BY ROLAND MASCARENHAS

I’ll be a great journalism school,” an editor advised me on why I should join The Peacock.

Over the past decade, I have written over 15 essays in India, and my home in Canada, as a freelance writer. Yet on my first day at The Peacock, I felt out of my depth: not only did I need to buy more work-appropriate clothes, I found the fast-paced cycle of selecting an idea, justifying the selection, finding interview subjects, transcribing, and writing multiple drafts within a few hours to be disorienting. Thankfully, I settled down two days later.

For me, writing for The Peacock was less about pay cheque, but more about the ability to connect with my Goan heritage. Born and raised in Canada, attending picnics, socials, and volunteering in the diaspora community, I’m even on the executive committee of Toronto’s Goan Soccer League (about which I intend to develop a documentary) and have volunteered in the diaspora committee of Toronto’s Goan Soccer Community, I’m on the executive committee of Toronto’s Goan Soccer League. Nonetheless, my case was of ‘American-Born Confused Desi,’ where second-generation Indians may feel more at home outside the country than within.

All that changed when I lived and worked in Mumbai from 2016 to 2020—only leaving because of Covid. I was living the “reverse Canadian dream,” as my brother joked at his wedding in 2017, “We have all heard of the young boy, growing up in India, saving enough money to move to Canada with the hope and dreams of a new life. Roland is the only person I know that would grow up in Canada, have everything, give it all up and move to India to start a new life.”

What started out as a journey of intellectual curiosity, novelty-seeking and the rush of dopamine that comes with it, unexpectedly brought inner peace. In “Planet Canada: How Our Expats Are Shaping the Future,” John Stackhouse alludes that some Canadians may feel more at home outside the country than within.

As I observed my extended family residing in Mumbai’s Salsette Catholic Housing Society in Bandra, and the Lobo Mansion in Byculla, I saw remnants of Goa. I also saw many people who rejected the immigrate-to-Canada narrative in favour of their current lifestyle. Indians in Canada are known to be hard-working and technical, but the personal warmth, desire for community, argumentativeness, and tolerance for ambiguity were new experiences for me.

There is so much I witnessed, from the zen-like disposition of passengers on the Virar train at Churchgate; the wine-and-cheese book club overseeing Juhu beach; or the weekly football group that devotes most of the time arguing about the offside rule. They became a psychologically-safe outlet for expression, in comparison to the political correctness and formality that has gripped Canada’s concrete jungles. “It’s like a big high school, where there are degrees of connection,” is often how I would describe the relationship links between India’s urban English-speaking lot.

My ongoing tryst with India has been undoubtedly transformational. Perhaps it’s a moment in time, or the natural progression of age. When I first arrived in Mumbai in 2016, I was a blank canvas, absorbing the senses and trying to make sense of them. Now, I am more of an artists’ sketch, fully-formed but continuously adding color and texture that may have been overlooked the first time around.

BY PRAGYA BHAGAT

M ost mornings begin with poetry. Today’s words come from Mary Oliver. “You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves.”

There is a family of peacocks that loiters in the rice fields in front of my apartment. Most mornings, I sit in the balcony, cradle a cup of lemongrass tea, and watch them squawk. This past week, however, I’ve observed a different breed, printed on glossy paper with that delicious new-car smell, saturated with just as much colour as its warm-blooded counterpart. Working with The Peacock as part of my first IFFI can be summed up by the kindness of the Aunty that roams the corridors of Maquinze Palace. She reminds me of Lalita Pawar. On my first day with The Peacock, the aunty led me to a quiet room in a different wing and offered me a cup of chai. Today, she smiles; we banter. I compliment the rose in her hair. She blushes. There is a kindness here, combined with a focus that the team carries into words and images that end up in the daily paper. Most mornings begin by reading the newest issue, pouring myself a cup of dark roast coffee, and performing the role of a writer.

Make no mistake: it is a performance. As an introvert, it’s a role I’m well suited to. I offer my attention so that you may feel heard. I file away your ephemaries, turn them into my building blocks, and shapeshift into a mosaic of what I absorb. To do so at a film festival—an environment bustling with thousands of bodies, avian sculptures, dhinchak beats, and evening strobe lights—overwhelms me. I prefer the quiet of paper and pen.

