

DELHI COMES ALIVE WITH BACK-TO-BACK ART EVENTS

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By Noor Anand Chawla

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Did someone say it's art-o'clock?! After a brief hiatus for the summer, Delhi's art fraternity is back in full swing, offering the very best to the Capital city's 'culturati'. The frenzy kicked off last week with the Launch of Artix, which is described as India's first Hotel Art Fair. It took place at the Taj Mahal Palace, New Delhi over a period of three days from August 25 to 27.

What set this event apart from others was its stance as being a "global gathering that celebrates art, culture, and aesthetics while serving as a platform for exquisite design collectables."

The second floor of Delhi's famed Taj Palace hotel was overrun by art of all kinds. Forty-three rooms were taken over, some by galleries, some by designers and a few by independent artists. On display were a blend of Indian and international masterpieces, contemporary and modern art, sculptures, tapestries, and a treasure trove of collectables.

The participants included hallowed names like Dhoomimal Art Gallery, Cultivate Art, Anant Art Gallery, Art Pilgrim, Art Centrix, and Arushi Arts. There were also 10 solo shows on display, which included two international artists from the United States and works from three private collections – that of Priya Paul, Lekha Poddar, and Saloni Doshi. Artix is the brainchild of Malvika Poddar, Payal Kapoor, and Timsy Anand and is described as being, “Committed to uniting a community of art lovers and collectors in an intimate setting.” It is also India's first art fair that will travel with upcoming shows in destinations like Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Kolkata.

Co-founder Payal Kapoor explains, “Artix introduces a truly distinctive concept. Unlike traditional trade shows, where people are herded through big hallways, in a hotel, they can wander in and out of suites, mingle with each other, even take a break, and sit around the pool. It's relaxed, and yet serious conversations happen. This unique setup allows buyers to envision how the art will complement their own living spaces, and the intimacy of the setting enables art enthusiasts to appreciate it closely.”

To this Malvika Poddar adds, “As India embraces the inaugural edition of Artix, a remarkable avenue unfolds for galleries to guide emerging collectors on their art journey. This showcase encompasses a rich tapestry of artistry, from textiles to jewellery, aimed at nurturing a new generation of connoisseurs. We aspire to weave opulence and artistry via Artix seamlessly. Our vision extends beyond horizons, with plans to extend this cultural celebration across India, creating more avenues for galleries and collectors to exhibit their diverse masterpieces. The potential offered during these three days is truly remarkable.”

Timsy Anand summarises, “Art is extremely personal, and therefore, one's connection with it has to be intimate and on one's own terms. In my view, Artix is a canvas of self-expression, an avenue where imagination breaks free from constraints and conventions. I envision Artix becoming a cornerstone event in everyone's calendar, a testament to its immense potential. Artix is a triumphant tribute to the diverse facets of artistic expression, gracefully transcending limits and resonating with the depths of the soul through boundless creativity and emotional resonance.”

The next event set to dazzle the Capital, opens a week later and runs from September 3 to 7. The Delhi Contemporary Art Week (DCAW), run jointly by six seminal art galleries of Delhi (all led by strong women), is currently in its sixth edition. The galleries are Blueprint12, Exhibit 320, Gallery Espace, Latitude 28, Shrine Empire, and Vadehra Art Gallery. Their idea has always been to, “promote contemporary art consistently and commit to the vision of coming together to educate, showcase and promote contemporary art.” The focus will be on

fresh voices from South Asia who work across mediums, styles, themes, and techniques. It is set to take place in the heart of the city at Bikaner House and will be open to the public throughout its run.

On display will be shows curated specially by the six participating galleries. There will also be a group exhibition that will feature the works of artists from each gallery, which has been curated by Girish Shahane and is titled 'Conjunction of the Spheres'. The exhibit's statement says, "The exhibition's curatorial framework bases itself on the vision of the cosmos articulated by the cultures of ancient Mesopotamia, a land that in its broadest definition includes modern-day Iraq and bits of Syria, Iran and Turkey. In any long-lived belief system, whether Mesopotamian, Indian or Egyptian, the place of gods shifts in importance over the centuries, as do their traits and powers. There is frequent overlap in roles among divinities, especially when it comes to issues central to pastoral and agricultural societies like fertility and war." "The choice of the theme was made because it is capacious enough to accommodate a wide variety of practices, as demanded of a show that is a collaboration between six galleries with disparate programmes, while also being cohesive enough to bring varied artistic styles together into a unified visual experience," says Girish Shahane.

Additionally, there will be curatorial walkthroughs and a two-day symposium organised by TAKE on Art called, 'Horizon and Perspective: Curatorial Gaze to Gauge Promise of Art' on the 4th and 5th of September. The keynote address for this will be delivered by Hannah Mathews, Senior Curator at Monash University Museum of Art. The event opened with a glittering preview evening curated especially for the design community, artists, and gallerists and hosted by Sonali and Manit Rastogi, founders of Morphogenesis, one of India's leading architecture practices.

Ahead of the opening, Sunday Guardian spoke to all six participating gallery owners. Ridhi Bhalla and Mandira Lamba of Blueprint 12 share, "Exploring the rich tapestry of emotions, cultures, and narratives, contemporary South Asian art transcends borders, connecting the world through its vibrant colours and thought-provoking expressions." Rasika Kajaria of Exhibit 320 explains, "This year, the emphasis of the exhibition space is on new media, and its structures as a place for creative endeavour, aesthetic exploration and furthering visual dialogue. Renu Modi, founder-director of Gallery Espace says, "I am very happy to be back at DCAW, which has emerged as one of the foremost platforms for contemporary art in Delhi."

Bhavna Kakar of Latitude 28 adds, "In the latest edition of DCAW, LATITUDE 28 brings forth new voices from the Global South with the participating artists experimenting with mediums and concepts to produce works that are diverse and innovative in nature. As an educational arm, the TAKE Symposium is conducted for two consecutive days during DCAW to promote a critical understanding of dialogues around modern and contemporary art."

Shefali Somani and Anahita Taneja of Shrine Empire say, “The gallery is focused on showing strong voices from the South Asian region whose works address the concerns of the contemporary.” Roshini Vadehra and Parul Vadehra of Vadehra Art Gallery end with, “DCAW has always been an exciting and successful platform for us and we are looking forward to the upcoming edition. This exhibition and public venue is a great way to present contemporary art to new audiences who may not enter a gallery space on a regular basis. It’s a great way for us to meet new art enthusiasts and collectors and introduce them to the best of our programme.”