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ROUTE

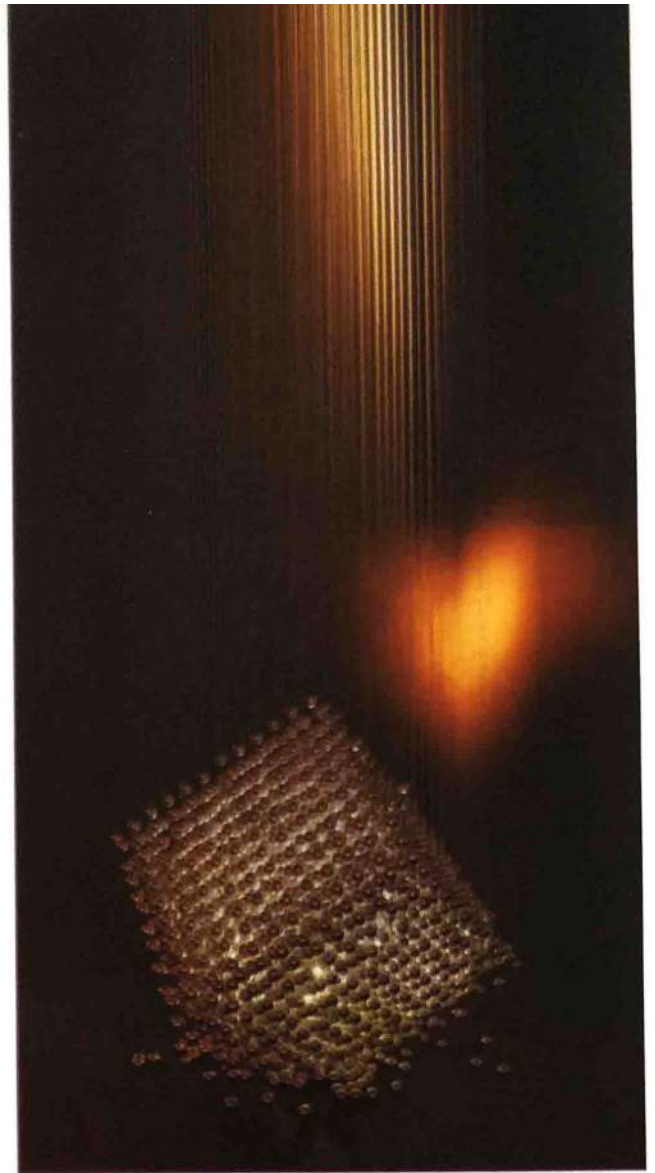
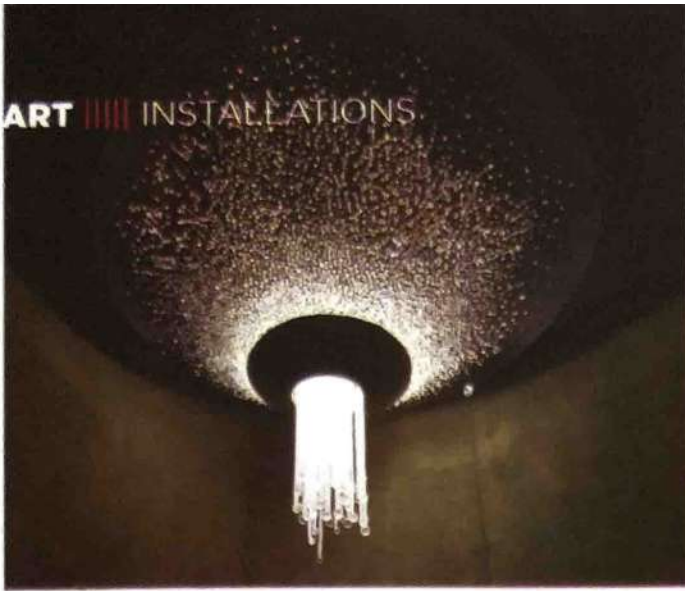
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GREAT MONSOON HOLIDAYS



