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Home > Sunday Mid Day News > Why you need to attend these 4 art exhibitions in Mumbai this September

Why you need to attend these 4 art exhibitions in Mumbai this September

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Ela Das |

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From paintings that capture the chaos of middle-class homes to celebrating women artists and the 60-yr Chemould legacy, here's our art roundup



From dusting cloths covering electronic items to myriad household objects jostling for space, Abir Karmakar aims to capture it all in his paintings, on display in Mumbai currently. PIC COURTESY/ GALERIE MIRCHANDANI + STEINRUECKE

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The nuances that make a home

Walking into an Indian home can be a sensorial experience with the objects amassed by each family member symbolising a time capsule ripe with sentimental stories and vibrant memories. A dusting cloth placed to cover the top of every electronic device or old cardboard boxes stacked haphazardly above every cupboard betray tales of an owner's personality, living habits and idiosyncrasies. While for some, sifting through generations of clutter within drawers or a store room is akin to an archaeological excavation; for the common man, these pieces bring together an idea of home. Exploring this familiar domestic imagery of Indian homes, Baroda-based artist Abir Karmakar's larger-than-life, photorealistic paintings spotlight the social and temporal quirks of modern India.

For his current show, Karmakar has selected two homes to paint. One is of a practising Christian joint family from Baroda and the other is a suburban home of a lone 80-year-old man. "His wife died a long time ago and his son has migrated to a different place. He lives alone, and you see time trapped within the belongings in his cabinets. It reminded me of my own father, who lives in Siliguri, and I've been living away from him in Baroda for the last 19 years," he rues.

Presenting six double-sided paintings of domestic walls in a three-dimensional Trompe l'oeil style, Karmakar leaves the viewer suspended between frozen time and real space. He collapses boundaries between taking in and being, memory and presence, "to enhance the experience of seeing an artwork and becoming an active participant around it. You're not distancing yourself from it, you're physically moving into it. It creates a different meaning to the painting. At first, you're walking into a stranger's home, but you're within an illusion—like a memory trapped within a photograph. It is not a reality anymore; and laden with layers and fragments of our own interpretation."

Unlike most magicians, Karmakar reveals his trick to us: he regularly visits strangers' homes across the country. "I visit several, but only paint a few. I look for surprises and things beyond my visit's intention—something which brings new meaning to what I'm looking for. Since I cannot spend too much time in someone's house, I capture it in photographs, going through them again and again once I'm in my studio. They tell me a lot of things that are then composed in my paintings," he shares.

For many, the visual chaos of the objects depicted in the homes Karmakar paints can be chalked down to hoarding, which, he feels, comes from a lack of economic stability. "When you see this level of hoarding, it's a sign of creating a sense of continuity with the past... the need to hold onto the past. It's very psychological. In a middle-class home, where the family is so tied up with the stresses of day-to-day life, this gives them a sort of assurance."

While the belongings in an Indian home showcase time in a non-linear way, with generations of memories and materiality co-existing all at once, Karmakar points out how, in urban spaces, everything feels quite homogeneous. "Nothing used in architecture is local anymore. Everything is imported or inspired by something imported. They're losing their cultural and local identity. Be it in Kolkata, Delhi, Bombay, or even in Baroda, they're all configured so similarly, I can't tell I'm in a different city."

WHAT: Passage by Abir Karmakar

WHERE: Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke, 101, 1st Floor, Commerce House, Ballard Estate

WHEN: September 14 to October 26; 11 AM-7 PM

CALL: 35098262

Harmony in a flux

Finding tranquillity in a chaotic world can feel elusive, but Akara Modern's captivating new exhibition reveals harmony between movement and stillness. Exploring how action leads to meditative rest, the show journeys from kinetic vitality to introspective calm. While MF Husain's horses epitomise vigorous energy through swift, expressionistic brushstrokes, Krishen Khanna's rare abstract Man with Sitar fuses colour and gesture to convey creative momentum.

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