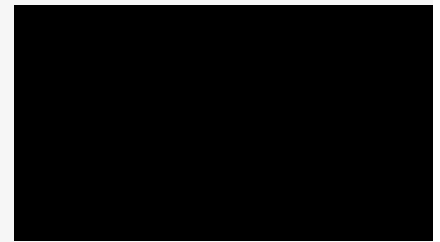


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Gargi. (Courtesy Shrine Empire)

Indian art galleries move online to beat the lockdown

3 min read . 09:30 AM IST

Avantika Bhuyan

Two new exhibitions are being hosted on the virtual space for the first time



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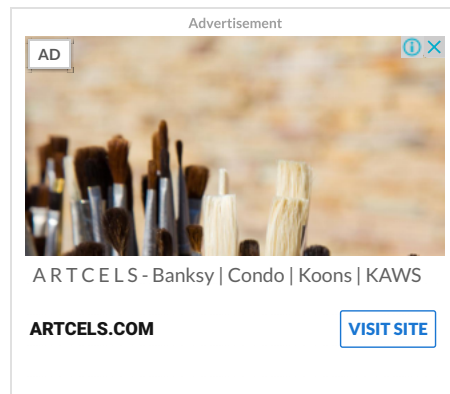
Just when we thought the art world had come to a standstill, with art fairs and exhibitions being cancelled, Indian galleries are trying to reimagine ways to hold shows during the lockdown.

In a novel move, two new exhibitions are being hosted on the virtual space, to be experienced on phones and laptops from homes. With dynamic viewing interfaces, the shows by Shrine Empire, New Delhi, and Tarq, Mumbai, feature works that are relevant to these covid-19 times.

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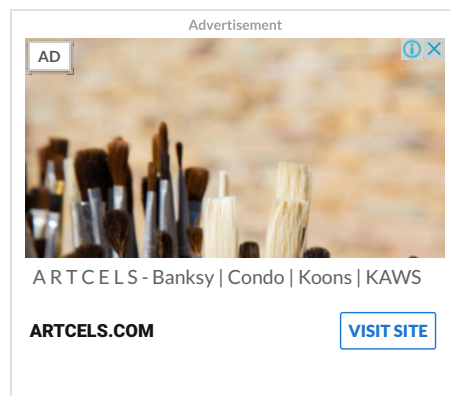
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A collection of videos, photographs, drawings and new media present dystopian and utopian images of a post-covid world. But most of all, the two shows hope to highlight that in times of great crisis, art can act as a unifier and elevate spirits.



Speculations on a New World Order by Shrine Empire and Resurgence by Tarq are also experiments about possible new art experiences. The viewing time for Speculations, for instance, is 30 minutes. It starts with a video work by Katyayini Gargi, titled The Reiterators, which shows human beings living in tiny box-like spaces. "It looks at the human condition as a self-absorbed spectacle, unfolding in the privacy of our own 'secure' living quarters, repeating itself endlessly for the comfort of familiarity..." the exhibition note says.

"Even though Katyayini made this video in 2015, it is so relevant in our current context of social isolation. The way we have treated our environment, such self-isolating incidents might occur again. So, is this way of living going to be the new normal?" asks Shefali Somani of the Shrine Empire.



Curated by Anushka Rajendran, the idea behind the exhibition is to not impose an immersive physical encounter with the artwork onto a digital platform. "Rather, the online platform adds its own meaning to the work and the artist's idea," says Rajendran.

Both the shows feature artists who have had a strong connection with ecology and environmental degradation. Resurgence reimagines the state of the world with humans temporarily taken out of the equation. It looks at the idea of healing, while also acknowledging the uncertain socioeconomic times that lie ahead. "We have taken one work from each artist like Nibha Sikander, Parag Tandel, Ronny Sen, Savia Mahajan, Sameer Kulavoor and Soghra Khurasani as representative of their artistic process. The idea is to relook at their works through a new lens and in a new context," says Hena Kapadia of Tarq.



It has been a learning experience to adapt drawings by Bhagwati Prasad, untitled works featuring fused plastic bags and acrylic paper by Aaditi Joshi, screen prints on paper by Sameer Kulavoor, and more, for virtual viewing. "We have photographed and scaled the works in a way best suited for this digital experience. For instance, we have a sculptural work by Savia Mahajan, which we have taken pictures of from every imaginable angle," says Kapadia.

Some works, such as videos, new media, and photos by Chandan Gomes and Sharbendu De, have lent themselves organically to online viewing. Take, for instance, Afrah Shafiq's now-where, which has small QR codes embedded within. The work can be viewed in the context of shared domesticity in times of social isolation. It looks at how a lot of us have been thrust into daily housework for the first time in our lives. now-where also recalls how women across classes have been confined to domestic spaces for centuries. "At first you see this work as an ordinary QR code. But when you zoom in, an array of details emerge. You can scan the codes to watch a film, read a story, essay, poem, comic, listen to music, play a video game, see art and more about the domestic space, as you live and work within it," says Somani.



Speculations on a New World Order can be viewed at <https://www.shrineempiregallery.com/exhibition/speculations-on-a-new-world-order/> till 20 May.

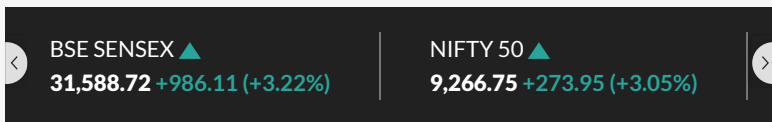
Works from Resurgence can be viewed at <http://www.tarq.in/exhibition/resurgence/> The show link will go live on 21 April



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