

NAME TO KNOW

Rochelle Santimano

With a repertoire brimful of restored Portuguese-era gems, the architect's restoration work is a subtle hat-tip to her Goan roots

By the time she was four, Rochelle Santimano knew that she was destined for design. "I remember my mother would hand me a colouring book and a box of crayons. I'd spend hours poring over the ivory paper, precisely shading in each outline. And then through school and college, I was constantly toying with design in various capacities," Rochelle recalls. And yet, when it came to choosing a career path, architecture wasn't the obvious choice. "But once I saw how it blended art and science, I couldn't imagine myself doing anything else." Although born and raised in Mumbai, Rochelle's Goan heritage played a significant role in shaping her outlook. "Almost every summer, Diwali and Christmas break was spent at our ancestral home in Colva, South Goa, where my family is originally from. My affection for Goa grew deeper with each passing visit, and by 2011, as a final-year student at IES's College of Architecture, I had already made up my mind that I wanted to put down roots there" she says. So what happened next seemed almost serendipitous. "I received a fellowship grant from



Architect Rochelle Santimano infuses her love for Goa into her work, where she beautifully restores colonial-era homes



From top: Villa Kanai is a contemporary home with a dash of old-world Goan charm; Villa Saudade is a 400-year-old home in Arpora that was restored by Rochelle; Casa Gracia, a 132-year-old colonial home in Assagao, was restored and redesigned into a chic, comfortable five-bedroom villa

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the Charles Correa Foundation, an experience that deeply moulded my understanding of the architectural and cultural fabric of Goa," she says. As one of four young architects chosen for the fellowship, Rochelle had a rare opportunity to interact with stalwarts like Raj Rewal, B. V. Doshi and, of course, Charles Correa himself. "We worked on researching and documenting heritage structures in Panjim. That's really what seeded my interest in restoration."

After spending the next six years working at prominent architecture firms in Goa, Rochelle decided to take a leap of faith by going solo. "2020 is when I felt ready to branch out on my own. And so, with the restoration of my maiden project, the 400-year-old Villa Saudade, was born Studio Praia," she smiles. The name holds special significance for Rochelle. "'Praia' is a Portuguese word that means land by the sea; to me, it symbolises Goa." By the same token, Praia's ambit extends beyond architecture. "It is a place where my love for architecture, restoration, interior design, product design, graphic design, art direction and styling comes together under one umbrella. With a tropical modern approach that straddles old and new, rustic and modern, local and global, it truly is Goa in a nutshell." ♦ studiopraia.in