



**SERENE AND TRANQUIL** One of the couple's works and (below) Mona with Poppo

# Concrete works of art

**A photo exhibition features the works of two architects who use unconventional concepts**

**ROSHNI JACOB**

For architects Poppo Pingel and his wife Mona Doctor, their work is more than just creating buildings. Their passion is to build structures that are "in harmony with its surroundings". Using natural light and locally available material are characteristic of their style. Often described as sustainable, organic and rustic, their architecture goes beyond conventional concepts and methods, which are captured in a photo exhibition, which is on in the city. Titled 'The Architecture of Senses', the show is supported by Max Mueller Bhavan/Goethe Institut Bengaluru.

Mona, who inaugurated the exhibition, says she is delighted with the feedback she received. "Bengaluru is very open to good architecture. So, it's not surprising that we received such good response."

While Poppo studied architecture at Münster and Aachen, Germany, Mona graduated from the Centre for Environment and Planning (CEPT), Ahmedabad, and obtained a masters degree in Appropriate Technology from Flensburg University, Germany. The couple now live and work at Auroville, where Mona has her independent set-up called Studio Naqshbandi. She believes architecture should not be guided by a specific style but by the place, its climate, locally available skills, people and other factors. "I try to achieve a balance between man, nature and economy," she says.

Her works include wide open spaces and greenery, which are dominant in her designs, especially her work on Cottage Restaurant ( Pondicherry) or Temple Tree Retreat (Auroville). Described as "poetry in concrete", her designs depict peace and tranquillity even in the photographs. Nature with its different facets and manifestations has always played a



prominent role in her works.

Though she's "influenced" by her husband's works, she asserts that she has "evolved" her own style over the years. "His is a one-man office and prefers to hand-draft his drawings and does not use a computer."

Some of the images on display at the show show Poppo's Afsanah Guest

House, which is an interesting blend of traditional and modern elements. With its tiled roof and simple facade, the place exudes a homey feel. Adding some natural beauty to it are grassy, rock-strewn paths and small ponds. The Quiet Healing Center, also by Poppo, seems to be an impressive mix of sharp, angular structures and circular, domed designs.

The use of exposed bricks and unpolished materials can be seen throughout the works of this couple. Besides giving the buildings a rustic look, Mona says they reinforce the concept of architecture of the senses, which she says "Is about activating the five senses through architecture and its elements. For instance, I'm cautious about air-conditioned buildings which have a set temperature, different from the one outside. This does not lead to a healthy working and living environment. No matter what the weather conditions are, we should experience everything in a natural setting, wherein all our senses are stimulated. This is what we try to achieve in our designs."

The exhibition is on at the InCITE gallery, Banashankari till July 12.



**கஸ்தியின்**

# பொன்னியின்

# செல்வன்

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