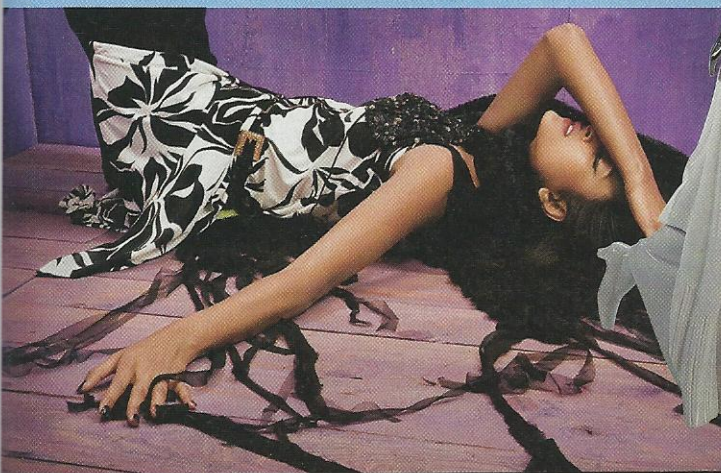


FEMINA east



One from the *art*

Aanupamaa Jalan is a woman of diverse talents. By Brinda Dasgupta

There are those who breathe music and those who breathe literature. And then, there's a separate group of people, who breathe art, and all things related to it. Aanupamaa Jalan is one such person. Her knack for pottery, and especially her talent with ceramic-ware, led her to set up her own studio, aptly named 'A', at her house in Alipore. 'A' has an eclectic collection of ceramic items—ranging from trays, bowls and platters to vases, cups, mugs, candlestands, and more! The 34-year-old Aanupamaa learned the art of pottery at school (Modern School, Delhi) and figured that she loved the stuff. Since then, there has been no looking back. She went on to work with noted artist Lydia Mehta and subsequently, study Garden Design at the Inchbald School of Design, London. "My work is very nature-oriented, and inspired by motifs like buds, leaves, and flowers. I work with natural forms, sober tones, and glazed and matte effects," she says.

POTS AND PANS

Looking around her studio, I wonder at the diversity in her work. Her decorative elements, floral motifs and colourful textures add deep character to the room, and what is perhaps most eye-catching in the whole studio is the big Buddha head in a corner. The ceramic-ware is clearly influenced heavily by straight lines, geometric shapes and striking colour combination in glazes. Of course, she



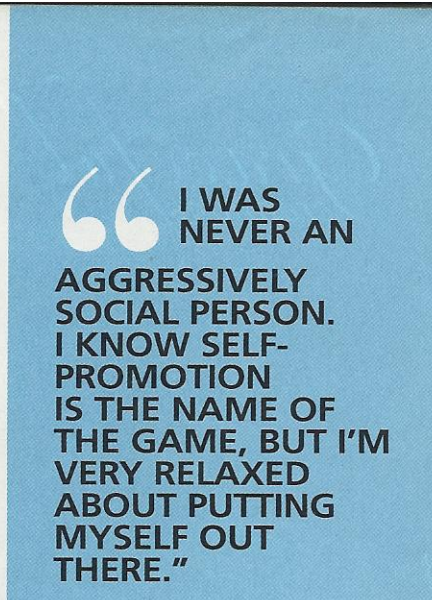
makes good use of her flair for art in her home as well. My attention is caught by the ceramic tiles that adorn the stairs. These tiles have an unusual *mudra* pattern, and are her own creation.

With a clear goal—her aim is to emphasise the shift of traditional design towards a contemporary one, in the section of utility pottery—Aanupamaa has showcased her wares in reputed exhibitions such as IMC (Mumbai), Cherry Orchard and Parampara (Kolkata), Akshay Prathishtan and Ankur (New Delhi). She is all set to play her part in helping Indian pottery come of age and feels exhibitions are the best places to promote the idea. No journey is devoid of challenges, though, and Aanupamaa has been no exception. Her biggest challenge has been communicating her thoughts and ideas to the handful of potters working under her. “There’s an inherent laziness and a lack of commitment in them, that I find slightly irritating. Indeed, getting across my ideas of style and expression to them is a little frustrating.”

However, ceramic-ware isn’t all Aanupamaa is about. Recognising her talent in the above, she’s had the honour of being president of the well-considered Ladies Study Group of the Indian Chamber of Commerce—a socio-economic group that seeks to educate the public on different issues, and gives awards to charitable institutions. The Ladies Study Group (commonly known as LSG) is a 42-year-old body that women the platform to showcase their talent and mobilise their potential. Explains Aanupamaa, “We spread awareness about different issues like the environment and politics, through regular seminars, symposia, debates, and panel discussions. We encourage women’s empowerment.”

HIGH ON LSG!

LSG’s world view has been all-



encompassing. And one of the highlights of the group is their guest speakers. “We’ve had speakers like Tarun Tahiliani, Anand Mahindra, Naveen Jindal and Sunita Narain, the well-known environmentalist and political activist, and even the *dabbawallahs* from Mumbai! In February this year, we organised a programme, where Oneness University, a non-spiritual association, discussed inner limitations and the ways to clear them.” The response was excellent.

Aanupamaa credits LSG for being a tremendous learning curve in her life. “I was an introvert, and this organisation taught me to reach out, and take charge. I learned how to handle relationships, and the value of team-work. The most wonderful part is that the entire world is just waiting out there for us to reach out to, and help comes in many different ways—it’s a beautiful experience.”

So what’s in the pipeline now? “We’re busy organising the annual awards ceremony of LSG, a major responsibility of every president whose one-year term is coming to an end. My pottery has now taken a backseat, but I shall bounce back with vigour, and you’ll see new designs and styles in my ceramic-ware!”

GLORY DAYS

This bright-eyed artist says she derives inspiration from positive



currents in her thought process, and never fears failure. “My family is my biggest support system,” she says. Indeed, she has fond memories of childhood spent in Udaipur, and the large joint family she grew up in. “I was part of a very close-knit family, and even now, we meet up on holidays and occasions.” She reminisces about childhood, and I can see the faraway look in her eyes as she talks about school, and the university years, spent at Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi, studying political science. “I hated studying, but pottery was something that inspired me.”

Aanupamaa shares that on the rare occasions she is free, she likes to meet her friends, go out and have a good time. She’s quite a gardener too, as she says landscape gardening is one of her hobbies. She’s travelled around the world, to cities as diverse as Prague, London and Mashobra (Shimla), but London remains her eternal favourite for its vibrant culture and friendly people.

Aanupamaa, just like her ceramic-ware, exudes calm and serenity, and is very reticent. It’s been an effort to get her to open up since she’s shy about answering questions. But she’s tremendously likeable, her work is stunning and aesthetically-pleasing. Her down-to-earth, grounded mentality makes her a joy to talk to. And with such obvious talent and flexibility in terms of creativity, I’m sure we’ll see much more of her work in the future! ■