



One Life on Earth

You have one life. Don't waste it.

Be honest. Work hard. Love, live and let live!

I guess this basic fundamental of life is what keeps me going. When I got married at the age of 23 and went to live in the US, I was very home sick. Winters were dreary and I was home alone, all day long. So I started painting my memories of home to keep myself busy. I had done applied arts from Sophia Polytechnic in Mumbai, and decided to use my skills to make my days memorable. Once I started painting, I realised this is what I loved doing. So I enrolled into a fine arts course at the Maryland Institute, College of Art, Baltimore.

Give life definition, like artist **Dhruvi Acharya!** Inject it with beautiful thoughts and a whirlwind of ingenuity. Recharge it by adding more meaning to it. And watch it come alive!

Dhruvi Acharya's new show, *One Life On Earth*, will be on view from October 4 to November 1 at Nature Morte, New Delhi.



I was nursing and drawing with my right hand.

It was only after I had my second child that we decided to move back to Mumbai. But till we were in the US, even after I had my first son, we travelled a lot. But my pregnancy or the fact that I was nursing or travelling with a toddler didn't keep me from pursuing my passion. Throughout this time, I continued to show my works, whether it was in Mumbai, Delhi, New York, Miami, Abu Dhabi, London or Milan. And every show was different and a great challenge. Because, like with everything else in life, it is important to evolve — so I have always strived to make my work better or change it completely. I have always tried to do fun things and have people tell me it is not pretentious art! I have even gone up in scale — have used 23 paintings to create a painting collage.

It feels great to be so very passionate about something that it begins to define you.

But it is very important to try and ensure that your self worth or identity is not based on people's reactions to what you do, but on your own belief in yourself!

I want to be a better artist than I am today. I have been a hard worker and I have set goals for myself. I believe that if I hold some thought in my mind it does happen. I guess it is a lot to do with taking things positively and maybe some amount of wishful thinking.

It's great to be able to spend time drawing, painting, reading, visiting galleries and museums and call it work! So while I do all this, my husband, who is a filmmaker, sees as many movies as he can. I guess it is all about you and what you enjoy.

I divide my time between Mumbai and New York, and when I am there, I love visiting the MOMA, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Chelsea art galleries. Even the American Folk Art Museum is a special place. I am very interested in the works of my peers and contemporaries, and I especially like the work of water colourist Henry Darger. Painting is not only my profession, but also my passion and joy. It is the medium through which I can contemplate upon and make sense of the world around me.

Because I felt like it...

My paintings speak of what's happening around me — in the environment, in my day to day thoughts, something I've read, events related to my pregnancy or stories that I have heard. Somehow everything gets translated into my work. My deep concern for the environment, my undergraduate training in advertising, graphics and typography, my love for Indian miniatures, comic books and contemporary street art, all have culminated into my body of work. There was a series of paintings that I did on violence, inspired by my sons who are interested in super heroes — batman and superman with their capes and masks, and also in hanuman. They all fight the bad guys, and here is where the violence comes into the picture. Although our home still has no toy guns or weapons, they dress up and pretend to fight the bad guys with imaginary weapons. My recent exhibition titled *One Life On Earth* had paintings focus on the current world environment. Just like me, my work is not overtly or obviously political.

I tend to utilise a subtle, dark and wry humour, drawing viewers into a world where thoughts are as visible as "reality" and where the protagonists live and metamorphose by the logic of that world.



If I didn't paint, I would drive myself nuts!

My paintings are based on my drawings, and my drawing books are like a daily journal, a chronicle of my thoughts, observations, emotions and experiences. I am interested in creating paintings that have a smooth physical surface but are visually and psychologically layered.

A watercolour by Dhruvi

I wouldn't have my day any other way. Because I simply love every bit of it. Do you?

I wake up at 6 am.

I send my two boys, aged 5 and 7, to school by 7 am. And I am in my studio from 8 am till 2 pm. The fact that my studio is just a flight of stairs up, makes it relatively easy. My time there is sacred and I don't meet anyone, nor do I indulge in lunches with friends. I love my music when I am working though — Coldplay or Norah Jones.

Two to 4pm is my time with the kids. I like to be hands on, available when they need me, be it to feed them or help them with their day's activities. And if they are busy, I go back to my studio, catch up on e-mails or read. I love both fiction and non-fiction. At the moment I am reading *When You Are Engulfed In Flames* by David Sedaris.

Dinner is usually at 7 pm and it is off to bed for the children at 8.30 pm. Normally, I go back to work around 9 on weeknights. My husband travels a lot, and is home usually over the weekend.

So I don't go back to work on Friday nights and keep the weekend free for friends and family.



I carry my watercolours and my drawing book with me always.

I love working with watercolours. It is a challenging medium. It is the immediacy of the medium that makes it fun to work with.

There is magic to it. You can't erase the mistakes, so you need to be spontaneous. So is it with life! It is after all a miraculous gift. Treat it well and you will feel blessed. I do!

— RAKHI AGARWAL