



Dheer Kaku's 'Time 2'. (Photo Courtesy: Space 118)

A laboratory of ideas

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- A new exhibition celebrates Space 118's ten years as a testing ground for new art practices
- This art studio -residency programme has hosted 350 artists so far

Sakshi Gallery's new space in 3rd Pasta Lane, Colaba, Mumbai, is displaying an assortment of contemporary practices, from the emerging to the established. One of the most striking works is Dheer Kaku's *Time 2*, a rendition of Gujarat's stepwells in ink and graphite on canson archival paper. Just a little ahead is an evocative photograph from Gauri Gill's ongoing series, shot in Rajasthan, titled *Boy Bathing In Talaab, Baran*. True to her style, it features unaffected candid portraits that highlight a combination of vulnerability and forthrightness. Then there is Tanya Goel's *C.P.W.D. Fragment 3*, carrying forth the artist's engagement with found debris from architectural and construction sites.

What unites these practices is that they were nurtured in the arts residency programme at Space 118, Mazagaon, Mumbai. And it is to celebrate these

journeys, charted over the past decade, that Sakshi Gallery and Space 118 have come together with the show *Making Space*.

The roots of the exhibition lie in a chance conversation between Geetha Mehra, director of the gallery, and Saloni Doshi, founder of the art studio-residency programme. "For 10 years, Saloni has been providing studio spaces for artists, practically pro bono. I myself have seen promising young artists emerge from that space," says Mehra. So, she invited Doshi to curate an exhibition at the gallery's new space to look back at the journey, and take stock. As part of *Making Space*, one can see glimpses of 33 practices—around 350 artists have done their residency at Space 118.

Doshi started the art studio-residency programme in 2009, when she was in her 20s. A graduate in media and communication studies from the London School of Economics, she started collecting art early. Gradually, she realized she wanted to do more.

A trip to Vadodara with like-minded people exposed Doshi to the Sarabhai family's work in Gujarat in fostering practices such as those of Howard Hodgkin's. She decided to provide a studio space in Mumbai to artists and support emerging practices. For this, she chose a shed in her family-owned warehouse in Mazagaon, near the docks. "When I started, community art studios in India had a very limited shelf life. At that time, using mixed media and photography was already in. But employing material like concrete, natural pigments or interpreting the sound of the rain in an image was unheard of. All of that started taking place at Space 118," she says.

In the past 10 years, the space has emerged as a laboratory for ideas, with techniques, materials and methods being learnt and unlearnt. "Both the studio space and the city of Mumbai have served as a canvas for artists. The 33 works on display draw on the ethos, people and construction in the city. People have even put full-sized cranes in their work," says Doshi.

The proceeds from the exhibition will be used for the production and publication of the book *Mapping Residencies In India—Post Independence*, which Doshi has been researching for seven years.

Making Space will be on view at Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai, till 19 October.