

No kagaz ki kashti. Nina picks dragonflies, instead

Brazilian graffiti artist Nina Pandolfo paintings are embellished with images that flourish within her subconscious. So, if you'd like to recall what childhood felt like, take a trip to 3rd Pasta Lane

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"I'm the child!" exclaims 31 year-old Nina Pandolfo, the youngest of four sisters, while attempting to trace the source of her inspiration. Dressed in paint-speckled denim cut-offs, her eyes shine with childlike innocence, even as we watch her brush her hair off her face, accidentally streaking it white with paint.

Mother made her follow her heart

"I worked on magazine illustrations and commercial-art projects to earn a living," Pandolfo shares. She's painted T-shirts, even created a line of dolls for earlier exhibitions, but her work has always centered around the same large eyed girls.

It was a heart-to-heart chat with her mother that eventually helped her decide she wanted to do graffiti. "She said, don't worry about which career is more lucrative. Focus on what I love doing. And I knew, I had to choose graffiti."

Inspiration Manga

At first glance, Pandolfo's work seems to adopt the style of Japanese Manga animation-art, but Pandolfo assures us, "I've been drawing girls with large eyes and big cheeks, since I was little." Her elder sister, Cidinha actually has a collection of the doodles she created as a child. "I've always drawn the same girls — they're different in some aspects of course, but surprisingly, their features haven't changed."

Little girls haunt her

Pandolfo's not sure why little girls

haunt her paintings. "Perhaps, it's because girls are always in a rush to grow up... to become women," she says, admitting that the converse is usually true. "So, though I've painted little girls, the emotions in their eyes, their expressions, reflect grown-up sentiments." Pointing at the picture of two girls, one she's painted within the right eye of the gigantic mural that dominates the gallery, Pandolfo says, "That could be children swimming, or perhaps they're playing on in a dessert or on a beach."

Scratching her head as she examines her own work, Pandolfo then offers a perspective based on

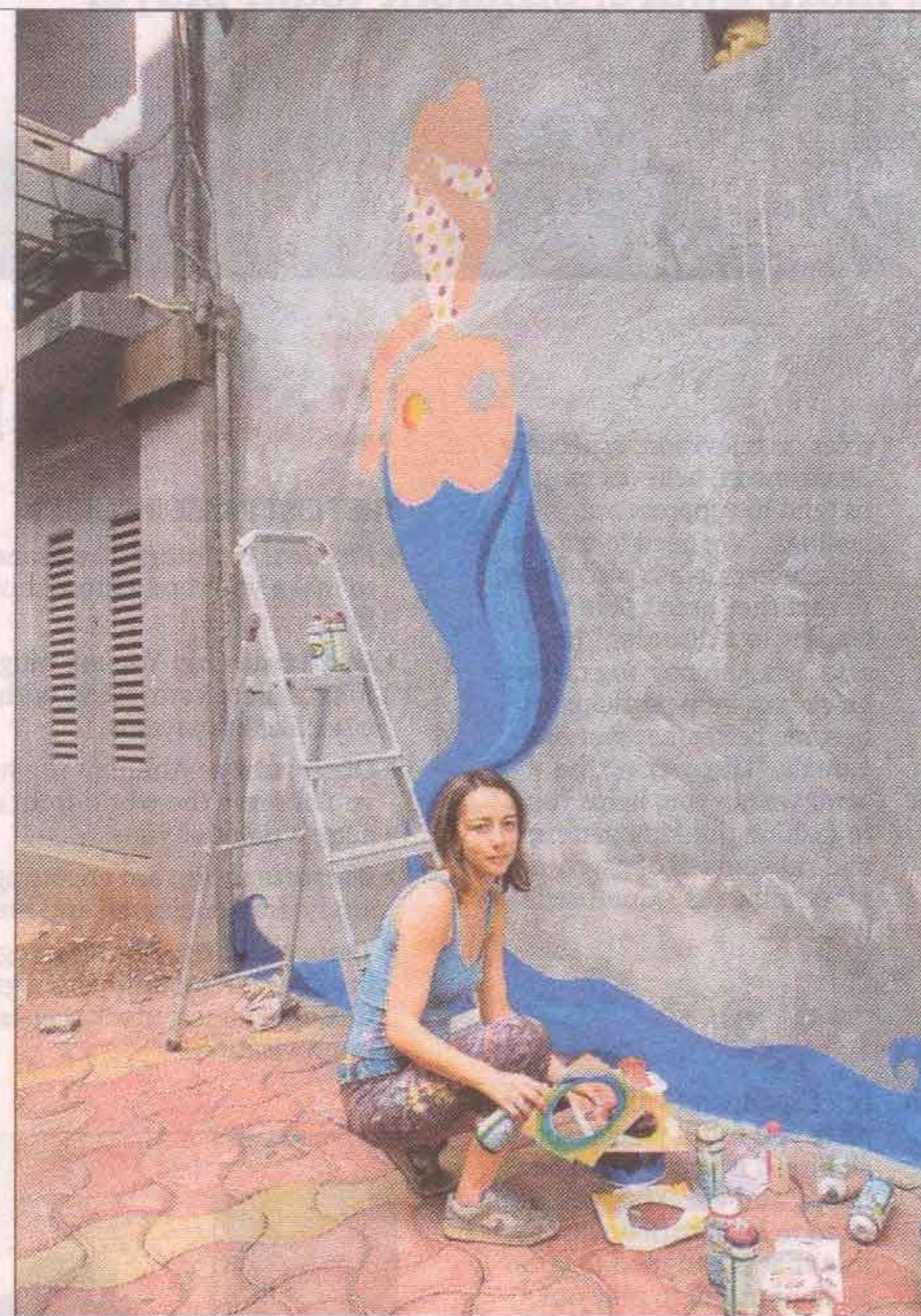
her new Indian influence. "In this country, people offer prayers in sacred rivers and the sun has important religious significance," she points out, the wheels in her mind, visibly spinning as she struggles to decide whether that's where the idea was born. "I don't know!" she decides at last, "It's a bit of everything."

Trading places with dragonflies

Though she's not certain where she derives her influences, Pandolfo does concede that the memories of playing in a small garden-patch at her mother's home in São Paulo, do show up in her art. "I remember watching dragonflies buzz around, and imagining what it would be like if they were my size, and I was theirs. I would imagine riding them too," she laughs, as her gaze washes over the painting of a girl with a dragonfly planted in the blue hair that flows out of her duck's-head-cap.

She lives with Mona Lisa

We find five little girls engaged in different pursuits adorning the face of Pandolfo's mural. A cat features here too, perhaps her own pet cat named Mona Lisa? Could the girls be a portrayal of Nina and her four sisters, and does the face they are clambering over, represent her subconscious? Pandolfo shakes her head in what seems like agreement, "They just might be!"



Nina Pandolfo in front of one of her murals. PICS/ANJANA VASWANI



At: Warehouse on 3rd Pasta, Third Pasta Lane, opposite Colaba Market. Call: 22023056. Log on to: www.GALLERYMASKARA.com. On view till December 31, 11 am to 7 pm, Tuesday-Sunday

