# The Spotlight

Volume - 1 | Issue - 2 | May 2025

BE THE STAR

## From The Founder's Desk

The world can be loud and demanding. Expectations pile up. Screens blur the line between attention and exhaustion. But give a child a blank canvas, and suddenly, their feelings have colour. Hand someone a script, and their unspoken grief might find a voice.

Because some stories are not meant to be spoken aloud — they are meant to be danced, painted, sung, or sketched in silence.

At IIG Arts Academy, we believe that art is more than just performance. It is a mirror, a release, and sometimes, a quiet rescue. Here at IIGAA, emotional wellness is not a side conversation — it is woven into the way we teach, listen, and create. From music therapy sessions to mindful movement in dance, from journaling exercises in theatre to free expression in visual arts — every form becomes a safe space. A way to feel without fear. A place to be whole, even when the world feels fractured.

We don't expect every student to be at their best all the time. We only hope they **feel safe enough to be real**.

Because sometimes, the strongest thing we can do is let ourselves feel — and create from there.

# The Science of Expression: How Involving in the Arts Helps the Mind Heal

There's something oddly magical about watching someone dance like their bones are made of water, or listening to a melody that seems to crack open your chest and let your heart breathe. We rarely talk about what that kind of creative expression does to the inside of your brain.

In a world where burnout is a badge and stress is a default setting, mental health often takes a back seat. We're all trying to cope in one way or another. Some of us meditate. Some go to therapy. Some just scroll until their thumbs go numb. And then **there's art—a quiet but fierce healer we tend to overlook.**

Engaging in painting, music, dance, or theatre actually changes your brain. In a good way.

**A 2016 study published in Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association revealed that 45 minutes of creative activity significantly reduces cortisol levels in the body, regardless of skill level.** It doesn't matter if you're Picasso or just drawing stick figures. When your hands are busy creating, your brain begins to calm itself.

But it's not just about calming down. Art also lights up the brain in ways that very few other activities do. Think of your brain like a messy, overloaded desktop. Engaging in a creative task—say, painting or dancing—is like hitting "refresh."

When you're immersed in creative flow, your brain floods with dopamine and serotonin. These are neurotransmitters—brain chemicals that regulate mood, reward, and motivation. Low serotonin levels are associated with depression and anxiety. Art pushes them back up, naturally.

**According to a report published in Frontiers in Psychology, dance has been shown to improve emotional regulation, body image, and cognitive flexibility, especially in people with depression, PTSD, and trauma histories.**

You know how people say, "I feel better after painting," or "Dancing makes me forget everything"?

That's serotonin in action.

***In a world that demands constant output, scientifically, art gives us a place to just be.***

# Art for the Mind: Global Programs Supporting Mental Health Through Creativity

## United Kingdom

**Arts on Prescription**

Doctors prescribe art sessions to support mental health through creative expression.

## United States

**Music & Memory Program**

Personalized music playlists help dementia patients reconnect with emotion and memory.

## Australia

**The Big Anxiety Festival**

A mental health-focused arts festival using immersive installations, talks, and performances to reduce stigma.

## South Korea

**School-Based Art Therapy**

Weekly art sessions in public schools help students manage stress and self-esteem.

## India

**Rang Karwan – The Art Van**

A mobile art therapy initiative bringing painting and theatre to underserved areas for emotional expression.

## Norway

**Hospital Artists-in-Residence**

Professional artists collaborate with patients in hospitals to support emotional healing and reduce anxiety.

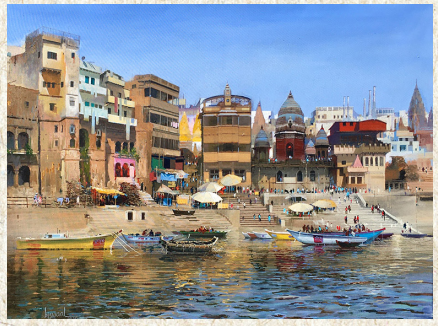
## Brazil

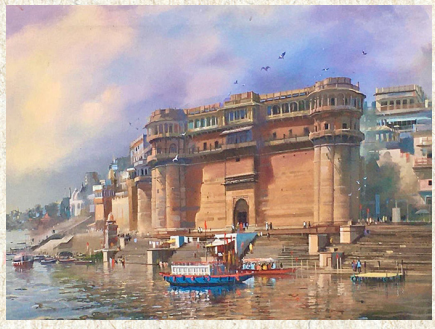
**AfroReggae's Creative Hubs**

Community workshops in favelas use music and theatre to heal trauma and create safe alternatives for youth.

