions.

Friday asked Panase to use the medium of art to describe ten life lessons that he has learned.



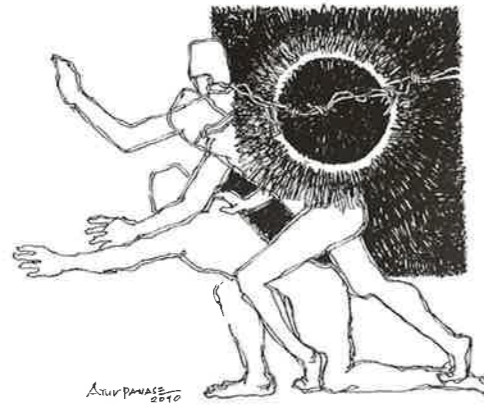
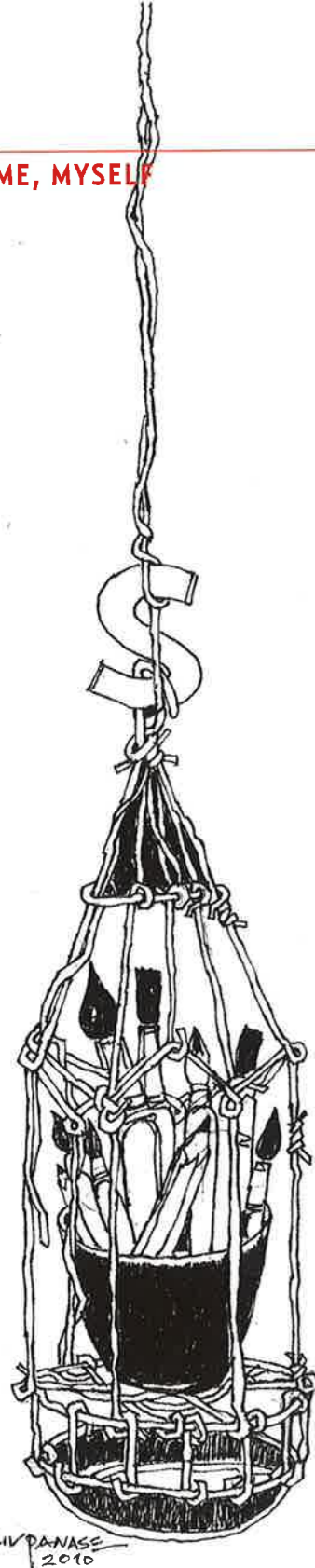
**1** Life is all about being influenced by something. In art, one starts with copying. There are three ways to draw: you can study a 3-D object and then sketch it; you can look at a picture of a 3-D object and then draw it; or you can draw something from your memory. But whichever method you choose to help you draw, you are essentially copying (even in the third case, your work is a copy of an image in your memory).

The same applies in life. When you are young, you imitate the behavioural styles and values of your parents. As you grow up, you copy the gestures or styles of people you meet. Life is all about copying things from people and making them part of your own life.

**2** I don't believe in having a career, at least not in the strict sense of the term. Art to me is not a career because I believe the term 'career' is very restrictive - it implies that there is an allotted time available and that one has to retire at a certain age. To me, art does not impose or suggest any limitations - it's boundless. The same applies to life. Art is my life and that's why I say I don't consider it to be a career. I earned a degree in engineering because my parents wanted me to have a stable career but then I realised that I wanted to do something which I could practice for my entire life. The retirement date from art will be the day when I will cease to exist.

