

Martin Luther Christian University was very fortunate to have had renowned painter Careen J. Langstieh as one of its resource persons in the recently concluded Art Appreciation Week. Careen Joplin Langstieh holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Fine Arts from North Eastern Hill University, a Diploma in Multimedia from ARENA, Shillong and, at present, she is a full-time freelance painter. Her works have been exhibited across the country and also in different international art galleries. The following are snippets from the conversation that Careen had with our correspondent:

Q: We are living in the 21st century, a busy fast-paced era. In such a scenario, how relevant is art?

Careen: I think art is very relevant because everywhere you look, art is related to one thing or another. For example, when you study Leonardo da Vinci, he was an inventor, a scientist, a mathematician and at the same time he was a painter and a sculptor. So even if everything is fast paced with technology, art is still related to something or the other. If we look at the young boys and girls of today, they are busy taking selfies all the time and I told them during one of the sessions that even the act of taking a selfie is an art in itself because when you take a selfie, you want to express something like taking a selfie when you're sad or when you want to show a funny face. Even when you go around, for instance, when you travel from here to East or West Khasi Hills, you see the beautiful landscape all around which cannot be ignored. So in the end, you can't do away with art.

Q: What has been your biggest inspiration?

Careen: My roots and the women of this region are, undoubtedly, my biggest inspirations. The struggle that these women put up with is what inspires me. However, I keep telling this that it is not about a sense of pity for these struggling women but for me it is the beauty of it all. Just like Van Gogh who would paint women in the fields, women washing clothes or a family that gathers in the evening to eat potatoes. Those are the things that inspire me. I also try to capture women from my community because they are the ones I can relate with. At this point of time, what inspires me the most are the women who would go around town collecting old newspapers and books. Those are subjects that make me very happy and make me want to portray.

Q: Where do you think is art at the moment in North East in that how far has it come and how far is it yet to go?

Careen: There are quite a few problems if we talk about art in North East. As far as Meghalaya is concerned, we don't have a platform to even do something as simple as showcasing something. When we have to exhibit something, we have to make do with a hall and there is a vast difference when works are exhibited in a proper art gallery where there are facilities like proper lighting. Even the government is not doing anything in this regard. Another thing is if we talk about talent, we have some of the best artists in these parts. For example, we have Rang, an amazing Installation artist who did his Masters in sculpture. He can even make something with just old newspapers. We also have many others who are not very well recognised in our parts but they're doing wonders outside of the state. So there's

always hope for a bright future even if we have to struggle with the various inconveniences. However, I am also sure that everything, whether negative or positive, will always help us in our growth.

Q: What is your message to young aspiring artists?

Careen: I always stress on focussing because when one is really focussed on becoming an artist or anything for that matter, one will get to his or her goals. No one can stop you if you have the passion to achieve.

Q: Coming to the Art Appreciation program, what was the main objective of the program and how has that been realised throughout these four days?

Careen: Many of the students that participated in this program are fresh from college or schools. This program has helped give them some insight as a small window into the world of art. If the program had been of a longer duration, it would have been more interactive and the students could have been able to do something themselves too. However I hope that through the few hours that we got to spend with the students, it has benefitted them and they can take back something with them.

Q: If we were to have a similar kind of program in the future, what are your tips for improvement?

Careen: I feel if I were given more time with the students that would allow the sessions to be more interactive. However, other than that, the University has done a lot and I really admire its fast growth and progress that is not seen in other universities. I am also grateful to the University for giving me this platform. I was very fortunate to have met Dr. Glenn, the Chancellor of the University, who gave me the chance to have my first exhibition in their old campus and for that I am very grateful.