In one of our first staff meetings, an editor tells us writers to report as objectively as possible. “No one is interested in your opinions,” he says. I watch three films, attend four masterclasses, and interview four filmmakers, a jury member, and two feminists. Every day, I write a poem. Among the voices I amplify, I find my own.

Gloria Anzaldua, in Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza, defines the term nepantla as a state of in-between, a displacement. Nepantla is a transition state between gender, occupation, geography, or any other label we may identify with. At IFFI, I inhabit this liminal zone between listening and telling, learning and offering, and make it my home.

So far, I’ve been asking the questions. In this last issue of The Peacock, you ask what the festival has been like for me. I find the spotlight jarring. I don’t know. I need time to process the plethora of experiences I’ve had. A week from now, maybe a month from now, memories will solidify and resurface. Shared tiffins, last minute edits, listening to Kendrick Lamar’s Damn on repeat during the forty-minute commute. As I return to my peaceful, rice field, lemongrass mornings, I’m left with more questions—three in particular—than answers.

On the spectrum of story tellers and story receivers, where do I place myself?

What is the word that describes the combination of satisfaction, pride, and cringe when you see your work printed on a page? Where in the body does a film live after it’s watched?
I enjoyed working with a bunch of young vibrant people and experienced mentors. The festival got me to think deeply about films once more.

Rukminee Guha Thakurta
Graphic Designer, Porvorim

The experience with The Peacock has been amazing. Everyone in the office was very hardworking and helpful. The office always felt like home.

Aman Bagali
Student, Dona Paula

I want to keep coming back to The Peacock. I always wanted to be part of it and it feels like my space.

Samiksha Mandurkar
Software Engineer, Ponda

The Peacock office is a very nice place where serious and goofy people work together to give a great output. It’s amazing how there are fresh ideas without any repetition.

Mayank Sharma
Student, Porvorim

Closing On A Perfect Number

The closing film at the 53rd International Film Festival of India is directed by Krzysztof Zanussi. The veteran Polish director is no stranger to Goa and India — he was the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement award at IFFI in 2012. The Perfect Number is his first film in four years for the 83-year-old.

The Perfect Number is about a young mathematician-physicist who is engrossed in his scientific research and teaching. Out of the blue, he learns that Joachim, an elderly Jewish-Polish cousin, would like to donate the wealth accumulated during his lifetime to him. The young man doesn’t hesitate to reject this offer, since he is happy with whatever he has in life. In the town though, word spreads that he has inherited a fortune, and the young researcher finds himself kidnapped. Beyond the plot of the film, Zanussi has explored several other interconnected threads.

Zanussi has been an important figure, far beyond Polish cinema. His debut The Structure of Crystal (1969) caught the eye of many and he subsequently had a string of successful award-winning films in the 70s and 80s. Through his characters and stories, he raises important questions about life.

For someone who has seen cinema and its technology change drastically over the years, Zanussi had something very poignant to say — “I do miss the times when cinema, and the arts in general, seemed to mean much more to people. On the other hand, older material like this is now available in ways it never was before, in this digital age. I used to think that film has the life span of a butterfly, but now it has the life of a turtle.”
Success ke peeche mat bhaago. Kaabil bano kaabil. Kamyabi jhak maar ke peeche aayeji.” These popular lines, about chasing success, from the Aamir Khan-starrer 3 Idiots form an informal creed for all the 70 artists belonging to the Watercolour Artist Association of Goa.

This art collective has exhibited the works of 27 selected artists for their exhibition titled “GoWow” at the ESG Gallery in the Maquina Palace during the International Film Festival of India.

“Watercolour is a very hard yet handy medium,” says Kalidas Satardekar, who leads this collective. “Sometimes, I absently dip my brush in my tea. You can pray through your art and you have to worship your art. Artists who worship their art have succeeded more than those running behind the money.”

The members of the collective are passionate and consistent in their artistic practice. “Every Sunday we have been doing live paintings for the last two years. In the rain, we work on still life or studio paintings, in good weather we go outdoors,” says Satardekar. When asked about taking on fresh entrants into their group, he says “We do welcome new artists. All we want is dedication, more than skills.”

