



Graphic Art Making Waves in Web Space

Indian designers-turned-entrepreneurs are reaching out to a wider customer base and investors are taking note of their potential in the contemporary market

CARTOONING is not what Praash Ibbat set out to do for a living when he qualified as an engineer. The digital caricaturist who launched Graphiccurry, a Bangalore-based start-up, has attracted the attention of global leaders such as Disney. The two-year old firm offers intricate digital caricatures inspired by top shows on television; these hand-drawn pictures are then printed as everyday objects of art.

"I was a good student but never got an engineering job. I was always interested in art and so decided to make a go of it," said Ibbat who runs the venture with wife, Deepthi. The firm retails its products through seven stores spread over Mumbai, Bangalore, Delhi and Noida, as well as on its online portal.

Graphiccurry, which participated in the Middle East Film and Comic Con (MEFCC) in Dubai this year, has appointed a local distributor there. "We recently received an order request from a fan in New Zealand," said Ibbat who estimates the company now has a customer base of about 30,000.

"What Graphiccurry provides is exactly what the crowd at Comic Con is looking for," said Jatin Verma, coordinator of Comic Con India. Investors are taking note of the potential offered by such startups. Early stage venture capital firm, SeedFund, invested over \$2 million in design merchandise maker Chumbak in March 2013. "Indians want more contemporary designs that define them, at good quality and reasonable price, and there is potential in market," said Bharvi Jacob, a founder partner at SeedFund. Manish Dey's Play Can, is a design label

that intertwines graphic design, illustrations and fashion. Hindu Gods illustrated as 3D lego forms of themselves and social issues colourfully portrayed on mugs, coasters and accessories has helped this startup grab customer attention.

"We didn't have a business plan and thought of the idea as an experiment," said Deyra, 42, a graduate from NIFT Delhi, who set up shop in 2008. The Delhi-based bootstrapped startup,

which has its own manufacturing facility, draws over 40 percent of its customers from global markets who buy directly online. Play Can also runs about half a dozen stores across India including in tourist hotspots like Pondicherry.

In Bangalore, architect Manjivhat Ibbat swapped a career in engineering to create geometric designs for lighting equipment, a move that spawned his startup - OWL or Objects with Light.

"I needed a break after a computer job and this was my hobby. We were taught model making in college and that's how I integrated the two," he said. OWL specialises in making lamps of contemporary design built from light, recycled polymer and 3D geometry as the major components.

Delhi's Gurleen Kaur, a graphic design student turned entrepreneur set up TwelvePC last December, an online store that sells exclusive football merchandise embedded with football art.

"The common element between an entrepreneur and a designer is that both flip problems into opportunities," said Sonia Manchanda, founding partner of Idiom Design and Consulting based

known for its work in creating the theme and look of several Future Group initiatives including Big Bazaar.

In Kochi, two engineers have quite literally wowed investors with the product design and video for wearable device Fin that can help automate hand gestures. The three-year old startup, Wove Makers has raised seed investment from technology startup MobMeye Wipro.



1 Cover photos by Twelve PC 2 OWL's lamps are made of light, recycled polymer and 3D geometry 3 Graphiccurry's Bond 4 Play Can intertwines graphic design, illustrations and fashion