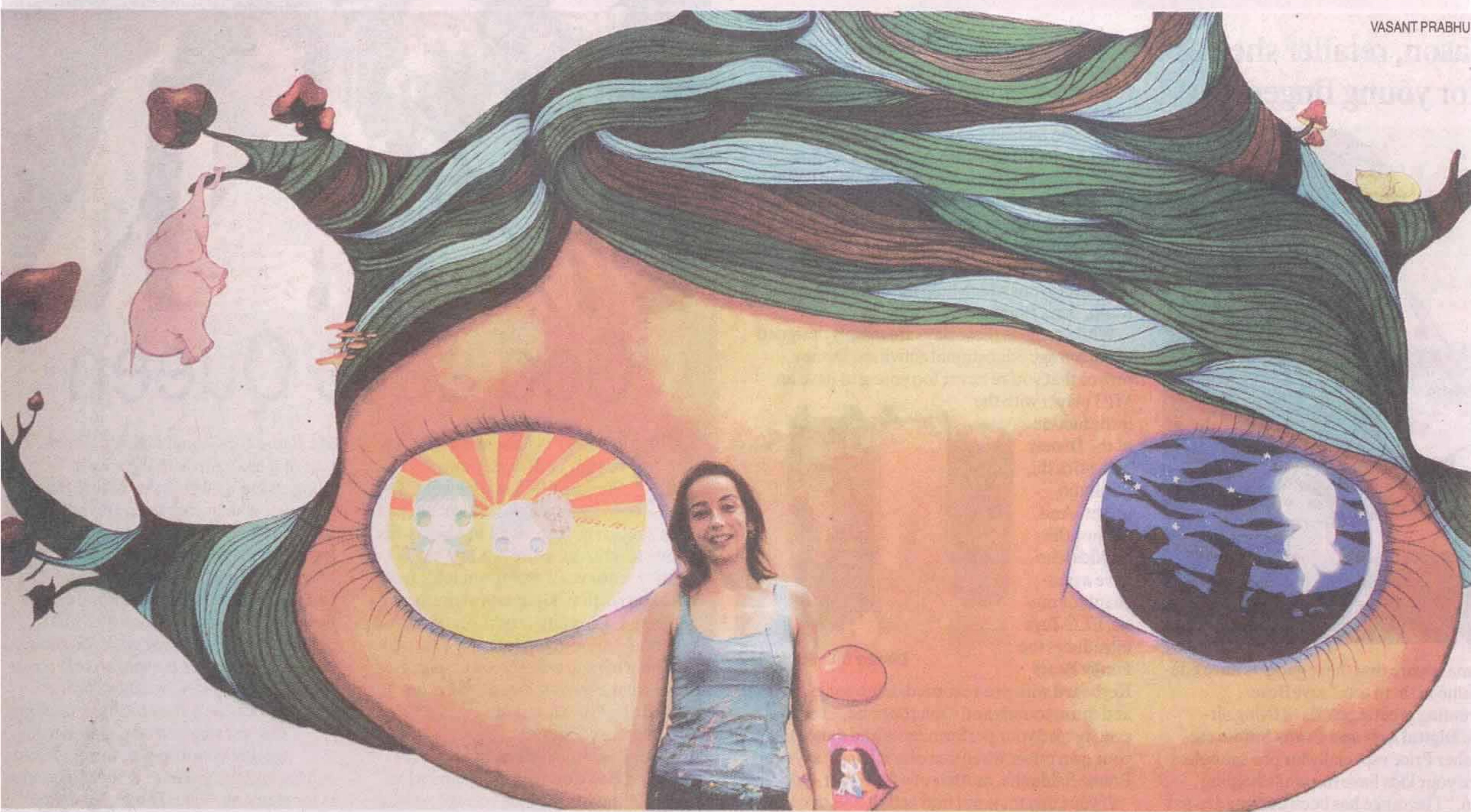


YOUNG AT ART



Brazilian artist Nina Pandolfo celebrates girlhood in her fantasy graffiti art

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PERCHED on a 49-foot ladder, a petite Nina Pandolfo, a Brazilian graffiti artist from Brazil, looks invincible as she completes her 33 foot x 50 foot, graffiti mural. Paint-spattered cargos and hands accentuate her passion as the artist explains, "Though I have been working on this mural for a whole week at Abhay Maskara's gallery, it will be painted over in a month's time. That is what being a graffiti artist means," she says with a winning smile. Her art sums up the exuberance and optimism of the artist whose solo show *Between Us* opens at Maskara's gallery, The Warehouse on 3rd Pasta Lane, Colaba.

One of the few women involved in doing graffiti art, Pandolfo began creating art with her spray cans and paint on her neighbourhood street at 15. "My mother is very supportive of my art. She advised me to follow my heart. Initially,

she was a little worried about me being out in the street with all guys, since mostly men do graffiti art, but then she got used to it," says the 31-year-old.

With an interest in street theatre, she is of the firm belief that in countries like Brazil and India, the working class does not have time to attend plays or visit art galleries, which is why the art has to be brought to them on the street.

One wonders why her first stop is a gallery though. "I have shown my art in galleries in France, UK, Germany and at home in Brazil, so why not in India? Besides, along with my graffiti I also do canvases. I do plan to go to Bandra and check out the Wall Project, where local artists have sprayed the walls," says Pandolfo.

Graffiti art is often understood as random and spontaneous however, it is not always so. Pandolfo is one of many artists who plan their wall space through sketches and often the art can have a very finished and polished look.

Pandolfo also has the added distinction of doing art that appears to celebrate the child in her. Unapologetically soft and feminine, her girl figures with large eyes and childlike bodies inhabit a world of fantasy.

Where elephants hang from trees, strawberries grow as big as trees and the girls have their fantasies, of a happy life on the beach, reflected in their eyes. Images border on Manga animation though Pandolfo clarifies that she had no exposure to Japanese art in the 80s and 90s when she first began painting.

"It looks fantastic on the surface, but if you spend time with the art you get clues into the works that talk of underlying problems," says the artist. Pandolfo cites the image of a little girl crawling towards a lone flower on a vast green hill. "The single flower is a symbol of hope and joy, but it also indicates that in this world there is little joy and much more sorrow," concludes the artist, matter-of-factly.