Prasad Naik, an artist from Ponda, says, “You learn a lot when you work in a group. Even an amateur can teach you something.” Talking about the challenges of working with watercolour, he says, “Once the watercolours flow on paper, we cannot really control them, or correct them. We have to wait till they dry and that asks for patience.” Drawing an analogy of this with our life, he says “Watercolour taught me to have patience in tough times, to get a beautiful painting out of life.” The rewards will eventually come. “Paintings speak for themselves. If they are appealing enough, they draw their buyers towards them. An artist should practice every single day.”

“Every stroke in watercolour is final,” says Chirag Kamat. “Unlike other mediums of paintings, if anything goes wrong in watercolour paintings, one cannot rectify it. That’s why the watercolour medium is called a challenging medium, but I feel that’s the beauty of it. I paint the houses of Goa and seek to maintain the identity of the structures through my brush.”

He turned to this genre after a brush with a watercolour master. “I never preferred working with watercolours but one workshop from Amit Kapoor, a leading artist in the watercolour medium in India, changed my perception towards watercolours, and now I have been at it for two years.” Are the paintings difficult to sell? “Watercolour paintings may not be as appealing as oil or acrylic paintings, hence it’s a little difficult to get buyers. But people who know art and recognise our efforts are eager to buy them.”

“The name GoWow comes from the sound of Goa and Wow! Goan landscapes always make us say that, don’t they?” says Saumitra Bakhle. “My aim is not to sell, it is to improve my skill, and it’s been 10 years of this journey. Selling is an additional boost.” She holds a master’s degree in electrical engineering. “Everything you see around is an art form and we need to be good at realistic paintings to excel at this,” says Bakhle. Artist Tushar Amonkar reminisces, “The last time I worked with watercolours was when I was in school. When I saw people posting their watercolour artworks on social media during the lockdown, I got fascinated. An artist from Mumbai, Amol Pawar, who created some simple paintings inspired me to try my hand at watercolours again. Luckily I got his guidance in two of his workshops in Mumbai. We are always excited to paint our canvases with different locations every Sunday and that keeps us motivated. I love to paint waves and shores along with huts and villages.”

60-year-old Anita Kubal has a degree in economics. “I don’t have a degree in fine arts but I ardently wanted to be an artist. I became a part of this association to fulfil my dream and I am living it now with their encouragement and guidance. I feel accomplished seeing my paintings selected for this exhibition. Age is never a lock to see dreams and complete them, dedication and efforts are the keys. Now I exhibit and sell my paintings all across the world and I am happy.”

I have always loved my experience working at The Peacock. The team is stupendous. I feel creatively stimulated and I love the celebration of film and art.

Chloe Cordeiro
UI/UX Designer, Dona Paula

Working with this paper has been an eccentric adventure, and a tonic for the soul. I’m amazed at the quality and passion the team put in to produce a world-class product.

Sunit Arora
Editor, New Delhi

I have learnt a lot about filmmaking and audience at The Peacock. I now feel much more confident building relationships between interdisciplinary spaces.

Lina Vincent
Curator, Porvorim

I’m proud and privileged to contribute to Team Peacock. We have a harmonious working culture and 8 years on the publication is maturing like a fine bottle of wine.

Jonathan Rodrigues
Mediator, Utorda
Food for Thought

BY JAYA MAKKIMANE

otting the Panjim promenade opposite the Old GMC building is an array of food stalls that cater to every craving one might have. From local Goan treats to Rajasthani street food, the diversity of delicacies found here is just as vast as that of the people thronging the International Film Festival of India.

Food stalls have always been a part of IFFI, after all cinema is best enjoyed on a sated belly. The vendors are elated that they can run their business profitably and also be near their favourite film stars. “The festival is very good business for us,” says Avni Ghadi. Her stall Goenchi Chul serves the beloved Goan thali — with fried mackerel, fluffy white rice, and an aromatic fish curry.

Some vendors have an even bigger perspective in mind. Ketan Gazinkar from WowMomos, who aims to promote his brand to a bigger audience, says “We started our brand three years back, but this is the first time we are having a stall at IFFI. We hope our unique product stands out from the other stalls and helps our brand image grow.”

