

# MAN OF CLASSIC ELEGANCE

With the world of art inspiring every step of his life, Mr. Lorenzo Sconci, unveils different shades of his personality, from being a curator of art, to managing a business and about enjoying the finer things in life

*Diksha Vahra*

Art has, since time immemorial, been an important field of interest and inspiration for many. Mr. Lorenzo Sconci, General Manager of the Sonci Art Gallery in the Dubai Design District, is a man who celebrates art within and without. From managing an art gallery, to his love for sailing, traveling, cooking, singing and playing the piano, his approach to life is unconventional. Translating his love for art in his profession and personality, he prefers to keep everything classic and elegant throughout.

**Tell us about your childhood? What details stands out in your memory?**

One of my earliest and most vivid memories is visiting the Quirinale Palace in Rome when I was seven years old to see a painting called the 'La Dama con l'ermellino' by Leonardo da Vinci. I remember making my mother stand in the rain for six hours only to get a glimpse of the painting. Ever since I can remember, I was extremely fond of art. I started regularly visiting my father's art gallery from the age of fifteen, following his work with art. Even as a child wherever I would travel, I would always look out for castles, museums and other artistic monuments because it caught my attention and it interested me a lot. From an early age I had a deep interest for archeology, sculpturing and art history, and I must say these have played a very important role in my childhood and my journey.

**Apparently, fireworks also make its way into the list of your childhood passions. Is this true?**

Yes, one of my biggest childhood fascinations definitely was fireworks. Especially fireworks synchronized with music, which is in itself like a form of art. The sky is like a canvas and we create our artwork using gunpowder, expressing different emotions through varying colors and scenarios with the change of every musical note. I had worked for a very long period of time with Pirotecnica Morsani in Italy, which is one of the most important fireworks companies in the world. Together we did shows for the general public, the government and some European royal families, which were highly appreciated. We have won many world championships for fireworks like in Montreal, Chantilly and Cannes. It would be very exciting to bring to Dubai the best of Italian Pyrotechnics.





**From working with fireworks to being the director of an art gallery, how did the transition come about?** My father Dr. Stefano Sconci, founder of Sconci Art Gallery in Rome, is one of the leading patrons of art in Rome. He has been especially supportive of the work of Arab artists ever since he opened the gallery in 1977. He has in his collection seminal works by well-known Arab artists such as Fateh Moudarres, Hussein Madi and Abdullatif Al Smoudi from the period when they were studying art in Rome.

When I was a teenager, I used to attend auctions and fairs with my father where I got to learn a lot about art. For example, finer techniques to recognize which piece of art belongs to which era is a skill you can only acquire after exploring lots of artworks. Say for instance, when artists would not sign under their paintings, only someone who has seen and read works of different artists in depth can differentiate which piece belongs to whom. Such things fascinated me and I decided to share my knowledge with the rest of the world, which I could only do through an art gallery.

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For me, art is an emotion and it is an integral part of my life. Since childhood, I have dwelled in the world of art and now it has become even more important as it is my profession now. Fireworks were my hobby but art means a lot more to me. Art in its many forms such as painting, architecture, sculpture, music and poetry enables us to express our inner self. It captures our feelings in ways that words cannot, and helps preserve them through time and space, allowing future generations to have a deep insight about the past, and helping them to better understand the present, and plan for the future. My love and fondness for art is evident throughout, in and around me.

**Vintage or contemporary – what type of art captivates you more?** When I was younger, I was always attracted to vintage art but growing up I began to develop a liking for modern and contemporary art. From a business perspective, contemporary art is trending these days so it is very important. However, since I hail from Italy, my inherent love for vintage art continues to remain within me. I used to love collecting pieces of fine art that reflect heritage. Sometimes I like to relax admiring my private collection while smoking a good cigar and drinking a glass of good brandy or some excellent Italian wine. Vintage art is all about seeing the hand of the artist in every stroke. Contemporary art, on the other hand, is more conceptual where the techniques and executions make a difference.

**You are wearing a Baume and Mercier vintage watch on your wrist. Do you like vintage watches?** Classical elegance is my key. I like wearing things that possess an artistic value. For instance, the Baume and Mercier watch that I am wearing is nearly sixty years old. This watch is one of very few pieces produced by the manufacturer in this model and it has certain uniqueness to it. There is also an emotional attachment since this watch has been worn in my family for generations. I prefer surrounding myself with less, but with very meaningful things. But primarily you notice my preferences are leaning towards classics.

I love dressing properly for every occasion. So it is not really about my mood but more about what the situation demands from me. Even when I am casually dressed, you wouldn't find me wearing running shoes. I love keeping it simple but classic. Being an appreciator of art, I always prefer bespoke clothes. I love wearing pieces that are unique and exhibit a genuine sense of craftsmanship. With ready to wear, my concern is similarity because then everyone has what you have. The distinguishing factor dies there. Nevertheless there are few brands that I like very much because I feel they are able to represent my personal style.

**What brought you to Dubai and especially the Dubai Design District?** I came to Dubai for the first time on a short holiday and saw the potential for developing the arts scene here and decided to stay. It wasn't a tough decision because Dubai is a very safe country and a good settling point. The multicultural exposure you get here is hard to find anywhere else. Everyone respects diversity and accepts it too, which is really important these days.

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The art scene is now developing rapidly in Dubai, but when I arrived here five years ago there weren't too many galleries and I felt compelled to establish an art gallery here. My objective was to honor the strong cultural ties between Italy and the Arab region by showcasing works by important Arab artists from our collection, and providing a platform for local emerging artists. That's why the title of my first exhibition was "A Charming Vision: an embrace between East and West". This "embrace" began many centuries ago when the Arabic culture established itself in Europe, and especially in Italy influencing its style. You can see concrete examples of this influence in Italian cities like Venezia, Ravenna, Palermo and many others. I also felt that this would be the ideal place to introduce key Italian and international artworks to the exciting art market in the region. While researching the market, I realized that the people from this region already have a good appreciation of Italian food, fashion and art because they often travel to Italy, and they visit not only famous touristic cities, but also smaller, lesser-known Italian towns.

**What are you up to when you are not busy curating art?** I get very little time off so whenever I do get some time, I relax and enjoy my life. When I am here, I go out for dinners with friends. Since I like cooking, I do host people over for dinners occasionally. I like to explore

the outdoors of Dubai and the Gulf area but when I am in Italy, I like to go sailing and relax on my boat. I love travelling to different islands especially Sardinia in Porto Cervo and the Archipelago of Maddalena where I love seeing the miraculous sunsets and enjoying the glamorous nightlife. The Sea is definitely my second love.

**If you were given an option to change your profession today, which field would you have changed to?** It is a very tough choice because art is in my blood. Following my academic background in finance, I would probably get into art investment funds. My other passion being the sea, I would likely look towards the naval industry.

**In a nutshell, how would you describe yourself?** Some know me as an entrepreneur and some as an artist or an art lover. I, however, identify myself with all of these. I am adventurous and I like to try different things in life, which opens me up to a lot of opportunities to develop new interests. I prefer, however, revealing only certain aspects of myself to certain people. Those who know me for ages know my tastes and likings, and those who don't can explore them in due course. Getting to know the whole me may take some time, but I believe this is because of the different aspects of my personality and that I like to reveal myself to people not all at once, but day by day. ■