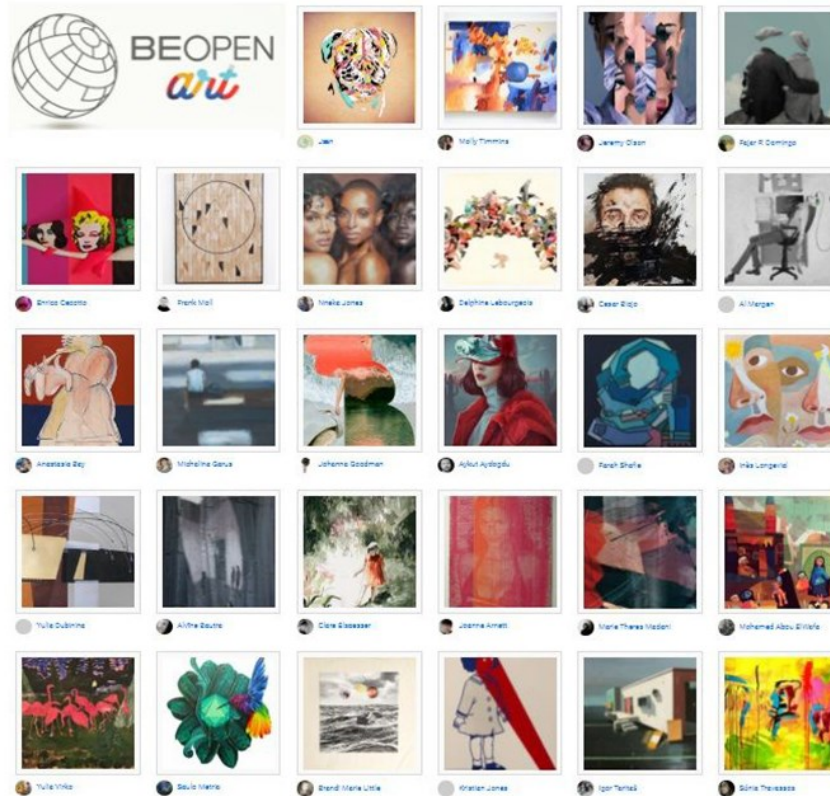


## BE OPEN Art: online galleries help artists survive the pandemic



India is one of those countries most severely hit by the coronavirus pandemic. The country passed 2.5 million active cases and is reporting an average of 300,000 new cases and 2,000 deaths per-day, with some analysts fearing this is an undercount. The economic impact of the virus has been equally disruptive. According to the Ministry of Statistics, the country's growth in the fourth quarter of the fiscal year 2020 went down to 3.1%.

For India's art world, the year has been no less challenging – both because of the overall economic drop and because of the temporary, but prolonged closures of brick-and-mortar exhibition spaces. While local galleries attempted to adapt themselves by moving their programming online, emerging artists who work independently or rely on funding support and commissions for their work found themselves struggling financially.

Forced to ask themselves “how do I turn my passion for art into a thriving business,” Indian artists at an early stage in their career had to turn to brand new online art platforms aiming to showcase and support young talents. BE OPEN Art is one of such online art hubs that go beyond the typology of an online gallery and offer their support to emerging artists who do not have their own resources, patronage and promotional opportunities: graduates, self-taught artists, and specifically, artists with a deprived background.

Unlike existing trading platforms and art marketplaces, BE OPEN Art is an online gallery that exists purely for philanthropic reason; using the platform is free both for artists and collectors. Isha Bawiskar, a young professional contemporary artist based in Latur, Maharashtra, made up her mind to submit her artworks to this platform, as the grim reality of 2020 pressed her to quickly shift gears to adjust to the dramatic economic effects of the pandemic. The co-operation with BE OPEN Art let her clarify how she can connect with her target audience using digital formats and social media and scale her business. As a result, she managed to walk in 2021 with 13 new buyers from across the globe, which would otherwise be inaccessible to her if she chose to use the same channels for marketing her art she had done before.

When asked about her role model in the artist world, Bawiskar says she is inspired by the work and struggle of Vincent Van Gogh, who was a hardworking and highly productive artist until the end of his life, even though he never managed to sell a single artwork. However, the new digital era with all the tools and benefits it has to offer to young emerging artists debunks the long-held assumption that the true Artist should be starving. And Bawiskar's example is here to prove that.