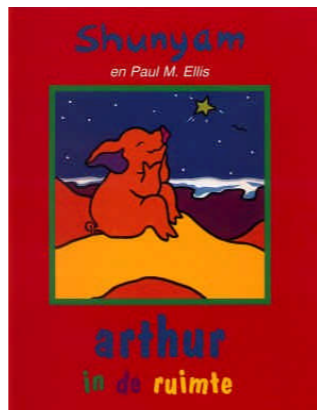


Ishana, a twenty-five-year-old woman of sharp wit and beauty spends most of her time at the Osho Commune. She is the daughter of a famous Dutch artist, Shunyam. She has had minimal brain damage since birth. She is seen around the commune always surrounded by lots of friends. [ed.]



**What brought you here to the commune?**

My mother has been here many times in the past and this time I wanted to experience the commune as an independent woman in my own right. I need to break from my mother and experience life on my own.

I love to meditate, even if I cannot participate fully in Osho's active meditations because of my handicap.

**What is your handicap and how does it affect you?**

The umbilical cord was wrapped around my neck in the womb and caused the blood flow to the brain to stop.

The way it affects me is that I have difficulty walking, going up stairs and talking. Everything I do is very slow and I have to be able to reach out to people to get help with everyday tasks.

**How is it for you to have a handicap here at the resort?**

I like the fact that people here do not judge me. They seem to be interested in who I am on the inside and they are usually very helpful to me. In Holland I often feel judged and rejected because of my handicap; people there are more concerned with appearances. Here I can just be myself and relax. I enjoy the sitting meditations and I also like to watch which feels very beneficial to me.



**How was that for you when your mother recently visited the commune?**

I have a strong bond with my mother. She has helped me tremendously in my life in dealing with my handicap. She is a strong woman and more and more I see her as a woman instead of a mother. It is nice to be with her here, but we do not cling to each other.

I realized that I do not want to be identified with being a handicapped person anymore and I feel

freer now. I can now take responsibility for my life in a new way. Now I can even joke about the handicap, because I know that it is not me! This improved my relationship with my mother, because she feels less responsible for taking care of me.

# The Joy of Emptiness



Anand Shunyam is a vivacious Dutch painter well known all over Europe. She has fulfilled the dream of every artist by having her own gallery – The Shunyam Art Gallery in Amsterdam. Her work has found its way to art collectors around the world for she knows how to capture the energy of life on canvas.

In Holland her paintings are known as Up-Art because people feel happy looking at their bright colors and humorous paintings of various animals, her most famous motif being that of the orange pig, Arthur.

We hope that you will enjoy the chat we had with Shunyam while she was visiting the meditation resort recently. [ed.]



**Tell us a bit about your beginnings in the world of art?**

I was originally trained and schooled as a portrait painter, earning my living through painting. My techniques were those I had learned in the art academies – very good, very precise, exactly what people wanted. But thanks to Osho a point came in my life when I realized that I wanted to know my true self. Though I was successful, I was fed up because it was all according to the rules of art, but not according to the rules of life.

I changed so much throughout the years that I saw that I was like a bear in a circus: give him money and he dances. This is when meditation entered. It was with this that I decided to quit the job and paint what I liked, to drop the tricks of painting.

**What was the major change?**

With meditation you begin to learn about this whole world inside of you, that you are overflowing, with abundance and joy – a bottle of bubbling champagne! That feeling came more and more; I wanted to translate it outside, to give it a form.

**Did you encounter any blocks?**

Big blocks! The biggest was to unlearn what I had learned in art school – how to do the bone structure exactly, to capture the face or the light shining on the hair. I had to undo all these things and start painting from my inner being. This is only possible if you are meditating, have gotten all the junk out – all the garbage that is inside blocking the natural flow.

