



HEART FOR ART

AN ANNUAL ART EVENT HELD AT JUSTA'S LAKE NAHARGARH PALACE, CHITRASHAALA SEES A CONFLUENCE OF ARTISTS FROM INDIA AND ACROSS THE GLOBE. THE EVENT IS A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN ARTIST BIBEK SANTRA'S NARRATIVE MOVEMENTS AND JUSTA HOTELS THAT BRINGS TOGETHER ARTISTS FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

An artist in residency programme, Chitrashaala is in its fourth year and the programme aims to connect artists across the world by giving them this common platform to ideate and interact among themselves. An initiative of couple Ashish Vohra and his fashion designer spouse Deepika Govind, the genesis of this started when the couple started acquiring original signed art to display in their hotel chain. "Art is a differentiator as far as our brand positioning is concerned so we felt an

artist residency would be a great connection for us."

The couple prefers to choose artists who are serious and they promote young talent with potential and use the earnings from the event to help other artists. "The way I see them really inspires the artist in me and I always look at art from the heart," she says. The interactions among artists happens in a natural environment and is informal and unstructured that encourages creative freedom. This year's edition

ARTS EVENT



held last month was curated by renowned art critic and curator Anirudh Chari. This year several noteworthy artists from India and overseas including Asis Kumar Sanyal, Katayun Saklat, Avijit Mukerjee, Hossameldien Mostafa Mohamed Gawish and Mohamed Adel Abdelrahman Ahmed were part of the event.



Clockwise from above: Deepika Govind and Ashish Vohra; artist Peter Markus; and Lake Nahargarh Palace

Artist Peter Marcus who was part of the event last year said, “I have been to India over 11 times already and in fact stayed at Tamil Nadu for two years learning the Chola techniques of art. It is great to be at Chitrashaala as we get to work together and appreciate and understand different mentalities. It is a different process as we are interacting from other artists from across the world which makes it a great way to learn and come up with something creative.”

Likewise Sharon Shanti, a woman artist from Malaysia averred that she is one among the few women who have chosen art as a profession in her country where this is still a rare career choice. “Being in India is a big exposure for me and it is a milestone to take back the transfer of culture from here as a form of contemplation.” Sharon’s work incidentally depicts an expression of power which she admits is an “explosion of my feelings.” The event has a good mix of seasoned and upcoming artists to ensure that there is a healthy exchange of ideas among the artists to make it enriching for all.

Interacting with the different artists at Chitrashaala is a great way to understand how the platform is driving synergies as well as collaboration among artists. The event is interspersed with musical performances, presentations,



group discussions and even role plays. Speaking to Sailesh Sanghvi, an artist who has risen from a humble background, I realize that pursuing art is not very easy especially in terms of the cost of art materials on one end as well as being able to make it commercially viable.

“This is why I only started to follow my passion for art 10 years back after ensuring I had provided for my family. In fact today I also help art students with art materials that can be very expensive.” Chitrashaala incidentally had a large number of both modern art as well as traditional art forms and interesting a lot of work was inspired by the local Rajasthani traditions.

With so much happening at Chitrashaala Ashish and Deepika share their plans to take this forward. “The idea is to have a more permanent form of this, something like an art hotel, a dormitory where artists can stay for longer periods, work and interact with each other and also have a gallery to showcase and sell their work. We want to create a self sustaining model where there is an art school, a cafe where people can come and interact with artists so that this becomes like the Nityagram of art.”

Walking around the property where the corridors filled with art in myriad interpretations and forms, you will realise that art is a movement and an ethos that must be experienced. ■