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## Reflections on the Mahatma Down Under

Mahatma and Me, a series of installations by artist Vibhor Sogani, is an ode to Gandhi, in Sogani's favourite medium: steel

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The work A Step Towards Divine is part of the Mahatma and Me show by celebrated artist Vibhor Sogani being held in Perth till November 27.

Visitors to Bell Tower at Elizabeth Quay in Perth, Australia, are being treated to a visual treat these days. More than 10 life-size installations with the largest of the scale of 16 feet by 10 feet, propagating the values of non-violence, peace and self-reliance, peers at them as they get close to the tower, in the heart of the city.

A series of installations titled *Mahatma and Me*, by celebrated artist Vibhor Sogani, brings together the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi with Sogani's trademark medium: stainless steel. Large installations such as *Harmony*, *The March To Freedom*, and *A Step Towards Divine*, are inspired from peace, non-violence and cleanliness, tenets that the Mahatma lived by.

Part of the tactile exhibit has been done in black 8-mm iron. But the other part, with a mirror-like gloss owing to the high metal content on the edges, is the most interesting, the artist tells us: "When a viewer stands in front of that, he sees a reflection of himself juxtaposed next to the Mahatma. In this stressful, violent world, it is a moment to pause. Pause and reflect upon what Gandhi stood for," says Sogani. "If you move five inches to the left, the perspective and the reflections change. So, it is a series of dynamic installations, each of them have been created to provoke self-realisation through making you stop and reflect for a moment," explains Sogani.



The work Step Towards Divine is part of the Mahatma and Me show by celebrated artist Vibhor Sogani, being held in Perth till November 27.

When did Sogani, who generally does three-dimensional abstracts such as *Sprouts*, the 40-foot-high stainless steel installation at Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences, come up with idea for the show? How did the concept germinate? "In a way, it was accidental. I got the idea of this show at 2.30 am on a humid summer night in Delhi, while reading about the Mahatma. Subconsciously, the themes he spoke about had been floating in mind. Gandhi was talking about self-reliance and cleanliness six decades ago, before it became fashionable in certain political circles. And then I remembered his iconic line: 'Be the change that you wish to see in the world.' And Eureka! I knew I had to do an installation about the theme on a reflective surface. We all want to see big changes in the world. Every great journey, though, has to begin with one small step. That step needs to come from within us — the Gandhi in us," says Sogani.

The Aussie chapter of the month-long show that began on October 2, is being funded by a non-resident Indian entrepreneur Nilesh Makwana and his wife Lene, the founders of the "Borderless Gandhi" project, supported by the Government of Western Australia, City of Perth and the Government of India.

Going forward, Sogani is planning to take the show to other cities within Australia, and subsequently other countries, particularly those where the Mahatma's politics left an enduring imprint, such as South Africa and the United Kingdom.

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