

A BURST OF COLOUR

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The paint from an image of a sitting horse appears to be dripping out of the canvas. Amid the pink, red, purple and blue paint that covers the animal's face and body glint patches of silver foil.

The painting is among 12 works, including two sculptures, by German artist Anselm Reyle, which are part of Galerie Isa's debut exhibition, which opens tomorrow.

Begun by art collector Ashwin Thadani, 45, the gallery in Kala Ghoda is the city's first dedicated to foreign artists. "I have been collecting international art for the past five years, from several galleries abroad," said Thadani. "The gallerists there often asked me why India didn't have space here dedicated to exhibiting the work of foreigners. I thought it would be a good idea to offer something different to collectors in India." (See on the right, 'A new wave in Mumbai.')

Thadani's gallery is among four new art ventures that have sprung up since September last year, when Mumbai's art market seemed to have recovered from a two-year slump that began in mid-2008, coinciding with the global economic recession. During the slump, several galleries shut down, such as Bodhi, Farah Siddiqui Contemporary Art and Bombay Art Gallery, while others halted expansion plans.

But in early 2010, the market started looking up, collectors started buying art again and prices began rising, stabilising at roughly half the pre-slump levels. One of the first ventures to come up was the Mumbai Art Room in Colaba, in September last year. A non-profit art gallery, namely one that exhibits art that is not for sale, it was the creation of an American curator and art historian, Susan Haggood, 52, who had moved to the city in April 2010 with her architect husband. It is perhaps the only non-profit gallery in the city.

Two months later, in December, the city got Clark House, an art initiative that includes a gallery of the same name in Colaba dedicated to experimental and performance art as well as ideas that might be too radical for other galleries. It also facilitates collaborations between art colleges and galleries in the city.

It was set up by Sumesh Sharma, 28, who returned last year from France, where he completed an interdisciplinary Masters degree from the Université Paul Cézanne, and Zasha Colah, a former curator at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya.

