

Bombay Times

Art

Attack!

Nina Pandolfo, Brazilian graffiti and street artist, speaks to **Mithila Mehta**

You can call her the street artist with a difference. As a pioneer of graffiti and street art in her native Brazil, this diminutive yet dynamic painter helped take art to the masses. She visited Mumbai recently, and she wowed the art circuit with her fresh ideas and vibrant hues. Meet Nina Pandolfo, for whom all the world is a canvas!

How did Pandolfo's tryst with graffiti begin? "Initially, I was just painting canvases. But around 1990, I started doing theatre on the street. At that point I realised that people in Brazil do not visit galleries, museums or theatres to experience the arts. The best way to showcase it is put it somewhere they will see it anyway. And so I started painting on the walls in the street!" smiles Pandolfo.

Nina Pandolfo's art comes in only one colour-colourful! Her recent exhibition in the city, 'Between Us,' at the Warehouse Gallery, Colaba, was a splash of bright and vivid colours. The highlight of the show was a giant graffiti work, 33 x 50 feet large. Pandolfo's art also has a very informal and lighthearted quality, which curator and gallerist Abhay Maskara explained as, "There is a child in all of us-playful, innocent and dreaming. Pandolfo's works transport us to a fantasy land where the sun shines bright and stars come out at night. They remind us that there is no better time to celebrate life than now." Cute little girls, with large expressive eyes, flowing hair and naughty smiles, insects, fruits and nature all become trademark features of her graffiti. Con-

ceptually, Pandolfo's works explore the idea of external and internal identity.

Not to be limited to the gallery, Pandolfo also left her mark on the cityscape by painting a pump house located outside to the Grant Medical College grounds on Marine Drive. Rendered in her trademark style with the bold and beautiful colour usage, Nina's art was immortalized in the city.

When she was not busy painting the city's walls, Pandolfo also thoroughly enjoyed what the metropolis has to offer. "I had a great time in the city. The people are very friendly and happy. I love Indian food! It's actually hard to list down everything," she laughs. But Pandolfo did notice the enormous art in streets of Mumbai. "The designs on the trucks, the temples, the colourful dresses the women wear-art is everywhere!" she observes. Pandolfo adds, "There may not be much graffiti, but there definitely is street art."

It takes a daring artist to challenge conventions and blur boundaries. To laugh in the face of tradition, and bring the bazaar city into the gallery. In Brazil, Pandolfo was part of the revolutionary art movement that led graffiti to art galleries and museums. Yet, the street remains her preferred exhibition ground. "When I paint in the street, people stop to see it. This makes a difference to them and me. Art is for everyone!" she signs off. Here's to a spirited artist who is painting the world-literally!

downtownplus@gmail.com

