

Saluting the sailor

ART Sonu Mulchandani pays tribute to the sailors and explorers from the 14th to 18th century in her exhibition of maps and scale models of ships

It was like stepping back into a portal and looking at the world through the eyes of the explorers, who, once they got over their fear of falling off the edge of the world, wandered the seven seas and mapped the world as they saw it.

And Sonu Mulchandani, in her exhibition "The Voyage", pays tribute to them through their works, by recreating or reproducing these maps over copper, marble, steel, wood, stone — even canvas — and which retain their old-world charm.

She works with world maps made between the 14th and 18th century — maps of Asia, India and Europe; even specific regions in Europe, like Naples (Southern Italy), the province of Peking, or the Mediterranean Islands.

Each of these maps is accompanied by a short note on the map.

She displays pictorial maps or map plans in works like the "The Garden of Pleasure 1685" where she recreates the architectural map plans of the Anguien Park built in Belgium in pictures, on marble tablets. The title page maps of European nations also display cultural icons through native figures of people and divine figures (like angels).

Sonu has also built wooden scale models of ships, like the "Kanrin Maru", an 1857 warship; the "Norske Love", a 1765 Danish warship, or the "Royal Louis" of the French royal navy, and surprisingly, the famous "Black Pearl" of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series fame.

"I was reading this books called *The Map: Finding the Magic and Meaning in the Story*



of *Your Life* by Colete Baron-Reid, which is more philosophical or spiritual, but it gave me a foresight into maps. Then somebody showed me some old maps, which gave me the inspiration to look closely at these maps and depict them through my artwork," says Sonu.

"I find that so much evolved from the experiences and cartographic records of explorers, who mapped the world without the help of satellites. So the exhibition is a trib-

ute to these sailors and explorers. But I hope this is just the beginning of a journey for us to look at maps."

Sometimes she adds a touch of tangible history to these maps by placing guns or swords over the representation.

She also contrasts these old maps with her interpretation of the Indian map, using well-known icons, in people, places and architecture to represent 18 different states in the country.

"These icons, whether it's the saint Thiruvalluvar in Tamil Nadu, the scientist M. Visveswaraya in Karnataka or architectural marvels like the Khajuraho temple, represent Indian heritage and culture; most maps don't depict this."

The exhibition will be on view until August 10 at Sublime Galleria, 24, 8th floor, UB City, Vittal Mallya Road.

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