

THE HOMES MAGAZINE FOR MODERN LIVING

# Livingetc

February 2018 ₹150

INDIA EDITION

## DESIGN PROJECT

Make a c(t)ellar statement

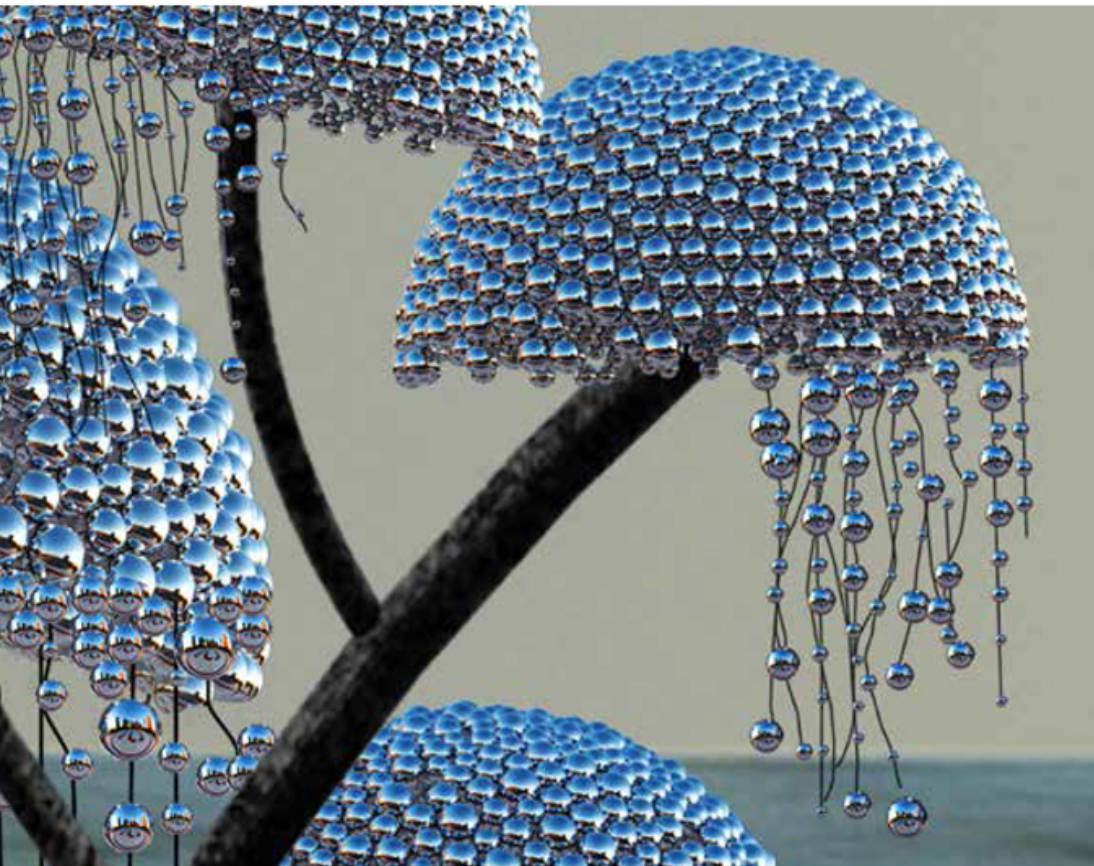
All you need  
to know about  
**SOFT  
FURNISHINGS**

**INDULGE THE  
VALENTINE  
MOOD**  
Gifts  
Decor  
Food  
Travel

**EDITED  
CHOICE**  
Cake Stands  
Bowls

*Max your  
space*





Vibhor Sogani; [TOP LEFT] a close look at the mirror-finished stainless steel balls of his latest work, Kalpavriksha; [TOP RIGHT] one of his earlier works, Fern

## *A Life In Design*

# VIBHOR SOGANI

Having travelled the labyrinth from sculptural lights to surreal design art installations, Vibhor Sogani talks about the journey

Words/Malati Kallapur Vijay

**S**tarting out as a furniture designer, moving into tabletop accessories... Vibhor Sogani found his true calling when he started to work in lighting in 2006. And soon he turned that in to art. His metal installations that dot some of the prominent locations across the country are a proof of this. His 'Mahatma in Me' has been travelling around the globe since its inauguration. The NID graduate in Product and Industrial Design, talks on the fusion of design with art.

*Starting from sculptural lights, your work has taken a surreal dimension. Please comment on the fusion of design with art.*

While design came through education and years of experience, art came from within. Therefore, fusing the two happens a bit naturally and doesn't feel like a deviation or a crossover to me. This is a format I enjoy the most and gives me a sense of joy and satisfaction of creation. With time, experience and constantly changing personal perspectives, the process of evolution is purely based on self design and motivation.

*Talk about the inspiration behind the current installation and your experience of working on it...*

An installation that I have completed recently and is perhaps India's second largest and Gujarat's tallest, is 'Kalpavriksha' – the wish fulfilling tree. Sited in an upcoming development in Ahmedabad called 'Arvind Uplands', it is 35ft high



[CLOCKWISE] Vibhor Sogani with his Mahatma and Me installation; his latest work Kalpavriksha; and one of his lights, Cascade



and installed on a 100-ft diameter roundabout.

