

# Behind Closed Doors: A Peek into Saloni Doshi's Space 118

BY ROSALYN D'MELLO | MARCH 23, 2012

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An artist at work in one of the studios at Space 118  
(Isha Shah)

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There are artists who try desperately to find a residency outside the bustling, hyperactive metropolis of Mumbai, and then there's that rare breed that actually wants to create work in that over-populated city by the sea. For the former, the world is your oyster. For the latter, considering space is such a premium, finding a studio can be tougher than getting in and out of the ladies compartment in the local train. Luckily, there's people like **Saloni Doshi** who are creating spaces for Indian and international artists. Her three-year-old **Space 118**, an artist studio complex located in Wadi Bunder in Mazgaon is a much-needed initiative to foster art in an increasingly commercialized city. Tomorrow, March 24, Space 118 will host yet another Open Studio Day featuring work by artists in residence **Aashna Jhaveri, Armando Miguelez, Juan Requena, Mufaddal Husein, Nyela Saeed, Rupa Chordia, Sharath Kumar, Sharmistha Ray** and **Shruti Garg**. The Open Studios Day which begins at 3pm and goes on until 7.30pm will also feature a performance by artist **Mansi Bhatt**.

**ARTINFO** spoke to Doshi, the 32-year-old art collector who's the woman behind the initiative.



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### **Tell us more about Space 118?**

I've been an art collector for the last seven years. While I was collecting, I felt the need to not just deal with gallerists but also to meet more artists. I used to work with the Times of India, as a brand manager handling the Times Group's websites. That was when I started



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more artists. I used to work with the Times of India, as a brand manager handling the Times Group's websites. That was when I started collecting art. I think I started working only so I could collect art. But I wanted to do something more, and there weren't too many choices. I didn't want to be a consultant, or a Gallerist. And nobody had started studio spaces here. I used to visit studios in New York, Baroda, and I felt the need for something like this in the city. I discovered this beautiful

warehouse which belongs to my father, and it took me a year to convert them into studios. They were beautiful structures as is, but they needed to be revamped.

### **How do you go about selecting artists?**

This whole thing is mainly run through word of mouth. Galleries have been nice enough to keep my postcards, but otherwise it's only through word of mouth and social media. It's mostly artists who are emerging who come here. I look at the intention of the project they're looking at executing here, and the seriousness with which they want to use the studio space. I also look at their past practice, what they've done. I prefer artists who are serious and have a vision, but that doesn't mean they have to do hard-core work. Mansi Bhatt, for instance, used to visit the studio everyday from Borivali and just read, because there were so few spaces in the city where she could do that.

Space 118 is like an oasis in Bombay. You can't imagine how important it is in a city where space is such a scarcity. A lot of people ask what is the concrete end, but I think even if there's a thought or an idea that has come through, that's enough. I can differentiate between people who fuff around and those who do work. There's also an application form online which requires the artist to state the intent behind the visit; why do they want to come here, what are they looking at doing here.

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### **How do you sustain the place?**

Basically, artists come here for anything between one to six months. No matter how much time they spend here, they give me one work, either something they've made here, or from before. Some even offer me a choice. It's more like a barter, work in lieu of studio space. If it's a longer period, like a year, then I charge a minimal rent of Rs. 15,000 which is peanuts, but it's a nice way of getting the place to sustain itself. I don't sell any of the works I get. In fact, I've never sold any work I've collected.

### **Who are some of the artists whose work is part of your personal collection?**

I have over 120 works by artists like **Vivek Vilasini, Tejal Shah, Pushpamala, Vivan Sundaram, Yamini Nair, Shreyas Kale, Chitra Ganesh, Aditya Pande, T. Venkanna, T.V. Santosh, Raghu Rai**. Three photographers I've yet to collect are **Richard** and **Pablo Bartholomew** and **Dayanita Singh**. I've never given importance to how many works I own; it's more the quality of the work. I'm not looking for signatures, but I want what I feel is that artist's best quality work. I also have an extensive collection of Kalighat paintings and work by Gond artists. I've got some Mughal miniatures but very few.

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