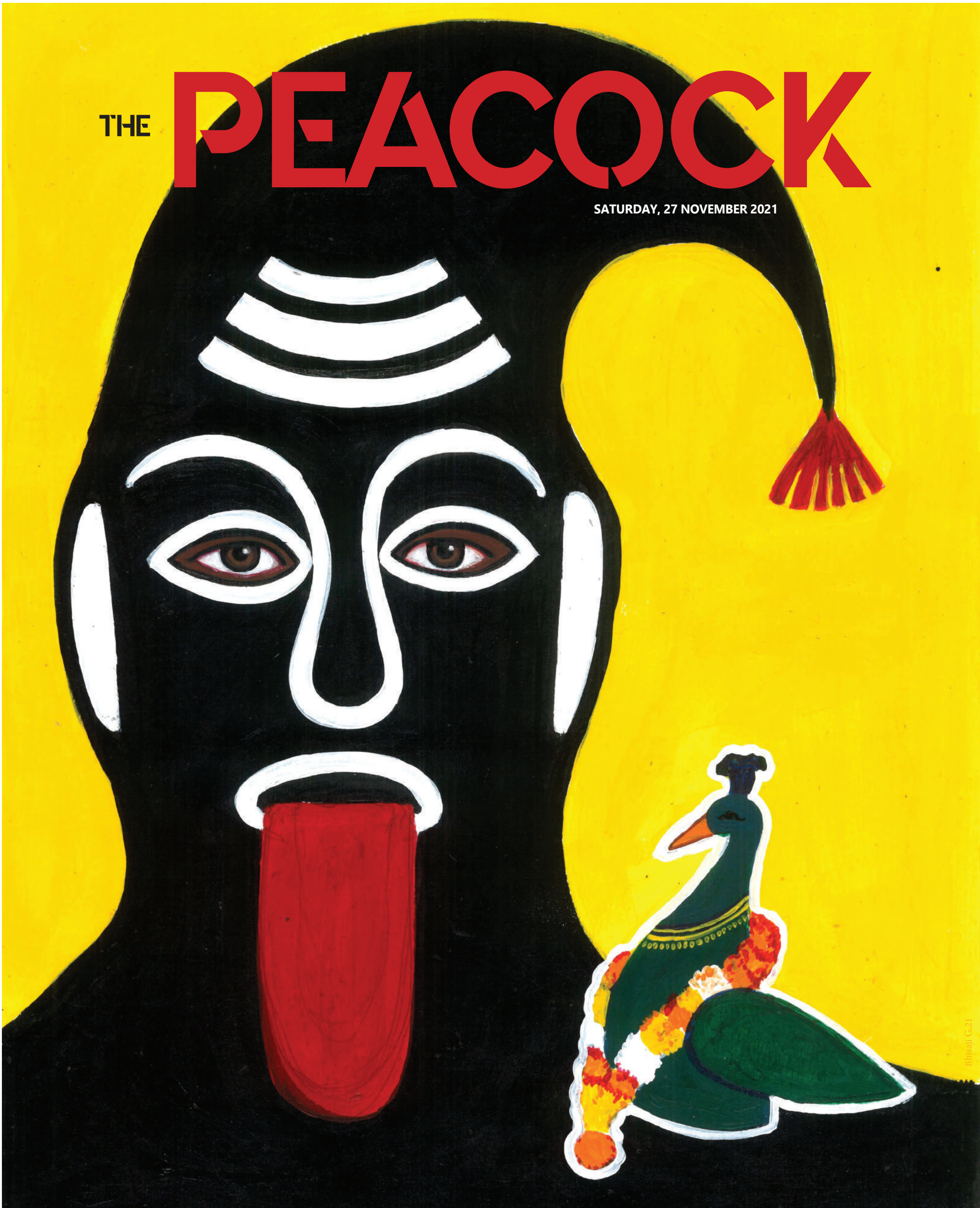


THE

PEACOCK

SATURDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2021



The word for “love” in Konkani is Mog. Recently, I was invited to a literary event at the Museum of Goa, which also uses that acronym, and found the term very apt. The brainchild of one of India’s leading artists, it is one of the country’s largest private galleries, and spills over with wonderful artworks that relate to Goa’s rich artistic traditions. Subodh Kerkar wasn’t onstage at the function, but his presence was felt everywhere nonetheless. I was really impressed by this multi-dimensional cultural space, and also by the artist’s deep love for literature.

I got a guided tour of the three-floored structure where paintings, photos, sculptures and installations reveal Goa’s history and culture as interpreted from many different artists’ perspectives. I realized that Museum of Goa is not a permanent exhibition like most other museums, but instead a space that organizes exhibitions, workshops, book readings, lecture series, talks, and screenings followed by discussions.

I find Subodh’s art very impressive. He is imaginative, innovative, and creative, all at once. One work that I really like is a boat, resembling Noah’s Ark, with people leaving the shores of Goa fearing mass conversions in the early 16th Century, and carrying their deities with them to protect them from being desecrated. Adjacent to the structure is the Sculpture Garden where many others of Subodh’s art works are displayed.

The artistic lineage of Goa is very rich, and our tiny state has produced many world-famous artists. Antonio Xavier Trindade (1870-1935) was an important painter of the Bombay school while his daughter Angela Trindade (1909-1980) was known for her Indian style Christian paintings. Francis Newton Souza ((1924-2002) is one of the greatest artists India has ever produced, who was a founding member of the Progressive Artists’ Group, Bombay.

The renowned artist M F Husain acknowledged Souza as his mentor. Souza’s

painting *Birth* (1955) was sold in the international market for over US \$ 4 million, which was a record price for an Indian artist

at the time. Another great was Vasudev Gaitonde (1924-2001) who is regarded as India’s foremost modern abstractionist. His

work currently owns the record at auction. Yet another distinguished artist was Angelo de Fonseca (1902-1967) who got his training from Abanindranath Tagore at Shantiniketan.

