

# TAS Turns Two

Edited by -  
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THE Art  
Sanctuary

**W**hat do you do when all your dreams come true? What do you do when the smiles around you are irresistibly infectious? What do you do when strangers thank you for bringing joy into their lives? What do you do when you go to sleep every night with a smile on your lips and a prayer in your heart?

You transfer all the blessings to the people they are meant for. You feel energised to think out of the box and provide more meaningful offerings. You say a silent prayer every minute for being honoured by the Universe with this outpouring of love.

The Art Sanctuary will continue its joyous journey, making more friends on the way, introducing even more mirth in the lives it touches. Because our special angels spin pure magic in our lives. Because they connect us to each other like none before them. Because they create art straight from the heart. We just have to open our hearts to receive it.

This edition of our newsletter has incredibly special messages from our facilitators, from the thought leaders in the art space we operate in and from the families of young adults we serve.



# CHARU GUPTA

ARTS BASED THERAPY PRACTITIONER.

Charu Gupta is a passionate pedagogue who works as an Arts Based Therapy practitioner with The Art Sanctuary. She has been working with TAS since July 2020, and uses various art forms like theatre, art, music, dance, movement in permutations and combinations. Like other practitioners, Charu had her own questions and confusion about how this new pursuit would unravel. A few months into interactions with our witty and enthusiastic young adults changed her perspectives. "With such a group, the term "neurodiversity" acquires new meaning I now understand it as 'Altruism'", she says.

Charu is cognizant of the reverberations these children have caused in her life. The warmth, wit, innocence, welcoming laughter, purity in the zeal to explore, keenness to serve showcased by the students along with the unflinching support of the parents, continuously inspired her to curate sessions that embraced every child's need. She notes "It has indeed been a journey of growth both mentally and spiritually and a lesson in self awareness for them and me. I have managed to come a step closer in the long and arduous journey from the head to the heart. As TAS rightly named the group "HE-ART" so it remains and will continue to remain in my heart."



Charu went on to start a 2nd batch for another group of neurodiverse young adults. Both batches benefit enormously from her expertise. But more than that, the therapy that she undergoes in every class with them, has become a support system for her. She has been able to handle personal crisis times, improve her relationships with friends and family members, through this period. We are so proud of you Charu and more than that, so very grateful for your commitment to your sessions. God bless you in all your endeavours in life – these are words we say of behalf of every family you have touched.

Dear TAS, your one word magic every week is not only helping Rupak find his bliss but his Sister and Dad found their bliss too!  
-Rajendra Munje



# SHIVANI DHILLON

STORY TELLER

Shivani Dhillon has always been a storyteller. First as a journalist and then as a parent of a daughter with down syndrome. She took her first tentative steps in this field with TAS in 2020. Since then, as she confirms, the universe has been conspiring for her to tell stories!

Apprehensive about handling a group of neuro-diverse young adults, Shivani nevertheless, ventured into the discourse with strong faith and passion. The rest is history! "All the young adults I am working with have become like a close-knit family, celebrating birthdays and special occasions together. They have a sense of humor like none other, the bond we share is beautiful.", she apprizes.

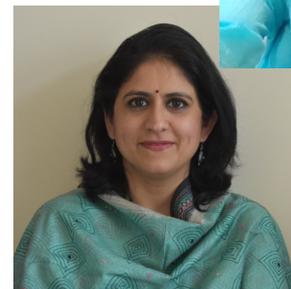
With her proficient skills and euphoric group, Shivani is overjoyed to see their prodigious results especially in their communication skills and development of expressive language. She is confident that the young adults will be able to pull off a grand story telling show soon!

Shivani is now running storytelling sessions for inclusive groups of children across the world, all online. She has recently launched her YouTube channel and is growing in leaps and bounds in this area. We wish her the very best in whatever she chooses to use her time in.

# NEHA BORDIA

STORY TELLER

Neha Bordia used to work with pre-primary children. But as an aunt to a very special youngster, TAS came to know of her unique qualifications and talent in telling stories. That is when her journey in this field began. With many sessions under her belt, she also launched her organisation "Story Circuit". She enunciates that this enriching journey has been a two-way journey, the more she gave the more she received. "The love and compassion has been amazing". We look forward to many more fun stories from you.