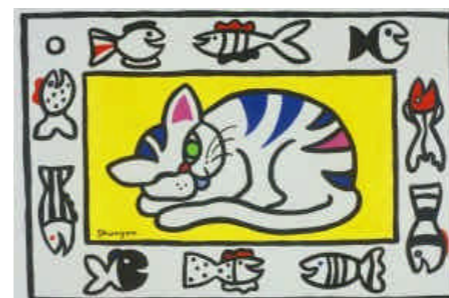
For me, meditation has been a cleansing process. You become so vast, so big, so infinite, that then things happen. Beautiful!

**So in a nutshell, what does meditation mean to you?**

It means being in tune with existence, getting rid of the every day junk and being at peace with myself.

In the beginning I had done it all in Dynamic Meditation – screaming, shouting, crying, fighting, you name it – but now through moving my body I can get rid of my accumulated tensions.

The Osho Kundalini and Nataraj are my favorite meditation techniques. Meditation becomes more and more a celebration, a bliss!



**Like Zen artists, do you take a break from painting?**

In my life things don't go gradually; they take a sudden jump. I started doing therapy groups and there was a sudden 'Stop!' from within.

Now the paintings just happen and people are left speechless when they see them, commenting: Wow! – this gives me the feeling of being a child again, this one cheered me up, I am feeling happy. And those are exactly the feelings I have when these paintings are happening, being painted.

After this break, my critics were afraid about my radical change in style, but my new paintings were an immediate success. An apprehensive owner of a famous Amsterdam art gallery displayed some of my paintings. When two were sold, the next day she phoned and said she wanted an exhibition – it sold out in two weeks time!

That was fourteen years ago. Now with my own gallery I also have time to make children's books,

CD-roms for children, and also work for big companies like Avanro, Nasa, ABN-AMBRO, Unicef, Green Peace, and the World Wide Life fund.



**Then aren't you still painting for the world?**

I only accept what I like. I am not painting for money. Now I paint from a different space and I choose my clients, my jobs.



**Can you give us a glimpse of how you paint?**

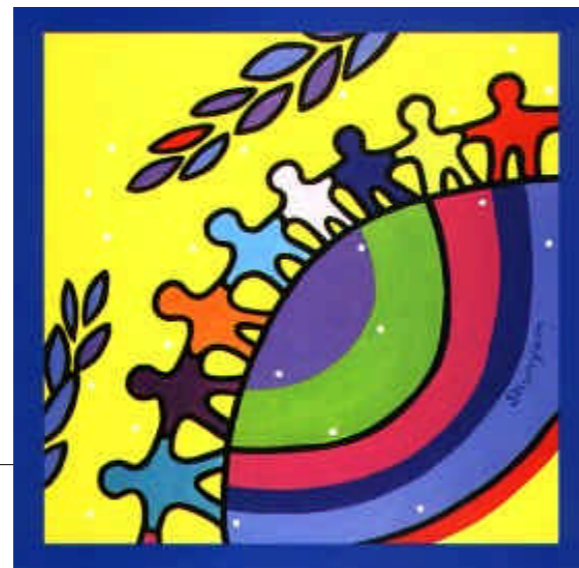
Yes. I go to my studio, put music on, stand before the empty canvas, and I empty myself – I become really Shunyam (emptiness). Standing with closed eyes, somewhere inside I hear the title *Abundance*, and the painting starts. It just goes on like this – or *River* or *Ocean of Joy* or *Forever Friends*.

I also hear the colors; for example, once while painting *Ocean of Joy* I heard "Use red." And I said, "No, I won't. I will take yellow." I painted yellow and it didn't look good; I had to erase and go for red – then it was okay. Someone is guiding me all along – it's only possible if you are empty.

**Wasn't this happening before you had meditated?**

No, because then I painted like an art student. Now these paintings are so pure that I look at them and think: Did I make them? I am filled with joy after; therefore they also make people happy.

They are spontaneous happenings which exude the feelings expressed on the canvas: I am empty within and joyous too – isn't that the best of both worlds?



**How has your visit to the commune influenced your art?**

I have been visiting the Osho Commune for about twenty years and it continues to be a source of inspiration for me. The magic of this place helps my painting to expand more and more.

To find out more about Shunyam and her art, visit [www.shunyam.com](http://www.shunyam.com)