

# “Art makes me feel alive”

Revati Sharma Singh believes her art keeps her grounded and allows her to express herself. In a chat with Rhea Dhanbhora she talks about her work and passion for art



>> Revati's work in *Changing Landscapes* in blue (left) and red (middle) and her artwork for the Surbhi Foundation (right)

When you ask Revati Sharma Singh where she draws inspiration from, she quotes Rilke Rainer – “The work of the eyes is done. Go now and do the heart-work on the images imprisoned within you.” The artist, who lived in India for 19 years before moving to the UK, where she has lived for 11 years, tells us that she adores and can't live without her two children, husband and black cocker spaniel. Here she tells us more about her art and her childhood.

**You're a British-Indian artist — tell us about your childhood?**

I grew up in Mumbai, but spent many idyllic summers in the tea estates of Himachal Pradesh, where my grandmother has lived for 90 years. I wish I could give my children the exposure I had, with a life full of greenery, books, arts, wildlife and nature. I love animals and had eight dogs as a child. I was passionate about art, literature and cultural heritage.

**Did you always want to be an artist?**

I never thought I would be an artist! I graduated from the Delhi College of Art in 1996 and started designing websites. Then I started my own web design division. Web design was the new thing in advertising. I designed websites for the Congress Party and also for the Election Commission of India, the Kamla Nehru Trust and Barista. I moved to Singapore after getting married and that's when I started painting. At the end of our 8-month stint, I had 50 canvases which we couldn't transport to London. My husband insisted I have an exhibition (I thought he was crazy) and so I had a solo show at the Raffles Hotel in Singapore and sold half of my work. If my husband hadn't encouraged me to have that exhibition, I wouldn't be doing what I am today.

**Tell us about your creative process.**

I paint daily, sometimes for hours and at other times, I do a few sketches or create a small painting. I need to go into my art room every day. It's my haven. What translates onto

the painting has very little to do with what I'm thinking, only with what I'm feeling. It's a totally spontaneous process for me.

**Who are your artistic role models?**

My current favourites are Claude Monet, Rembrandt, S.H.Raza, F.N.Souza and Anish Kapoor.

**Does your art imitate life or do you create your own world in your work?**

Art completes me. It is the beginning and end of everything I do. Whether I'm joyous or upset, angry or calm — it is the way I express myself. During the process, nothing else matters. Once created, I am often detached from my paintings, but there is a handful of work that I like to keep.

**You were the only Indian artist invited to the Masterpieces Art Fair in London. Tell us about it.**

Masterpiece London is a celebration of exquisite art, antiques and design. Hosting internationally renowned exhibitors, the fair presents a unique opportunity to collect across multiple disciplines and mix contemporary with antique, traditional with eclectic. I was overwhelmed to be part of something this prestigious. It's an honor to be put in the league of such extraordinary and formative global names in the art world. I hope I can do more such work to make my country proud.

**Where and what would you say that you draw inspiration for your work from?**

I don't know if it's true for most artists, but I think the subject chooses me. I find, more and more that all things Indian inspire me... India inspires me. The colours, chaos, diversity, unity, food, flavours, sounds, smells, people, dialects... I feel passionately about them and recreate everyday images stored in my mind's eye in an abstract manner.

**You also address public issues — tell us what drew you to them.**

I've always been a believer of the message and the motto — be the change you want to see. I try and channelise thought provoking social issues and concerns on canvas. With a nation that has so much potential, it's sad to see issues such as malnutrition, hygiene and poverty, keep the nation away from its potential. These are issues that I spread awareness through art and social work. I've just been a part of the Pink Filly that supports Breast Cancer Awareness in India.

**You recently created a canvas for Ritz Carlton India. How long did it take to finish?**

It took me five months to create it. It is my largest work, with several layers of paint. It's 20 feet by 14 feet!

**Tell us about *Nostalgia*?**

The show is about how the 'past' is the many millennia's of the earth's evolution and the story of her creation. It is the creator of the magic that we call 'memory', which guides the earth along her orbit and a human along his path of growth. It is the sacred-keeper of natural history and holds the secrets of many a civilisation. My painting, titled *Nostalgia*, is an effort to encapsulate all of these sentiments on canvas. This will take place at JW Marriott in Juhu on February 7.

## WHERE TO CATCH REVATI THIS YEAR

Revati has had a busy 2014, with her work at the India Art Fair being shown last weekend (February 2) and having just finished her Pink Filly show in Mumbai in January. Take a look at what's next:

- Nostalgia, JW Marriot, Mumbai on February 7
- Art Monaco, Monte Carlo in April
- Plan India Auction, Pune on October 7
- The Royal Academy of Art, 2 woman show, London, in April