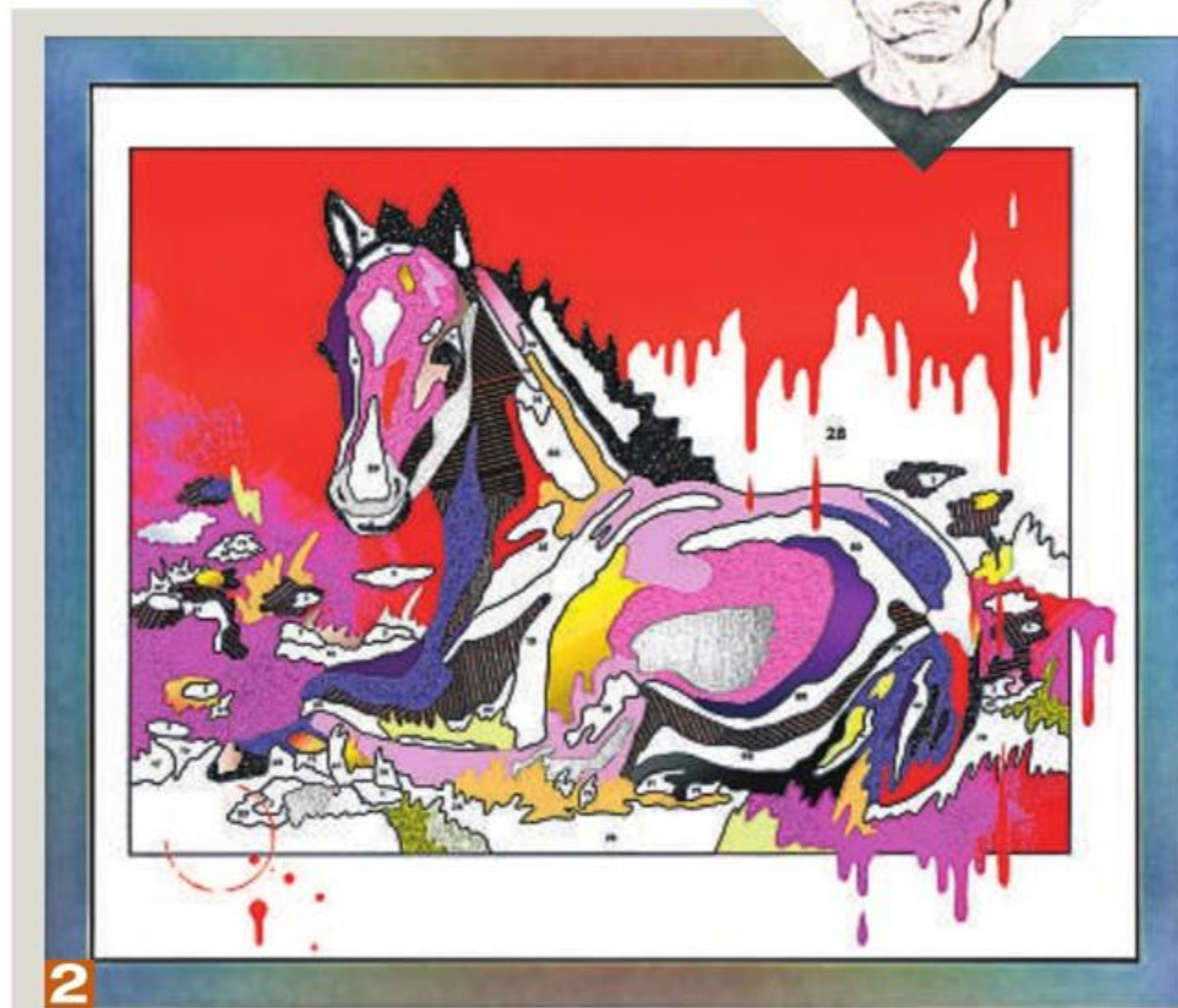
Then in April this year, curator Kanchi Mehta started a non-profit artists' career management service called Chameleon Art Projects, which helps artists build their portfolios, places them in residency programs in India and abroad and helps them get visibility.

"These new art spaces, which showcase contemporary, cutting-edge works, give audiences interesting viewing experiences," said artist Atul Dodiya.

Girish Shahane, a writer and art critic, says Clark House has the potential to develop into something the city's art scene really needs. "We need an organisation that engages with politics, education and history, often working outside the conventional gallery space," he said.

Drew Moe, an independent American filmmaker who visits Mumbai once a year to work in Bollywood films, regularly visits the city's art galleries. "Mumbai has more interesting art to offer than before, which is great news for art lovers."

CUTTING EDGE Tomorrow, Mumbai's first gallery dedicated to foreign artists opens – with an exhibition of works by a German. It is among several innovative, new ventures that promise to stimulate the city's art scene



These new art spaces, which showcase contemporary, cutting-edge works, give audiences interesting viewing experiences. All of these are located in south Mumbai, but I hope they also make an effort to reach out to audiences in the suburbs.

ATUL DODIYA, artist



1. Nikhil Raunak, a student of the JJ School of Fine Arts, created this print, titled *Amay Suu & 15 Possible Titles*. It celebrates the work of Burmese Nobel Laureate and politician Aung San Suu Kyi, and is a part of an art project initiated by Clark House.

2. German artist Anselm Reyle's painting, from his numbered series, can be seen at the first exhibition of Galerie Isa, which opens to visitors tomorrow.

3. This print, titled *Struggle of Survival*, has been created by Tejswini Sonawane, a student of the JJ School of Fine Arts. It is a part of the project initiated by Clark House.

4. A photograph by Ravi Agarwal, *Boy with a Turban*, is displayed at an ongoing photography exhibition on street photography at the Mumbai Art Room.



A new wave in Mumbai

GALERIE ISA

WHAT: Mumbai's first gallery dedicated to foreign artists

OPENING: Tomorrow

STARTED BY: Ashwin Thadani, a businessman who has collected Indian contemporary art for 15 years and international contemporary art for the past five years.