"Dear TAS , the prompt activities for arts and performing arts conducted every week is something which Usaid enjoys thoroughly! It gives him the opportunity to get his grey cells and creativity in motion and he is also learning to take up the challenge. We really look forward to the new prompts. Thank you so much for the platform and for taking the pains to co-ordinate it all"  
-Usaid and Fatima





# SAMAR JODHA

PHOTOGRAPHY MENTOR

"As people, we all have stories to tell. Some express it through writing, some through art and some do it with a camera, and yes, there are countless other ways to express your inner thoughts.

Over the last two dozen years, Express/Aspire, the photography workshops one has been running in developing countries, has brought me to thousands of young people, many of them caught in the conflict of war, hunger or even basics of life missing, where I have mainly taught them the art of storytelling through a camera.



Last year during the lockdown, I got an opportunity from The Art Sanctuary to work online with some inspiring youngsters with a different set of challenges. It was an enriching experience; their warmth and openness was my biggest takeaway during the tough lockdown for these creative souls.

And as I look back at my own life, the learnings from these young minds is tremendous. Each time in their small ways, they have helped me shift my compass on compassion and, most notably, the non-judgmental space. In this era of digital noise, we have lost the art of listening, and as we know, social media has made it even worse. But working with these individuals, one gets reminded of pausing, listening and absorbing the basics of what we are as human beings, our precious emotional availability.

What I would call is the Analog Effect.

Thank you, TAS, for taking me on your journey. I am so proud to be part of all the learnings and our collective voice."

Samar has been actively involved in conducting workshops for the inclusive photography competitions TAS has been holding. We are extremely grateful for his time and commitment towards our calls.

"Bihag is learning photography and dance through TAS. Of course there is absorption of skills in both forms.. But more important is how the perception of people around Bihag changes". This proud mother Murali reports that every time outsiders hear about all that he is learning they are taken aback. When he displays his skills at photography or singing and drama, they are really impressed. Bihag has featured in radio interviews and performed online for many events. These have helped him build his own self image and this has had a "direct impact on his socialisation skills which makes him more visible in the eco system. That's a pleasant feel" says his mother. Yes Murali, Bihag has a right to his rightful place in society and TAS will slowly and steadily help you carve out that place for him...

-Bihag and Murali



"We are filled with tremendous joy and pride to see a sense of identity develop in Aparajeet." Through the various platforms created by TAS, neurodiverse artists like Aparajeet got an opportunity to express themselves in a creative and constructive manner. This "has attracted a lot of love and appreciation from all around him. I am reminded of the saying by Keats, A thing of beauty is joy forever" and eCAPA has been the Canvas for Aparajeet's imagination".

-Aparajeet and Dipti Sarangi



# ANUJA SHARMA

PRE THEATRE SKILL BUILDING FACILITATOR

Anuja Sharma, with decades of experience as an IT Process consultant and Coach, is training students in pre theatre skills by teaching them facial expressions and body language to accompany the emotions they feel. She has been interacting, learning and growing with both children and adults through various 'self-direction' workshops for over a couple of decades. The content of these workshops embodied tools and methods to help individuals introspect, listen and above all express themselves freely, in personal and professional relationships.

She recounts that initially she thought a few modifications to her existing workshop model would do good for the engagement with TAS. But since the very first meeting with all the mothers of the group she realised that this would be a journey of incredible learning for her as well as her students. She educates how the 'miracle mommies' through their faultless knowledge of their children, their patience, open mindedness and hope have kindled introspection about her own life and relationships.



I had to stop, think and allow this group's energy to re-organize me, my thoughts and speech. They brought out the best aspects of me, by being honest, invested and clear in their expectations of our communication workshop, called the 'Fun Express'."

With the awe-inspiring skills of Anuja Sharma and the natural talent of the children, the team has done a play on Esio Trot by Roald Dahl. Adapted by a student- mother duo, the success and éclat of this pursuit lies in this: "we allowed the fish to swim and the bird to fly, without trying to mould them into our notion of theatre actors. The result was, they confidently played their part with what comes naturally to them, fun and ease."



