

# Global Art in Local Gallery

Galerie Isa, that opens today, is the first gallery in Mumbai to exclusively showcase international contemporary art

ZAIRA ARSLAN

THE Fort area in South Mumbai is famous for many things. The large heritage buildings, vendors who sit on the sidewalks and sell everything from *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* to pirated CDs of films and software, and landmarks like the Bombay Stock Exchange make the area one of the most recognisable in the city. But for the culturally inclined, it is the abundance of art galleries that sets it apart from the rest of Mumbai. The historically rich Fort area is home to some of the oldest, newest and best known galleries in Mumbai. Today, another gallery will join that prestigious list, but this one will be unlike any other. Founded by Ashwin Thadani, an art collector and owner of a corporate travel company, Galerie Isa will showcase the works of contemporary interna-



tional artists only. Housed in the Great Western Building, the gallery space is a cosy 2,000 odd square feet spread over two levels of about 1,000 square feet each.

Nearly 15 years ago, Thadani began collecting contemporary Indian art. But with every trip he made abroad, he became increasingly interested in contemporary interna-



(From left) Anselm Reyle; ground floor of Galerie Isa; a foil painting from an earlier collection by Reyle

tional art. He started collecting it about five years ago and has been doing so ever since. Now, with Galerie Isa, he's looking to familiarise the Indian audience with the works of these artists.

The question is, how well will the Mumbai audience receive such art. Thadani is optimistic. "Good, cutting-edge art cannot be ignored," he says,

adding, "The reception will be slow, initially, but it will get recognised."

At the moment, the plan is to have one solo show every quarter, so as to give the audience enough time to familiarise themselves with the works of these new artists. And inaugurating the gallery space on Friday is German artist Anselm Reyle, whose show "Indian Mylar Vision" will be

on display from December 17 to February 20.

Known for his abstract works, a feature distinct to Reyle's paintings, sculptures and installations is his use of everyday objects. The Berlin-based artist uses materials such as decorative foil, lacquers and wagon wheels that are removed from their original functions and restructured



to find new meaning in his works. "My roots are in abstract painting," he says. "I work in this field and try to expand it through materials which do not belong to the art context such as decorative foils, lacquers, and found objects like wagon wheels or African handicrafts," he adds.

For this show, Reyle has created, among two sculptures and other works, a series of foil paintings. These abstract works, which are among his best known, consist of brightly-coloured decorative foil that is arranged and installed differently each time. About the works he has created for this exhibition, Reyle says, "I made some of the foil paintings specifically for this exhibition. I altered them according to my image of India. I have never been there, but I have certain ideas about the country from books, illustrations and movies."