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When art was taped, thoughts were set free



Stefan Busch, Thomas Meissner and Felix Rode Waldt • **Sunish P Surendran**

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In the 1960s when the usage of spray cans was rampant in the urban art scene across the globe, several artists began finding an alternative that would fill the void that spray cans failed to do — an art that was relatively easy, suitable for small and temporary projects. Thus began the 'Tape art movement'. While the art form that predominantly uses adhesive or duct tape has been gaining momentum across several parts of the world, Berlin has been spearheading the movement through 'TAPE THAT', a collective that was started in 2011. Stefan Busch, Thomas Meissner and Felix Rode Waldt, artists from the collective were in the city for a workshop-cum-live demonstration curated by the Consulate Of Germany, Chennai,

Goethe Institute in association with Stella Maris College.

Though tape has been used in art in one way or the other, the term 'tape art' became a trend only in the early 2000s. "We definitely wouldn't say that Berlin is where it all began. But, I would proudly say that we are in the center of the tape art movement," beams Thomas, a tape artist-cum-economics professor.

It's not easy to create installations out of adhesives, opine the artists. "We work on different surfaces — walls, floor, ceiling, vehicles and what not! Using a tape for art is temporary, that's a challenge but sometimes this becomes an advantage too. When we work on temporary installations, it's easy to remove them without leaving patches. But, to make an installation, it takes a lot of effort and time," says Stefan.

Tapes are not 'curve friendly' but

are great for designing symmetric objects, abstracts and lines with precision. "This is both a challenge and advantage. How we use it to our strength matters," adds the artist who has been a part of 'TAPE THAT' for five years.

The biggest installation so far, by the collective was for the 10th anniversary of the Berlin main station. "We can't pick a favourite but, this is the biggest we've done so far. We designed large parts of the floors inside the main station with tape lines in different colours. They formed an abstract system on the floor and on stairs," says Thomas.

Concurs Stefan saying that it took approximately 10 days to finish work. "The highest point of the structure was about 25 metres high and we used tape of 30 cm width," he explains.

The artists who have also travelled to countries like Saudi Arabia, Chi-

na, Egypt, Russia and Vietnam, say that tape art needs more focus in India. "Though we are not aware of any tape artists from India, the bunch of students we are teaching now might become the first generation tape artists here!" exclaims Thomas pointing to the Fine Arts students of Stella Maris at the workshop.

"We have heard of tape art but, this is the first time we are getting a whiff of the technique and process. The concept is very interesting and we are looking to learn more!" shares Vibha, a final year student.

So will tape art become the 'next big thing'? "We would like to think so...but, we cannot come to conclusions as there's more to tape art that needs to be explored. We would like to see what surprises the art holds for us," adds Felix.

For details, visit: tapethatcollective.com