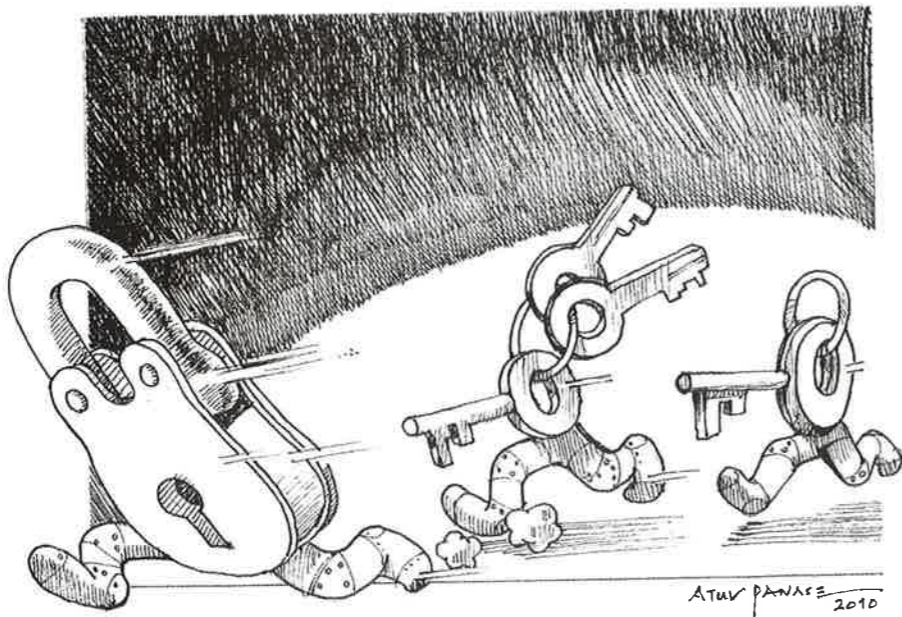






**3** There is no right or wrong in art – only good or bad. This might seem a little strange to some, but I believe that there's nothing right or wrong in art. You cannot say that a particular technique used in a painting is wrong, but you can say that a painting is bad. Of course, art is subjective. Similarly, there is no one way to lead your life. This is the greatest lesson I learnt from art. Thanks to this realisation, I do my best not to judge others.

**4** In art, I feel it is important to use your self as a creative reference. An artist should translate their emotions and expressions onto a canvas for others to access. Similarly, to me life is a canvas and you have to translate your values and personal attributes on to it. In the same way that art gave me satisfaction, recognition and a livelihood, so life too will return your favours. If you give your best to something, you will reap the rewards.

