



Daydreams that came true

Suganthi Mohan
Speciality: Quilling
“It is very important to have a hobby. Right from the colours you choose, to the materials you use and how much effort you are willing to put into a pastime, defines who you are,” says Suganthi Mohan, 46, a homemaker based out of Chennai who is steadily gaining fans for her expertise in a heritage papercraft.



Suganthi came across quilling, the Renaissance-era art of rolling strips of paper and gluing them in decorative designs, while researching ideas online for origami. “I started by making cards and selling them to my friends at our local library. This led to me create a Facebook page from where I receive most of my orders,” she says. She focusses on both traditional and contemporary subjects, with her most recent work featuring a banyan tree that uses five millimetre strips of green paper in three colours. Packed together in a tight beehive pattern, the effect is both mesmerising and awe-inspiring in its intricacy and realism. “The challenge is that content should not only be original but also new, which means one has to go from one level of difficulty to the next,” she says, adding, “I’ll continue quilling whether I have buyers or not.” See her work on: Papercraftss.blogspot.in; www.facebook.com/quilltcreate; [@suganthi_mohan](https://www.instagram.com/suganthi_mohan)

GETTING CRAFTY

Meet craft enthusiasts who have carved out a niche for themselves in cyberspace

■ NAHLA NAINAR

Few of us remember how it feels to create something with one’s own hands. Even in schools – charts, dioramas, carpentry, and stitching projects that once were clubbed together as ‘Socially Useful and Productive Work’ (SUPW) or ‘Work Experience’ have now mutated into a Google-aided mission that requires endless reams of paper printed off the Internet. And yet, it is the Internet that has provided a virtual meeting place for craftsmen and women. Be it art, cookery, crochet, knitting, quilling, or Do-It-Yourself (DIY) projects, nearly everyone who can make something is online, posting to a readership that knows no geographical boundaries. We spoke to three craft enthusiasts who have carved their own niche in cyberspace with much success.



Taking wing with art projects

Angela Jose
Speciality: Craft and home décor
Maternity leave afforded Angela Jose, 29, the chance to start her website ‘The Crafty Angels’ in 2013, that now features home décor tutorials and craft ideas. But balancing the blog along with her professional duties (Angela works as the Deputy Manager at Power Grid Corporation of India, Kolar), has been a challenge. “Since The Crafty Angels is solely the work of a one-woman army struggling with office and home, the pace of marching is a bit slow but I love what I make,” she says. The other ‘Angel’ in the blog is her four-year-old daughter Grace, an assistant on many of the projects.

With online content getting plagiarised often, earning money from a craft website isn’t easy. “Crafting is a niche topic that doesn’t have as much traction as beauty, lifestyle or fashion. So the return on investment is very less,” says Angela, who started out with her own domain name and hosting. “Getting the template and design for a website require technical help. With changing Google algorithms, being good at craft is not enough to maximise exposure for your content,” she adds. She advises aspiring bloggers to try their skills out on a free service first before moving to a self-hosted platform. “Blogging is a slow growth industry and you cannot become successful overnight. If you love what you do, then blogging about it is always going to be a success,” she says. See her work on: thecraftyangels.com; [@thecraftyangels](http://www.facebook.com/thecraftyangels)



Fun and learning

Shruti Bhat
Speciality: Children’s art
Artist, blogger and ‘mompreneur’ Shruti Bhat, 38, started her website in 2009 to chronicle her journey and experiences with craft work for her then three-year-old daughter. “I grew up around creative ladies – my mom and grandma, who are my inspiration. Artsy Craftsy Mom is a humble attempt to share the joy of children’s creativity with other parents,” says Bengaluru-based Shruti. Co-author of the book *Learn with Play: 150+ Activities for Year-round Fun & Learning*, Shruti lists craft projects by age group on her website. “Running a craft blog as a business has its own challenges,” says Shruti. “We have to be aware of the latest trends, connect with the audience, understand the technology and now GST.” After nine years in the business, Shruti admits that producing quality content everyday is a challenge. “I’ve stopped putting undue pressure on myself and now aim at publishing just two posts per week,” she says. Persistence is key to surviving in the online world, Shruti adds. “Make a small positive change each day and success will follow.” See her work on: artsycraftsymom.com; [@artsycraftsymom](http://www.facebook.com/ArtsyCraftsyMomPage)



Balancing act of the mind

Slacklining is slowly gaining pace in the city with informal sessions every weekend. We attended one to find out what the buzz is about



■ MEGHNA MAJUMDAR

In slacklining, there seem to be only two directions worth mentioning. ‘This’ and ‘the other’. When the solid ground under your feet is replaced by a single, taut two-inch strip of nylon, all concept of left or right, east or west goes out the window. In a panicked search for equilibrium, your body decides for itself which direction it wants to lean towards, in the hope of finding solid ground (it won’t until it’s completely horizontal, which is neither ideal nor pain-free), while your brain valiantly tries to restore balance by turning all flailing limbs in ‘the other’ direction. The simplest way to go about it is to step off the line, and go home. I was on the verge of doing so, but pride can be inconveniently insistent sometimes. So we stuck around as slacklining enthusiast Eashwar Mathur took up the daunting task of teaching my friend and I, the balancing act at Semmozhi Poonga, where these informal sessions generally take place. To make matters worse, Eashwar treated the waist-



high, metres-long stretch as little less than solid ground. He walked from trunk to tree trunk on the quivering strip, turned effortlessly, and walked back again. The difference was in his speed, and in the way his hands flailed

JAYWALKING!

The record for blindfolded slacklining is held by Pablo Signoret, who walked along a 422.82-metre-long slackline, suspended more than 450.59 metres in the air, in 26 minutes.

Between the lines Age or fitness level plays little role in slacklining ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the height with safety in mind. Hard ground is a strict no-no at this early stage – there’s no expert slackliner in Chennai yet, and very few in the country as a whole. No formal authority either, “it’s the kind of thing you just pick up and teach yourself,” says Eashwar. Like skateboarding, but with less apparent risks. “It’s all about finding your centre of gravity,” he said. The duo has trained themselves through online vide-

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os, and have graduated from simple walking to butt bounces, flips and other stunts. On the other hand, my friend S and I had turned in to toddlers. Stumbling, tottering, trying to figure out how our knees and arms are supposed to work. It’s more difficult when you’re an adult, and have had years of coming-of-age escapades that constantly remind you what a twisted ankle or a stubbed toe would feel like. Children don’t spend as much time worrying about the risks. S eventually learnt to walk, long before I could even stand. For the life of me, I couldn’t figure out how. The only two hints that worked were simple and old as time – don’t look down, and focus on a point straight ahead of you to walk towards. In the end, it was just a battle of the mind.

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