Earlier this year, we lost two nonagenarian greats: Vamona Navelcar (1929-2021) and Laxman Pai (1924-2021) who both worked tirelessly in the field of art for over seven decades. Following in their footsteps are generations of others, including many brilliant twenty-somethings including *The Peacock*’s own cover artist this year, Bhisaji Gadekar (who also studied at Shantiniketan).

Subodh is part of a multigenerational artistic dynasty. His father Chandrakant was an exceptionally gifted draughtsman and painter, and his son Siddharth is London-trained and very talented. The older Kerkar was a teacher by profession, and I was fortunate to have been taught by him in high school. Once, when I wrote an essay, he called me close to him, and advised me to opt for French studies. “You must read French literature. Because I can sense that you will be a talented writer someday,” he said. Unfortunately, he did not receive the acclaim that he deserved as an artist, but it is good to see that Subodh has, as also his sister Harshada, who is one of the most brilliant realist artists of our times.

Subodh is a non-practicing medical doctor, who once ran a hospital. But his passion for art compelled him to give up his practice. After founding MOG in 2015, he started working towards promoting art in every conceivable form, which he says is based on “the realization that in a country with over 1.3 billion population hardly a hundred thousand connect with contemporary art. I want to change that, make art affordable and accessible.”

“Love and empathy are the tools with which to build the future.” says Subodh. I could not agree more, and salute his efforts wholeheartedly.

MOG Asundi



Illustration by Chloe Cordeiro

SHORT TAKES



As a theatre student there’s so much to learn from international films about cinematography, directing and acting. They are bolder and less censored compared to Indian films.

Sanyukta Pagi
Theatre Student,
Goa



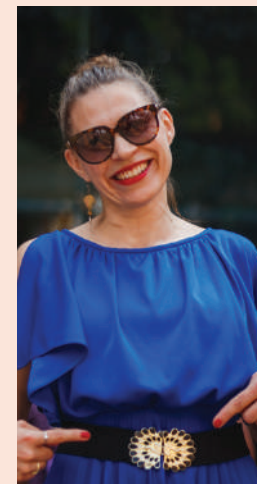
IFFI is the only opportunity I get to watch internationally acclaimed films on a big screen in Goa. I enjoyed *Bergman Island* for its story and cinematography and *Ring Wandering*.

Manish Karapurkar
PR Professional,
Goa



I enjoyed *Bettada Hoovu* which was sad and very touching. I like to watch psychological thrillers so I’m looking forward to watching *Kalkokkko*.

Mekha Rajesh
Psychology
Student,
Bangalore



My experience in India and at IFFI has been truly wonderful. It was amazing to have the world premiere of *Humanization* here. The house was full and everyone was really focused on the film.

Louise Ryme
Actress, Sweden

Of Chicken, Man, and Movies

BY SACHIN CHATTE

In *Feathers* (2021), directed by debutant Omar El Zohairy, a man with an extremely modest background is turned into a chicken, during a magic show that goes wrong. The man walks into a magic box, comes out as a chicken and the process turns out to be irreversible. As audacious and offbeat as the plot may sound, there is so much more to the film – it is not actually the story of the man or the chicken. It is about his wife, who had to bear the consequences of what has happened to her husband.

It is only at film festivals that you get to see cinema of this quality and spectrum. Traditionally, viewers are exposed mostly to Hollywood and Bollywood, and in some cases, regional cinema. When you watch cinema of the world, you realize how far filmmakers are ready to push the envelope. For a young audience watching this kind of cinema, it can expand their horizons and open new doors of perception.

There was so much to admire in *Feathers* in every aspect of filmmaking, starting with the mise en scène – the interiors are grey, dirty, with the paint peeling off, and mostly barren. The exterior shots always have smoke or other forms of pollution, with industrial buildings in the background. It is a socio-realist, absurdist drama with a touch of Aki Kaurismäki and Roy Andersson. How admirable it is to combine so many elements and pull them off successfully! Valdimar Jóhannsson's Icelandic feature *Lamb* also left the audiences at IFFI this year with their jaws on the floor.

Over the years at IFFI, we have seen some memorable films. Movies that have stayed in our hearts and mind, stood the test of time – and our age. I remember watching Jafar Panahi's *Taxi* (2015) twice on the same day – once in the afternoon and later, during the midnight screening. A love letter to cinema, the director has been banned by the Iranian

government from making films, but yet he continues to make them surreptitiously. *Taxi* is a film that was shot entirely in a, well, taxi – every single shot is from within and not once does the camera leave the taxi. While teaching Film Appreciation at Goa University, I often cite this film for its uniqueness.

If cinema is looked at beyond being just a form of entertainment, it can be a richly rewarding experience. Cinema is also a great tutor – we learn about people, politics, culture, emotions, and more. I have learned as much about aboriginals in Australia from Rolf de Heer's films screened at IFFI [*The Tracker* (2002), *Ten Canoes* (2006), *Charlie's Country* (2013)] as I have through books. This director was also at IFFI as the jury chairman in 2006, and we gained some remarkable insights into his filmmaking.

We have seen horrors of war through cinema and practically every year there is a film based on some incident during WWII. I remember the Polish film *General Nil* (2009) by Ryszard Bugajski – it was about General August Emil Fieldorf aka “Nil” who fought for Poland against the Nazis and after the war, he was punished by his own communist government. Bugajski is known for his political films like *Interrogation*, which was made in 1982, but was banned by the Polish government till the dissolution of the Eastern bloc.

Cinema has also taught us precious lessons, that one should stay calm and stress-free through the vagaries of life. As someone who loves tea compared to other forms of liquids, here is my favorite filmy scene. In *3 Faces* (2018) when the protagonist (played by Panahi) is driving around in a remote village, he stops at a house, to ask for directions. There is a celebration going on within, and an old man invites them in for a cup of tea, to which Panahi politely refuses and says that they have to go. “Someday, we all have to go my friend, but you should always make time for a cup of tea,” says the wise old man.



