

# Narratives in white

**CHAT** Paper engineer  
Sachin George Sebastian  
on how he folds meaning  
into sheets of paper



**WHITE NOISE** Sachin George Sebastian PHOTO: M. SUBHASH

It was two hours before The Chivas Studio Spotlight event at N Asian and energy levels were running high. Sachin George Sebastian stands amidst the melee, quiet and observant, perhaps drawing inspiration for his next project: chaos, and the beauty of it, seems to be a dominant theme in most of his work on display.

His display, carefully conceptualised to fit the theme of the evening, showcased complete works as well as smaller works in progress. “The idea was to show people what goes into the making of a complete work. The display here is a representation of my studio. Viewers can see in it reflections of the ideas and the thoughts which lead to a creation,” he says as his eyes travel to the largest of his displayed works titled ‘Within Chaos’. The 6.5x6.5 foot white paper collage depicts a man, crouched in foetal position as if shielding himself from the buildings, towers, electricity poles that are weighing down on him. It is a com-

ment on life in a metropolis; a story in black, white and paper.

The table was covered with bits of snow white paper in different shapes and sizes. Some hard torn strips and others carefully carved and folded shapes. The smell of glue hanging around the ‘studio’ confirms that his work is not just limited to the traditional version of Origami but also to its variant, Kirigami, which involves cutting and gluing of the paper too.

Much of Sachin’s inspiration, it turns out, comes from paper itself. “If I were to tell a story with just a strip of white paper, what would I say?” he responds when asked about his choice of medium – sheets of white paper. Being born and brought up in Kasaragod, a town in north Kerala, Sachin shares an ambivalent relationship with cities and urban life.

The second display consists of six frames, each frame floral metaphor for a big Indian metropolis. “People are

drawn to cities because they look perfect from a distance, like the flowers, but within them there is chaos and confusion. But you can also find beauty in this chaos,” he explains.

His philosophy is simple: “I like the idea of nature and flowers and dislike concrete jungles and sharp corners.” The works aptly represents this conflict and foretells a dystopian future where city infrastructure outlives the people in it.

Hyderabad is depicted by a bud, unlike bigger cities like Chennai and Delhi which are fully bloomed flowers. Look closely and you recognise the shape of the Charminar rising from among the clutter of paper buildings.

Like these cities, his work is continuously evolving. “Once I return, I will have to rework the Hyderabad piece to add in my new perceptions of the city. There will certainly be a lot more buildings then,” says the first time visitor.

ZEENAB ANEEZ