

Going on record



Wall flowers (clockwise) Artworks by Sonia Mehra Chawla, Nandan Ghiya and Sumakshi Singh



A new show explores the creative process behind making art, says **Georgina Maddox**.

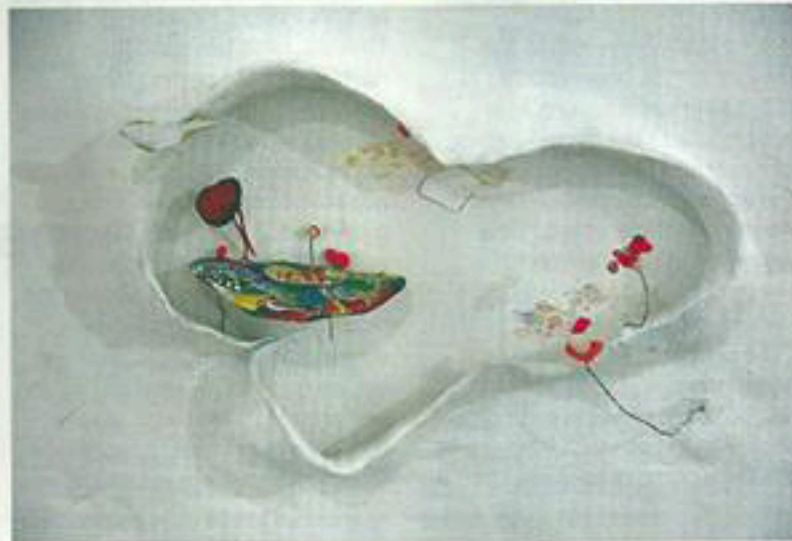
Artists are usually fiercely protective of their studio space and are deeply private about their creative process. So even if you watch slightly shaky footage of them at work, you know that you have got a peek at something exclusive.

Walk into the compact, white-walled Exhibit 320 at Lado Sarai this fortnight to not only view art but also the creative process behind it. At *Artchiving* all artworks are accompanied with LCD screens displaying the documentation of each artist's work. The show is curated by Ranjita Chaney Menezes and features Gigi Scaria, Nandan Ghiya, Sonia Mehra Chawla, Sumakshi Singh and Sunoj D.

We got a glimpse of the bearded and bespectacled Sunoj D pottering around his studio, sifting sand, crushing glass, melting molasses and creating his sculptures. The columnar works are prickly with jagged glass on the surface but also attractive, because they are bathed in golden paint dust.

"I try to look at the space between two opposing sides, placing them in the contexts of time and space – the real and the unreal, the living and the dying, one side and the other – to reflect my understanding of the internal conflicts," said Sunoj.

Sumakshi Singh shared with us her process of creating art in architectural settings. "I create micro-interventions in architectur-



al spaces, accompanied by minuscule scars and amplified flaws, that convert the sterile surfaces of a white cube gallery into saturated membranes that resist efficiency in viewing," she said. "Decoding and digesting it becomes impossible to decide what the artwork stands for and doesn't."

When you walk into the room covered in slivers of green paper-sculptures and a few colourful protrusions, you get a sense of what the artist is talking about. This work is more minimal than her usual installation drawings, which are heavily detailed and leaves much to the imagination.

Another artist whose work stands out in an assemblage of pop and vintage imagery is Nandan Ghiya's photo installation. His work, presented in wooden boxes with glass fronts, convey a sense of wit and irreverence. For instance, an image of ancient Buddha heads found in archaeological digs are covered in funky

stickers with marketing jargon that proclaim: "sale", "discount", "limited stock", and so on. Another image is an old studio portrait of two women sitting on chairs covered with thick poppish text that declares, "I am a work of art". A portrait of a young man royally dressed is covered in text that declares, "AC/DC is not for me".

You can't help suppressing a smile when you go past these works. But the artist's explanation is serious in contrast to the impression it first creates. "The images used for this work are remnants of my artistic process," said Ghiya, "sketches, studies, fragments or reference images, which did not translate beyond adorning the soft-boards in my studio. So in effect, the work is perhaps a fragmented representation of my mindscape – an assortment of tangibles and intangibles that have impacted my art practice."

The other two artists, Gigi Scaria and Sonia Mehra Chawla,

share their process of archiving images and both of them present rather painterly images. Scaria's paintings capture rolls of paper, some with images, and some blank. "An artist's archive can be an archive of unfinished ideas, untold stories and layers of blank rolls of emptiness," said Scaria. "It can also be overshadowed by the unknown future and the ever-existing present protected by the clutches of memories."

Chawla's "Biomorphic City", part of the show, captures futuristic landscapes on canvas. It is an ongoing project that provides visionary images of a futuristic, self-sustained mega city, the images toy with the challenges of energy management, nature, architecture, agriculture, urban spaces and the quality of life. The project is funded by the gallery owner Rasika Kajaria and it extends beyond this particular exhibition. "We do not have an archive of contemporary art, even though we now have more records of ancient and traditional art practices," said Kajaria. "It is important to create archives of contemporary art because many people are resistant to recording the process of younger artists. However, it provides us with material so we can trace their trajectory and document their growth." If the art doesn't explain itself, don the headphone and watch how it comes to life.

Artchiving is ongoing at Exhibit 320. See Exhibitions in Art listings.