

ELLE 25

THE POWER LIST

They are brimming with PROMISE and breaking new ground. ELLE showcases trendsetters from film, art, theatre, music, literature, radio and sport, just as this ensemble steps into the spotlight

Photographers AKSHAY MAHAJAN, BIKRAMJIT BOSE, DWAIPAYAN MAZUMDAR

Hairstylist ELTON VESSOAKER FOR NALINI OF NALINI & YASMIN

Make-up Artist CHHAYA CHAKRABORTY FOR SHISEIDO

BAPTIST
COELHO

artist

It's only in the past two years that Baptist Coelho has got used to the idea of identifying himself as an artist. "For the longest time, even when I came back from England after completing my master's degree, I was reluctant to use the word 'artist' for myself," he says. "It came out of my respect for art. I would just think, how dare I call myself an artist?"

Baptist studied graphic design at Mumbai's LS Raheja School of Art before heading off to get his MA in visual communication at the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design in the United Kingdom. He returned to India in 2007 with a portfolio of works and ideas that seemed simply outlandish. One of his installations sought to make air tangible, another wanted to bottle

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dreams. Highly conceptual yet simple in terms of technology and frequently bizarre, Baptist's art is an earnest look at the world through his wide-eyed perspective and it's impossible to not share his sense of wonder.

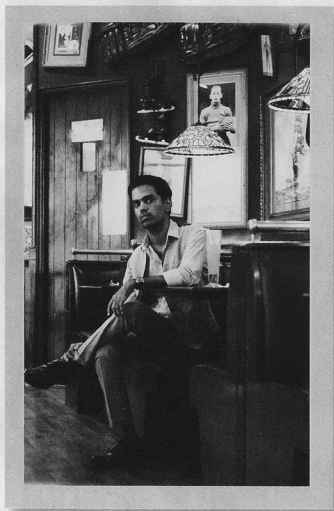
His latest project is titled *Your Dream Home* and for it, Baptist asked people what their dream home would be. The fact that he's used the same device repeatedly doesn't bother Baptist who points out the diversity of perspectives that are presented when a range of people become part of a work. "I think mine is an outsider's perspective. My works are all about accessing another place, maybe psychological, maybe physical. The public participation is what gives my work intimacy."

The best of Baptist's works make clever use of public participation. For *Paper Planes*, he asked children to write down their dreams on pieces of

paper. *You Can't Have Emotions Out There* used objects and interviews Baptist collected over a few months in Ladakh. "Public participation is naturally part of my practice. I like how it involves people who wouldn't dream of being part of contemporary art participate in it."

Although many of his works strive to raise awareness about social issues, like the hardship faced by soldiers or the growing economic divide in urban society, Baptist sees himself as more of an artist than an activist. "I look at art as a mirror. Reflections aren't always absolutely accurate. They can show the same thing in different ways. That's what I think art does. It offers a reflection of reality that is altered."

BY DEEPANJANA PAL,
A FREELANCE WRITER AND THE AUTHOR
OF *THE PAINTER: A LIFE OF RAVI VARMA*.

MANU
JOSEPH

author

While Manu Joseph's contemporaries from Loyola College in Chennai were cramming for the IIT and IIM exams, he was cutting his teeth on celebrity profiles for *Stardust* and *Society*. When his classmates headed to Manhattan, Manu found himself living in AFD chawl, the accommodation that his new employers had promised. For a man with a sense of his own promise, it was a blow.

But he stuck it out. Currently the editor of *Open* magazine, Manu's career included stints at *Outlook*, *Wired.com* and *The Times of India*. He hit paydirt this year with his first novel *Serious Men*, published in India, the UK and the US. "All my life, >