

Fellows at ESO

Rubina Kotak

Although I spent the first two years of my life in the south-western corner of Tanzania, I grew up near the equator, in Kenya. Having obtained my Masters degree from Canterbury (Kent), I decided that it was time to venture somewhere a little more exotic. Hence I moved north, to southern Sweden to start a PhD at Lund Observatory.

Here I worked on time-resolved spectroscopy of cool white dwarf pulsators with a view to simultaneously tapping their asteroseismological potential and constraining the properties of the convection zone in a novel way. Having (temporarily) exhausted all the targets that could be observed in this way, using the largest (optical) telescope on the planet, it was time to move on. So I found myself at Imperial College London, working as part of a concerted European effort to deci-

pher the physics of thermonuclear supernovae (SNe). Partly as a result of the numerous side-projects that sprouted out of this, two of my current preoccupations are the characterisation and use of circumstellar matter surrounding SNe to determine the nature of the progenitor star(s), and whether core-collapse SNe are able to produce significant quantities of dust at all redshifts.

I arrived at ESO-Garching less than a year ago and am still negotiating my way around the intriguing maze of corridors, doors, and dead ends, making navigation using images e.g. of the Horsehead Nebula, a necessity! My duties at ESO include working in the PR department which is both fun and stimulating. Being at ESO gives that child-in-a-sweetshop feeling: lots of interesting talks, experts in every field, and a general feeling of being at the hub of events and decisions that will shape the future for decades to



Photo: G. Dremel, ESO

Rubina Kotak

come. My time at ESO is sadly coming to an end, but I'm looking forward to taking up a staff position at Queen's University Belfast. Definitely time to invest in umbrellas!



The Starburst Galaxy NGC 908. Image based on data obtained with FORS2 on the VLT, using B, V, and R filters. North is up and East is to the left. The data were extracted from the ESO Science Archive and further processed by Henri Boffin (ESO). More information can be found in ESO PR Photo 27a/06.

Corrigendum

The caption of the second photo in the report on the Walloon Space Days in the last issue of *The Messenger* mentioned Mme Simonet, Minister for Science, New Technologies and External Relations of the Walloon Regional Government, while the photo showed Dr. Monnik Desmeth, Belgian delegate and Vice President of the ESO Council. The picture here shows Mme Simonet at the press conference at AMOS.



Photo: S. Tarquinio, AMOS