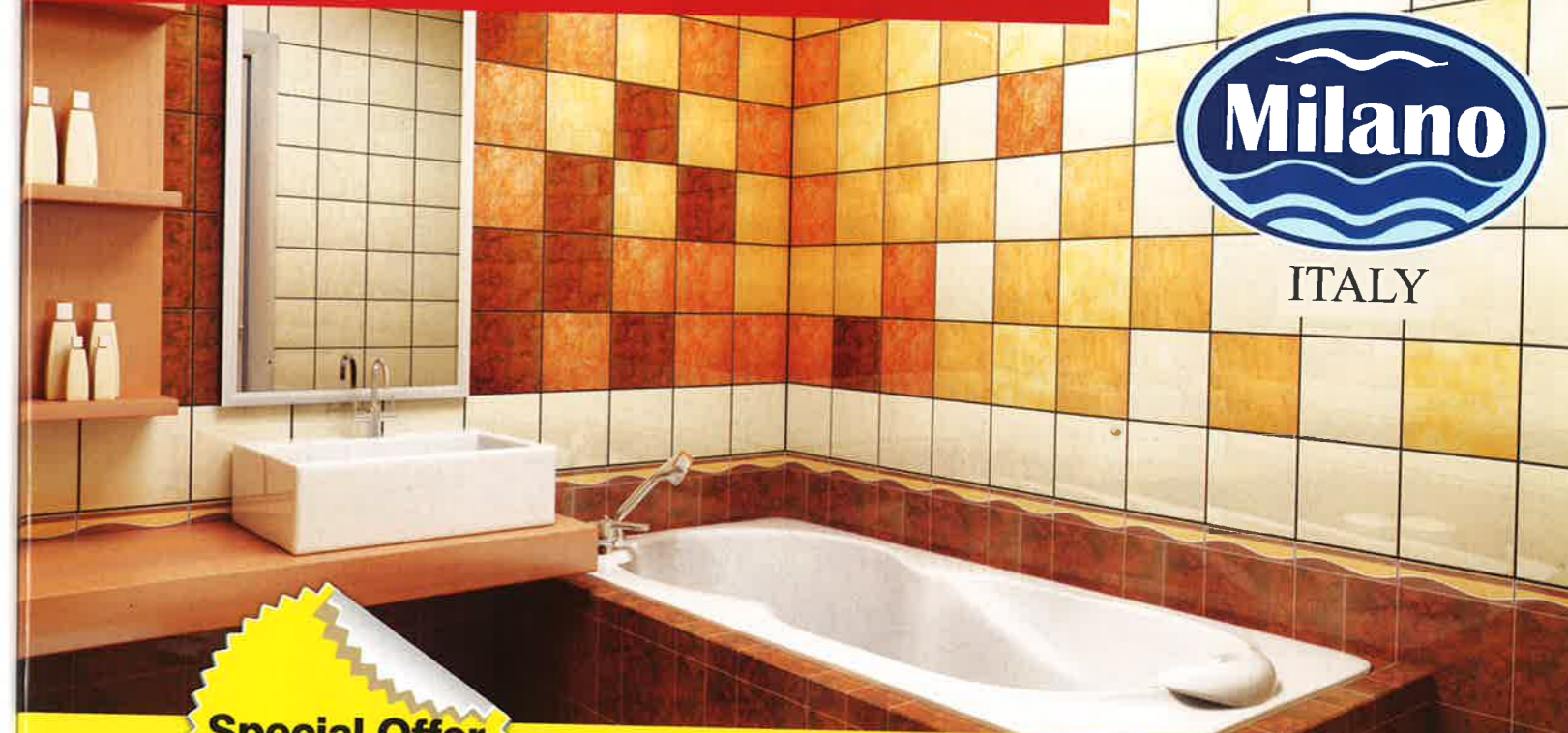


**5** Art comes first... after money! Initially I used to believe that money would not be important to me. I thought I could survive on art alone. Naturally, that was a naïve assumption! I cannot live without art – it is like oxygen to me. But to maintain that oxygen level, I need money to buy paint, sketchbooks and so on. So now I say that art comes first, but with money in tow. To live my life fully, money is important.

**6** Accept yourself and who you are. One of the key lessons art teaches you is to learn to be honest with yourself and accept the way you are. Nobody's perfect and it is inevitable that you will fail occasionally. There have been occasions when I have created something which has not turned out to be exactly what I had in mind. But I had to accept that whatever the result, the product was a direct result of me and my efforts.

In life too, you have to realise your strengths and weaknesses. If you accept yourself the way you are, accepting failure becomes easier. More importantly, it will help you know your potential and your limits. Art is difficult to teach but relatively easy to learn. To reach a level where I could teach well, I had to constantly assess myself. To know what you can offer, you need to be true to yourself and know your limitations.

