



ART

Art in the IT city

By Jisha Krishnan

If this were to happen five years ago, I would never have given up on art," sighs a young lady as she strolls through UB City—Bangalore's most famous luxury-shopping address.

Over the last week, window shoppers at Louis Vuitton, Lladro, Diesel, et al have been tempted to stop and gush over the artistic expressions spilling out of galleries and shy canvases.

After a modest maiden attempt last year, Art Bengaluru 2011, which started on June 17, has taken a bold step. The city-centric show has gone national, with 17 art galleries and more than 100 artists from across India participating in the festival. "It's quite impressive," says international art consultant Franck Barthelemy.

At the entrance of the mall, there's an old Fiat transformed into an 'artmobile'. The surprise continues at various levels as artists bare their souls. "I have never really been to an art gallery and didn't think it would interest me. But this is unbelievable! I loved most of the paintings, especially the abstract ones," says Priya Narayan, an IT professional.

Many Bangaloreans, like Priya, spent the weekend browsing through the paintings, illustrations, photographs, sculptures and installations of established artists as well as amateurs. "It's good to see so many youngsters," says Yusuf Arakkal, who has converted his 1956 Millicento into an awe-inspiring copper installation.

Bigger canvas: The show has more than 100 artists from across India participating

For Simran Lamba, the general curiosity on the faces of visitors is the most satisfying reward. "Art is supposed to evoke some kind of a response. It should move you," says the artist from Delhi, who uses coal tar as his medium of expression.

This time around the idea was to engage as many people as possible. So apart from the works on display, there were talks by renowned artists like Krsna Mehta and Arpana Caur on the craft, workshops on subjects such as tainted glass-making, an art competition for children and also an art and luxury auction, the proceeds of which will go to the HCG Foundation, an organisation providing free cancer treatment.

And for those who have a smartphone, the QR codes—two-dimensional Quick Response bar code—placed strategically throughout the festival zone and interconnected with social media sites offered relevant details about the festival schedule, each work, its price and the like. The prices range from ₹4,000 to ₹8 lakh.

The show has the stage for a bigger canvas next year. "It would be a bigger success if we get the IT guys to shed their inhibitions and splurge," says an art critic.

Amit Sharma has been splurging for a while now—on his photography equipment and travels. "Even if my photographs sell, there is no way I'm making any money out of it," the IT guy admits, candidly.

But then, according to him, no amount of money would match the thrill of coming face-to-face with an African elephant in the middle of a jungle and "realising that its eyes aren't black, grey or brown, but orange—bright orange!"

Art enthusiasts are unanimous in their view that Bangalore has a long way to go before it can catch up with Delhi, Mumbai or Kolkata. But the journey has begun. ■