



The mammoth *Silenus* at the Warehouse

BLOW UP

A brand new art gallery with an international show that's just mind-blowing

THE metal shutter door that greets one on 3, Pasta Lane is rather unassuming. However it opens up to a world that is nothing short of an Alice in Wonderland labyrinth. The sleeping giants, called Silenus, inflate and deflate to the breathing cycle of twin blowers as their bodies made of the nylon spinnaker (ship-sails) fill up with air. The 45-foot vertical shaft of the Warehouse can evoke the feeling of sublimation in a trice and the busy world of cycle repair shops, vegetable vendors and traffic jams just melts into the afternoon.

This new gallery that just opened its designer shutters

owes its form to architect Rahul Mehrotra, its idea to collector-turned-gallery owner Abhay Maskara and its art to Max Streicher whose solo *Breathe* opened the space to the public on March 15.

"This used to be a store house for cotton, now it's a store house for ideas," smiles Maskara who has been planning the gallery since January 2005. "The idea is to have just three to four shows a year and not to be in hurry to fill up the gallery. One has to create an enduring impact," adds Maskara.

Besides its verticality, the gallery has some special features suited for art that plans to go be-

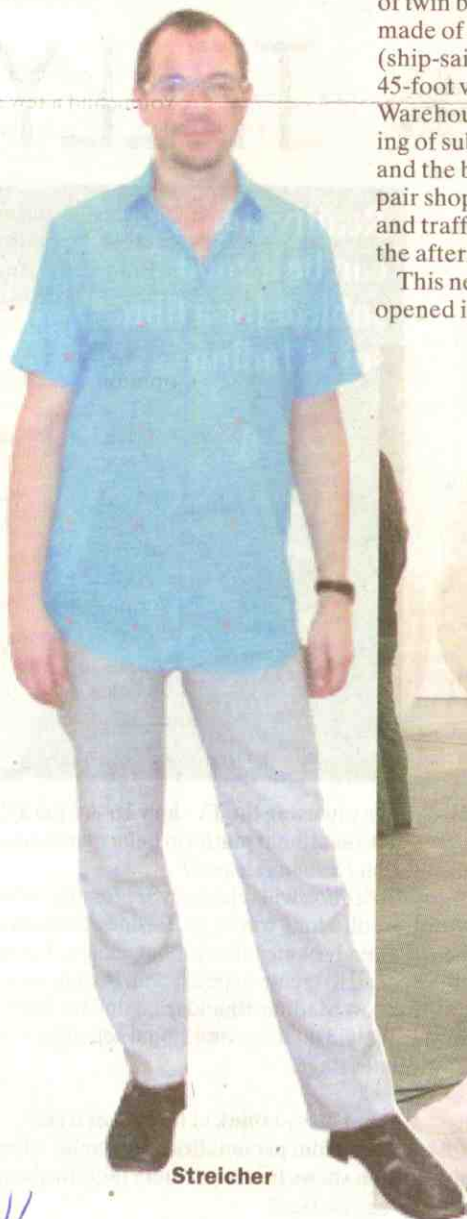
yond the scale of 'normal'. There are six-inch blots in the wall at regular intervals of 3x7 feet to facilitate hanging a work of art from any height. A 40-foot moveable ladder can get the artist and the crew up to giddy heights, while the bare warehouse look lends itself well to taking on the persona of the work.

Introducing Streicher to the Mumbai art viewing crowd is quite a privilege given that this internationally acclaimed Canadian has had more exhibitions that we've had breakfasts. The Fine Art University of New York alumnus has shown all over the world and this is his first stop in India. "I find it both exciting yet difficult to get used to. The chaos is something I've never encountered before. But once I got the hang of it I began to enjoy myself," says the 50-year-old who spent two weeks in the city to just set up his show.

His work, to put it in one word, is monumental and humbling in a spiritual sort of way. However, in many ways, it is the antithesis of what one perceives as big and ponderous given that the 'sculptures' when deflated can be folded away in a box.

"I started my first inflatable as a way of doing something different from what I had been doing in grad school, which was very conceptual and not very hands-on. Even though it was not 'in' to do figurative works in the late 80s and early 90s, there was something bigger than my desire to be accepted going on in the work," he says. "Inflatables are the medium of enchantment, fantasy and optimism."

And the new gallery is all of these too.



Streicher



Romulus and Remus get a young fan