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## ‘Jaipur Art Week a unique incubator of the Indian contemporary art’

By BI India Bureau



Sana Rezwan, executive director at Prestige Group

*India’s art landscape has the advantages of a rich cultural heritage, along with talented artists. Yet, it needs more art galleries and institutions to support contemporary arts. Jaipur Art Festival which will be held in January 2024 intends to fill the gap. The platform between artists and art is democratizing participation, supporting women in art and much more. Sana Rezwan, executive director at Prestige Group based between New Delhi and Jaipur, talks to Business Insider India about its plans and activities. Here are the excerpts of the interview:*

**<https://www.businessinsider.in/entertainment/news/jaipur-art-week-a-unique-incubator-of-the-indian-contemporary-art/articleshow/107003211.cms>**

## **What is Jaipur Art Week and how was it conceived?**

Jaipur Art Week is one of the initiatives of my not-for-profit, Public Arts Trust of India (PATI), which I established in 2022. I'm originally from Bangalore, but after nearly 20 years abroad, I returned to India and after visiting Jaipur in 2021, fell in love with the city and chose to make it my home.

Having lived in London and New York, I was very aware of the absence of art galleries and institutions supporting contemporary art practice within the city. I could see the pull for contemporary artists to go to Delhi and Mumbai to further their careers, but given Jaipur's incredible cultural heritage, it was clear there was an opportunity to create a platform here that would better support artists to live and work in the city, whilst also showcasing their work to an international audience.

I saw this as my opportunity to give back to the city and its creative community and it was then that Jaipur Art Week was born. We'll host our third annual edition from the 24th-31st January 2024.

## **How does it help bring in talent from across the spectrum to showcase their works?**

With Jaipur Art Week, my ambition has been to develop a platform for artists and contemporary art. This hasn't been easy; it's an ongoing process that we review carefully after each edition to develop the next.

Rather than having a curator define who participates, we invite artists to apply through an Open Call. To support younger artists to apply, our team hosts proposal writing workshops, supporting them in refining their submissions and to develop their proposals and CV. We received over 75 submissions and collaborate with an international jury - Madeleine Haddon (Curator, V&A East), Pooja Sood (Director, Khoj), Hiba Schahbaz (Artist) - to select over 20 emerging and mid-career artists, many of whom will exhibit professionally for the first time with our support.

When reviewing applications, the focus is on an artist's readiness to exhibit, the quality of their work and their ability to participate professionally. After selection, we support them through the curatorial process to develop their work. Anyone not selected gets personal feedback on their submission to help them improve should they decide to apply in the future. This supportive environment makes Jaipur Art Week a unique incubator within the Indian contemporary art landscape.

During Jaipur Art Week, we will unveil a monumental public artwork by Jaipur based artist, Bhimanshu Pandel. The work reimagines what a tree could look like in today's time. The piece will be commissioned in collaboration with Frozen Music, a local interior design company, which will provide the artist with the facilities and support to make his vision a reality.

We wouldn't be able to support up and coming talent without our partners, and we are also grateful to Rambagh Palace, Rolls Royce, Silvia Furmanovich, Kilian Paris, Luxaviation and La Fugue.

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During the course of Jaipur Art Week, we invite undergrads and college students to become a part of our team through our Ambassador Program. Instead of just volunteering, this initiative provides individuals with an opportunity to build professional skills through activities including exhibition building, art handling and production. Ultimately, as we build PATI, they'll also be our potential future employees.

### **Give us a sense of how PATI's initiative to show art in public spaces has taken off?**

For me, public art isn't just about exhibiting art in public spaces. It's about integrating art into everyday life and providing opportunities for everyone to be creative, learn and explore. All PATI's initiatives provide free access to the arts for everyone, reinforcing creativity as an important part of everyday life regardless of a person's association or generation.

A key part of this is our work in Arts Education. We are currently partnering with Delhi based organization, Learning through Arts Narrative and Discourse (LAND), to develop a creative arts education program in schools within the walled city of Jodhpur. A new co-learning model, we've observed the gaps in arts education at many government schools which often have no art teachers. The current pilot project will work with five schools on a series of modules covering museum, folklore and ecology, tied to the tradition and topography of Jodhpur and the Marwar region of Rajasthan. If successful, we will roll out this model across the state.

