

# Spatial compositions



A perspective on the slow but steady movement towards residential design that's pivoted on art

By Gretchen Ferrao

As we put this piece together, the India Art Fair has just come to a close. In its seventh edition, the New Delhi-based programme offered a platform for collectors, critics and the curious to share an experience across over 4,000 artworks. At the other end of the country, the two-year-old Kochi-Muziris Biennale (India's first and only biennial) continued to turn heads. Besides hosting the three-month long event, the Kochi Biennale Foundation, a non-profit charitable trust founded by artists Bose Krishnamachari and Riyas Komu, works towards making contemporary art more accessible to the common man. Similar intentions, led to nine of Mumbai's leading galleries collaborating on Mumbai Gallery Weekend earlier this January. That there's a conscious effort towards creating

FORBES INDIA MARQUEE. A SPECIAL MARKETING PRESENTATION + APRIL 03, 2015



FORBES INDIA MARQUEE. A SPECIAL MARKETING PRESENTATION + APRIL 03, 2015

Clockwise from top left Collector and art gallerist Ashwin Thadani worked with friend and Indian textile heir, Arun Nayar on his Mumbai residence; A Parisian private townhouse art gallery by architect Elliott Barnes; The Le Sutra Andhra Art Home draws references to the state's arts — Etikoppaka's lacquered wooden artefacts, Tolu Bommalata (shadow puppet theatre), and textile crafts like Ikat and Kalamkari

awareness on the subject is evident. This, coupled with easy availability of information online and avid travel (significant game changers over the last decade or so) has contributed to a shift in the perception of art from characterless decor in hotel lobbies to reflections of one's self within the home. The revolution is slow moving. Nonetheless, the fraternity across varied genres is hopeful. Take, for instance, Western Contemporary art collector and director of Gallery Isa, Ashwin Thadani who believes, "It [Western Contemporary Art] is quite an alien subject to Indians, who tend to concentrate on Indian art. I'm convinced that this will change with time. There is a long gestation period in a project like this." His tryst with art began in the Nineties while redoing his South Mumbai home. He describes his



**Top** The design of the dining chairs in the Gond Art Home was inspired by the eponymous tribe's carved wooden combs; **Below** Thadani's home is peppered with western contemporary art from his generation

collector base as small but steadily growing; well-travelled and open; within the 40-something age group. Since opening Gallery Isa, he has enjoyed the occasional project or two, sourcing art for the residences of close friends and patrons. Most homeowners however, are clear about what they want to add to their collections.

### The business of aesthetics

For designer Mitali Bajaj who heads creative studio Dr Art + Design, the process is more hands-on. Since her work on India's first art hotel, Le Sutra in Bandra, Mumbai, she has been approached by leading business executives and industrialists to create bespoke art homes. "They commission us to customise installations... It becomes a status symbol when they have guests over or to show

off their office to customers," she states. Furthering this art proud notion, she tells us about her work with luxury real estate builders, namely Godrej and Tata, who're keen to incorporate art works into community spaces. "Art creates a high-value perception in the eyes of the customers, increases property value and their brand value. It generates tremendous amount of PR and ability to market a project," she elaborated. Testament to this is the firm's Le Sutra Art Homes in Bandra, that have been four years in the making. "Each unique apartment highlights a different facet of Indian tribal art. We wanted to create each art home like a monument. The target audience is sophisticated global citizens who are looking to live in India for two to four years. We are overwhelmed at the response; the Le Sutra Art Homes got rented at 50 per cent higher than market rentals, and run at full occupancy," claims Bajaj.

### For the love of art

American architect Elliott Barnes' advice to those planning an art home is to collaborate with an interior designer who is "more interested in accompanying the project, than dominating it. Creating a residence that revolves around art requires restraint and humility." His design for a Parisian private townhouse art gallery exemplifies this. Working with the client's burgeoning collection, he envisioned constantly evolving interiors that welcomed art, while leaving room for the inhabitants to adapt.

The recent past has seen a flood of information on art as an investment. Barnes' take on the subject is a refreshing change. "Collecting is not an investment; it is a passion. It is a lifetime's obsession. Truly exceptional collections gain their notoriety after those who created them have passed on. Collecting is like a fine wine; it needs its time," he says. In a similar vein, Thadani encourages aspiring collectors to follow their eye. "Acquire what you love. Once you do that, follow the artist's career. I always believe in contemporary art of your generation; you grow with the artist. You see where the artist grows wild in your lifetime," he concludes. ♦



FORBES INDIA MARQUEE. A SPECIAL MARKETING PRESENTATION + APRIL 03, 2015