

Art Inside

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Mumbai's art studio Space 118 opens its doors to view works of resident artists in an informal setting.

Typically, an artist's work is viewed inside a gallery, framed, mounted and up for sale. Somewhere, there is a formal air to the setting, a transactional pressure on the buyer (and the artist) even amidst the casual camaraderie around wine and cheese. But what if the works are viewed inside an artist's studio — the very place where they have been created?

"It gives the artist a first-hand experience of his work being showcased, without the pressure to cater to a market even as the outside world gets a glimpse of the inner workings of an artist's studio," says Saloni Doshi, director of Mumbai's premiere art-studio Space 118.

Doshi's space, a cluster of five studios in Mazgaon, has been hosting "Open Studio Day" events for the last two years where the resident artists' studios open doors for the public. Its next "Open Studio Day" takes place on April 4, featuring works of Schön Mendes, Vaibhav Raj Shah, Pratap Morey, Max Pinkers, Mrugen Rathod, Genevieve Robertson, Michelle Cherian and Maripelly Praveen Goud. The works of eight artists, who have been in the studio's residence for over two months, will be on display this time.

A well-practised concept in the international art scene, the open studio is not very well known in India. Most Indian art studios are yet to adopt the practice. Anyone is free to walk in, but it is generally attended by the broader art community including gallerists, curators, artists, critics and art enthusiasts.

"The environment is informal, and the conversations with the viewers take place at various levels," says Shah, one of the artists whose works will be on display. According to Doshi, it is also a rare opportunity for the artists as their works are exposed to constructive criticism.

However, the absence of commercial prospects is what probably explains the lack of such programmes among Indian studios. "There are expenses in organising it. Moreover, it is for the benefit of the artist and not for the studio. It is an effort, but I see it as a brand building exercise," says Doshi. Last year, Space 118 held three open studio days, the last one was in September.