



## *A FORCE OF NATURE*

### Simone Naturally Inspired

MANY INTERIOR DESIGNERS talk about “bringing the outside in”. Few mean it quite as literally as Simone Arora, whose eponymous store in Mumbai is filled with furniture, homewares and artefacts crafted from wood, sand, crystal and stone. The earthy textures and muted tones form a design concept she calls “nature luxe”.

Desks are made from burnished driftwood and mirrored tables are cut to look like pools of water. The showstopping centrepiece is an enormous, 25-ft chandelier that cascades down from the atrium. It has branches made from twisted metal and crystals that are suspended like icicles. “That is my signature piece,” says Simone. “It was designed exclusively for the store and made in Europe. It is spectacular.”

Simone Naturally Inspired features 140 brands under one roof and is spread over two levels of a beautiful old heritage building, once owned by the commander-in-chief of the Eastern Fleet. “We restored it from the ground up,” she says. “It has stunning arched windows, high ceilings and stone walls. The interiors are tranquil and soothing, in natural colour schemes. I wanted to create a haven from the hustle and bustle of city life.”

Browsing the store is an immersive experience. The ambient lighting changes three times a day and the air is scented with Simone’s signature fragrance. “I want to enlighten and involve the customer from the moment they step in. It’s meant to be a total sensory pleasure.”

Simone, which opened in 2014, is the expression of a lifetime’s interest in interiors. Its owner was born in 1971 into an artistic family: her father, Sanjay Khan, is a filmmaker and actor, and her mother, Zarine, is a successful interior designer. “Our mother kept

a beautiful home full of carefully curated art and furniture,” says Simone. “I remember the way she decorated the dining table with fine crystal, fresh linen and flowers for dinner parties. I still count on her eye and sense of aesthetics when choosing merchandise.”

Simone married entrepreneur Ajay Arora when she was 21 and together they launched D’Decor, now the largest manufacturer of furnishing fabrics in the world. The idea of launching her own brand came four years ago. “I had always been a silent creative contributor to D’Decor,” she says, “and I felt a strong desire to express myself. To create an identity of my own.”

Inspiration came from her suburban Mumbai home, Juhu, which she designed with the renowned Indian architect Hafeez Contractor. “I was intensely involved in every aspect of the build,” she explains. “I personally sourced all the furniture, accessories and art from Europe. It took years. Now it’s an extremely relaxing and rejuvenating place. Every window looks out on lush natural greenery and trees.”

This passion for detail explains her new business venture, Project Simone. “With this offering, we provide turn-key project solutions, from conceptualisation to implementation,” she says. “We showcase our design concepts via mood boards that encompass a complete look and feel of a space.”

Nature remains her inspiration. “The natural world brings us tranquillity and soothes and rejuvenates our minds and senses. Simone is an oasis in the heart of Mumbai and I hope that every customer who comes to my store experiences that.”

— [www.simone.com](http://www.simone.com)