

# ON CONDITION

Narendra Yadav's solo is an irreverent take on our conditioning



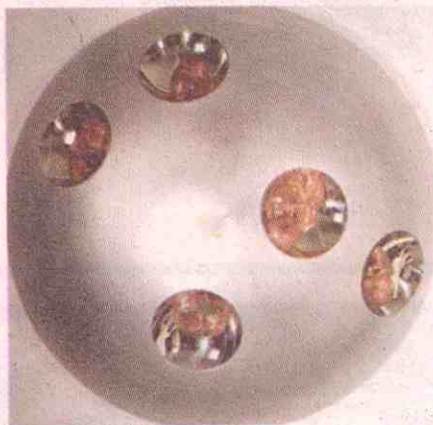
*Cosmic Reflections Before Mortality Strikes; (Below) Celestial Bodies in Conversation*

GEORGINA MADDOX

FOUR men lie covered with sheets, as static plays on the radio next to them. Five fetuses — in different stages of growth — are nestled in crater — like concaves that rotate round in a shining orb. Nearby post-industrial waste accumulates in a plastic container as two hands, pierced with injections, jut out of it. Welcome to the laboratory of 'Doctor Strangelove', or in this case that of artist Narendra Yadav. He examines the whole process of human conditioning through his latest exhibition 'Pavlov's God', which opens at Abhay Maskara's gallery The Warehouse, Colaba, on February 27.

The almost life-like men and fetuses are cleverly created replicas made of fibre-glass. "My main concern here is to examine the manner in which we are conditioned to believe certain truths, faiths and beliefs of human beings. Like the Russian scientist Ivan Pavlov's experiments on the conditioning of humans and animals, I want to explore through my work the ways in which people can respond to a stimulus when conditioned. Thus beliefs can range from the absurd to the illogical," says the artist, who has a day job as the creative head at Lintas Advertising Agency.

"In that sense, the babies are the only ones who are not conditioned by society, they are in some way open to the great cosmic universe but pure and untrained by the propaganda of our society," says the 44-year-old artist. The installation he refers to has the foetal babies rotating in the shiny celestial orb and is titled *Cosmic Reflections*



*Before Mortality Strikes*. And the one with men lying with radios is titled *Celestial Bodies in Conversation*. It speaks of the contact between the lines between the dead and the alive as well as the conscious and sub-conscious mind.

"A lot of the statements I make are ambiguous since I do not want one interpretation for my work, I like people to interact with it and come to their own conclusions," says the Ratnagiri-born artist. His other works hint at the 9/11 tragedy as a paper plane crashes into metal towers. In another instance, wooden bookstands placed on a table with a plush carpet below showcase children's books instead of the holy books that are usually kept in such a sanctified space.

"We are all told stories and myths in our childhood. By placing children's books in the position of the holy books, I am trying to say that the stories within the holy books are also in a way stories we are told," says the artist of his subtly irreverent works.