What stood out for me is the large number of women-run stalls this year. Perpetua Gomes told The Peacock, “We are a group of four women running this business. We start preparing these Goan delicacies the morning before and spend the entire day having fun cooking. We hope people enjoy the fruit of our hard work.” Her stall consists of famous Goan sweets like doçe, bolinhas, and dodol.

Manija Tilve’s stall sells homemade snacks. “We are a self-help group, an initiative by the government of Goa. We get a platform to showcase our products and enjoy the festival at the same time,” she says. A variety of homemade snacks like banana chips, multi-grain laddus and chakli can be found here in addition to homemade masalas and pickles.

“Sometimes I get my investment back, some years I don’t. However, I enjoy having my stall here as for me this is a form of passing time and meeting different people,” says Safi Baig, who has been at his stall ‘Arhan Juice Centre’ ever since IFFI moved to Goa.

One need not venture far to support local artisans. A vendor selling brown rice, haldi, and honey informs us that “all our products are handmade by the rural villagers from the Goa-Karnataka border. We teach them the skills and give them a platform to earn and make a living.” Even though the brightly lit festival lights and unique banners make these stalls stand out, many IFFI-goers are sometimes unaware of their location outside the festival. A media correspondent told us, “I have been at this festival for many days and only just realised there were these amazing stalls just outside my workplace.”

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THE PEACOCK-SQUAWKS

The great thing about working for this paper is meeting experts from different fields. It has enabled me to get a new perspective on what I want out of my life.

Roma Fernandes
Filmmaker, Panjim

Everyone has come to enjoy at IFFI, but the security guards aren’t given proper facilities to have their meals. Something needs to be done about this.

Govit Morajkar
Illustrator, Chimbel

I’ve really enjoyed getting to know and to work with this warm, talented group of people. This is a special newsroom.

Zenisha Gonsalves
Writer, Dona Paula

Once you get bitten by The Peacock bug, you’re hooked and can’t help but return to this experience.

Siddhartha Lall
Photographer, Pilerne
BY GOVIT MORAJKAR

Claiming Space

1. Statue of Unity, Miramar
2. St. Augustine's Church, Reis Magos
3. Independence House
4. CHC Heritage Building
5. Devil's Thumb
6. Mandovi Bridge
7. St. Francis Xavier Church & Chapel of Dom Lourenco
8. Fort Aguada
9. Fort Aguada Beach
10. Empress Market
11. Goa State Art Gallery
12. Dona Paula Lighthouse
13. Arambol Beach
14. Anjuna Beach
15. Calangute Beach
16. Baga Beach
17. Morjim Beach
18. Palolem Beach
19. Calangute Beach
20. Fontainhas
21. Panjim
22. Mapusa
23. Porvorim
BY LINA VINCENT

While talking to a young filmmaker at IFFI the other day, our discussion came down to the complexities of presenting the passing of time in cinema — we debated on what was best for his story. There are certain recognised tropes to showcase ‘a shift in time and space; waves beating repetitively against the shore, birds flying, clouds moving, and the elided clocks and calendars. There are also processes of aging in chronological time — in persons, foliage or architecture, indicating decay and even death. Audiences can be made to experience flashbacks and slow-motion; they can be taken backward and forward in time through illusions of ruptures and bends in the conventional timeline. There are ways of telling stories with a deliberate rejection of continuity, contrary to the way we experience time in day-to-day life.

Those hours spent immersed in a film, engaged with characters and a landscape, can become unaccounted for, as one is whirled through a symbolic wormhole and trapped in a created narrative, only to come out a slightly changed person (if the film is effective). Good films often contend with messianic time, as expressed by Walter Benjamin — that is experienced as emotionally intense, almost akin to a drug high. As opposed to homogenous time that is continuous, messianic time disrupts the flow of past and present.

