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Arena

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ARTIST'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Work With Giants

The artist Huma Bhabha is preparing to ship a selection of her large-scale totemic sculptures across the country for an exhibition and is eagerly looking forward to her studio being empty again. "When I'm working on a show and on a lot of cork sculptures especially, there's a lot of dust — and cleaning," she said.

Ms. Bhabha, 57, grew up in Pakistan, where her mother, an amateur painter, encouraged her to see artistic potential in unlikely places. She developed a fascination with cartoons and greeting cards and knew early on that she wanted to be an artist. In 1981, she moved to the United States to attend the Rhode Island School of Design and later completed her Masters of Fine Arts at Columbia University.



These days Ms. Bhabha is best known for the richly textured sculptures that she has been making since the 1990s from materials including cork, Styrofoam, plastic, wood, metal and paint. She answered T's artist's questionnaire. For more answers: tmagazine.com. **TIANA REID**

WHAT'S THE WORST STUDIO YOU EVER HAD? Every studio was good. I've had studios with no windows but it all depends on what kind of work you get out of it. They were small. But even the studio that was a closed-in porch — it was tiny — there were some breakthroughs that happened for me there. So I think you can make work anywhere.

WHEN YOU START A NEW PIECE, WHERE DO YOU BEGIN? I start by building the armature for a sculpture. It's pretty much coming straight out of my head — no sketches or drawings usually.

WHEN DID YOU FIRST FEEL COMFORTABLE SAYING YOU'RE A PROFESSIONAL ARTIST? I always said that, even when I wasn't making any money from it. Even when it takes a long time, when you're not really showing that much or selling anything at all, that is what you believe in. When I had to fill out a form or something, that's what I put down as my profession: artist.



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