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## STELLA PAINTS TO SPREAD MESSAGE ON ENVIRONMENT

### Express Features

**T**he graffiti-laden walls of Stella Maris College wore a whitewashed look yesterday. A noble message spearheaded by the students, they started the 'Hope for the World' project, a mural painting initiative with an environmental theme. Supported by Gallery Veda, the outer walls of the college have been turned into canvasses for the students to create environmental and folk-art inspired paintings.

The Department of Fine Arts, Stella Maris College has taken the lead in this, with the entire project totalling 28 panels and covering nearly 1,500 sq ft. "The project revolves around how man has affected nature — especially in the wake of the disaster Chennai has seen — floods, cyclone Vardah and the Ennore oil spill," said Margaret Thomas, HOD, fine arts. "Some panels are about the destruction of environment while others are about how to preserve nature. But the main aim of the project is to sensitise the general public."

The panels include evocative murals with



Students of Stella Maris painting graffiti on the wall

Romani Agarwal

a folk-art influence, and Tamil and English quotations stylised to capture the attention of people driving by. "We are working with typography and visuals as well and intend to finish painting the walls by the end of this week," added Margaret. Nearly 200

undergraduate and postgraduate students are involved, working to first detail the panels and then fill it in colours. The murals will illustrate the changing relationship between man and nature, and the effect that technology, resource exploitation and deforestation have

had on the Earth.

The walls of the college were previously decorated with art which had taken form nearly five years ago as part of the Art Chennai initiative with Gallery Veda. "Through Art Chennai, we achieved the aim of bringing art to public spaces. But it became old and we wanted to uplift the panels and send out the message of environment and its importance in the wake of the disasters," said Sanjay Tulsyan and Preeti Garg of Gallery Veda, which supported the college in the earlier initiative as well. "Our main motive was that art should be available to everybody while also having a message through out of the box projects, and this was merely a continuation of an earlier collaboration," said Preeti.

In fact, after Art Chennai, the college was approached by several organisations to help them spruce up their walls! "We have had the opportunity to paint the walls of institutions looking after autistic children, as well as at the Madras High Court — at the creche where children of domestic workers are left during their time at work," said Margaret.