At PATI, we are always open to partnering with like-minded organizations who share our mission. We are also spearheading a residency initiative that brings contemporary artists to the city of Jodhpur to collaborate with local artisans. PATI's team has undertaken extensive fieldwork into Jodhpur's craft and performing arts traditions within the Marwar region which we share with artists before they travel. Our first residency is a partnership with Prameya Art Foundation, Institut Française and RAAS Jodhpur, under the banner of Villa Swagatam, which will welcome French artist Deborah Fischer to Jodhpur in April 2024. We will also be partnering with Kohler (one of our corporate supporters) to bring another three international artists to Jodhpur later the same year.

The outcome from each of these residencies and the Art Education initiative will be showcased at Jodhpur Art Week 2024 – our latest PATI project – which will launch in November 2024, 8-17.

Ultimately, PATI's initiatives foster a more holistic growth of arts and culture through artist residencies, commissioning, curating, education, professional development initiatives and community exchange.

### **What has been the response to initiative from people, artists as well as tourists?**

The Art Week falls during peak tourist season in Rajasthan so we get a diverse audience of tourists from various nationalities and cultures. The idea was always that Jaipur Art Week would form part of the national arts calendar here in India with the timing close to the Jaipur Literature Festival and India Art Fair, so visitors could come to India and attend all three festivals during their trip.

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The main reason I established the Art Week was to support the next generation of contemporary arts practitioners working in Jaipur and Rajasthan, but also to give everyone in Jaipur the opportunity to see contemporary art, to get involved and learn more about it. The response to our previous editions has been incredible, but we are always looking to expand our reach at an international level as well. This year, we're developing a new series of schools and family programs which also forms part of our Art Education initiatives.

**Are there any specific themes that are taken up in certain areas?**

For the third edition of Jaipur Art Week, we've focused on Jaipur as a city which was originally founded as a commercial center for the arts.

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In 1883, the Jaipur Exhibition made a significant change in how the world perceived India. For the first time, it celebrated Rajasthan's culture on its own terms, exhibiting the work of artists from the Jaipur school through a national lens and elevating their practice to international fame. Established as a center for trade, Jaipur has always embraced an ethos of cultural modernity and openness, however, the Jaipur Exhibition defined the city as a progressive model and not just an urban center. The third edition of Jaipur Art Week embraces this heritage.

**Can you give us a view of the art landscape in India? How has it been evolving?**

Over the last decade, we've started to see world-class exhibitions coming to India, but always in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata or Bangalore, making them accessible only to people who have the means to travel, or who live locally to the venues. This is something I wanted to change through Jaipur Art Week.

Through PATI's various initiatives, we are supporting emerging artists from Rajasthan which decentralises the current concentrated Indian arts narrative, but also by elevating the practice of non-artists and placing their work at the center, we are giving opportunities to those who don't currently get the exposure their practice warrants. Just because someone has not had a formal arts education, it does not mean their work cannot be part of the contemporary arts narrative. For me, this is a key part of PATI's work to support the evolution of India's art landscape.

As a female-led organization, PATI's work also focuses on empowering women in the arts across India and South Asia as the region is still very heavily male driven.

## 5. Jaipur Art Week Transforms India's Famed "Pink City"

Often dubbed "The Pink City," the ancient Indian municipality of Jaipur has long been home to a treasure trove of architectural riches, buzzing bazaars, and a vibrant arts culture, harkening back to the Jaipur Exhibition of 1883. Now, arts patron Sana Rezwani, founder of the Public Arts Trust of India, is transforming the city once again for the third annual [Jaipur Art Week](#), taking place from January 24-31. Featuring a host of site-specific installations, exhibitions, studios visits, and performances, the weeklong event will showcase the work of more than two dozen emerging and mid-career artists, among them Bhimanshu Pandel, who created a monumental public artwork with design firm Frozen Music. There will also be commissions at the elaborate Albert Hall Museum by Ellinor Euler, Wolf Jaipur and Ayushi Patni.