

A toddler that's already ahead of the curve

by Archana



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GALLERISTS & THE CITY: MUKESH PANIKA/ RELIGARE ART

WHEN Religare Art had given itself a prime spot on the cacophonous K. G. Marg in October 2008, it had actually set a new suite of standards for all art galleries in town. The new high was not just in terms of the well- thought out space it had created but also because of what it came to host within its imaginative walls. The praise may sound like a paeon by an obsequious courtier but for anybody who earns her livelihood by ambling about the city's galleries, it indeed, was one of the best art havens to lose oneself in.

Just as this piece is not a paeon, it's not an obituary either. Because though Religare Art has shut shop at K. G. Marg, it has moved into a new home, at the parent company's corporate office at P3B District Centre, Saket recently. And it gets going with its inaugural project, the WhyNot Place residency, on June 15.

" Even though we were at C. P., I was looking for more height, floor area and breadth. And we had the Saket option as it is our own place. But what I'm most thrilled about is the fact that we are in the most important hub of the city, enjoying a street level view and with an atrium space that is six floors high," says Mukesh Panika, director of Religare Arts, Religare Enterprises Limited.

Panika clarifies to distinguish between being present in a public place as opposed to an address at a mall which abound in Saket. " I wouldn't have wanted to be in a mall as we are more than just an art gallery. Our art space is sacrosanct and we cannot position it in the same league as shops selling various brands." he says.

The enthusiasm in Panika's voice should not be missed because it promises a lot of action at the new Religare Art — an assumption one can safely reach by past experiences. Within a very short life span, Religare Art attained a high status in the art fraternity of the city thanks to edge residencies, art/ photography exhibitions, talks, performances and much more by simply bringing alive the place.

Their café and the book shop too had a seminal role in that development.

" Soon after we set up the gallery in October 2008, the market collapsed. But we stayed through it and the tough times helped us in positioning ourselves as we had entered the field with a long term commitment towards art. It helped us sift through what came our way, to focus on people who are serious about art," explains Panika.

He adds that since Religare Art has situated itself as a 360 degree platform for artists, he is hoping to make the new experience bigger and better. " We want to be the platform for artists who are in it for a long innings," says Panika.

Among other things, do watch out for Art Quadr, which will feature an international and an Indian artist on a collaboration.

And of course, many other out- ofthe- box ideas that have already made Religare Art a name to be associated with if you are anybody of consequence in the world of art.

archana. khare@ mailtoday. in