Illustration by Keziah Pereira

SHORT TAKES



I try to watch the Indian regional films because they are usually more heartwarming and moving than most Bollywood films. I loved *21st Tiffin* and *Sunny*, and am looking forward to *I Am Kalam*.

Archana Olat
Housewife, Goa



It's been great to have my film *Neeli Hakki* at IFFI and see the reaction from the crowd. I feel that my strong urge of telling something through cinema has been fulfilled with this project.

Ganesh Hegde
Director, Honnavar



The First Fallen, which was about the beginning of the AIDS crisis in the early 1980s, was really beautiful and extremely emotional. I'm looking forward to watching *Parallel Mothers*.

Gayathri Baiju
Phd Student, Kerala



The movies in the World Panorama category subjects that I could have never have imagined. I didn't even have to read the subtitles to understand the Arabic film *Feathers* because the visuals were very good.

Nikhil Mardolkar
Student, Goa

Viva La Familia

BY URVASHI BAHUGUNA

Amy Jephta's *Barakat* (2020) was screened on 26th November as part of a category spotlighting cinema from countries in the BRICS alliance.

The film is a wholesome, family-centric dramedy the likes of which one would not have expected to see at a film festival.

Set in Cape Town, South Africa, with dialogue moving back and forth between Afrikaans, English, and Arabic, the movie revolves around Aisha, a cheerful Muslim woman whose faith is an essential aspect of her personality.

A widow with four adult sons who are busy doing their own thing, she is left free to pursue a life of her own. When a lovely chiropractor named Albertus with whom she has been spending time for several months proposes, she doesn't hesitate to say yes.

There's a refreshing lack of apology in Aisha's claiming of her joy. It's a rare film that allows an older woman, especially one who is neither white nor skinny, to be the recipient of romantic love.

The primary conflict in the story arises from the united resistance of her sons who cannot stomach the idea of their mother remarrying. Even her friend and neighbour is quick to remind her that her dead husband's body is warm yet. But Aisha merely quips back, "After two years, his body is ice cold."

Barakat is a richly textured story with many layers that dive into the pretence necessary to co-exist in a large family, the self-righteousness and support that can coincide in religious communities, and the disproportionate burden of emotional labour that falls on women.

There is a great deal of comic relief in the film, but it is not directed at the love story, which is a boon for the narrative. Aisha and Albertus are allowed to love each other without a distracting emphasis on their age. Instead, the film laughs at standard sibling antics, neighbourhood gossips, and messed-up family dynamics.

Barakat is also a sensory treat. Food serves as shorthand proof of the community's close ties to each other and the importance of Eid



in a Muslim family's life. Aisha, as a mother, friend, and even as a romantic partner, is hell bent on feeding everyone around her.

There is a steady stream of rosy falooda, rice platters, baking sheets of fresh cardamom biscuits, and heaped mounds of mince curry crossing the screen. On the holy day, the neighbours share food with one another and Aisha's daughters-in-law cook up a feast when the matriarch takes an uncharacteristic moment for herself.

Unfortunately, the final ten minutes of the film ended up feeling contrived, with old-fashioned messaging about the prevalence of family over all else. There is an unforgivable amount of accommodation required from the women in the story and an uncomfortable amount of forgiveness extended to the men.

The story provoked a lot of questions for me – Would most of us balk at our mothers dating? Would we discover that we were too fragile to make room for a parent to have another priority? Would we believe that we had a say in what they did and who they chose?

And perhaps most troublingly, would we have different standards for mothers versus fathers? Jephta's feature would have benefited from deeper examination of why we as a society are uncomfortable with older women finding love and why sons in particular may be squeamish about their mothers moving on. But her film has the capacity to kickstart that conversation.

Despite the shortcomings, I left *Barakat* feeling charmed by the world I encountered in the film. Aesthetic and sartorial details have been thoughtfully incorporated in the film and it guides us to a deeper understanding of this complex tableaux of characters.

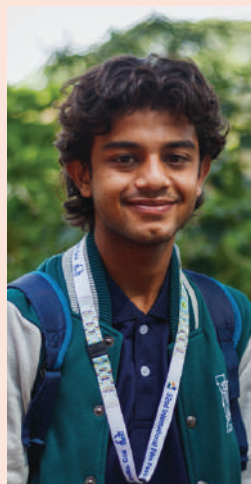
Further, there are moments when it reveals greater insight and awareness of the patriarchal undercurrents of the story. Aisha and Albertus, and to some extent her two youngest sons, are the stars of the film with an endearing humanity that reminds us that people can carve out grace and happiness even when societal odds are stacked against them.

SHORT TAKES



I really liked *Humanization*. It was a touching movie with an optimistic ending. *Magoado* was very interesting as it was shot in 1:1 aspect ratio, which highlighted the concept of the film.

Princy Fadte
Student, Goa



The only reason I'm here is to watch Satyajit Ray's movies. I also wanted to catch *Ring Wanderer* because the director is a Manga artist.

Yathin Y. N
Student, Bangalore



Naanu Avanalla... Avalu, a true story of a transgender woman, captures her journey well. I was happy to see the theatre packed with young Indians who are open to films that are inclusive of the LGBTQ community.

Swaathishri Mohan
Student, Chennai



The transport between the two venues is excellent. *Atlantide* was technically great with good visuals but I didn't feel an emotional connection. I'm hoping the movies we've booked next will leave us drained and crushed.

