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# Writing on the wall

Students of Stella Maris College are set to create 28 panels of artwork with quotes in Tamil and English on the college walls



**Art for all** Students paint on the compound wall of the college SR RAGHUNATHAN

:: NAVEENA VIJAYAN

Cathedral Road is chock-a-block with Tuesday morning traffic. Even as vehicles tailgate each other, honking incessantly, a group of girls, unperturbed, continue to run their brushes smoothly over the recently white-washed walls of Stella Maris College.

### Giving hope

Those waiting for long at the bus stop see hope of a different kind – painted in bright yellow. The freshly-done text reads, ‘Hope for the world’.

“By the end of the week, we hope to fill the 28 panels (1,500 square feet) with quotes – both in English and Tamil – and drawings,” says

200-odd students will be divided into teams of 10 each to work on panels

Margaret Thomas, head of the department of Fine Arts.

The project is being done in collaboration with and sponsored by Gallery Veda, a city-based gallery that has branches in Nungambakkam and Taramani.

Passers-by are used to seeing art on the walls of the college. “It was done up during the first edition of Art Chennai, five years ago,” says Sanjay Tulsyan, who was the brain behind the event in 2011, that saw the coming together of hundreds of

artists and galleries.

“Slowly, it kick-started a movement, where small groups took up painting on the walls. This event will probably encourage more such,” he adds.

Preeti Garg, founder of Gallery Veda, finds the project to be in sync with what her art space stands for. “Art needs to be more inclusive and less intimidating. And in this kind of public project, all one has to do is look outside the car window to enjoy some art and soak in the message,” says Garg.

To understand more about the Hope for the World Project, Thomas takes us to the Fine Arts department, where the 50-member core team is busy planning the patterns and texts that would soon reflect on

### Million-dollar painting

The highest price for a work of art by elusive artist Banksy was struck in 2008 when *Keep It Spotless* was sold for \$1.8 million at Sotheby's in New York.



the walls for everyone to see.

Third-year students Teresa Antony, Rashmi Guhan and Sri Mithraa explain the thought process behind the project.

“Post cyclone Vardah, our college lost a lot of trees,” says Antony.

### Tribal and folk art

She recounts other disasters, such as the recent oil spill off the Ennore Coast, and the floods of 2015.

“We took inspiration from the work titled ‘Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?’ by Paul Gauguin,” adds Antony.

“But we have Indianised our works. You’ll see a lot of tribal and folk art, and the portrayal of characters is similar to what artist Jamini Roy does,” chips in Guhan.

The templates of all the works are spread out on a desk. The 200-odd students, who will be part of the project, will be divided into teams of 10 each, to work on panels from 6.30 am to 9.30 am and 4 pm to 7 pm every day for the next week.

Curious to see what will soon be writings on the wall, we flip through the transparent, thin sheets to see a sentence written in a smooth cursive hand – ‘Live gently while you walk the earth’, before walking out.