Filmmaking as a process is a time-bound activity; they are visualisations of human stories that respond to a particular age and its realities. They contain markers of events and experiences, accounts of individual and collective endurance in varied perspectives. They record factual histories, as well as the dreams and imaginations of the populace. Cinema also reflects the technology of the time — the eternal icons for filmmaking are the heavy ‘moving-image-camera’ and the film-strips, clunky, outdated material that is now assigned to museum dioramas, along with heavy projectors and video tapes. The craft is continually evolving, with new technology being developed and released in quick succession — systems that improve techniques of making, and as well as viewing. Incredibler forths of CGI (computer-generated imagery) transform spaces and landscapes. Multiverses can be brought to life in small studio spaces, lifeless objects can be animated, and characters played by dead actors can return to feature themselves through the magic of cutting-edge VFX.

The digital medium has shifted the access of films to small devices; to the largest possible extant now, anyone with a screen (of any size) and an internet connection can watch films on the move, record, pause, repeat and change the way the maker might have intended it to be watched. OTT (Over-The-Top) platforms, that everyone became addicted to during the isolated and warped period of the pandemic — started making things shorter, crisper, split into parts so viewers could consume multiple bodies of content and fit it into their schedules easily. There is something called ‘binge-watching’, wherein people watch entire series of episodes or films under a franchise, without a break.

Coming back to a festival like IFFI, it certainly seems that the love for the large screen, and the patience to sit through movies for hours it takes, still exists strongly. People come back year after year to experience the films watched, others complain of missing important screenings; there are some who are rushing to click selfies with the day’s stars, and yet others who are sad about the day, I overhear wafts of conversation in diverse languages, both Indian and foreign. Some speak of films watched, others complain of missing important screenings; there are some who are rushing to click selfies with the day’s stars, and yet others who are sad about the loss of the daily trains.

The whole of life is just like watching a film. Only it’s as though you always get in ten minutes after the big picture has started, and no one will tell you the plot, so you have to work it out all yourself from the clues.”

— Terry Pratchett, Moving Pictures

IFFI 2022 has been a great experience. I gained a lot from the fine mix of experience and fresh talents. We can’t forget the fun and high energy in putting each issue out.

Nicole Suares
Creativepreneur, Panjim

It has been seven years working for The Peacock and I always take a lot of photographs and compliments back home, along with special new names to add to my phone contact list.

Assavri Kulkarni
Photographer, Nerul

The Peacock dances to its own rhythm during IFFI. This 9-day grind of the daily trains us, binds us, and gives everyone a new experience each time.

Impana Kulkarni
Dancer, Panjim

I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to work for a newspaper as prestigious as The Peacock. The friendships I have made in these ten days will last forever.

Jaya Makkimane
Biotechnologist, Divar Island

Illustration by Olive Cordrin

THE PEACOCK SQUAWKS

BY LINA VINCENT

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THE PEACOCK SQUAWKS
As an actor, I am a little more restless, but as a director I am very calm. You have to deal with not just the creative process of taking the shot, but micro-managing the location, team, and everything. Your attitude on the set influences everything that happens on the unit,” says one of Indian cinema’s leading actresses, Mita Vashisht. She was in Goa with her directorial debut, the documentary feature Mani Kaul and That Thing Called The Actor at the Film Bazaar’s Viewing Room.

The National School of Drama alumnus has displayed versatility in her acting roles, from the unconventional Siddheshwari (1989) directed by Mani Kaul to commercial films like Yash Chopra’s Chandni (1989). She has also proven her prowess working with directors like Govind Nihalani, Mani Ratnam, Subhash Ghai, Rahul Kawall, and others, bringing all this experience to her new film that explores the art and craft of acting.

The film deconstructs the four aspects of the Natyashastra, the ancient Sanskrit treatise on the performing arts. It also refers to filmmaker Kaul’s ideas about acting (a director she worked with on two films). “Kaul was very interested in the Natyashastra. People say that he knew nothing about acting and turned them into an object. But I understood how he was influenced by the Natyashastra. I am bridging the gap between the ancient text and cinema and making the connections.”

In a previous conversation with Ashish Rajadhyaksha, Vashisht had said that “Kaul taught me to place emphasis on my body and develop a better sense of frame. In fact, he saw the filming of my movie and acting in others. But she used her experience with other seasoned directors to her advantage. “I was well-planned in my shoots. It’s a 96-minute film and if you see it’s visually very ambitious. But I had just 12 shooting days. I knew what I wanted,” she says. In the past, she has been used to working with large teams, but her new film took a core group of just six members to execute her project. “Many times you have a team of 150 members. As an actress I have never understood that. Bigger teams don’t make for better films,” she says.