Arron Melito
Student, Chennai

Konkani Fest at IFFI

PATRICIA ANN ALVARES

Goa's own contribution to the 52nd edition of the International Festival of India this year is an interesting set of films. While all of them are making their debut at the Festival, *Paul 10* has already made it to the global circuit, bagging a few awards in the process, with *D'Costa House* as the only full-length feature film. The jury comprising filmmaker and director Rajendra Singh Babu, Cinematographer Prasantanu Mohapatra, and actor and filmmaker Pramod Pawar, selected these five out of eight submissions. In conversation with *The Peacock*, the directors gave us a peek into their films.

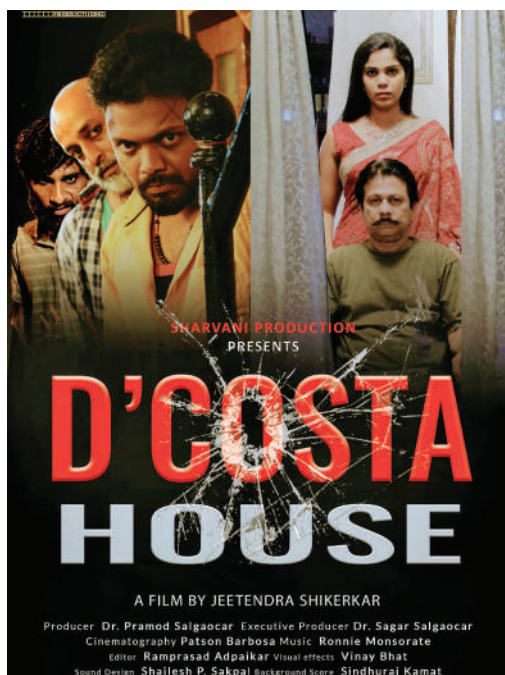


PAUL 10

Directed by Sunil Revankar, *Paul 10* is a 19-minute film that has won several awards, including one at the KASHISH Mumbai International Queer Film Festival. It explores the aspirations and disappointments of a transgender sportsperson, who is fascinated by the Indian football player Ngangom Bala Devi and aspires to play in the forward position like her. However her dreams are shattered when the hidden identity of her gender is revealed and she is expelled from the team. Premiered in January this year, the film which took seven days to shoot and is produced by Roopa Ramesh Revankar has been well received at various film festivals.

D'COSTA HOUSE

Well-known Director Jeetendra Shikerkar, who has had several innings at IFFI in the past including *Mortoo* in 2014, and producer Dr Pramod Salgaonkar joined hands to produce a full-length film *D'Costa House*. A crime thriller, it features some well-known Goan stars like Prince Jacob, Rajdeep Naik, and Rohit Khandeparkar.



KUPAMCHO DARIYO

Kupamcho Dariyo (A Sea of Clouds), an 18-minute short film, is the story of a young couple, who are about to say farewell to each other and may never meet again. A mature love story it does not focus on the sadness, but rather on both the characters who have their own perspective as to how things stand. The film is directed by Himanshu Singh, and the producer Kishore Arjun Shinde also doubled up as its writer. The film's dialogues are innovatively crafted in poetic form, with Raavi Kishore and Ugam Zambaulikar playing the lead roles.



GAGAN

Its script was written in 2010, but *Gagan* (Sky) hit the screens only a decade later, in 2021. Producer Supraj Kerkar (whose film *Tiffin Box* won laurels at IFFI in 2017) and director-scriptwriter Brijesh Kakodker took three years to make this film. It has been shot in Cotigao and Poinguinim, thickly forested areas in Canacona taluka. The shot of the moving cloud, in particular, took them two long seasons to perfect. The 25-minute film is about the broken relationship between father and son played by Shantaram Pawar and Narayan Kudalkar respectively.

LIMITS

The only Marathi film in the section, *Limits* is representative of any metropolitan city - it examines the differing ideologies between people of the same generation, and highlights the difference between the common man's perception and actual reality. Produced and directed by theatre and film personality, Vardhan Kamat, the film has an interesting aspect— it is shot in five scenes with individual 'one-take' scenes. Filmed over three days, the unit built their own track and trolley with limited resources.



SHORT TAKES



The combination of coming to India and having my film *Unbalanced* at the festival has been perfect. It was amazing to see the reaction from the crowd and answer their questions.

Juan Baldana
Filmmaker,
Argentina



This is a nice, clean environment. The people are courteous and follow safety protocols. The only problem we had was the lack of food stalls. *Exam* was a great film about how women persevere.

Carmina Zweigart
Retired Project
Manager, U.S.A



I like how Satyajit Ray portrays the various colours of society without overexaggerating. It's my first time at a film festival and it feels like such a grand event.

Raj Tiwari
Student,
Chattisgarh



When Pomegranates Howl was a sensitive film about the Afghan crisis but what makes it more beautiful is that it was funded by the Australian government. The backstory made it even more meaningful.

Susie Dasgupta
Writer, Bangalore



Photo by Assavri Kulkarni

“We are looking out for films all the time!”

BY IMPANA KULKARNI

Global film streaming service, MUBI launched its branch in India in November 2019, with Svetlana Naudiyal heading it as Director of Content. Four strong films out of MUBI's curation had their India Premiere at IFFI this year – *Lamb*, *Memoria*, *The Worst Person in the World*, and the Palm d'Or winner, *Titane*. With OTT platforms Netflix and Amazon Prime also part of the festival for the first time, *The Peacock* caught up with the MUBI India Head for a quick conversation.

MUBI is well known for its curated content, tell us a little bit more about the process.

I, along with other programming team members globally, are constantly on the lookout for new filmmakers, films, and rights holders. We attend film markets and festivals in our respective local territories, have a strong licensing team that reaches out to sales agents and distributors for new films, and stay in touch with aggregators who work as our eyes and ears in the market. For example, the distributor sends several Malayalam films to choose from,

then we sort through and find that one rare offbeat film for our audience. Most of our discoveries however, actually come from people reaching out to us directly via social media.

How is the curation process specially designed for India?