ART ||||| INSTALLATIONS



Left Top: The Orion installation brings out the artist's artisanal skills
Bottom: Infinity is one of the four light installations created by the artist Above: Cube highlights the artist's unique style

ART FROM THE HEART

RENOWNED INSTALLATION ARTIST VIBHOR SOGANI'S WORKS ARE A REVOLUTIONARY BLEND OF ARTISANAL SKILL, NEW TECHNOLOGY AND UNIQUE MATERIALS
BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

If you live in or have been to Delhi, chances are you would have noticed a huge stainless steel installation around the AIIMS flyover. Designed as part of the beautification of the national capital, this is installation artist Vibhor Sogani's creation. A leading creative professional and product designer, he is an alumnus of the National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad, and a well-established name in the art world.

LAUNCH PAD

Ask him how it all started and he replies: "My design journey started after my schooling in Jaipur. Despite being a good student, academics never excited me. After a session



Top: Initially Studio Vibhor Sogani specialised in table top accessories
Bottom: Slim is an interesting interplay of light and design

with a career counsellor and an aptitude test, I was told my 3D visualisation is good and I would do well in a creative field.”

In 1992, Sogani graduated from NID with a degree in Product Design (Industrial Design), after which he worked for a year with the furniture division of Godrej in Mumbai. He moved out and took up freelance projects, which somehow weren't easy to come by. “Finally, in August 2002, I launched my collection of table top accessories under the label Studio Vibhor Sogani. Till 2005, I was involved in my accessories line but somewhere down the line, I realised this stream was far too commercial for my creative sensibilities,” says Sogani. In 2007, Sogani was invited to participate in an art show and soon, he ended up doing his first show titled, ‘God & I’ featuring wall art and installations in stainless steel and other materials. In his words, the exhibition was “liberating” as he did it for himself and without stressing over its

functionality.

Recalling his journey, he says: “The shift from design to art was an internal struggle for me but I had an advantage as I was technically equipped and that became the most interesting and intrinsic part of the process later. The same year, I also got an opportunity to do some work in the field of lighting and the response was encouraging at various levels. My lighting portfolio started growing and as a designer, I felt more satiated and involved. In terms of competition too, the segment was more specialised. There were lesser people in my category from the Indian subcontinent and that allowed me enough room to expand.”

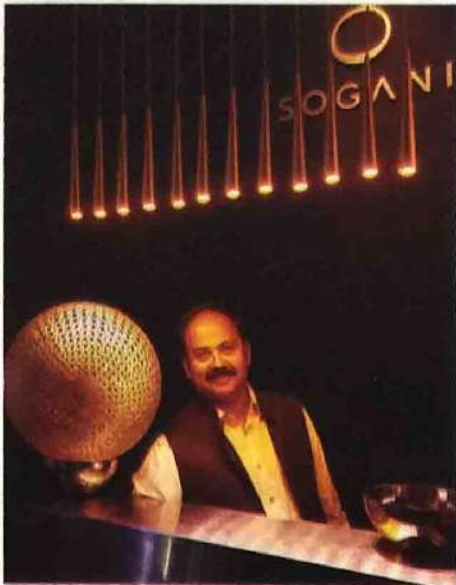
DESIGNER DREAMS

Before Sogani's tryst with art, he worked as a design consultant on several commercial projects with clients across sectors such as real estate, hotels, and government bodies. “I worked on some off-beat projects such as the country's first few go-carting tracks, redesigning Mumbai's suburban trains, and upgrading Kashmir's copper craft. Also, trophies for events like the Samsung Cup