“The first-paced daily newsroom routine was disorienting at first, but I settled into it two days later. I try to learn something interesting from the people I work with. I explored and learned different concepts through my perspective at The Peacock.”

We are simply looking for ways to feel alive and a film festival provides that opportunity not just in the screening room but also in conversations and being around so many people.

Roland Mascarenhas
Freelance Writer, Toronto

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Pragya Bhagat
Poet, Parra

I try to learn something interesting from the people I work with. I explored and learned different concepts through my perspective at The Peacock.

Michael Praveen
Photographer, Porvorim

Saul Bass is the best-known designer of film title sequences till date. Bass worked with some of Hollywood’s most prominent filmmakers including Alfred Hitchcock, Otto Preminger, Billy Wilder, Stanley Kubrick and Martin Scorsese. One of the most studied designers, Bass is known for stylistic coherence between his designs and the films in which they appear. In this tribute to the great graphic designer, I use his signature paper cut-out style to depict the exit of this year’s The Peacock.

— Rukminee Guha Thakurta
All through the last few days of the 53rd International Film Festival of India, Team Peacock has been wowed non-stop by streams of delegates coming to the Maquinez Palace to pick up back-issues of our unique festival daily. Nothing makes us happier than to see this labour of love being avidly pursued, appreciated, and cherished by so many people. Thank you, readers, first and above all.

This has been a very big year of celebration for Goa and our beloved mai bhas, because Damodar Mauzo is the 2022 Jnanpith Award winner. What other newspaper in the country can boast of such a distinguished daily columnist? We are deeply blessed that 'Bhayee' (as he is universally known) has honoured us again this year. Huge gratitude to him.

Our paper’s ambit to assess IFFI and cinema in different ways always relies on expert columnists. This year, The Peacock had Rukminee Guha Thakurta – one of the best editorial designers of our times – and Lina Vincent, the fast-rising art curator, as well as Nadia De Souza’s singular painterly stylings. Thank you, ladies!

Over eight editions over as many years, our paper counts on Short Takes to bring us a proliferation of fresh, unfiltered opinions, and our newest team has done us especially proud. Take a bow, Siddharth Lall, Jaya Makkimane, Roma Fernandes and Aman Bagali. Equal kudos to Govit Morajkar, Chloe Cordeiro and Analise Pereira, our ace illustrators who also took our paper to another level of excellence altogether.

Very special acknowledgements are also due to the photo team of Assavri Kulkarni – whose superb portraits are the signature visual identity of The Peacock – and the indefatigable, highly versatile Bharatanatyam dancer-turned-Managing Editor Impana Kulkarni, it has been a winning formula all the way.

What a difference a year makes. Where the last edition of this festival was tense (partly understandable due to pandemic strictures), this one has cruised impressively smoothly. From the point of view of this publication – which has expanded to two editions of The Peacock Quarterly (the second will be launched soon) – we were able to achieve more than ever before, and the biggest reason has been the unstinting, refreshingly understated and highly efficient support of the CEO of the Entertainment Society of Goa.

Many thanks, Swetika Sachan. Team Peacock dedicates this edition to you.

- Vivek Menezes

Illustration by Analise Pereira

Monica, 28 November 2022
11
SCREENING SCHEDULE - 28TH NOVEMBER 2022

CLOSING FILM

THE PERFECT NUMBER
(POLISH, 85 MINS)
28TH NOVEMBER, MONDAY
TIME: 2:30 PM
INOX 1, 2, 3, 4 PANJIM
OPEN TO DELEGATES
(ON FIRST COME FIRST SERVE BASIS)

MISSED AN ISSUE OF THE PEACOCK? Visit our office on the first floor of Maquinez Palace and collect!

Praveen Naik’s final luminous cover artwork for this year’s The Peacock portrays our favourite bird “totally mesmerized” by the iconic Panjim statue of Abbé José Custódio de Faria (1755-1819), the Goan man who became the first Indian celebrity in Europe in post-revolutionary Paris, where – amongst many other remarkable exploits – he distinguished himself as the pioneer of scientific hypnotism.