We work with very strict curatorial guidelines or themes, selecting films to match the seasonal programs we envision for the platform. In India, we try to make sure we give voice to all the indie films from different regions and languages of the country besides the independent Hindi film industry.

Given the high quality of prints it streams, does MUBI have a film restoration process as well?

It's tricky to trace the rights to OTT platforms for many old films. We are able to locate the distributors who hold the rights for restoration, so that the older films that we show are high in quality. There isn't so much restoration happening in India, but it's improving every year. For instance Shivendra Dungarpur is doing some excellent restoration work.

How has IFFI been for you this year?

It is the first human interaction outing for me in two years! More than watching films, I have met many colleagues and senior filmmakers. Unlike other festivals, the crowd and charm at IFFI is different. This morning at breakfast I ran into Shaji Karun and we spoke about his work, and his idea of doing theatrical screenings at the film club. This is the sort of conversations you take away from the festival. IFFI is very special for me, because my first film-related job was a 3 month gig with DFF for IFFI back in 2010. I also worked for NFDC Film Bazaar.

How did your love for cinema start?

I actually studied biotechnology, then moved onto advertising and PR. However, I would always watch films and had a subscription for MUBI, much before it came to India. I'd attend the film screenings in Delhi at India Habitat Centre, my college IIMC, Siri Fort auditorium, and JNU. At Katha Centre for Film Studies, an NGO in Mumbai, I ran the film curatorial studies program for one year in 2011. My friends joke that I have manifested my job into my life – from watching MUBI to working for it, I have come full circle!

What is it like to work for a curatorial platform like MUBI?

Working here is smooth and only challenging in terms of meeting the timelines, for say finalizing a deal, addressing technical problems, or digitization of beta tapes. I was the first to join the India branch, now we are three of us running the show –Apeksha Vakharia is in charge of marketing and Rajeshwari Shastri is the social media coordinator.

Given that you deal with movies day in and day out, whose films have inspired you the most?

I like films that show the connection between man, nature, and human creations. Iranian legend Abbas Kiarostami, Polish auteur Krzysztof Kieslowski, Indian masters Ghatak and Ray, and the Thai filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul are the first that come to mind.

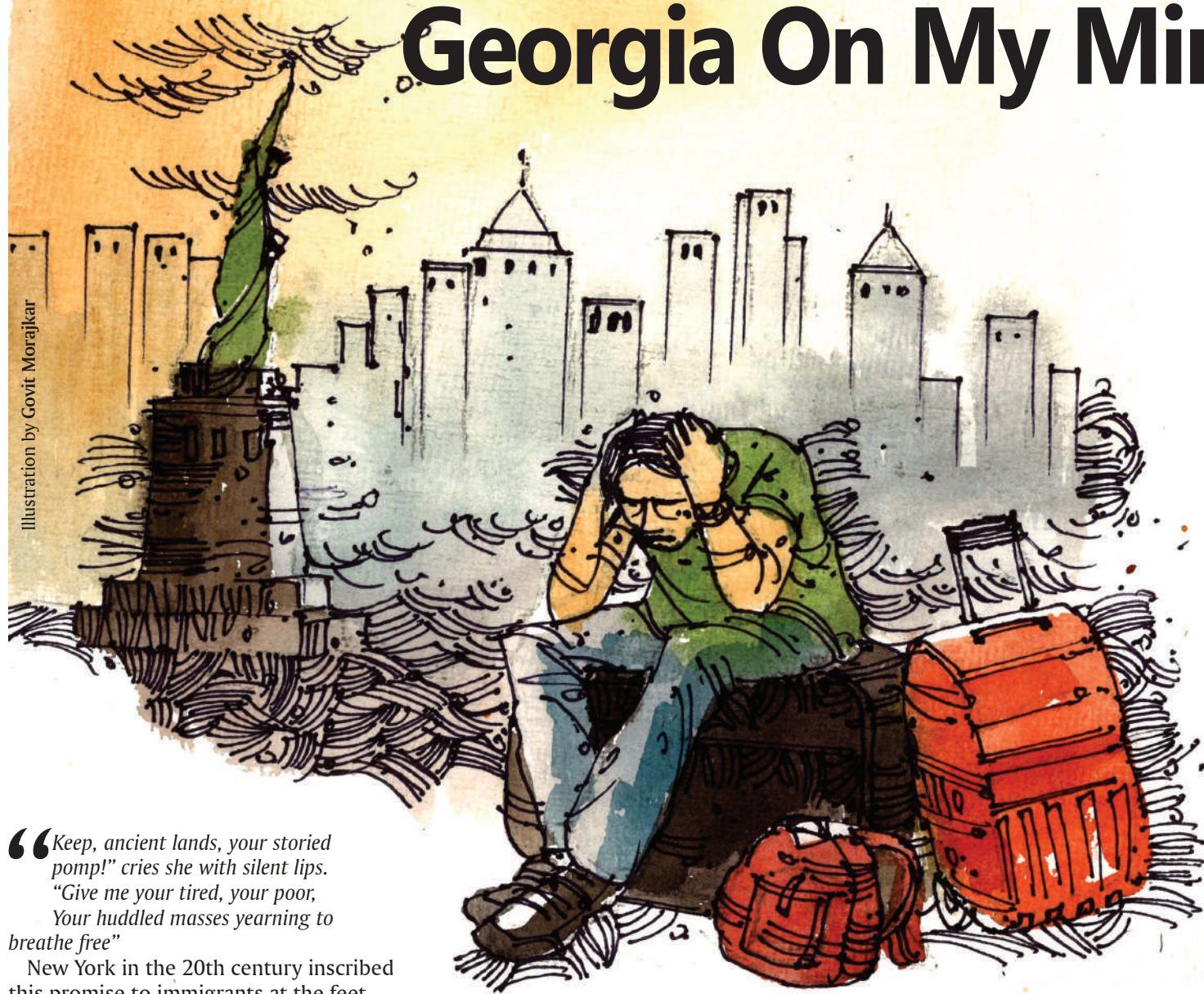
What would you like to say to all filmmakers out there who are looking to showcase their films?

