

Talented Youth of Today

Helping you add soul to your walls



Kishani Kaluarachchi

BY SHABNAM FAROOK

This month on LW we feature Kishani Kaluarachchi, the Managing Director of Wall Art (Pvt) LTD, an exclusive retailer of globally renowned wallpaper brands in Sri Lanka. In a gutsy move, Kishani gave up the comfort of her desk job, took a leap of faith and started this venture which has spearheaded a revolution, by pioneering elegant wallpaper designs that come in a rhapsody of colours and textures to suit any mood, taste or budget. Armed with a team of professionals, she is ever willing to assist the company's discerning clientele transform their homes and offices into the cynosure of all eyes by adding soul to their walls. If you're bored with your walls and yearn for some style, sophistication and oomph, Kishani will help you reawaken the allure of the four walls that surround you.

Q: Kishani, let's begin with an introduction about yourself.
 "I went to St. Bridget's Convent and then Stafford International for my A' Levels. For my higher studies, I got a degree in Economics and Management from the University of Bristol in the U.K. From the time I started my degree at university, I always knew I wanted to come straight back home after getting the degree, and I was lucky enough to find a good job when I got back!"

Q: How long have you been working at Wall Art as the Managing Director?
 "Wall Art was founded in early 2012 so it's been about a year and a half now."

Q: How is this position different when compared to the other positions you've held previously?
 "I started off my career as an investment analyst which gave me a lot of insight into what it takes to start up new business initiatives and how to run them successfully. After that, I spent a few years as a Business Analyst at the Sri Lankan branch of a U.S. strategy consultancy which encourages entrepreneurship among its employees. I don't think I would have had the guts to start up my own venture if it wasn't for the advice and support of the management! So I would say that one of the main differences is that I have more responsi-

bility now as I oversee most aspects of the business. And I get to actually apply and implement strategies and operations instead of just recommending them to others. And of course I also get to see the direct impact and result of every decision made!"

Q: Tell us about Wall Art and what the company specializes in?
 "Wall Art is a retailer of wallpaper brands from Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, U.K. and the U.S. We also offer another design option called '3D Tiles' which are fiber tiles for walls. We were the first company to offer these products in Sri Lanka and our full time installation staff have travelled all over the island installing our products in hotels, apartments, restaurants and shops, lounges and bars, offices and homes."

Q: Do elaborate on the company's product line up.
 "We continuously update our range of wallpaper by bringing in new catalogs from our suppliers and we are up to over 10,000 designs now. Due to the large variety, we have designs suitable for any room in a house or office, and we also recently expanded our range of kid's wallpaper and borders."

"We heavily emphasize quality at Wall Art - from the quality of our products which are sourced from the best wallpaper companies in the world to the quality of the work undertaken by our installation crew. We also focus on providing quick and satisfactory service throughout the whole process - from the choosing of a design to the completion of an installation."
 "Our 3D tiles are also very popular with residential customers who want something different in their homes. Also many offices, restaurants, and coffee shops have installed our 3D tiles. The advantage of the 3D fiber tiles is that it comes in white and can be painted over in any colour to match the room interior."

Q: In a country where wall paints are popular, how do you position your product?

"People are now paying more attention to creating great living spaces within their homes. Also owners of businesses and commercial spaces from shops to restaurants to lounges are realizing that they need to do something different to attract a customer when they walk through the door. They need to create a pleasing environment to retain these customers. There are even certain colours you can put on a wall to make a customer purchase more of your product! An instant impact can be created by painting a single wall in a different colour, and installing wallpaper to create a feature wall is the next step up. It can be one of the most dramatic ways of transforming a space in just a few hours. With even a simple textured design, a room can be infused with your own personal style and taste. We get customers from all walks of life who want something different in their homes and we help them to choose a design that gives them a sense of pleasure and satisfaction each time they see it in their home, business or office."

Q: What kind of reaction have you got from your customers so far?
 "We've seen an overwhelming response for our products over the past year. The feedback we've received from our customers has been encouraging and we keep updating our collections with types of designs that clients want."

Q: How can an interested customer get in touch with Wall Art?
 "They can call on 0114343834 or send us an email on info@wallart.lk. Our Facebook page also has a lot of our latest designs. The best option is to drop in at the store to see the entire range before making a decision."

Q: On a more personal note, tell us about the responsibilities your job entails?

"As a relatively new start up, my responsibilities cover most aspects of a business from overseeing sales, finances, marketing and recruitment."

Q: What do you enjoy most about being at the helm at Wall Art?

"My previous jobs were mostly desk jobs, so I like the fact that I can get out of the office and meet people in the architectural and interior design industry as well as corporate clients. I also get to visit building sites and beautiful homes and see how constructions and renovations are carried out from the initial stage onwards which is quite fascinating."

Q: How do you find a balance between your personal life and your career?

"I don't really work long hours like I used to anymore so maintaining a work life balance is not an issue. However running a business adds a whole new level of stress. I try not to think too much about work after office hours but don't succeed that often!"

Q: What do you do to relax and unwind?

"I absolutely love reading and I've been addicted to it since the age of seven or so. People who say they don't like reading really don't know what they're missing! I shop online for the latest books because it's quick and easy and is delivered straight to my doorstep. I also love to travel when time and finances permit."

