

At home in the world

Simona Bocchi, a seasoned Italian sculptor, talks about hopping from one Indian city to another to ensure that her art remains pure

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Though Simona Bocchi's sculptures do not have features, they speak a thousand words. All through her college years, Simona did not stay at one institution for more than a year; for she feared that the place and her teacher could influence the tone of her work. But the Italian artist, a self-confessed explorer, has firmed her footing in Udaipur, Rajasthan, for the past eight years, a place that doesn't fail to mesmerise her every day. Her romance with India dates back to early teens, when she used to read a lot about Hinduism, and was particularly inspired by Vivekananda. "There was an attraction, something was pulling me here, but I didn't know what and why. I finally decided that I'll come here when I'm ready to stay in the country."

In 2007, she finally landed in India for a two month long trip, and saw the Kumbh Mela, Khajuraho and Agra. Unlike many other expats, who make it a point to touch Goa, for her the beach city was not on the agenda. "I didn't go to Goa till recently. What at-



SOUL MATTERS *Simona Bocchi*

tracted me was my spiritual connection with India." She further adds, "Since I came here, I never had a feeling to search for a new destination. But of course I'm a free spirit, and I love to travel and see

new things. I am an explorer, a very curious person by nature. I've changed 18 towns till now. But India is very different. The country doesn't make me feel tired."

Her chance meeting with

the then Italian ambassador to India gave her a platform to showcase her art. She wanted to show her work in India but had issues importing her sculptures. "So we decided why not create new sculptures here and then hold an exhibition in this fantastic land. Initially I didn't know where to start, which city to go to. Then I came to know about Udaipur, which is a great place for marble sculpting."

Finally around four years back, she held her first exhibition in the country, which was facilitated by the Royal family of Udaipur. She believes that her life and marble are somehow interlinked. "My life has been driven by the stone to such an extent that when I think about every town I've been to till now, there is some connection with the marble." Though she

has her sculptures sitting all across the world, Asia for her is a fairly new place and she believes that there is lot of explore here.

Unlike many other artists from the West, who take the help of robots for their work, she prefers to go the traditional way and all her pieces are handcrafted. "For me an idea alone cannot create an artist, it is a combination of the idea, feel, touch, presence and energy that together makes an artist."

Her connection with India is reflected in her work as well. "Like Taj Mahal is a beautiful amalgamation of Indian and Italian cultures, my work is also a fusion art form. Also, many of my sculptures have similar figures like that you see in Khujuraho."

She intends to create an art movement that has environment at its core, and encourages the use organic materials in sculpting. "I have done a lot of work on jute and fibre. It gives me an opportunity to connect with the nature. This is something that I want to encourage." She is also writing a memoir which will be published by Har-Anand publishers.

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