We are looking out for films all the time, so please reach out to us! Even if a film hasn't done festival rounds, we are interested.



Georgia On My Mind

Illustration by Govit Morajkar



“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she with silent lips.
“Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free”

New York in the 20th century inscribed this promise to immigrants at the feet of a giant statue on Ellis Island. But contemporary New York is over-reliant on its financial sector and is now failing its promise to the tired, poor, and huddled masses that once yearned to belong here. The poignant Georgian art house production *Brighton 4th* (2021) captures the decline of the city’s immigrant culture all too vividly.

The US was the pre-eminent industrial superpower in the 20th century. Its manufacturing economy gave it an ability to absorb poor immigrants from far and wide and incorporate them into an American way of life. If the 20th century was the American century then New York

was its beating heart. But contemporary New York’s tight embrace of its financial and service sectors has had a devastating impact on its ability to assimilate its lesser skilled immigrants. As a result its legendary urban vitality is seriously declining like never before.

It is in this context that Kakhi, a kind-hearted ageing wrestling champion, has arrived at the Soviet émigré enclave of Brighton Beach, New York. His aim is to rescue his son Soso from the gambling debts that he has incurred at the hands of Georgian immigrant mobsters. Khaki arrives with cash in hand and a

determination to help out his failing New Yorker son. This inversion would have been unthinkable of in the 20th century.

Soso has dropped out of medical school and taken to a life of gambling and doing odd jobs to survive. The neo-liberal economy, exorbitant tuition fees, high rents, and the lack of a social safety net are increasingly crushing the dreams of the younger generation of New Yorkers. The city today is a global financial hub and yet it has limited opportunities to even educated newcomers like Soso.

For the educated left behind, it is

menial jobs and an increasing reliance on their parents that a New York life has to offer. Soso’s only option to get a green card and legalize his existence is through a fake marriage, something he cannot afford. This is the reality of New York for immigrants today – dream and the city will crush you. The New York economy is booming but only for those who can plug into its financial and service sector industries.

Khaki leaves his pleasant family life in Tbilisi and finds himself in a world of immigrant deprivation where working long hours without pay, bankruptcy, squalid living conditions, and working odd jobs to survive is the norm for low-skilled immigrants.

A wide assortment of talented immigrants from the former Soviet Union arrived in Brighton Beach with dreams of a better future. Sadly opera singers turned into doormen and professional wrestlers took to a life of crime. One also almost never hears English being spoken in the movie despite it being situated in New York. The only contact these immigrants are shown to have with mainstream society is on the margins.

Khaki too begins doing odd jobs to help out his son but is roped in by fellow Georgians to kidnap a Kazakh hotelier who hasn’t paid his Georgian cleaning crew for months. Khaki exhorts a promise from the hotelier to pay up, only to discover that the man is actually broke. He is too kind-hearted and allows the hotelier to escape. The theme of immigrant bankruptcy pervades the movie.

Khaki has to solve his son’s problems with the help of his fellow immigrants, with the State nowhere in sight. He uses his wrestling skills and his old world networks to bail his son out, at a deep personal cost. The film tells us, in more ways than one, that an elderly Georgian had it better figured out than a modern New Yorker. The New York we once knew no longer exists.

SHORT TAKES



There have been a lot of changes since last year; they’ve improved. It’s my eighth time here and the people are always so nice. That’s why we keep coming back. *The Champion of Auschwitz* was remarkable.
Joshua Zweigart
Safety Engineer, U.S.A



The Indian selection should also include films about the struggles of the middle class families. There’s too much of an emphasis on the poor farmer or the harrowed woman. India is more than that.
Madhuri Banerjee
Author, Goa



These are the kind of films you won’t find on OTT platforms, but they must be watched. They talk about so many different things and expose you to new perspectives.
Krishna Patel
Actor, Mumbai



I am very disappointed that there are only two Malayalam films this year. Even *Chiruli* is not being screened here. I don’t understand how that could happen.
Sajil Manpad
Director, Kerala

Censored!

Over the years of working in the art industry, I have experienced many incidents of censorship. On one occasion, I had to hurriedly remove a prominent artist's paintings of nudes from a display after being tipped off that members of a particular vigilante group would be visiting the gallery. Another time, I organised the (complex) shifting of slightly explicit sculptures to a dark backroom on the urgent request of a senior executive at a corporate gallery, who had received threats of violence. Even last year, I was forced to withdraw an artist's work from an exhibition, because the gallery found the content too politically forthright and feared repercussions from local goons. I questioned my own position then, and asked myself what I could do to change things. One of the most publicised cases in recent history has been that of the late M F Husain, whose drawings of an unclothed goddess Saraswati resulted in a vicious furore. Despite his position in the progressive movement, and his hand in the making of a modern Indian visual identity, the criticism he suffered was so extreme that he was forced to live the last years of his life in exile.

Showcasing any kind of artwork that appears to cross lines of 'cultural acceptance' is often a risk, even in the more liberal metro cities – and the consequences range from mild harassment to extreme acts of conflict and even imprisonment, as visible in the recent number of cases against stand-up comedians and performers. Who decides the boundaries of cultural acceptance? What is the definition of 'hurting religious sentiments'? What constitutes 'un-Indian' conduct? Largely, these matters are determined by self-appointed authorities for public morality and behaviour, who gain prominence by force. This moral police finds art, literature, and film easy to target in the crusade of correctness. Unfortunately, these are spaces that can be misunderstood and misinterpreted easily, regardless of the makers' intentions.

