

# Art | Room with a view

Art residencies are offering contemporary artists a lifeline away from the demands and pressures of galleries, auctions and the market

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Jaaga in Bangalore is an art residency technology.

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Curator and writer **Ranjit Hoskote** says the concept of the artists' residency began to evolve after the 1990s, alongside the biennial and collaborative spaces which serve as alternative or supplementary production systems (as opposed to galleries, museums and public commissions) for artists. Apart from being "down time" or repose, such programmes facilitate the forging of fresh connections and help start conversations among practitioners across disciplines.

In India, residencies are naturally more appealing to artists because infrastructure is scant. Sales of contemporary art are weak compared to most other countries, even those in West Asia, despite a vibrant tradition of art education. As a result, residencies become an invaluable resource for artists.

Take Prathap Modi, 31. A residency junkie of sorts, he's completed the PEERS residency at Khoj, open only to emerging artists and fresh graduates, and has been to a few in Europe. His current stop is Space 118 in Mumbai's Mazgaon.

Modi takes two days to settle into the quiet of a residency – "to get around its ecosystem," as he puts it. He has been roaming around Mazgaon, an urban refuge a short drive away from Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, and the city's art district, spread over Kala Ghoda and Colaba in the south. A

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Space 118, Mazgaon, Mumbai. Photo: Nyan Shah/Mint

**Saloni Doshi's** Space 118 is the first art residency that opened in Mumbai, back in 2010. Self-funded, it comes with a room and basic living facilities. Artists from anywhere in the world can spend one-two months there. During this time, they are expected to work on a proposed project, but not necessarily complete it. The artists have to pay her with one of their artworks. Doshi hosts an Open Studio day every four months to show the work of the residents to gallerists, curators and collectors. She is even happy to facilitate sales.

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“My only condition is that the residents should not be fly-by-night operators who use the space to just stay here and travel around, but artists with a serious project in mind.” Doshi scrutinizes all the proposals, which keep growing each year, and meets the artists before inviting them.

“Artists from anywhere in the world can spend one-two months at Space 118—during this time, they are expected to work on a proposed project, but not necessarily complete it” Among the artworks crowding her office is a stunning abstraction in oil painted by Ankush Safaya during a recently completed two-month residency. It shows a cluster of overlapping geometrical shapes in primary colours, inspired by the new Mumbai landmark Antilla, industrialist **Mukesh Ambani**'s home. “Safaya is from Hoshiarpur, in Punjab,” says Doshi. “He is mostly self-trained, with a lot of talent. Surprises like these make residencies so rewarding.”

Serendipity is often inspired by the setting. And as far as location is concerned, few residencies can beat the stately charm of the Sanskriti Foundation in Anandgram, off the Mehrauli-Gurgaon Road in New Delhi.

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