for the love Of art

Posted on
A wall mural of two exotic flowers

A veteran in the advertising industry of Sri Lanka, Lilamani Dias Benson, Chairperson of Lowe LDB sets her sights on an alternative creative expression. Embracing a flair and eye for art, she finds joy as she applies brush to paper, giving voice to the abstractions of her mind.

Words Prasadini Nanayakkara | **Photographs** BT Images

“I paint because I am a dreamer. Because images and colours capture my imagination and beg expression in some way,” says Lilamani Dias Benson of her artistic pursuits. Creativity in expressing an idea to capture the imagination of others has been second nature to Lilamani. First and foremost a professional writer, she stood out for her innate ability to communicate ideas through words and pictures.

Through her passion for the craft of ideas, she found her forte in advertising. A versatility in the creative field coupled with a sound mind for business helped her thrive and rise in the industry. Eventually, her career progressed from earning a place as creative head at a leading advertising firm to being head hunted to lead an international agency in Sri Lanka. However her love for art remained with her since her school days. “Now that I am moving into semi-retirement and not running the agency on a day-to-day basis, I am picking up on that love for art once again,” she states.

Evidence of Lilamani’s love for art is displayed on the walls of her home. An avid collector, many works of art, primarily of artist Iromie Wijewardene transform the interior into a gallery of sorts. To hone her own skills, she once took up sketching lessons under the tutelage of Anoma Wijewardene where she gained confidence in her skills. She discovered further encouragement and appreciation when she moved on to painting, and sharing her work on facebook. “It is partly because I have been in advertising all my life, which is all about imagery,” she comments on her artistic mode of communicating messages.

Lilamani primarily works with poster colours, acrylics and watercolours, often

experimenting with two or more varieties of media for the desired effect. Some of her pieces possess whimsical and abstract qualities reminiscent of modern art. While most are products of her imagination – her ideas finding expression, this time in another dimension – few are derived from the surroundings. A collection of autumn leaves, bearing the hues and qualities of nature is an example of the latter.

A halo of leaves parting from the branches of a tree as though caught in a wind is one that reveals Lilamani's ability to capture movement and mood; it engages both the eye and the mind. Similarly her collection includes those that capture swirling movements through bursts of colour. For instance, a peacock flaunting its plumage doesn't become apparent at first glance – the subject detracted amidst vivid colour and a flourish of feathers. In contrast, a collage of sharp geometric shapes in surprising blends of colour highlights the abstract nature of her work. Lilamani has even taken up a more adventurous venture filling an entire wall space of a room with her painting. From floor to ceiling it is a mural of two flowers that spring from rich foliage and convey an almost exotic and sensuous quality.

> "I paint simply for the love and joy of it and I hope that shows"

Ever eager to learn and grow as an artist, Lilamani has tried her hand at paper cut art as well, with appealing results. Inspired by French artist Henri Matisse, here too is a nod at modern art. Cut out shapes of curves, strips and edges, though meticulously placed, seem to have found a natural harmony and balance to communicate a creative expression.

She hopes to move on to working on canvas and graduate to oils in time. "Acrylics are fun because they mimic the texture of oils, and are not as difficult or demanding – you can experiment," she says of her preferred medium.

While she receives enthusiastic responses from her family, friends and peers, pieces of her work have already been promised to individuals. Some even call for a solo show. Lilamani however is cautious and modest about her skills. "I am still a novice, so maybe in good time," she says adding that, "I paint simply for the love and joy of it and I hope that shows."

