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Artists and galleries explore virtual space

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Chennai: When the national lockdown was announced, artist Asma Menon decided to put brush to paper. Literally, as she has always wanted to explore small format paintings. Now, the series of paintings are part of the WhatsApp mailers being sent out to art lovers and collectors by Artworld, Sarala's Art Centre.

"The paintings -- 8 inches X 8 inches or 10 inches X 10 inches -- require concentrated time and the lockdown has turned out to be perfect for it," says Asma, who has been working with water colour, watercolour pencils, a bit of acrylic for highlights and pen and ink. "Four of the series are based on photos I had taken of dilapidated temples," says Asma, who shot all of them in the rays of the morning sun, so that people get a natural impression of the works.

With all establishments remaining shut due to the lockdown, artists and galleries alike are exploring the digital space to maintain the connect



DIFFERENT STROKES: The nationwide lockdown hasn't been a deterrent for artists like Asma Menon

between artists and buyers. From virtual exhibitions to 3D tours, they are going the extra mile.

The National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, which has a representative collection of Rabindranath Tagore's art work, for instance, launched a virtual tour titled 'Gurudev - Journey Of The Maestro Through His Visual Vocabulary' to commemorate the 159th birth anni-

versary of Tagore on May 7.

In Chennai, Sarala Bangerjee of Sarala's Art Centre, one of the oldest art galleries in south India, has been conducting online exhibitions since April 4. "The first one was a group show to raise funds for Covid-19 relief," says Sarala, adding that they create digital catalogues of the artists' works -- with their bio data as well as a note from the artists -- which is then sent out on WhatsApp. "If someone likes a particular work, they ask for the pricelist. The artwork will be sent to them once the lockdown is lifted."

The need to reinvent oneself and one's way of working is in a way beneficial, feels Sarala. "Even during normal times, not everyone makes the effort to come to a gallery. But now clients can view art from their homes when they are relaxed. And the artists need the exposure," she says.

At InKo Centre, Director, Rathi Jafer has been working to figure out how their regular programmes can meaningfully transition to the digi-

tal space. "Besides compilations of e-compendiums of past exhibitions, we are looking at master classes with artists, who can share techniques, discussion forums to share ideas and collaborative virtual workshops and residencies," she says. The Gallery @ InKo Centre, their exhibition space, is also looking at a digital platform. "We are in talks with artists in Korea and in India to commission virtual exhibitions but it will take some time as we are will have to investigate and invest in appropriate technology to make it as interesting as possible. It is important to provide as authentic and meaningful a sensory experience as possible via resilient virtual conduits," she says.

Artists will also have to get tech-savvy, says Asma. "The wine and cheese evenings are gone, unless you have exclusive previews with a limited crowd. Artists will have network differently, and accept the fact that you might meet clients more face-to-face (via video calls) rather than in a crowd," says Asma,

Chennai: Artists and galleries explore virtual space

Priya Menon | TNN | May 11, 2020, 09:59 IST



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