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Talk
IN THE NEWS

Moving Art Finds a Home

Mumbai gets its first space dedicated to video art in Bandra called What About Art?

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OFF the glitz and glamour of Waterfield Road in Bandra that houses a host of high-end nightlife spots, including Hakkasan and Royalty, is 29th Road, a quiet neighbourhood burgeoning with cultural activity. Here, in an old, close to decrepit, building that is already in talks for redevelopment, the city will host its first space dedicated to video art.

The space, What About Art?, which opens on November 9, is an initiative by Eve Lemesle's arts management agency by the same name. Lemesle says, "I have been a video artist and it made sense because this is one my areas of expertise. Each art space has its own sensibility, and for mine, video art is going to be its only focus. In terms of the programming, I'm not making any rules that are set in stone. I don't mind screening experimental films and keeping the idea open. But I will not be so open to Bollywood movies."

What About Art? opens with a bang, with nine video art pieces that will be screened as part of "Translucent", which is a preview to the first edition of a video art festival by the same name, conceived by Kanchi Mehta. The films that will be screened include those by Jehangir Jani, Nikhil Chopra and Munir Kabani, Ashish Avikunthak, Sahej Rahal, and Niyati Upadhyay, among others. The festival is slated to open in Goa, from December to February, at Sunaparanta Goa Centre for Arts.

Mehta, who was a student of painting, fell in love



(Above) The brain behind What About Art?, Eve Lemesle at the space, which opens this Saturday; a video still from Ashish Avikunthak's *Vakratunda Swaha*

with the moving image (of the arty type) when she was called to be part of a jury for an international award for video and performance. Her idea behind the festival is the same as Lemesle's for the new space. "In a country dominated by Bollywood, the art form has not had enough exposure. I want to encourage students and collectors and critics, to learn about this form of art," says Mehta. She is the founder of Chameleon Art Projects, which organises residencies, prints publications and manages artists and curates exhibitions.

Lemesle's space is seated in bohemian Bandra, unlike the storage rooms with high ceilings that give galleries in south Bombay a sense of old-world opulence. The hall of a 1BHK is being used for exhibiting video art, while the bedroom serves as the office for What About Art?. The old tiles have been polished, but it still looks a lot like a typical middle-class home. "The space has been designed keeping in mind how people in Bandra are; it's a creative neighbourhood. The official timings of the space — from 4.30 pm to 7.30 pm which

converted a flat into an artist residency, which hosts one international and one local artist. "People who come for gigs downstairs can come up check out a video and then attend a gig, or vice versa. Also, because What About Art? is open only in the evenings, during the day, the space will be used for other activities which will include talks with the artists who are in residence, maybe screenings and other events," she says.

The setup for now is pretty simple, with just one projector, and they plan to host not just videos but even video installations. "The best part about having a space for video art is that you are free of all the logistical problems. All an artist needs to do is upload his/her movie on a link or send across a DVD."

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will extend to 9.30 pm on weekends — will make the space more accessible to people," says Lemesle.

The space ties in Lemesle's business which she describes as one that "caters to every need by an artist for the completion of his art work". So What About Art? handles everything from the ideation process (they facilitate residencies, both Indian and international), to the fabrication of art works, the technical know-how of putting together a great show and finally displaying the work at a gallery.

Lemesle hopes to make it a space where various forms of art can converge. The ground floor of the building houses Bandra Base, the new go-to place for interesting music. On the second floor, Lemesle

