

# Little master stands tall

Artist Jaideep Mehrotra talks about his latest installation 'Sachin Tendulkar' made of aluminium. He also throws some light on the city's public art scene

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✓ If cricket is one of the many religions practised in India, then perhaps it won't be too wrong to say that Sachin Tendulkar, (christened "God" by cricket enthusiasts and experts), is as much a religion in Mumbai. RPG Art Corridor in association with Harsh Goenka, as part of their public art initiative will unveil today two art installations as tribute to the cricketing legend. The job was entrusted to one of the most distinguished artists in the city, Jaideep Mehrotra, who took around five months to take the concept from his imagination to a glorious tangible end.

Jaideep says, "The criteria of the creation was given to me by RPG — it was going to be a public sculpture. They selected a few artists including me to share our concepts. They liked the idea I presented and I got on board. Primarily, I wanted a sculptural artistic work that would be attached to a concept and the context, but one that could also stand on its own." The artist went on to create two sculptures, using a special quality of aluminium, that's usually used to build aircrafts and Formula One cars, along with



Artist Jaideep Mehrotra with one of his latest installations

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carbon fibre. Speaking of his first piece that is put up at the Worli S a s m i r a Junction, Jaideep says, "When the aluminium is cut out, they are staggered on a plate and the sparkling bits, when looked at from the side, glint in sunlight. The surface upfront looks like a woven black fabric as it's made of carbon fibre. And

when you slowly move away from it, say about 10-12 feet, you actually see Sachin's face. But when you drive away from it, one moment you see the face and the next moment it vanishes." The artist wanted to create the feel of an illusion in the sculpture. "People envisage stars as larger than life. The persona is always bigger than the person. But when you move away, that's when the aura begins to diminish. All of it is an illusion. It's in our minds." He continues, "I'm also trying to

use solar lighting to make it look more prominent. I can imagine 20 years from now, somebody driving by it will go 'I thought I saw a face'. I wanted to create that mystery element."

Jaideep likes to spend more time thinking about an idea than engaging in the actual physical process of materialising it. The other piece themed on the Little Master is a portrait made of text. "The text is a quote of Sachin. When he was going through a low phase in his career, he had said, 'when people throw stones at you, you turn them into milestones'. In this sculpture, the aluminium is sandwiched between two pieces of carbon fibres." The artist enjoys a good game of cricket, has immense respect for Tendulkar but he's far from a fanatic and he feels the objective distance may have helped him create what he has.

Jaideep rues the fact that the public art scene in Mumbai is non-existent as compared to the world. He says, "There are too many restrictions here. I remember a few years ago, a group of J.J. students were asked to paint a few cow statues near Churchgate station. There was a huge furore about how the 'holy cow' is being tainted and so on. People have also tried painting the walls of cops' stations and traffic stations and the police put a full stop on that too. The stimulus needs to be there. People need to be more tolerant. Creativity causes people to advance."