# NISHI JOSHI

MOVEMENT THERAPIST

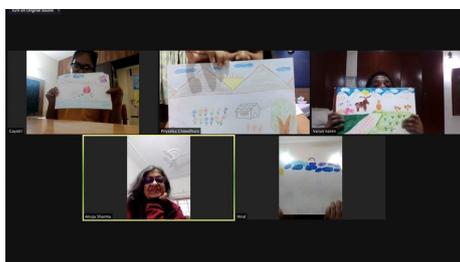
Nishi Joshi is a qualified Dance & Movement Psychotherapist (RDMP-UK) and a Mental health professional. She has been working with neuro-divergent individuals of all ages since the last 5 years, facilitating individual and group sessions. Alongside her work with TAS, she has started working at a school that aims to offer inclusive learning environments to children, offering 1:1 therapy services to neuro-divergent individuals of all ages.



The group movement and dance sessions called "EMotion" curated and offered by her, brings together a rhapsodic group of young adults to meet each other through movement. This allowed for opening of an enriching and stimulating two way platform to bring in cohesiveness and synchrony to the group through dance. "It was an opportunity for me to invite every young one to celebrate their uniqueness and experience synchrony with each other!"

Nishi Joshi commends the trust and commitment of every family/care provider/parent of TAS who have played a quintessential role for both the young ones and herself. The inspiration, hope and zeal of the students and her association with TAS has empowered Nishi to set up her own organisation - The Safe Sanctuary. We wish her the very best in all her current and future endeavours.

## FUN EXPRESS WITH ANUJA SHARMA



It was through The Art Sanctuary and eCAPA that Swami got "an opportunity to showcase his potential in a public forum. Our relatives and friends also got to see the results of Swami's hard work over the years". Swami also enjoys sending his art to friends and responding to the prompts that TAS sends every week. We look forward to creating even more opportunities through which you can keep contributing to the world of art.

- M Shivashankari and Swami



"When we sent in Nishant's entries for eCAPA 2020 we were very tentative. To put a price on each piece was even more tough as we had never done that before...Art was just something that he engaged with joy and we just co created together and kept exploring and expanding" For this family, TAS forced them to take a step back and evaluate the art created by their ward. They were forced to value it. The selling of the artwork brought connection and joy in a larger circle of people who could behold it" Nishant went on to not just sell his art, but had it featured in calendars and posters too. We are so proud of this young adult and truly feel blessed to have helped him in his journey in the art world.

-Nishant and Akhila

# ABHIJIT MISRA

ART ON A PLATE- COURSE FACILITATOR

"How often do we take up something as a challenge and are left humbled!?"

One of such memorable experiences of mine was recently with TAS. The art of plating workshop unpacked a lot within me. It was all new an experience for me and as anticipated, I was left absolutely overwhelmed by the end of the first workshop. It was only the pumped up youngsters and the support of parents that got me rolling eventually.

While I was supposed to be the one helping them, it was the interaction with those little champions that changed how I saw it all. By the end of those 2 months, I was left creatively challenged, humbled and emotionally touched.

It's not very often that I reflect to realise how puny my existence is. Observing the intellectual space these young adults came from and watch them adapt to a new cycle of techniques was absolutely thrilling. Times of reflection would often remind me how inflated my self identity is against their scale of growth and how amazingly are these youngsters in touch with reality. Their giggles, amazement at what they saw, the unfiltered love they shared with parents translated across the zoom screen like art.

It's been a while I have seen them but whenever I think of them, I tend to feel small. And this feeling of smallness in fact feels encouraging. Am looking forward to what adventures our lives have in store and I wish the champs All the best! Hoping you guys continue to be as mischievous as artistic!"



We all miss you at TAS and hope that you will soon present a plateful of adventure through another cooking course specially designed for us.



# AYUSHI

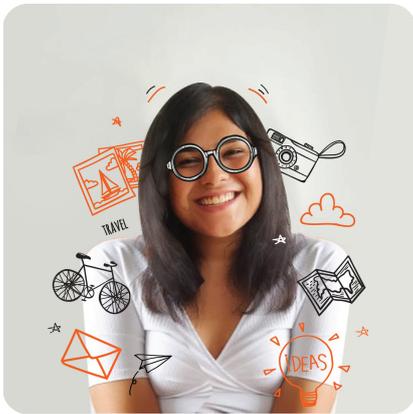
LEAD SOCIAL MEDIA

"With utmost pleasure in my heart, I'd say that this beloved relationship that I have formed with The Art Sanctuary in the last few years cannot be traded with anything in this world.

The showcasing of one of my short films made with my student, in the "Mumbai International film festival 2020" was a very big achievement for me, and all fellow Art Sanctuary associated artists. I am now incharge of the social media platforms for TAS and contribute in building a strong impactful voice for this beautiful organisation.

