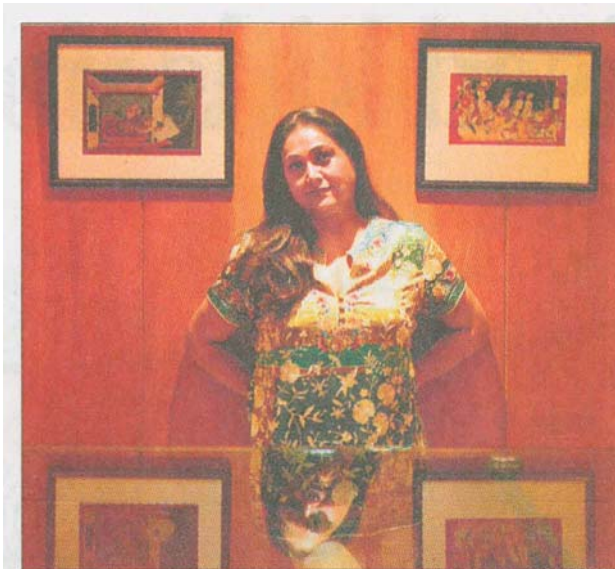
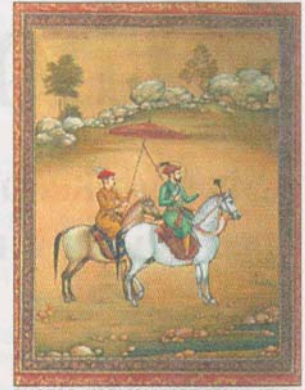
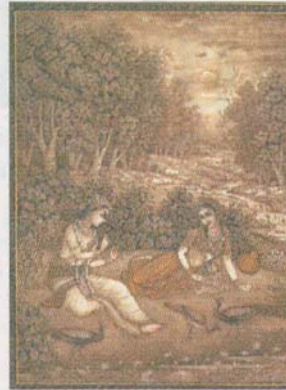


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ANSHUMAN POYREKAR/HT



PHOTOS: HARMONY ART FOUNDATION

(Left) Tina Ambani at Reliance Centre on Thursday with two miniature paintings that will be showcased at the Harmony Art show.

(Above, from left) *Radha & Krishna* by Reva Shankar Sharma (9"x5") and *Shah Jahan riding with Dara Shikoh* by Shakir Ali (21"x 16") are a part of the exhibition.

Pieces of history in paintings

Tasneem Nashrulla
Mumbai, March 12

IN 1546 AD, Mughal Emperor Akbar commissioned the Hamzanama — a legendary manuscript that depicted the heroic exploits of the Prophet Muhammad's uncle Amir Hamza through nearly 1,400 exquisite paintings on cotton.

Now, 463 years on, Tina Ambani, wife of Reliance ADA group chairman Anil Ambani, is curating the Harmony Art show 2009, which celebrates the historic art of miniature painting that Akbar revived during his rule.

The Harmony Art Foundation, founded in 1995 by Tina Ambani serves as a platform to showcase a wide range of Indian artists. In its 13th year, the annual art show will feature 300 works by 40 artists from across the coun-

try who have dedicated their lives to mastering the intricate art of miniature. At a time when contemporary paintings are greatly sought after, Ambani's decision to highlight an age-old Indian art form may puzzle a few.

She explains: "When the landmark Taj hotel burnt in the 26/11 attacks, we mourned the ruin of a heritage structure. We now feel the need to revisit our rich heritage that has become extremely relevant in today's times."

And that's precisely what the show's theme, A Tradition Revisited, seeks to evoke.

Ambani admits that while the art form hasn't received its due patronage from the media, it continues to remain vibrant owing to its evolution over centuries.

"Miniature art has absorbed the events and cul-

tures of different time periods, carrying with it diverse influences like mythology, aristocracy and nature," says Ambani. "It has defined the eras it flourished in."

For the first time at the Harmony Art show's history, a team of art historians and academicians travelled the interiors of Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh to handpick the 40 artists, most of who inherited the mastery of miniature from their fathers and grandfathers.

They are adept at depicting traditional themes of Hindu mythology and Mughal history using modern day techniques and mineral colours on cloth and paper.

The show will be inaugurated on March 13 by Jaya Bachchan and will be open to the public from March 14 to 22 at the Coomaraswamy Hall at

the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (formerly Prince of Wales museum), which Ambani believes is an apt venue to attract students and tourists as well.

In the wake of the recession, she says that the prices of the works are affordable.

"The art show has never been a commercial venture. It has always been about creating awareness about art, educating children in artistic history and showcasing promising talent in the world of art," she says.

As 2008 ended on a sombre note, Ambani hopes that the art show will "ignite a spark in Mumbai's cosmopolitan crowd to go back to our rich traditions."

"The show must go on," she says.

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