

## Artist creates India's first public art museum on water and sustainable development

By Sandip Bal, Times News Network

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If you are passing through Rasulgarh Square and notice a giant tube well and a series of painted building-like structures, don't be surprised. This busy traffic junction that connects Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Puri is getting a makeover.

The roundabout at the centre of the crossroads under the flyover was being used as a scrapyard to store construction debris. But now, it's getting a new lease of life through a series of art installations and murals deemed India's first public art museum on water and sustainable development. It has been conceptualised and created by internationally acclaimed contemporary artist Manav Gupta. He has been working relentlessly for over two months to give the square a beautiful look.

According to Manav, the art installations are not mere structures, but are the elements of a concept — the city in a city — sustainable city, smart city, and are made up of scraps from the bridge.

*"It's an effort to engage common people through public art. In our country, public art is a rare thing. So, I have tried to introduce my concepts, which are mostly about transforming pottery into large installations. I wanted to bring this concept to Bhubaneswar and use the scraps lying around. Since pottery may not be feasible here, I used concrete scraps and debris."*

He has used the concept of Earth, which when pronounced in Hindi — Arth — gives it two meanings: 'meaning' and 'wealth'. And in keeping with that, Manav has put up three installations — a giant 20-foot tube well, a city of concrete blocks and murals.

*"A tube well was used in villages as a source of clean water, but no one uses it these days. It's a symbol of pure water from within the Earth. I have made this installation from scraps. I used waste concrete blocks used for pressure testing during the flyover construction to create the city within a city. I have made flowing pathways that look like rivers from tube well to the city. This charts the path water takes from its source to households." — Manav Gupta*

The installation city reflects the architectural design of an urban centre, with unique murals on the seven towers. These murals are a tribute to Odisha and the city of Bhubaneswar, with various elements specific to the city like the Lingaraj temple, Odissi dance and more. Manav said one side of the city installation depicts realism and the other, sustainable development.

*"I was invited to create this public art after having worked in many places across the globe. Bhubaneswar has been noticed all across for its recent achievements like holding a hockey World Cup and becoming the smartest city in India."*

Manav, who had left the city ahead of cyclone Fani and returned after it, told us that it was as if he was seeing a different city.

*"While the cyclone caused so much destruction all around, I feel blessed that my installations were not affected. It was a humbling experience after having spent 20 years of my life visualizing and creating these types of environmental art installations." — Manav Gupta*

To his credit, Manav has six most iconic and revolutionary art projects in India this decade. Once finished, the installations will be maintained by the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) and would act as a major tourist attraction.