

A RENDEZ-VOUS
with Jaideep Mehrotra



*W*ith the Indian economy growing leaps and bounds, India is adding more millionaires faster every year. People are getting rich and are not afraid to flaunt it. While they go out and splurge, they also invest their money wisely, so that instead of working for money, their money works for them. People have always invested in shares, property and recently in Mutual funds. However, there is one more option which few invest in, but swear by. Yes, you guessed it, its Art.

Take it from those who buy Art. "I buy art that really appeals to me. Not only does it soothe my senses, and tickles my mind, it also decorates my home and it always a great conversation starter. Add to that the fact that its worth more than double since when I bought it, it's the best investment I've made"

Speaking of Art, we met up with someone who has been associated with it for the past 40 years. Among creative circles, he needs no introduction. He was one of the youngest Indian artists to hold his solo exhibition at the age of 13. He was also the first Indian artist to have his own website on the internet. He is Jaideep Mehrotra.

His early years...

Jaideep was always interested in art and painting from a young age. Since the time he was in school, Jaideep took to painting with a passion. With brush and paints in his tiny hands, he drew inspiration from his favorite painters - Dali and Picasso. His mother noticed his zeal for art and encouraged his creative ways. Jaideep recollects that his first studio was a little room under the stairs of his parents home, which his mother equipped for him.

By the time Jaideep was 13, with the help from his mother, he had his first solo exhibition. A gentleman who happened to pass by, saw his paintings and liked one. Before buying it,

the gentleman requested to meet with the creator of the painting. When Jaideep's mother brought in the 4 ft 2 inch artist, the gentleman was taken aback and exclaimed "I'd like to see the artist, not his son!"

Work v/s A form of self expression

Through his early years, Jaideep continued to be encouraged to follow his passion. However, due to a financial crisis, he had to give up his dream of pursuing his studies in art, and got into business studies instead. He attended college from 7 to 9 am and reported straight to work at 10 am. After 5 years of working as a businessman in India, Jaideep traveled to Dubai and Nigeria.

Being in Nigeria, Jaideep still missed his first love – art. His body and soul yearned to experience the stroke of his paintbrush against his canvas. He had now saved up some capital and decided that he had to take a risk and follow his dreams. He gave himself 2 years and knew that if his career in art failed to take off, he could always fall back on the business he had mastered in the last 13 years. This was in 1983, a time when Art was not considered a career option.

After that, Jaideep never looked back. His paintings received rave reviews from art lovers both in India and Abroad. "At the start it wasn't that simple" says Jaideep. His family looked at painting more as a hobby, than a profession. But Jaideep stuck to his guns and continued with venerated passion and determination.

"When I started out as an artist, there were few galleries which held exhibitions for select artists. New budding artists would have to hire public exhibition spaces to hold their own exhibitions. Very few people appreciated art, which made the entire industry very niche. To sustain a life on painting alone was close to impossible. "I took a conscious decision to be an artist and I've never regretted it" says Jaideep.

The motivation behind the man

Jaideep says that his home-grown models are his wife and children. Inspiration manifests itself from Jaideep's surroundings – the music that he listens to, something on the news, or something he's seen on the streets.

In one of his series of paintings, he had painted his younger daughter. It was showcased at his exhibition and was sold. When he mentioned it at home, she cried profusely at the thought of parting with 'her' painting. "Being a father is more important than being an artist" said Jaideep, and luckily the buyer agreed to rescind the sale. Jaideep has never sold 'his daughter's painting'.

Today, 40 years after first starting out as an artist, Jaideep has seen a paradigm shift in the art world. Today art has become highly professional and is considered a business by many. There are professional courses to understand art, its value and sell it as an investment. There is a commercial angle to art. "The commercial part is handled by my wife

Seema. This allows me to focus on my work" says Jaideep. Yet another example of a woman behind the success of a man.

Today, Jaideep is one of the most well known artists around. His works adorn the walls of famous celebrities like Harsh Goenka, Tina Ambani, Maureen and Nusli Wadia, Pooja Bedi, Juhi & Jay Mehta and even Shahrukh Khan. Although he is thrilled whenever he sees one of his paintings at someone's house, he's always sad to part with them. "All of my paintings are like my children, they're a part of our home and of our lives" says Jaideep with a smile.

Jaideep's last 2 exhibitions have been in Dubai and Singapore. After 4 years, he exhibits his latest series in Mumbai.

For more information on Jaideep Mehrotra and his works of art, log on to www.jaideepmehrotra.com You can also be a part of his exhibition to be held in Mumbai between November 26th and December 2nd at the Jehangir Art Gallery.

