

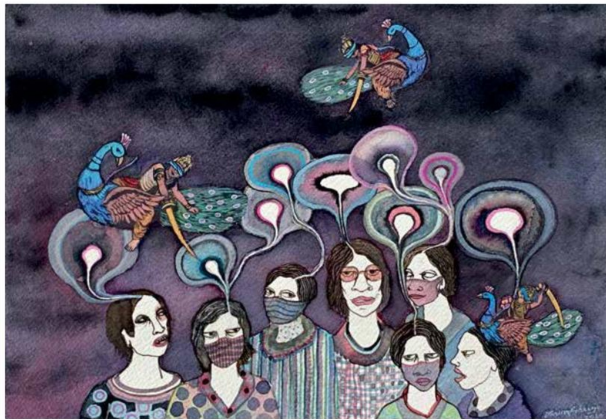
LEISURE

Art for the Binge-watcher

ART

Virtual platforms are breaking the barriers of social distancing with new ways of exhibiting art

DHRUVI ACHARYA AND NATURE MORTE



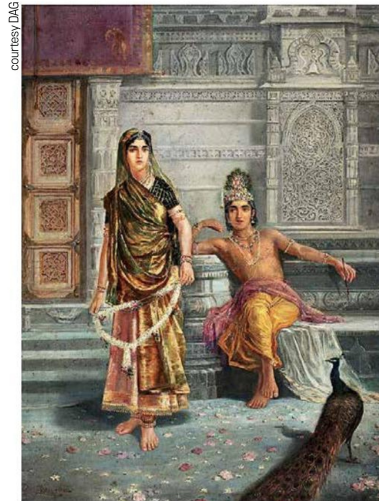
You might think that visual artists have had it better than most during the Covid-propelled lockdown—and you would be right. Most artists work alone—and display only needs to shift from the clean white 3D cube of the art gallery to the 2D rectangle of the digital screen. So even as the lockdown left a series of shuttered shows in its wake, many galleries rose to the challenge. One exciting development has been In Touch, a digital platform created collaboratively by galleries across India (Artintouch.in/).

Edition 4 of In Touch, which runs till November 10, includes Rustom Siodia's little-seen 1920s



courtesy NITYAN UNNIKRISHNAN AND CHATTERJEE & LAL

and '30s watercolours on the Chatterjee and Lal site, Kanu Gandhi's astonishingly intimate photographs of the Mahatma on PhotoInk, Dhruvi Acharya's arresting pandemic-inspired work at Nature Morte, and Buddhadev Mukherjee's marvellously humorous human figures, playful studies in scale, at Mirchandani + Steinruecke. Chemould Prescott Road is showing Lavanya Mani's 'Game of Chance', mixing science with miracles and omens in a manner



courtesy DAG

'Evaporating Voices' by Dhruvi Acharya (top); 'The Half of It', 2020, by Nityan Unnikrishnan (left); and 'Radha and Krishna' by M.V. Dhurandhar (on display in DAG's *The World Will Go On*)

Art Restart

1 Nityan Unnikrishnan's solo show ***It is Getting Louder***, showing at Mumbai's Chatterjee and Lal gallery from November 13 to January 2, feels very much like India right now. The acrylic images on khadi spill over with people: reading, eating, dreaming, waiting. The other set of the images, graphite on muslin or bamboo fibre paper, are abstract, filled with black and white forms which could be anything: masts, mountains, plants, porcupines. All that unites them is their jaggedness.

2 Art Heritage Gallery, Delhi, together with Kolkata's Seagull Foundation, is showing ***The Self Portrait***, a show of early and rare woodblock prints, sketches and watercolours by the late K.G. Subramanyan, who died in 2016, aged 92. They aren't all depictions of the artist: watch out for 'Jangpura Women' (1950), and many striking untitled linocuts and litho prints of seated women. Open by appointment till December 15.

3 DAG's ***The World Will Go On***, on view online since October 25, will be open to visitors at The Claridges, Delhi, between November 2 and 12. Highlights include a 1980 Raza, an M.F. Husain Hanuman, Nandalal Bose's 'Diwali', and one of Krishen Khanna's *bandwalla* images.

4 Prasanta Sahu's ***Suburban Shadows***, on the Emami Gallery website till November 30, visualises the links between rural and urban through his

perfect for a pandemic year. In 'Miraculous Sights 2', a town floats into the sea aboard a ship, which itself hovers over the scaly back of a submarine creature. In the hypnotic 'Portents', a gigantic red flower opens a bleeding glass eye to a world buffeted by strange animal-headed comets.

In Touch's on-screen display is effective: you can see a chosen artwork as it might look on a wall (with a virtual chair for scale) and zoom in. I wish, though, that more galleries had done what Gallery Espace has with Manjunath Kamath's dream-like pastiches—to

identify sections of each work for higher-resolution reproduction. It feels like a privilege to have his strange, vivid imagination enlargeable on one's private screen: a pile of books in flames as an elephant grazes placidly in a field outside, a television splashing into a bathtub, an angel approaching a Mumbai taxi, or a giraffe a buffet.

Others, too, have made efforts online. The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art has a superb virtual tour. Kolkata's CIMA has a new website. The uncertainty of recent months seems to have pushed the artistic process into the foreground. Mumbai's Tarq Gallery is presenting Garima Gupta's notes and sketches from

the Southeast Asian wildlife trade—"unarchived fragments of a conflict that is pushing us into a war with the very world we inhabit". Nature Morte offers up a downloadable colouring book by Acharya, while Kolkata's Emami Gallery has devised a virtual flipbook. The flipbook is a great format both for Prasanta Sahu's *Suburban Shadows* (see below) and *Aroh*, a group show that came out of Emami's open call for lockdown work by young artists (I particularly liked Arindam Sinha's 'Marking', Arpita Akhanda's 'Hung Up On the Past' and Jahnavi

Khemka's 'Lockdown 1'). Finally, the digital crossing of geographical limits allowed us to view, sitting in India, 35 sketches from the late great modernist Ram Kumar's 1960s and '70s notebooks on Art Basel's Online Viewing Rooms.

But while the hushed silences and 'no touching' rules of the gallery may feel only a step away from the literal untouchability of a virtual display, an aura still clings to the work of art in the era of digital reproduction. Three of the five shows to look out for this month—at DAG and Art Heritage Galleries in Delhi, and at Chatterjee and Lal in Mumbai—are open for offline visitors. ■

—Trisha Gupta

Art galleries, by embracing the virtual world, rose to the challenge thrown by the pandemic



studies of food and farming: a lettuce in a shopping cart, vegetables sprouting from human limbs, a *bhindi* as skeleton, shadows of the labouring body.

5 **Five Million Incidents**, a set of public art interventions funded by the Goethe Institute, has been reconceptualised in digital form. Visit [Goethe.de/ins/in/en/ver.cfm](https://www.goethe.de/ins/in/en/ver.cfm) to join the imaginary chatroom of Ranjana Dave's *Age Sex Location*, add to Sultana Zana's *Fieidness*, a collaborative digital archive of time spent in nature in the city, or log in to play Shradha Borawake's virtual game *Chaat Meets... A New World Order* on November 7. ■

—Trisha Gupta