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Where Mannequins and Masks Spoke About Street Artists

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Chennai: It's 10 am, and under the bright sunny sky, one can see over 100 students from Stella Maris College gearing up to transform the bus stop right outside the college into an art space. The event, which aimed at throwing light on the importance of street artists, was part of Goethe Institut's Street Art Festival — Conquer the Concrete.

Stella Maris College was among the several institutions that had applied to the Goethe Institut to organise a street art event as part of the Street Art Festival.

Inside the college, there is much hustle and bustle, as a bunch of students, all from the Fine Arts Department and clad in black, fasten their masks, start clinking quirky instruments, and march outside the college. Once outside, they bend down and begin drawing and writing on the ground with chalk for the next 20 minutes. Through their art, they capture the essence of Chennai — from cinema to dance to music, not to leave out the autos and buses that define the city. One of the quotes reads the dialogue 'Adhukkum Mela' from the movie *I*, while another reads 'Busy life, happening place'.

Lakshmi Priya Daniel, associate professor, Fine Arts Department, dean of Student Affairs at the college, and the woman behind the initiative, says, "Street artists are looked down upon today. This event has been organised to make people recognise

their importance."

Meanwhile, the girls install mannequins on the bus stand. One of them is seen holding a symbol of a heart. "Most people in the bus stand do not wait for the bus, but pass their time waiting for someone close to their heart. This mannequin depicts that," says Lakshmi. "The other mannequin, which is seen sitting on a chair depicts an eternal waiter," she says. The mannequins, she says, will remain at the bus stop till the end of the day.

A few girls remove their masks and hang them on the wall, having the passersby on the stretch shoot glances.

Students captured the essence of Chennai — from cinema to dance to music, autos and buses that define the city through the art

"The masks divulge the fact that the street artists are ignored. It conveys the general notion that it's the art that matters and not the one who makes it," says Lakshmi.

Later in the evening, the students also took to painting themes including role of women in the city, map of Chennai, kolams and buses on the walls at the bus stop. "I must thank Sr Jasintha Quadras, principal of the college, and Margaret Thomas, Head of the Fine Arts Department. They have been the backbone of the street art event," says Lakshmi.



Mannequins set up at the bus stop outside Stella Maris by the college students