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**Mohammed Qasim  
Ashfaq**

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**Make Me a Black Hole and I Will Believe**

*Make Me a Black Hole and I Will Believe You* is an exhibition of recent works by London-based artist, Mohammad Qasim Ashfaq. A wall piece made of aluminium tape, drawings on paper and curiously shaped maquettes come together to create an intriguing conversation between abstraction, geometry and, in the words of (that famous astronaut) Buzz Lightyear, infinity and beyond.

The maquettes look solid, precise in their geometry and almost futuristic. One would expect them to have been conceived using complicated mathematics and sophisticated computer programmes but more often than not, Mohammad Qasim Ashfaq works by hand and is guided by his instinct. By his own admission, he isn't very good at maths and his regular tools are pencils, rulers, surgical blades and a compass that his father gave him when he was a boy. The gleaming, angular works that seem to belong in a science fiction world began their lives as a pencil sketch. Many remain sketches while those that are three-dimensional have undergone countless revisions as sketches and then metallic cardboard models before being manufactured and engineered into their present shape.

Although much of his work is now sculptural, Mohammed specialized in painting while he was a student at Robert Gordon University and then at the prestigious Slade School of Fine Art in London. Using mirrorcards, metallic cardboard, tape as well as metal, he creates pieces that intriguingly combine abstract ideas of infinity and spirituality with actualized symbols of power and energy. Whether through two-dimensional works, like his drawings and tape installation, or three-dimensional pieces like the maquettes, Mohammed seeks to capture abstract ideas in the precisely angular shapes of his art.

Consider Mohammed's drawings and sculptural pieces carefully and you'll see that they are made up of simple shapes. Lines and planes, drawn and imagined with meticulous accuracy, meet one another to emphasise the simplicity and power of geometric perfection. There's a sweet innocence to them, despite their stark appearances. 'Black Object' is a model of a spacecraft and this must inevitably remind a viewer of childhood fantasies of space odysseys. 'Beads' looks like something that would be used to tie a little girl's ponytail, especially with the pink bead. Yet, the sharpness of angles and the intensity of colours undercut the childlike qualities of Mohammed's work. His drawings are deceptively simple – dark, geometric orbs suspended in a pristine, white papery space – until the graphite catches the light and you see the millions of meticulous, precise, unwavering lines that radiate from different points to create these shapes.

The maquettes glower glossily. Their planes often reflect one another, intensifying the black-as-space colour of the pieces. Walk around them and imagine the maquettes as enormous, monolithic structures out in the open, reflecting and absorbing nature and its energy. In the white space of the gallery, on the other hand, the maquettes' gleaming surfaces are revealed in all their black glory by the stark contrast with the gallery's white walls. These two colours are infinity, either suffused with light (white) or emptied of it (black). The maquettes reflect the silvery filigree of Mohammed's wall installation, adding a shimmering layer of magic to the curious objects.

Technical in appearance but fanciful, futuristic and yet old-fashioned, Mohammed's art plays hide and seek with references and legacies. Russian constructivism, traditional Islamic art, British minimalist sculpture from the 1980s, the spare power of Nasreen Mohamedi's unique style, all these may be glimpsed in Mohammed's drawings and maquettes. But all these names and traditions are only allusions that hover around a very distinctive and contemporary practice that Mohammed Qasim Ashfaq has developed in a short time. This exhibition of drawings, maquettes and a wall installation in Mumbai marks his Indian debut.