

# The Road Less Taken

Sarai adds one more address to its growing art hub — Art District XIII

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THE BRIEF stretch at Lado Sarai village's F lane is no stranger to the hustle and bustle of its many young and contemporary art galleries, Galleries such as Abadi Art Space, Exhibit 320, Latitude 28 and Wonderwall have, over the years, transformed the rustic neighbourhood with their intervention, for accessible and experimental art. Just as we enter what is popularly called the "art district", the road bifurcates and leads one well inside a new address. Barely three days old, Art District XIII is the latest addition to the burgeoning art hub, and the aforementioned road is not just metaphorical. With the idea of getting the "outside inside", the Art District XIII's exhibition space welcomes one with the familiar grey concrete floor, and the inauspicious number '13' attached to it, a promise for being the "antithesis" to everything conventional.

"In the winter of 2013, when Indian contemporary art was at its lowest confidence indicator, we decided to open an eclectic contemporary art space. The decision was against conventional wisdom, with hardly any interest in contemporary art and values for Indian art plummeting," says Kapil Chopra, the gallery's 'mentor'. Chopra, the president of The Oberoi Group, who is also a known art writer and collector, notes that since 2007, India hasn't seen a "global artist". "Like, say, Subodh Gupta," he says. With the idea of presenting well-established artists, Indian and international, Art District XIII has opened with Australian artist Paul Davies' solo "Built in Translation II", an ode to his residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris. A narrow wall at the entrance also houses London-based Anish Kapoor's installation in collaboration with Absolut that was seen at India Art Fair, in January, this year.



PHOTOS: ANKAVI TARANNUM

(Above and left) A view of the interiors at Art District XIII

The conceptual space, designed by Delhi-based architect Akshat Bhatt, with the incoming "road" also hints at the gallery's attempt to do away with inhibitions usually associated with high-brow private art galleries. Plans for creating a platform for programmes, writing and conver-

sations around the art of today aides the proposal. The physicality of the space here takes a concise form and is rendered spacious by mobile divisions. Even though the room is not the size of a museum hall, its design rules out the possibility of appearing clogged when large-sized works or in-

stallations are put up. For now, though an annual calendar hasn't been set, October will see art critic, author and curator Ranjit Hoskote helming a show by a "prominent" Indian artist. We look forward to see where this new road takes us.