

Delhi hosts India's first hotel art fair, a new meeting place for art market

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Artix, India's first-ever hotel art fair in India, at the Taj Mahal Palace in New Delhi from August 25-27. (Photo: Courtesy of Artix)

"I have kept one painting in the bathroom," says Lindsey Nobel as she steps in front of a large canvas leaning against the wall close to the wash basin. "It was painted during the pandemic," explains the Los Angeles-based American artist about *Gathering*, an abstract work linking people with nature.

At Artix, India's first-ever hotel art fair at the Taj Mahal Palace in New Delhi (August 25-27), each artist, gallerist and collector has a room for themselves. Artworks are mounted on walls and floors in luxury rooms relieved of their furniture. Bathrooms are no exception.



'Blue Door' by artist Siddharth Shingade at the Gallery Vision Art (Photo: Courtesy of Artix)

"A room for an artist is much more personal," says Nobel, an abstract artist and sculptor who first came to India on a cruise ship to Chennai two decades ago. Nobel's conceptual, futuristic paintings in acrylic reflect the idea that "we are all connected". Colourful droplets of water drip from above in her *Syringe Series*, a tribute to life and planet Earth.

Nobel is one of the two artists from abroad who are part of Artix, which promotes the philosophy that a hotel is an immersive space suited for creativity and business as a home away from home. "The fair is happening on an entire floor. There are 43 rooms for 20 galleries, 10 solo shows and three collectors," says Arushi Arts gallery founder Payal Kapoor, one of the creators of Artix.

Six months ago, Kapoor had just returned to Delhi from a tour of international art fairs when she discussed the idea of a hotel art fair in India with Malvika Poddar, founder of fashion boutique Carma and Timsy Anand, the owner of Jalsa, the annual fashion exhibition in Delhi.

"We wanted to create a different fair for the new art collectors of tomorrow," recalls Kapoor. "This showcase encompasses a rich tapestry of artistry, from textiles to jewellery, aimed at nurturing a new generation of connoisseurs," adds Poddar.



Jewellery designer Archana Aggarwal's collection at Artix (Photo: Courtesy of Artix)

Among the participating galleries at Artix are Dhoomimal Art Gallery, which has two rooms for postmodern and contemporary art, Anant Art Gallery, which has the works of Baroda-based artist Anikesa Dhing and Delhi-based Harsh Nambiar among others, Delhi's Artoholics, which has FN Souza's works, and Kapoor's own Arushi Arts gallery. Gallerists are joined by three private collectors — Priya Paul, Lekha Poddar and Saloni Doshi — while solo shows include artists like Sakti Burman, Sukanya Garg and Faiza Huma.

Paul's collection at Artix from her 30-year-old archive, the Priya Paul Collection of Popular Art, has travel posters of different airlines and destinations created by famous artists. Among them are limited edition lithographs commissioned by the tourism ministry and the Railways. The posters include *Benares on the Ganges* in the *See India* series issued by the traffic branch of the ministry of transport and another, titled *Travancore*, also from the *See India* series. A poster issued by the Railways shows Emperor Akbar receiving an emissary of Queen Elizabeth at the Fatehpur Sikri in 1586.



Artix founders Payal Kapoor, Timsy Anand and Malvika Poddar (Left to Right) (Photo: Courtesy of Artix)

"The hotel art fairs in Hong Kong and London have been well received by the international art community. It is an interesting concept different from whatever we have been doing before," says Sagan D'Souza of Dhoomimal Art Gallery, whose exhibits include Jamini Roy, Amrita Sher-Gil and VS Gaitonde.

Hotel art fairs are gaining currency in the art world as artists, gallerists and collectors look forward to personal and localised spaces such as a room in a luxury hotel or a repurposed house. Last year, Thailand launched a hotel art fair in Bangkok, joining the existing fairs in Spain (Hybrid Art Fair in Madrid) and Japan (ART in Tokyo). The Artix creators say they will make it a travelling fair, with Hyderabad chosen as the next destination in April 2024 along with an annual edition in Delhi.



Artist Gariba Singh Tekkam's work, which is part of Gallery Arts of Earth (Photo: Courtesy of Artix)

"Every room is a gallery," says Poddar about the inaugural hotel art fair in Delhi. "We will take the fair to metros and smaller cities. We have had a good response from the artist community in the country to the new venture," she adds. "In my view, Artix is a canvas of self-expression, an avenue where imagination breaks free from constraints and conventions," says Anand.

The ongoing business summits at major hotels in Delhi, including the Artix venue, Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, to coincide with next month's G20 summit of world leaders have provided a captive international audience to the new fair. "The hotel art fair is an interesting take on the art fair format," says Shankar Tripathi of Delhi's Anant Art Gallery. "The fair exposes Indian art to business leaders from the G20 countries," adds Tripathi.



American artist Lindsey Nobel's painting, Gathering (Photo: Faizal Khan)

Artix creators are hoping the fair will be an instant hit with India's art community. "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," says Kapoor. "This unique set-up 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."

Faizal Khan is an independent journalist who writes on art.