

Marble and bronze speak

Sculptor SIMONA BOCCHI talks to ILa SANKRITYAYAN about working in India for six years and picking up skills like inlay work from local artisans

Passion for your work, can take you everywhere. Simona Bocchi moved from Monza in Italy to Udaipur, because of her love of craftsmanship. "From girlhood, I was attracted to India, because my family had Indian friends, and I developed the desire to get closer to Indian traditions and culture," comments Simona. Her exhibition, *The Process of Unknowing* at Istituto Italiano di Cultura, is the result of many years of work and experience here. Six years ago, she shifted to the subcontinent. Her works fuse contemporary Italian art with traditional Indian crafts.

"I was lucky, because a few years ago, the Italian Ambassador to India invited me to work here and prepare an art exhibition to be held in Delhi. It was years of work before I could create a meaningful art collection that expressed my interaction with India, its people and its beliefs," shares Bocchi.

She adds, "Professional life has taken my work to Italy's marble cities, including Carrara, Pietrasanta and Verona. I have also worked with marble from caves that Michelangelo and other great master sculptures took from, creating works that have survived the centuries."

She continues, "I had heard great things about Rajasthan's artistic tradition and chose Udaipur, which has caves of white, green and pink marble. The city also has many marble traders, and I've enjoyed its slow pace, the peace by the lake."

Simona calls her works, *The Process of Unknowing*. She explains, "It refers to my constantly changing



creative state of wonder and discovery. It also expresses the way creatives process happens, when as an artist, I deal with materials like marble, bronze or jute, that change, to shape my work.

"The final form of a sculpture emerges from what in the beginning, appears like absence of form.

Materials used, slowly take the shape of an impressive piece of art you know nothing about, until it is finally shaped."

One bronze sculpture called, *Kundalini* is her favourite. It depicts a couple, with the man's feet on the ground, from which he takes energy and holds it on his palm, elevating the woman, who appears to fly.

Together, their forms traces a spiral shape that suggests movement and freedom.



Another work, *Infinity*, uses Rajasthan's sandstone, with the face of a woman lying gently down, on a supportive surface. And a piece in jute titled, *Personage* was made in 2002.

"This was the beginning of my research with jute. I was drawn to nomadic Indians, and the faces sculptured capture rural folk. I also learnt the importance of jute, and its meaning as recyclable, natural packing material, which was moulded into art, using traditional dyeing methods," reveals Bocchi.

Working with different material and media, Simona finds the freedom to express herself through bronze, marble, jute, aluminum, canvass, acrylic materials and colour.

"Inspiration," she says, "comes from daily exposure to things. Nature, people, places. India enriched my artistic knowledge, because it allowed me to work with local artisan and

learn new skills, like marble inlay work, using small mirrors as decorative element. That same technique is used in Rajasthan's ancient royal palaces. I also learnt that weavers can create magic with their skills and art. I worked with local stone masters and used their small chisels on my marble statues for engraving small flowers."

Simona has travelled in Norway, Argentina and Uruguay. In India she's been, "fascinated by archeological sites like Hampi in Karnataka." She recalls, "Those majestic stones stand before your eyes telling you the history of centuries. I love Ajanta and Ellora. I have also visited Mahabalipuram in Tamil Nadu, with its unique monumental complex. Khajuraho in MP was disappointing, because the statues seen in books turned out to be far smaller than I imagined." Her show on till September 30.