In this journey so far I realised how art is so brilliantly expressive in nature and hence powerful enough to make us believe that everything that we can imagine is real. Working with neurodiverse artists brought so much more than just happiness and creativity. Each day that I work on a different idea for TAS, I feel more inspired to create. I am grateful to be a part of TAS, and I hope we continue to grow and create a bigger impact on the art industry."

We look forward to your youthful energy bringing in higher awareness to our cause.



CREATED BY A TAS ART ENTHUSIAST



The day Aditya was featured on the front page of the TAS website was a day the parents will remember forever. With Aditya's art being selected by Bose Krishnamachari for eCAPA 2020, and then 2 artworks getting sold in the virtual exhibition, Aditya "became extremely happy and confident". The buyer understanding the special role they had played in this young artists' life, "sent the framed pic decorating their new home". This brought seamless pleasure into the lives of the artist and his entire family.

-Aditya and Kajal



Thank you for this opportunity to express our happiness and the impact eCAPA has made in Basil's life. Basil always loved to Draw and Paint. He was keen on doing an exhibition of his paintings after he visited some art exhibitions and saw artworks displayed there. so we were looking for venues for the same. Do you believe in miracles? When God uses people to give you an opening that we have never dreamt of?

I do. That was what happened in Basil's life. It started with Participating in the Outsider Art show in Kochi and then at 2 eCAPAs was a huge opening for Basil. It actually made a marked difference in other people's perception of Basil and his works and established him as an artist." Seeing his artworks displayed in STIR gallery, New Delhi, was such a beautiful experience for us all. It is something we will cherish all our life. The confidence e-CAPA gave Basil is IMMENSE. Now he proudly says that he is an artist when someone asks him what he is doing". It is this respect from the mainstream society in which our artists live, that TAS strives to achieve.

-Basil and Sara



In 2020, amidst the desperation and frustration of lockdown days there came a silver lining in the form of eCAPA 2020 online exhibition. To our joy Nikhil's artworks were selected. When we posted the Ecapa virtual tour in various groups of our family and friends we got a raving feedback and everyone happily acknowledged Nikhil's artistic talents. It was such a motivation and emotional booster for Nikhil and us as a family. This motivated him to do more artworks." eCAPA TAS is attempting to increase the reach of the creative art of intellectually challenged young adults into mainstream society. We will eventually explore possibilities of merchandising this art so that all these artists can take up this as a vocation.

-Nikhil and Sindhu Saiprasad



# MALA CHINNAPPA

A BRUSH WITH ART (ABWA)

"When The Art Sanctuary launched eCAPA, it opened up a much wider, pan- Indian audience for our Chennai based wards. Artworks by our 16+ year olds were suddenly featuring in the STIR Gallery in Delhi! Nothing less! And their works were lapped up by all visitors, art enthusiasts and discerning buyers. Great validation for Team ABWA, the young artists and of course the parents.

We wish TAS all the very best and will be partnering them in all their (ad)ventures!"





# KRATI GIRHOTRA

STUDENT TRAINEE PRACTITIONER

"I have been associated with TAS in the capacity of a student trainee practitioner for over a month now and it has so much to offer to every single person associated with it. The organisation through the medium of art exhibits and explores the creative side that I personally feel is a very cogent approach in highlighting the artistic flair. The concept of art has been very close to my heart since my childhood days and therefore I can discern how favourable the same can be in overall development. I can't stress enough how greatly I revere this institution for the incredible work that it is doing. I have learnt so much from my interactions with the members and this experience is adding to my life in every possible way I can imagine."



"When there was a vacuum in my art activities, I got introduced to TAS. It gave me fresh fillip to my life. It revived my painting activity and gave me fresh lease of life".

TAS provided Indu with a platform for showcasing her talent to others. Continue to blossom Indu.



Like many other parents, Ram and Alamelu were very reticent about allowing Prithvi to participate in any art exhibition. They didn't want Prithvi's art to get rejected in the selection process. But in the words of the mother "How wrong we were!!! We realised TAS is only an encourager. All participants were given a chance."