Every now and then, a film or series is banned, with cases against it in court. *Paanch* (2003) was a

crime thriller film by director Anurag Kashyap, based roughly on the 1976-77 Joshi-Abhyankar serial murders in Pune. The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) did not grant a certificate to the film citing the violence and representation of drug use. The film went on to show at several foreign film festivals but did not see the light of day locally, despite cuts. Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Padmaavat* (2018) suffered violent opposition and destruction of its film sets, as its historical narrative was said to have offended both Hindu and Muslim sentiments. An organisation even announced a one crore award to anyone who chopped off lead actress Deepika Padukone's nose and ears. The Amazon Prime series *Tandav* (2021) met with public outrage and was accused of hurting the religious feelings of a section of the audience. Even after censorship and apologies, the series continued to face troubles. These are simply a handful of examples among many, and the reasons are widely debated. Films like

Lipstick Under My Burkha (2017) and *Angry Indian Goddesses* (2015) that addressed women's empowerment and themes of sexuality received heavy cuts from the CBFC. Ironically, the vast number of films that objectify women, and glorify toxic masculinity seem to face no objections at all!

A development in 2021 from the Information and Broadcasting Ministry is the proposal of a Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill, that among other things, will allow government intervention in the case of an already certified film receiving any public complaints. This has the film fraternity deeply concerned about the manner in which it might be used to curtail freedom of expression.

A Film Festival like IFFI provides cinephiles with the ultimate experience of being able to choose from a diverse array of films in their original form – uncut, uncensored, and from all across the globe. Freedom of expression is every individual's privilege and responsibility, to be exercised with care and sensitivity. It would do us good if we wore thicker skins, and learnt to laugh at ourselves more often. The arts in any society are the voice of a collective conscience, and I can feel only admiration for those who have raised their voices, and art, against forms of silencing.



Illustration by Riza Noronha

SHORT TAKES



Tokyo Shaking does a good job depicting the realities of toxic corporate culture. *Unbalanced* was the only film I walked out of. It didn't seem to have a good storyline.

Dhruva Parmar
Chartered Accountant,
Mumbai



I feel there should be a better selection of films. The music playing outside does not match the mood of the festival. The presentation has deteriorated and we need something more subtle and restrained.

Vidhu Varma
Insurance Executive, Delhi



I get inspired by these hard-to-find films. I like finding common emotions and something everyone can connect to no matter who they are or where they're from.

Devansh Katoch
Filmmaker, Delhi



The way the film *Killing the Eunuch Khan* was shot gave me a headache. I haven't been able to get tickets to the films I really want to watch.

Sunitha S.
Stylist, Bangalore



Rupya Chaar, Rupya Chaar!

BY JOSÉ LOURENÇO

Radio, turntables, and cinema were the only available audio-visual entertainment before the arrival of TV, tape cassettes, and DVD players, which came in during the 1980s and 90s. The costs of cinema came in a good range for the pocket-conscious cine-goer. Back in the 70s, typical cinema ticket rates were 80 paise for the Lower Circle (simple benches right up in front, where you squinted up at the towering screen), Rs.1.30 for Middle Circle, Rs.1.80 for Upper Circle, and Rs.2.20 for the Balcony upstairs. Millennials have perhaps never heard of a matinee (3 pm), first show (6 pm), and the late night second show, although the present generation may not consider 9 pm as 'late night'.

Prashant in Curchorem turned into an industrial unit. Cine Niagara, Curchorem has also transformed into a party hall. But most of the ageing theatre buildings like Cine Aisha in Ponda, El-Capitan in Mapusa, and others were torn down to make place for multi-storied structures. El-Dorado located near the Panjim Market, that screened some top notch Hindi and English films, was felled in 1996 to build a tower of shops and offices. The theatre's legacy ended with an apt film, *Anth*, which means 'the end'.

The three popular cinema theatres of Margao were built in the sixties and bear influences of the Art Deco and Art Moderne period. Cine Vishant on the Aquem road has a flamboyant asymmetrical form where sensuous curves and linear elements coexist quite happily. Vishant was a regular haunt during our college days, where the first day's first show of English films was a sacred ritual.

