

GOING ARTSY



As co-working spaces evolve, artistic décor has become a talking point as it is all about creating a space for artists to feel inspired

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO



From collaborating with artists to providing a platform for art, co-working spaces are slowly evolving to become a space that artists love. In fact, art also forms an important part of the overall décor of several co-working spaces.

Art attack

Most co-working spaces have started seeing art as a therapy by itself and also encourage discussions around art through collaborations with leading art festivals and events creating conversations around the relevance of art. Ankit Samdariya, CEO, The Hive Collaborative Workspaces says, “We collaborate with local artists to give them space to promote their art. One of the ways we do this is by organising events around art, wherein we host movie screenings, panel discussions, collaborate with art festivals and create an environment for active discussions around art in our centres.” Today co-working spaces are becoming experimental hubs for upcoming talent. “We continue to provide individual artists and groups with access to our large community to perform and showcase their art. This includes, a series of coffee painting workshops, open mics, innovative music workshops (like Shubham Bansal’s - Guitar Bro), live music performances, calligraphy workshops, dance workshops and photography workshops,” says Amit Ramani, CEO and founder, Awfis.



Dextrus

Art community

The idea is to take the concept of co-working spaces a notch higher and make it a collaborative space that inspires its members to express their individuality and enhance their creativity. "We have an inhouse arts and graphics team which is an eclectic mix of designers, illustrators and artists who create installation artwork for WeWork spaces. Led by intent, we create meaningful and unexpected art and graphic experiences to connect and inspire our members. The arts and graphics team creates custom art for all our spaces to bring out the local elements of the city and weave in the city's history into our overall idea for the aesthetic of the space,"



Dextrus

says Hrishika Basappa, director, brand and communications, WeWork India. Smartworks has taken various initiatives in terms of art therapy as they believe that it adds to employee productivity and happiness. Neetish Sarda, founder of Smartworks says, "To discover and encourage home-grown artists, Smartworks exposed their members to a plethora of art forms—mandala art, doodling, decoupage, coffee painting, bottle painting, galaxy coaster painting, pottery workshop and water colour painting. We have partnered with 40+ independent artists including Hobbmob and Craftsutra for PAN India workshops." Likewise, Mumbai based Dextrus has used art to add depth and texture to the aesthetics of their co-working space. Robin Chhabra, founder and CEO of Dextrus says, "We wanted Indian art as it has great potential and we wanted to complement its traditional ways with a contemporary touch. Most of our art plays with the theme of work and dexterity. All of us sit in our glass buildings at our cubicles and we forget that farmers, tea pickers, artists, masons and other various professions also toil away albeit in different landscapes. This juxtaposition with the laptop armies of our urban lifestyles was an interesting one we wanted to emphasize on."

Platform matters

The very concept of co-working has been a boon for the artists who are often struggling with the twin constraints of shoe-string budget and the need for a space where they can work and create art in peace. A well-designed co-working space is the next best thing to a studio, especially when the co-working spaces depart from the cubicle-based, glass-domed approach of traditional office spaces. "Based on our own understanding and several conversations with our fellow artists, we designed ECORK as a warm, vibrant, green space with flexible, highly affordable packages



ECORK co-founder Runjhun Noopur



An artist at ECORK



Huddle

that allow the artists to walk-in and work on an hourly, daily or monthly basis. Additionally, as a creative space that seeks to become a hub for artists from across India, we are actively curating events, sponsored and otherwise, where artists can exhibit, feature and promote their art," says Runjhun Noopur, writer, entrepreneur and co-founder, ECORK Coworking and Creative Spaces. Dextrus has worked with Medhavi Gandhi to design the different pieces of art in their space. The first is the 'Dextrus dolls of work' where she worked with S. Chinniyachari from Vishakapatnam to make beautiful wooden dolls. "We then took the help of a Rajasthani painter, Narendra Kumar Soni, who under the guidance of Nishil Shah (who has co-designed the space along with me) converted the wooden bases into these colorful figurines that represent the different attires work people adorn on their way to work. They are right at our entrance and the pastel colored dolls are a big hit with all who come into the space. We worked with another Rajasthani artist, Ravi Kumawat, who along with two other painters,

painted an entire landscape depicting people busy at work. Their comprises of imagery of tea leaf pickers, sculptures, carpenters, fisherman and many more in a lush green landscape landscape. This 20-foot wall brings a lasting impression on all the users of the space. In addition to this we used some of Ravi's miniature art on old parched stamp paper and have sprinkled them around the co-working space," says Chhabra.

Art of the matter

The very concept of co-working has been a boon for the artists who are often struggling with the twin constraints of shoe-string budget and the need for a space where they can work and create art in piece. A well-designed co working space is the next best thing to a studio, especially when the co working spaces depart from the traditional cubicle-based, glass-domed approach of traditional office spaces. More and more co-working spaces across the country are waking up to the possibility of a client base that extends beyond the traditional corporate/startup/entrepreneurial crowd. Freelancers who are into non-traditional fields like art and

photography are gravitating towards co-working spaces that designed to suit their needs, and willing to fit into their budgets. Worldwide, co-working spaces thrive on the communities they nurture, fueled by the crowd they attract and events they curate. And while seminars, conferences and networking meetups have always been a mainstay for such spaces, art-focused events do carry their own weight, especially in terms of how they define the general vibe of the community. Curation of art-related events by India based co-working spaces is still relatively infrequent, but as the penetration of these spaces increases, we can hope that a more commercially viable, community-based model for promoting arts will evolve," says Noopur. Huddle hosts events that prompt young artists and creators to utilise the space as theirs for engagement and workshops, as a first move to ramp up their work, and going forward either the walls or the library become display centres for them. At Huddle, artwork is showcased on their walls from freelancers who are new in the art circuit alongside artwork that is from companies that have been in the ecosystem for a little longer and have a credible user. All the art has been bought online from artists around the country, with abstract and canvases from Kulture Shop which stimulate creative thinking. Art, in fact, is being used to make a difference as well where funds from art auctions are being used for social benefits and as aid. Shobita Kadan, director of marketing and strategy at Impresario Entertainment and Hospitality Pvt Ltd (IEHPL) says, "We attempt to strengthen our support towards independent visual artists from across the country through showcasing their work and building an audience for them. We have always hosted various art and design events to support the community, and will continue to do so." The impact of art in co-working spaces has manifested in myriad ways to ensure that these spaces are both aesthetic as well as functional. □