PROJECTS: Galerie Isa will host four shows every year, each lasting two months. Its first exhibition, consisting of paintings and sculptures by German artist Anselm Reyle, opens tomorrow. Thadani says he will choose artists who are backed by well-known



■ Ashwin Thadani

art galleries abroad.

WHERE: Kala Ghoda

TIMINGS: Monday to Saturday, 10.30 am to 7 pm

CALL: 66373432

CHAMELEON ART PROJECTS

WHAT: A non-profit art initiative that aims to help art students establish a promising career by helping them build their portfolios, places them in residency programs in India and abroad and helps them get visibility. It will also curate art projects in India and abroad.

BEGAN: In April this year

STARTED BY: Art curator Kanchi Mehta realised that many students who graduate from art schools found it difficult to figure out what kind of art would appeal to contemporary collectors and did not know how to approach galleries. "If an experienced person from the art fraternity can guide these students and acquaint them with contemporary

trends, they can go a long way," says Mehta, who has worked for art galleries such as Bodhi and BMB in Mumbai and for Saffronart auction house in USA, as well as taught art history at the JJ School of Fine Arts and Rachna Sansad College in Mumbai.

PROJECTS: Mehta has tied up with art residencies such as Space in Baroda, Futura Foundation in Prague, Trebesice in New York and Space I18 in Mumbai.

WHERE: Sewri (W)

CONTACT: kanchistan@gmail.com

■ Kanchi Mehta



CLARK HOUSE

WHAT: An art initiative that curates independent art projects free of both commercial and institutional pressures. It has a gallery by the same name and also initiates collaborative projects between art colleges and galleries.

ESTABLISHED: In December 2010

STARTED BY: Zasha Colah and Sumesh Sharma, both of whom have worked for various art projects in the city for nine years before starting this venture. "We felt there was a need for curating art projects that are not dictated by a commercial art space or the rules of a public art institution," says Sharma. The duo also realised that art colleges and commercial art spaces in the city are oblivious to each other's existences. "We felt there was a need to curate projects that

would initiate a dialogue in a city where institutions galleries and art schools remained within their spheres, leading to the domination of an imperfect speculative economy within the arts" says Sharma.

PROJECTS: Clark House has done 16 projects. For a recent project, they brought together 17 students of JJ School of Fine Arts' printmaking department and five artists. The students created ten limited-edition portfolios of 22 prints of these artists' works. Each edition was priced at Rs 45,000. Clark House will use 15% of the money earned by selling the prints to buy better machinery for the college's printmaking department. The 17 students will share the rest.

WHERE: Colaba

TIMINGS: Open all days, 10 am to 8 pm

CALL: 98202-13816

MUMBAI ART ROOM

WHAT: Possibly the city's only non-profit art gallery, one that displays visual art that is not for sale; it is meant only to provide a viewing experience

OPENING: September 2010

STARTED BY: Art curator and historian Susan Haggood, 54.

Haggood worked as an art curator in the US for 35 years before arriving in Mumbai in April 2010. She and her architect husband wanted to migrate to another country to experience a new lifestyle and they chose to come to India because, she says, it was "culturally rooted." She chose Mumbai over Delhi because she felt so much more comfortable here as a woman. She soon realised that Mumbai lacked an art space dedicated to presenting thought-provoking projects without

commercial pressures.

"I want to cater to both Indians as well as viewers in the US, who can see the works online," she says.

PROJECTS: Mumbai Art Room has exhibited four art projects. The current exhibition is a collection of photographs of street life in Mumbai and other parts of the country by several photographers, including Ravi Agarwal, Pablo Bartholomew, Chirodeep Chaudhuri and Shahid Datawala.

WHERE: Fourth Pasta Lane, Colaba

TIMINGS: Tuesday to Saturday, 11 am to 7 pm

CALL: 97699-50136

■ Susan Haggood