The first time his painting got sold, the parents cried. They realised that Prithvi's art and paintings were appreciated by strangers. They encouraged Prithvi to paint more and practice regularly. They started sharing his artwork with friends and relatives. Suddenly, there was a demand amongst family members. They each wanted a painting of his to exhibit at their homes. Friends loved getting them as birthday and housewarming gifts. "People suddenly started looking at Prithvi as an artist and a productive adult. They started realising that he is gifted in his own way and they can be proud of him too". From being hidden in his home, Prithvi has sold 4 works and been featured in media.

"We look forward to the weekly prompts from TAS for art presentation on social media." Parents like Ramkumar and Alamelu who were not very active on social media suddenly find themselves using TAS as a platform through which their neuro-divergent ward finds their rightful space on the various digital platforms. TAS has been making a real difference in their lives.

-Prithvi, Alamelu and Ramkumar



# AJMAL JAMI

"When I got a call from Films and Television Institute of India, Pune, to conduct a workshop for TAS, it seemed a bit of a challenge. Though I'd held workshops on film making and camerawork before, including with young adults and children, this one did cause some apprehension. It was to be with neurodiverse young adults with special needs. Film making using a smartphone. Something not done before, certainly not by me. But it helped to have the TAS coordinators with their comprehensive insights and inputs, in getting a sense of the specifics.

It was to be the start of a shared journey of new learnings and an exploration of the self and the great joy that comes with it. Over the next few days, my young friends - and their caregivers - were made acquainted with the language of visuals and how to see the world around them in terms of this language. Shots were taken and pored over. A shy smile, a tap on the shoulder, a quick grin, an expressive nod, indicators of a growing understanding. By degrees, there was a new awareness of what worked and what could be better. The language of films was seen at work. All of this translated to what they were doing with their smartphones.

10 intensive days of hard work made light by breaks for tea and snacks and a lovely surprise cake cut by everyone. Much merriment and mirth, and then finally the fruits of the combined labour. The screening followed, with a memorable accompanying wash of exultation, that shine on everyone's faces that stays with me forever. The films had come out well. Satisfaction! More than in previous workshops!! It had been a beautiful journey of self exploration and creativity and learning about film making, with very talented co-travellers. We walked that path, which would have started them off to roam yet further vistas of creativity. Mumbai International Film Festival 2020 was one such opportunity... I'm sure they will go further. I learnt as much as they did.

Post that, a very shy student and her very thoughtful present of Gen Malik's book on the Kargil War. She had inscribed 'To my Kargil Hero..Jami sir.'

That was my pure gold medal."

AJMAL JAMI



Realising that our young adults needed a gainful involvement in the art space during the lockdown, TAS introduced multiple online workshops.

Jijo joined one such workshop on photography conducted by world renowned Samar Jodha. Anxious about whether Jijo would pick up the fine nuances involved and whether his intrinsic interest in the camera could be honed successfully, Moushumi found that “Samar was teaching it on another level which opened Jijo’s eyes in a completely new way. We honestly never knew he could do what he does today with photography”.

Jijo has showcased his canvases at the eCAPA exhibitions too. The workshops and discussions during the exhibition always gave an added edge to the parents to further explore options for our young adults. “For Jijo, it opened the doors of a very exciting world for him with new dreams and visions into his life”!

- Moushumi and Jijo



The Art Sanctuary “provided a great platform to showcase the artwork of Rohan and helped his art reach to large number of people. The love and appreciation he got has motivated him to perform better”.

Rohan, keep working on your art and photography. You are a shining star.

-Rohan and Veena Goyal

A parent says, “celebration at TAS means its family time and loads of fun.” That's the major change that TAS has brought into the lives of our young artists. Their families and friends have seen them enjoy all the fun things that their neurotypical peers do – have a safe space in which to laugh and cry, discuss and appreciate each other’s activities. The facilitators know that more than the skill building, TAS aims to create an environment where ideas spring forth in the minds of our creative geniuses. TAS has not left its mummies out. The art-based therapy sessions for the mothers have helped calm them down and bring a deeper understanding of the process that their young wards are going through. This idea of creating extended support structures for the families along with the artists, has taken roots quite incidentally. This journey started with St Xaviers College, Mumbai partnering with TAS by sending their master’s programme students as intern to us.

TAS will continue to support this special art and in the process, ensure lifelong changes in the lives of our artists. That is the least we can do for them considering the immense trust they have displayed in us by sharing their artworks. But we also know that lives all around them are changing. The positivity is visible in the eyes and smiles of all those impacted by our art.



