

## Jaipur-based sculptor turns 'invisible yet abundant' cigarette litter into works of art



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Jaipur, Jan 4 (PTI) Discarded cigarette buds have morphed into refined sculptures at the hands of Jaipur-based artist Prashant Pandey as he incorporates one of the most ignored elements of urban litter into his distinctive artistic language.

The artist believes cigarette waste carries intimate traces of human presence. "These remnants hold breath, habit and time. They are private gestures left behind in public spaces," he said, offering a glimpse into his ethos.

His solo exhibition, 'Biography', will be presented at Gallery Maskara during Mumbai Gallery Weekend 2026.

The exhibition features more than 70 sculptural works made entirely from discarded cigarette buds. Each sculpture uses around 5,000 of these pieces of urban disuse. In total, over 3.5 lakh butts have gone into creating the body of work, the artist said.

The material was collected over several years from the streets of Jaipur and from public smoking zones at airports, restaurants and other shared spaces.

"I have been working with cigarette buds since 2010. It took me five years to complete this project," Pandey said. "What we discard often reveals more about us than what we choose to keep."

Pandey said he was drawn to cigarette buds because of their invisibility despite their abundance. "They are everywhere, yet rarely noticed. That contradiction makes them powerful," he said.

The works resemble leaf skins, anatomical membranes and floating cellular systems. The exhibition moves away from the lifespan of objects and focuses instead on the silent stories embedded within them.

"Rather than moralising, 'Biography' functions like an archaeology of everyday gestures," the artist said.

Beyond his contemporary practice, Pandey has also been involved in major cultural projects. He was part of the team that worked on the sculptural execution of the Ram Darbar idols at the Ram Temple complex in Ayodhya.

The project required meticulous craftsmanship, traditional sculptural discipline and close collaboration with master artisans, highlighting the artist's ability to move between experimental contemporary art and classical sacred forms, Pandey said.

The exhibition will open with a preview during Mumbai Gallery Weekend from January 8 to 11. It will remain on view at Gallery Maskara from January 12 to February 28.

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