



DAILY BREAD

SOMETHING AS plain and limp as paper takes forms unimaginable in Jenny Pinto's hands to form glowing earthy shades for cosy corners in your home.

What goes into that paper lampshade is even more amazing. Banana stem fibres, fibres from the mulberry, sisal, assorted grasses, and even ladies-finger plant stalks and those of the *gongura* (hot chutney material in Andhra Pradesh)!

"What's different about my lampshades is that I make my own paper. I'm a paper-maker first and then a designer," smiles Jenny Pinto, who's been experimenting with handmade paper for the last five years at her studio tucked away in a quiet and dusty corner off Sarjapur Road.

Sassy lamps

You'll be greeted at the studio by alluring standing lamps with crushed-paper shades: sassy geometrical ones for the walls that cast a soft warm glow around, paper and wood lamps, classy paper-and-hand-cut granite lamps that speak the earth... You'll be amazed by the range and the simplicity at the same time. "I tend to choose materials that are equally organic to go with the paper, though steel can sometimes be very classy."

And matching her work is her design studio, which is as organic as the lamps themselves. If you visit her studio, don't miss the floor and ceiling. The predominantly brick-and-stone studio has leaf imprints embedded onto its cement floor, making nature's art look truly phenomenal. And the paper-making machine is housed in a room whose ceiling has been imprinted with coconut palm leaves. Plants spring from



From ad filmmaking to creating earthy lamps with hand-made paper, it's been a journey back to the roots for Jenny Pinto

Jenny with some of her luminous creations at the studio.— Photo: Murali Kumar K.

hanging coconut shells.

An ad-filmmaker who worked on big brands such as Cadbury's and Johnson and Johnson, Jenny moved from Mumbai after a long and successful career, wanting to do

something different and something with her hands. "Light and paper was the natural path to take," says Jenny, who believes that paper and light create magic together.

Nearly 99 per cent of individ-

uals and industries in India that make hand-made paper use cotton cloth waste. But Jenny, a self-taught paper maker who scoured for books on the subject when she started out, took to experimenting with

plant fibres and various river grasses. "Paper from plant fibres takes easily to sculpting and organic shapes. Anything that has cellulose makes paper," says Jenny, pointing out to shades that look like papery

crinkled oyster shells, or twisted paper that forms a streak of flame.

Each lampshade desires a certain texture and thickness of paper, made painstakingly at Jenny's workshop which also

houses a full-fledged paper-making unit. Plant fibre is first cooked or boiled, beaten, sieved from water tanks, dried on cloth, and pressed to drain out moisture. Then, it's shade-dried naturally. Jenny's other

specialty is that no chemicals go into the paper-making process, whether the thinnest and tiniest of sheets or the large thick ones. And making her own paper has the advantage that she can make paper specific to each lamp. "My lampshades won't fit any old lamp that's lying at home, because the lamp and shade are integral to the design. I don't really start off with a design concept. It just takes life, once I start sculpting it. Very often the best designs come out of mistakes!"

Paper makes anything

Jenny has also experimented with *cora* grass mat waste from handicraft units and incorporated weeds destroying Kerala's rainforests in an effort to recycle waste. "In fact, in a project I did with students of Mallya Aditi International School, students produced paper from organic kitchen waste."

The banana-fibre paper she makes (her specialty) is so strong that she has to work shapes on it even when it is wet. Banana fibres and the fibre from the *lokta* grass that grows in the north-eastern parts of India, Nepal, specially at the foothills of the Himalayas, make the most translucent of papers, explains Jenny.

And Jenny insists that you can make paper out of practically anything. And anything out of paper. She's now into paper weaving, collaborating with weavers to make paper scrolls for modern homes. In fact her experiment with studio-weaver Julie Kagti won the duo an Elle Décor International Design Award in 2004. Most of her clients are young people just setting up home and looking for something to go with their organic décor. Architects and interior designers bring in their clients to choose what suits their ambience. She's done up restaurants and offices too. "A lot of people have taken my lamps back to the U.S. because hand-made paper is very expensive there," says Jenny. Her lampshades range between Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 7,000.

Jenny Pinto can be contacted on jennypinto.com

Daily Bread features people who pursue their beliefs and choose not to be a part of the ho-hum and humdrum.

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