From showcasing Brian’s art at the physical exhibition ‘eCAPA 2019’ at the STIR Gallery in New Delhi, to the virtual gallery created by TAS for eCAPA 2020, Anita and Pradeep, parents of Brian have never missed an opportunity to showcase his art “The array of online group sessions with Art and movement based therapy with Charu .. story telling with Neha and Shivani and fun express with Anuja..photography with Samar Jodha, Mohit Ahuja and a videography session with Ajmal Jami.. an amazing set of mentors”. All these helped Brian and his friends get a routine during the pandemic days. They now have “a huge virtual family whom he loves very much. He looks forward to every session and the past year and a half has been amazing with so many wonderful people in our lives”

Says Anita “Brian has become so close to his virtual gang of friends from the TAS sessions that he is already planning on visiting all of them soon which means an all India tour as his friends are spread across the country.. what fun that would be..”

Most parents are finding that the social media engagement of their artworks has helped create a special place for the young artists in mainstream society and “.. we found the creativity and imagination of the children brimming over” TAS sees how these students are “a lot more independent and know(s) how to log in to the zoom sessions”. This was unheard of before TAS started these sessions.

Anita also goes on to share that “family and friends have begun to appreciate his art and understand the time and efforts he puts into each work of his”. This pride towards their work has translated into higher order independent life skills as well as “talking about these sessions to his brother and cousins and extended family.. and of late when he wants to meet his cousins together.. He himself asks me to schedule a zoom session”. What more can parents ask for?

-Brian, Anita and Pradeep



# MOHIT AHUJA

PHOTOGRAPHY INSTRUCTOR

"It's been a couple of years since I've known The Art Sanctuary and it feels like it was just yesterday that we started. The passion with which TAS is run is admirable and while I see it as a teacher, I also see it as a sibling to a superhuman myself. I can only wonder what all wonders are in store for the years to come. All the best to TAS. This is just the beginning!"  
Mohit, your photography workshop has been the silver-lining of the pandemic. Continue to train and inspire.



A GLIMPSE FROM PHOTOGRAPHY SESSIONS



"Our first association with TAS began in 2019 with the launch of eCAPA which gave an opportunity for Varun to be able to display his art works in a gallery and get appreciated. This was the start to many more creative journeys for Varun as TAS has initiated so many avenues like story telling, fun express and photography to name a few. With support and creative experts leading the process, it has been a continuous learning for Varun.

He has made many virtual friends and started socialising virtually very comfortably". Photography was a new exposure for Varun and he is learning about the various aspects under the very able teacher. Varun is so much more confident, able and willing to explore the unknown and take decisions".

As a family, Veena has met other wonderful parents, mentors, friends and even people who have appreciated the works of the young adults looking at their abilities and being empathetic with them. Way to go Varun. Bless you with many more years of success and joy  
-Varun and Veena



AJAI VADDAKATH

# AJAI VADDAKATH

"The space for art in the world of people with intellectual challenges has always been marginal at best, with art used mainly as a therapy tool or a calming activity to pass the time, and not so much as a viable medium of genuine expression.

Though there have been intermittent forays of special needs artworks and shows nudging and prodding at the boundaries of Indian contemporary art, it wasn't until TAS started to establish themselves and give a national platform to these artists in the form of eCAPA, that the contemporary art world started to sit up and take notice.

Take notice of the authenticity and genuineness of expression, the articulation of feelings, and meanings of symbols, through the painted canvas or the photographic print.

In the past 2 years and more, with support and mentorship for the marginalised artist, through large shows like eCAPA, or through strong handholding in the online groups, the collaborations with leading experts in the medium like Mr Bose Krishnamachari and Samar Jodha, TAS has changed the landscape for art of the intellectually challenged persons, and moved it ever closer to the real contemporary art space than at any point before this.

These are still early days, but even a casual study of the extent of acceptance these special needs artists have in the galleries and among contemporary artists will show that the emergence of TAS has been an inflection point, and the continued perseverance and enthusiasm of the dedicated team at TAS will result in crossover artists in the near future, and help establish a permanent presence of the art of the Outsider in the Indian contemporary art space."

The Art Sanctuary is ever grateful for all the love, blessings and support it has been receiving since its inception.

We will continue to work towards our cause and strive to create an inclusive art world!

Signing off,  
Team TAS