# Real Stories, Real Impact

## Bijay Biswaal: From Railway Platforms to Artistic Pinnacles





Born in 1964 in the quaint town of Pallahara in Odisha's Angul district, Bijay Biswaal's early life was far removed from the world of art galleries and exhibitions. Working as a Chief Ticket Inspector at Indian Railways in Nagpur, his days were filled with the hustle and bustle of train schedules and passenger queries. Yet, amidst this routine, Biswaal found solace in sketching the everyday scenes around him—be it the weary traveler waiting for a train or the rustic charm of rural India.

Without any formal training, Biswaal honed his skills during his off-duty hours, transforming mundane moments into captivating artworks. His paintings, often centered around Indian railways and rural life, resonate with a sense of nostalgia and realism that strikes a chord with many. The intricate details and vivid storytelling in his art reflect not just technical prowess but also a deep emotional connection to his subjects.

In 2016, recognizing his exceptional talent, Biswaal voluntarily retired from his railway job to dedicate himself entirely to painting. His decision bore fruit as his artworks gained national attention, even earning a special mention in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Mann Ki Baat" radio program. Despite his rising fame, Biswaal remains grounded, often emphasizing the therapeutic nature of art and its role in providing him with purpose and peace.

Today, Biswaal's journey serves as an inspiration to many aspiring artists, especially those from humble backgrounds. His life underscores the transformative power of art—not just as a medium of expression but as a pathway to healing, self-discovery, and societal contribution.

# Rang-Ae-Mehfil

**Melody, rhythm, and the vibrant energy of young artists stepping into their spotlight**

## Singing Competition

**May 9, 2025**

The IIG Arts Academy Singing Competition brought together voices that didn't just hit the right notes—they told stories. From soulful solos to spirited group performances, the event showcased a spectrum of genres, languages, and emotions. Children as young as seven stood on the same stage as teens preparing for formal training, all united by their love for music. Some chose classical ragas, others belted out folk songs, and a few even ventured into original compositions.

The auditorium echoed with applause, admiration, and more than once, goosebumps. Judges Bhagyashree Mohanty (Renowned Singer), Anurag Das (Professional Singer), and Baishnab Kailash (Classical Music Expert) brought warmth and wisdom, encouraging young performers while offering thoughtful feedback.

Trophies, medals, and certificates were awarded, but what lingered longer than the prizes were the proud smiles, teary eyes, and the quiet thrill of singing one's heart out in front of a live audience.

# Dance Competition

## May 10, 2025

If music stirred the heart, dance set the soul free. On the second day, the stage transformed into a whirl of colour, movement, and emotion as students from various age categories performed in the IIG Arts Academy Dance Competition. Traditional met modern—graceful Odissi twirls flowed into bold, expressive modern dance routines.

Each performance was a story in motion: some explored mythology, some channelled joy, others wrestled with grief or anger, all without using a single word. The choreography was detailed, the expressions genuine, and the energy in the room—electric.

Our panel of esteemed judges, including Biswajit Das (Classical Dance), Pankaj Kumar Pradhan (Odissi Dance), Rakesh Kumar Behera and Soubhagya Bharati (Modern Dance Experts), were deeply moved. Their feedback wasn't just technical—it acknowledged the bravery, imagination, and sheer hard work of each dancer.

# Until Next Time...

As this month's pages come to a close, we leave with hearts a little lighter and minds a little fuller. Art, in all its forms, has a quiet way of holding us, like a hand on your shoulder when words fall short.

Thank you for reading.

We will be back next month—with more voices, more colours, and more moments that speak to the sublime.

IIG ARTS ACADEMY
THE STAGE IS YOURS - OWN IT

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Designed & Distributed by IIG Technology

Published by IIG Arts Academy