

CHISELLED TRUTH



Simona Bocchi in her studio

SIMONA BOCCHI, AN ITALIAN, LEFT HER COUNTRY TO SETTLE DOWN IN UDAIPUR. SHE LOVES HER INDIAN SIDE, AND INDIA IS NOW HER REAL HOME, SHE SAYS. HERE'S SIMONA, ON WHY SHE FEELS SO CONNECTED TO RAJASTHAN

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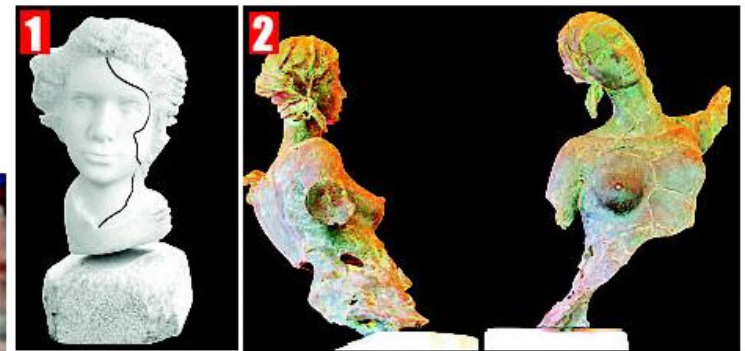
She always dreamt of coming to India and settling down here since she was nine, she says. But left it all on her fate and chances in life. "I came to India four years ago. Antonio Armellini, who is the Italian ambassador to India, invited me here to put up an exhibition of my work. It was too tempting a proposition to decline," says Simona Bocchi, a sculptor from Italy "India had been a dream destination for me since I was very young. You know my friends always used to say, 'why haven't you gone to India when you travel so much?' and I told them that if ever I go to India, I know I will never come back. I was always deeply connected with India. I used to read a lot about the country since I was a kid," she continues.

Simona has been in the country for the past four years and Rajasthan happened by chance. "A lot of Indians had seen my work and they wanted me to come down to India and do the same here. They all told me that instead of going to Delhi I should be in Jaipur. So this Indian family in Italy who had a factory of marbles in Udaipur asked me to come here as a part of their family. They helped me settle down here and work," she shares.

In 2009, Simona made of marble sculpture of Shiv and Parvati for Uttarajan Art foundation in Baroda. It was very well received. "In 2009 I was invited by a charitable organisation to make some sculpted piece for them. Though I was still staying here in Udaipur, I was representing Italy. I made Shiv-Parvati for them and they loved it. I am blessed to be here



As a sculptor, I found my calling in Udaipur



- 1** This one's titled Shiv Shakti. Everyone loved this
- 2** Called Vanity. I learnt to let go of mine...
- 3** That's me (Simona) with one of my creations
- 4** Titled Personage, this is one of my early works
- 5** Marble and Rajasthan go hand in hand... the white's for purity

THE BEAUTY OF BEING HERE IS THAT I DID NOT HAVE TO CHANGE MYSELF TOO MUCH TO ADAPT TO THE DIFFERENT CULTURE

and can't tell you how thankful I am to the people around me who welcomed me with open arms."

Though Rajasthan happened to Simona by chance, she loves her new hometown dearly. "The beauty of being here in Rajasthan is that I did not have to change myself too much to adapt to the different culture. I did not prepare myself in any special way to be a part of this country. Everyone made it easy for me to completely fall in love with this place. I go back to Italy time-to-time for work. My house in Italy is now my studio but my real home is right here in Udaipur. I am very connected with my Indian side, my Indian friends and the Indianness that I have around me," she says with a smile.

"The beauty of Rajasthan is that it is not contaminated. It holds those age-old traditions dearly, the way the women dress up, the way people are protective about their loved ones and the way people respect each other are just some of the things that this place has managed to retain. There is still a lot of purity and innocence in this place. This has made my life much more fascinating. The spirituality and the contrast between east and west helps me in my work. India gives you a chance to be who you are. In the west, you have to be a certain way and behave a certain way, but in India there is a sense of freedom that I value a lot. The energy here is very positive. But again the traditional culture here is so strong that it is not very easy for just about anyone to adjust. One has to be open-minded to absorb and fit in. Trust me, I feel like a foreigner when I go back to Italy now. I am very far from that mentality now," she concludes.