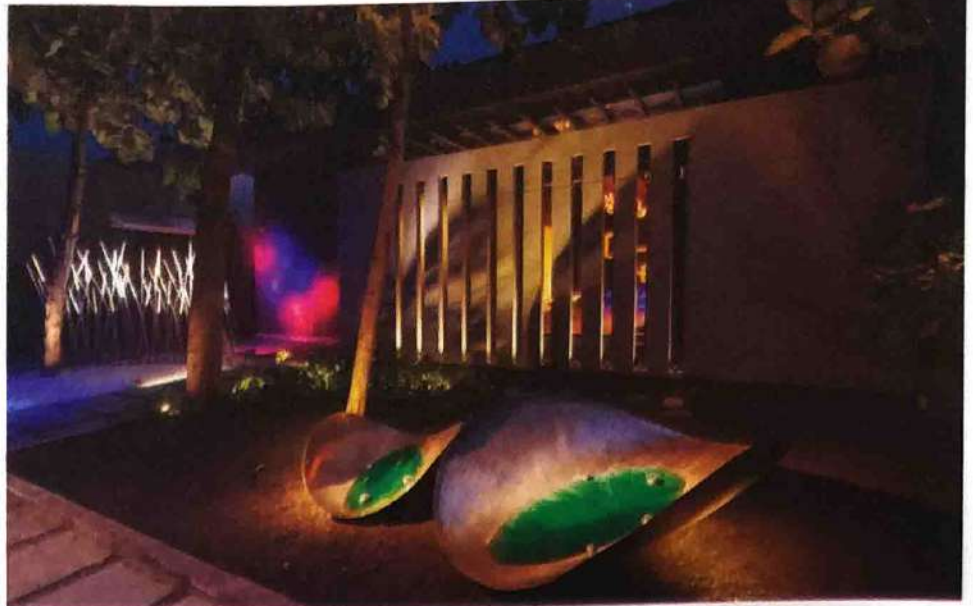
(India-Pakistan Cricket Series in Pakistan, 2004); Pepsi Cup (India-Pakistan Cricket Series, 2005); PHL Trophy (Premier Hockey League) and Hutch-Delhi Half Marathon were designed and executed by my office,” he points out. Quizzed on the marriage of art and technology, the designer-cum-artist says: “Being an industrial designer from NID, the comfort with industrial processes and technology was always there. Exposure to Indian crafts and handicrafts came in the first

THE ART FORM

Installation art is the term used for site-specific, three-dimensional works that aim to change a viewer's perception of a space. The art form spans the entire gamut of traditional as well as non-traditional media like painting, sculpture, found objects, drawing and text. The term has been used since the mid-1950s. In recent years viewer participation has emerged as a key component of installation art.



Top Right: Sogani's studio is spread over 35,000 square feet
Above: Vibhor Sogani, design consultant turned artist



phase of my career while I was consulting. Art is an expression pretty much from within. To amalgamate and arrive at technology-driven installations was an easy choice. Once I got rolling, it wasn't difficult."

CONTEMPORARY CHIC

Sogani's is an experimental style involving combining materials like steel, copper, bronze and stone to create art, sculptures and light installations. His work reflects his contemporary, urban sensibilities. Having started Studio Vibhor Sogani in 1994 in Delhi, he has several award-winning projects and

installations to his credit. The studio, spread over 35,000 square feet, comprises different zones where each zone has a distinct installation and is an experience in itself. Lush green exteriors showcase a variety of outdoor installations ranging from one to 20 feet.

LABOUR OF LOVE

Taking his portfolio ahead, Sogani has created four light installations - Orion, Cube, Cascade and Infinity. Each one of them showcases his artisanal skill. They also stand out for the use of new technology, and unique materials. He shares an interesting anecdote from 2004 when the Indian cricket team travelled to Pakistan after 14 years for a full-blown one day and test series.

"I was given the opportunity to design and create the trophies, mementos and other associated products for both the series and got to travel with the team. We were in the streets of Pakistan with the Indian flag and wearing the team colour. The euphoria attached to the experience was unparalleled. We managed to win both the series and brought the trophies home, making me a lucky charm of sorts," he recalls.

About the trophy, he says: "It got immense international acclaim and became a turning point in my career, especially in terms of my experience with metal." ■



PIÈCE DE RÉSISTANCE

One of Sogani's best and the country's largest public art installations is named 'Sprouts'. It is a 40 feet high stainless steel installation spread over six acres of greens surrounding the AIIMS flyover in the heart of Delhi. The idea behind Sprouts was: 'When the seeds begin to sprout' - to show how India is shaping up and transforming since independence. It was a joint government-private project