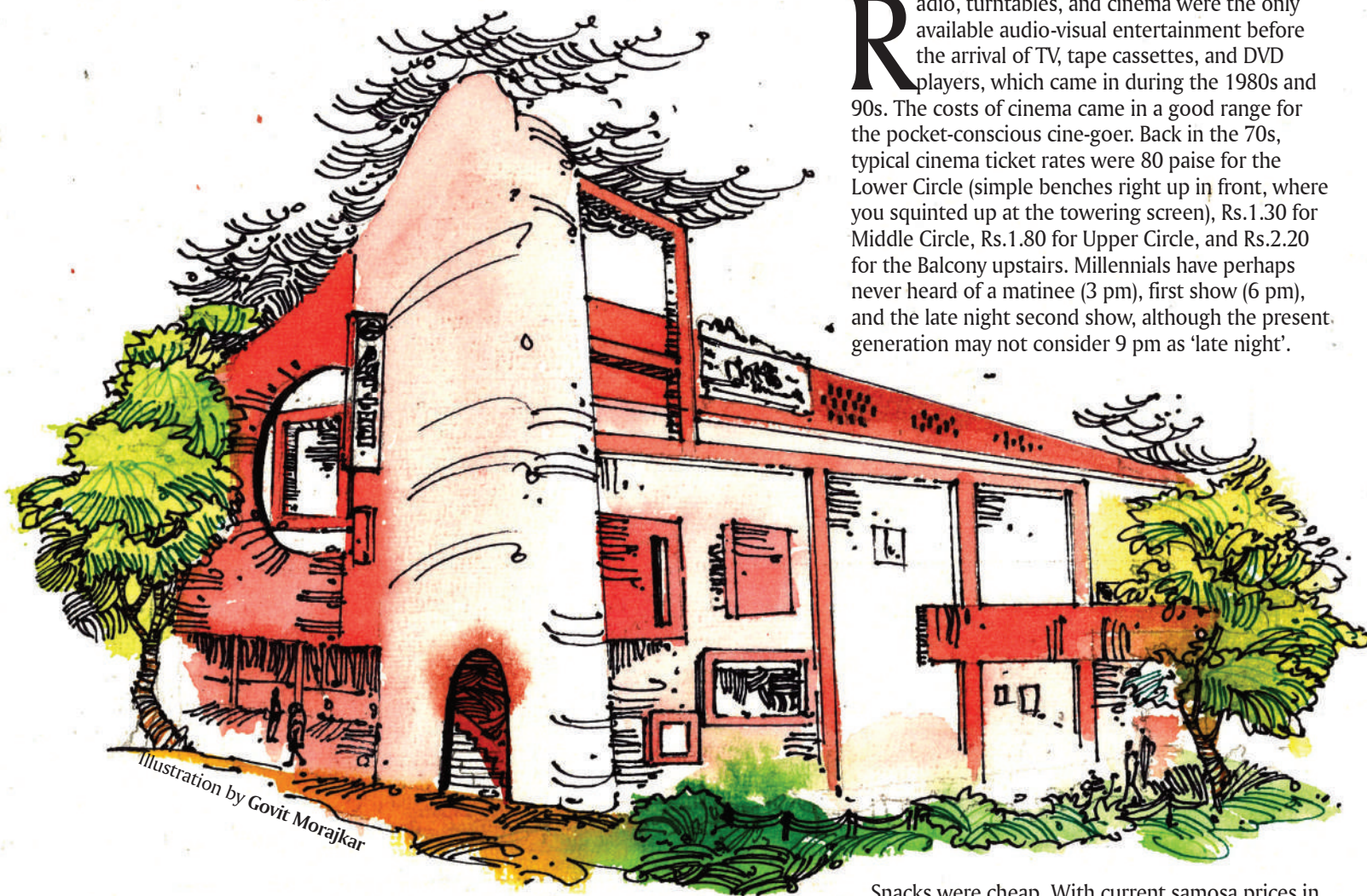
Cine Lata is the oldest running theatre in Margao, located near the Municipal Square. The water cascade motif at its apex as well as the pulvinated triple bands are Art Deco elements. I recall watching a movie on the frontmost bench (Lower Stall) just for the heck of it, during my college years, for just one rupee! The theatre now offers Dolby sound and is owned by the Zantye family who own several theatres in Goa, including Samrat and Ashok in Panjim. These twin theatres have also been used as an IFFI venue in the past.

Panjim also had Cine National. Its dilapidated structure still stands, but the theatre which was once the crowning glory of Panjim, had an unceremonious end, after it started screening B and C grade films, more than a decade ago. Interestingly, the land on which the theatre stands belongs to the Corporation of Panjim and the future of the place is still uncertain.

Cine Agasaim, Cine Gulmarg (Ribandar), Jai Mahalasa (Curti-Ponda), Cine Kamala (Tisk, Usgao), Cine Alankar (Mapusa), Victory Talkies (Siolim), Cine Vasco, Hira Talkies (Bicholim), Shivam (Vasco), Cine Paradise (Cuncolim), Cine Radhakrishna (Sanquelim), and Nandi (Pernem) also belong to the hall of famed theatres, some of which are still bravely running.

And then there are the halls that existed even earlier, in the 1930s and 1940s, some of which were simple tents or marquees: Cine Eden (Panjim), Cine Central, Cine Dashratha (Mapusa), Cine Mhalsa, Cine Rex, Cine Olympia (Margao), Cine Shamin (Bicholim), Cine Shanta Durga (Calangute), Janata Talkies (Quepem), and Cine Raj Hans (Assonora).

(Acknowledgements: 50 Years of Konkani Cinema by Andrew Greno Viegas, and JoeGoaUK.)



Snacks were cheap. With current samosa prices in multiplexes hovering around the three figure mark, in the 80's you could get four samosas for one rupee (*Rupya chaar*; *rupiya chaar*, as the vendor would yell).

Some theatres like Cine Metropole in Margao, also had 'Boxes', meant for couples, where more than just film-watching could occur. Today apps and online bookings are the norm, but back then tickets were bought only at the counter and 'house full' could end up with tickets being sold in 'black' — Aamir Khan plays a black marketer in *Rangeela* (1995), a gem of a film. 'Do ka chaar' meant they were sold at double the price. Late night shows at theatres would often get cancelled for lack of audiences. This occasionally happens today for some shows even in multiplexes.

In recent years new films are released simultaneously all over India and even worldwide. Interestingly, the last two Bond films premiered in India a week before its release in North America. But in the seventies, Bollywood movies had different release dates across the country, often several months apart, and Goa was a very low priority for distributors.

As viewership in theatres declined, their owners had to resort to viable adaptive reuse. Cine Metropole in Margao is now a swanky reception hall, with its high ceiling inspiring awe in dining guests. Cine

Poem of the Day by Urvashi Bahuguna

Aspiring

Let's say you have a dream and you're young and there's a chance it could come true. Let's say you have the courage of a gambler and the spine of a quarterback. So, you move to the city. There's only one city. There's a hundred ways this could go. Only one way it will probably go. For argument's sake, let's say nothing bad happens. You dodge the bogeymen. You never sleep roofless in the dark. Say you even find a sliver of fame, a coin to call your own. I want to know what you do with something small. Where you go from there. I bet the whole damn world would like to know.

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a dark blue button-down shirt, is running towards the camera on a city street. She is smiling and has her arms slightly out. In the background, a blue car is driving away, and there are trees and buildings on either side of the street.

Inox Panjim, Audi 3, 9:30
Norway, France, Sweden, Denmark
Dir: Joachim Trier
121 min

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