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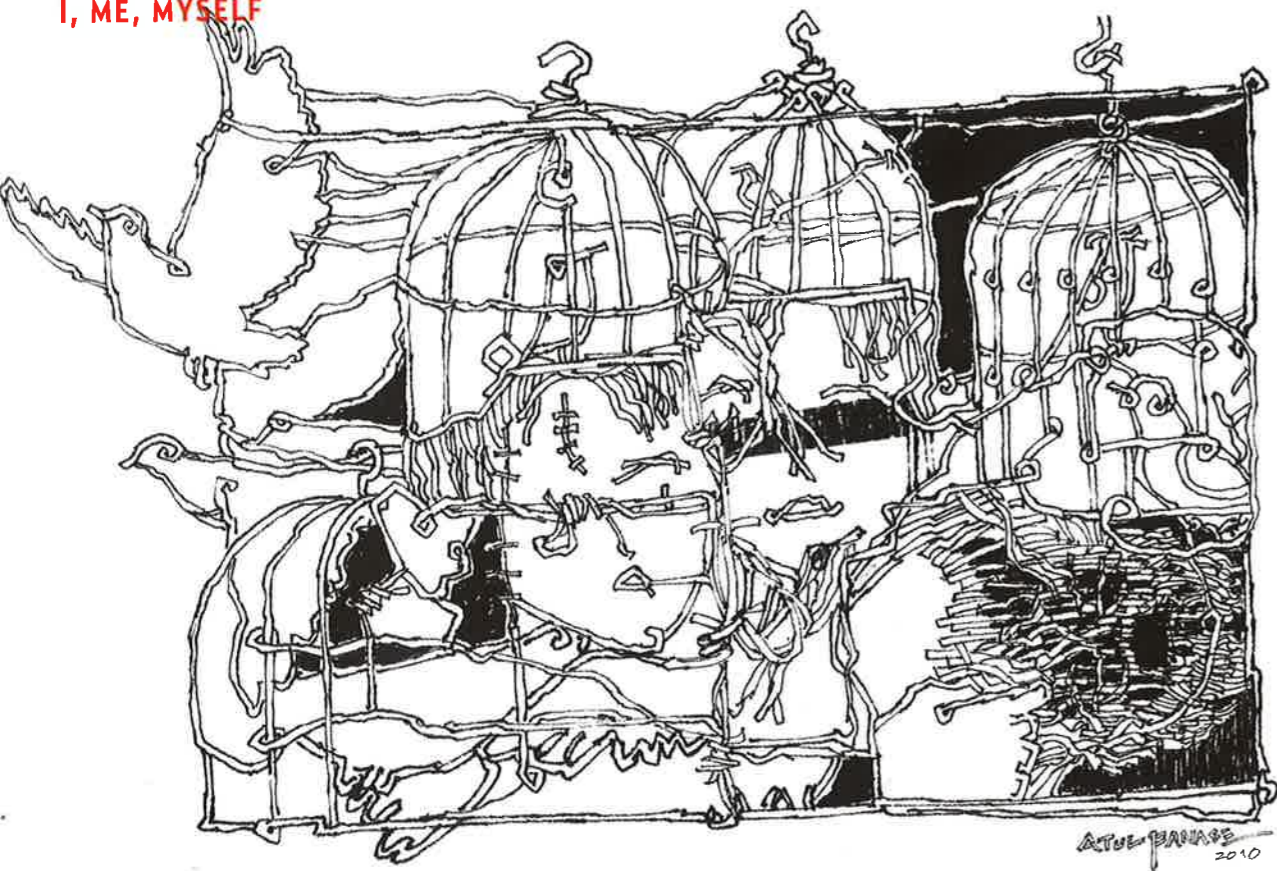
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## I, ME, MYSELF



**7 Every day is a birthday.**  
In any art form – especially fine art – an artist creates something new every day. An artist gives birth

to new ideas in the form of sketches and sculptures, which is why I think of every day as a birthday – an opportunity for new creations.

Every day offers a new beginning, which is why I think of every day as part of the celebration of life.



IMAGES COURTESY OF ATUL PANASE

**8 Art is a language that all of us can speak.** The world needs unity today and I believe that art can bring people together.

Art has taught me to live without boundaries. For that to happen, you need to make art your [guiding light], which is what I have done.

**9 I have seen results of artistic medicine, which I call 'arterpathy.'** For a brief period in my life, I experienced bouts of depression. Art turned out to be therapeutic. This 'medicine' worked its magic on me and I believe it can work for other people too. When I was scared, confused and fearful about what the future had in store for me, I found art to be my best companion.

**10 Pain is the beginning of everything.** As the prefix indicates, pain is part of painting. The start to all good things in life begins with pain too, so people must learn to take it in their stride. Disregarding it is not useful; rather making pain your muse helps you to take life in your stride.

– Veathika Jain is an Abu Dhabi-based freelancer

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