The circumscribing, stunning landscape and the overall flavour of the serene, flowing greens, served as the source of inspiration for this installation. Crafted in stainless steel balls that are mirror-finished, the installation is conceived as an abstraction of a tree format. Envisioned as life that is constantly changing with the environment, the installation also transforms itself with changes in the environment. On a bright day, the installation sparkles, and on a cloudy day, it becomes soft and diffused, blending dynamically with the mood of the environment. Yet, as a result of its mirror-finish and high reflectivity, it stands out beautifully at night. An amber glow on the inside and a cold white glow on the outside add another element of drama to it. This becomes a reason for engagement, and hence people enjoy it, just like the 'Sprouts' sculpture in Delhi. I myself enjoyed the experience, particularly due to its public nature, where, owing to its surrounding landscape, it is not all about the installation in the middle, but the entire 100 feet diameter roundabout that comes together and manifests itself as an installation.

*Tell us more about your 'Mahatma in Me' travel exhibition and its success across countries...*

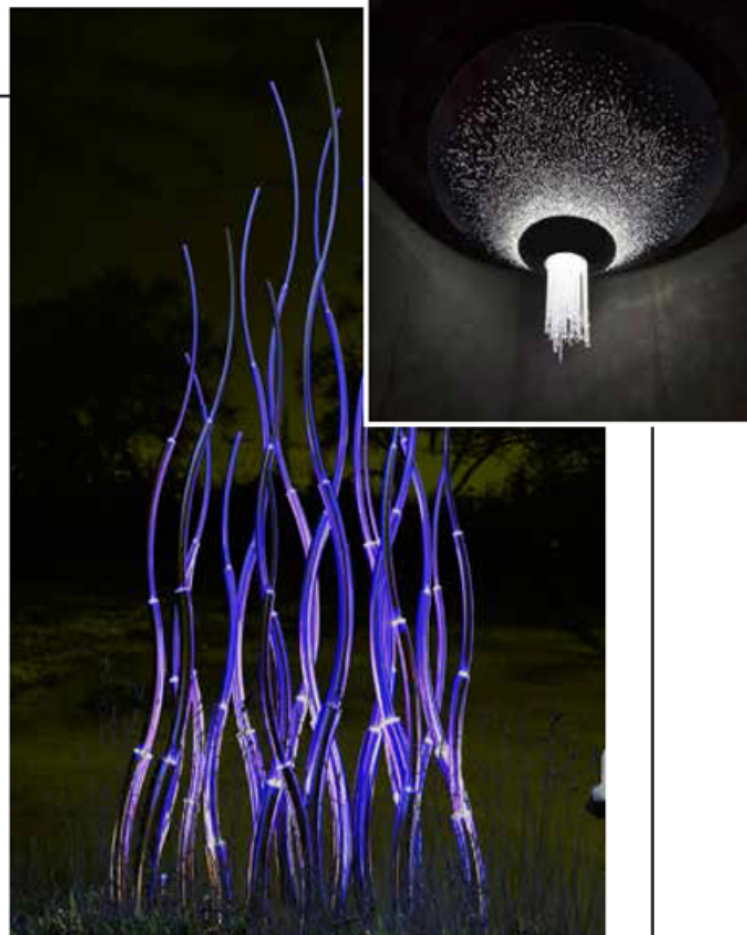
It was inspired from the life of Mahatma Gandhi. One quote by him triggered a thought for the series 'Be the change that you wish to see in the world.' Every individual carries a bit of Mahatma in him, waiting to be discovered. 'Mahatma in Me...' is my humble attempt towards that realisation. Subtle images of Mahatma Gandhi and some impressions of his thoughts, expressed in reflective steel, make us pause to reflect for a moment on the Mahatma within all of us...

In 2015, I was invited to celebrate 100 years of Mahatma's homecoming. In 2016, I was invited to Australia for a month-long solo exhibition organised by Borderless Gandhi Projects and supported by the Government of Australia. The exhibition then travelled to Zimbabwe last year to mark 70 years of India's independence and beginning of 'India in the Sunshine City Festival'. Currently the works are in Tanzania, where they were unveiled in the National Museum on December 6. ICCR, that supported the events, is keen to take them to other African countries as well.





[ANTI-CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT] One of Vibhor Sogani's lights, Orion; Blue grass; his installation, A Step Towards Divine, inspired by M K Gandhi; and another of his lights, Cascade



*Internationally, where is the design-art scene headed?*

We can see a lot more in this rapidly-growing genre now, and there is more exploration happening. In the recent times, internationally, the galleries are already showcasing this mix of art and design. The recognition and popularity of the genre is on the rise. Typically, there were two popular formats; one sculpture, and the other paintings. The next novel thing was installations, which is not an old format, and could be site-specific; theme-based or with a message. We are witnessing a new genre that is an amalgamation of art and design. I guess we will see more of this in future.

*And, what is its state in India?*

As of today, one is not witnessing much of this fusion of art and design in India. In the realms of design and installation, there is a lot happening internationally, which is available online. It is a lot more visible in the private domain though. Innovation and exploration in these domains lack avenues in terms of art/design shows in India, but I do hope that we will see more in times to come.

*How will things move forward from this new genre?*

With the kind of infrastructural growth and development in India, it will be natural to see an upsurge in this domain. This new genre is exciting. There will be a lot of play of materials and experimentation. The lights, the designs, the art and the installations, all together and in isolation, will lead to an interesting blend. Traditionally, the education system would segregate the branches of design, art or specific branches of design etc, but today, nothing is regimented. The same colleges are propagating experimentation and are in fact talking about this specific genre. The boundaries are all getting blurred... that is most stimulating.

*Who are the people you look up to in the design field?*

There are many designers who I admire; to name a few, Achille Castiglioni, Jasper Morrison, Marcel Wanders, Ron Arad, Kareem Rashid and Philippe Starck... There is also a lot of new talent now, whose works are a lot of fun to see. But I do follow the works of designers such as those mentioned, who are pretty much timeless. They have been in the industry for many years and therefore, it is always interesting to watch their new works.