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PORTRAIT OF GLASS STORIES

Artist Anjali Venkat turns pieces of mirrors into delicate desires *By ZOYA PHILIP*

Working with bare hands has always fascinated Anjali Venkat. It intrigued and tickled her curiosity for objects. As a young girl she would find new and innovative methods to manipulate broken tiles, mirror and even glass to create her own piece de resistance, an art that was handed down to her by her grandmother.

Her creativity takes her to overwhelming levels, the moment she spots discarded glass bottles or even pieces of wood. "I love utilising different kinds of material to create something new and unique," she says. The self-taught, Chennai based artiste has honed her skills and techniques over many years, drawing inspiration from the places she has visited and learning about their new uses with the same material. She says, "I love re-using things that are considered waste and disposed off." Her objects of fascination are differently coloured and uniquely shaped liquor bottles. "I immensely enjoy working with these bottles. It is amazing how you can reuse them to create objets d' art or even trendy util-

ity articles," she confides. Anjali's creations include glass patchwork, wind dancers, a Bodhi tree, tree of life, wearable art glass. As a member of a non-profit organisation called the Hundred Hands, Anjali also encourages and helps artisans find a platform for their talent and work. "The founder of the organisation, Mala Dhawan, got in touch with me and asked me if I would like to be part of the initiative and I happily obliged," reveals Anjali. Started by Dhawan and Somaya, the motto of the organisation is to encourage the dying art forms of Karnataka and the neighbouring states. The organisation aims at building and aiding artisans to procure a sustainable livelihood. Speaking of support, Anjali says that her family is the backbone of her creativity. "My husband and my sons are accustomed to my ideas and work. In fact, my sons lend a hand while I am working. Since they have grown

up watching me reuse such objects, they have also picked up the habit and try and do whatever they can," she says.

Though her creativity can be termed as enchanting, she likes to keep things simple.

She retails from her studio in Chennai where she customises certain pieces depending on individual preferences.

"Converting someone's idea into glass work is almost bewitching," she adds. She believes that even when she is creating an individual piece, her source of inspiration come from her surroundings.

"I look around me. The colours, the play of light and shadows are a big source of inspiration for me. However, I am not a person who creates pretty and delicate things. My tastes are more graphic and funky. I try and stay away from realistic themes," says Venkat who exhibits her art work around the country.

