

THE

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Shilpa Mayenskar Naik 2025

Tribute to Shyam Babu

BY DAMODAR MAUZO

Known for classics like *Ankur* (1974) and *Nishant* (1975), the late director Shyam Benegal was a principal pillar of independent movie-making in India. He passed away in December 2024, soon after the curtains were drawn on the 55th edition of IFFI. I think it is fitting to recall his movies and memories here in the land of his ancestral roots.

When Shyam Babu first visited Goa in 1967, it was to shoot a tourism promotional film. He found everything about the place captivating: the picture-postcard landscape with pristine beaches stretching as far as the eye could see, the gentle pace of life, the laid-back attitude of our people, and the charming dialects of Konkani spoken in different regions of Goa (incidentally, Shyam Babu's mother tongue was Konkani as well). He loved the serendipitous ferry rides (because there were no bridges yet) over the Mandovi and Zuari, and the cities of Panjim and Margao that still bore a distinct Latin character. The fascinated young adman remarked perceptively that "Goa is both a part and apart from the rest of India. Goa is distinctly Goan."

Shyam Babu reasoned that "Goa did not share the same history of the rest of India for over 450 years [and] was affected far more by republican politics of Europe than any other part of India. Goa adopted the judicial practice of a more egalitarian Civil Code compared to the rest of the subcontinent [and] all this happened well before the emergence of democracies even in Europe." These are some of his

reflections in Goa: Past, Present, Future, written for the book *Location Goa* in 2006. I must share that my pride for my homeland rises to another higher level when I see my Goa through the eyes of

grand house of Mario de Miranda in Loutolim. Set in Goa of the twilight years of the Portuguese rule, it is an authentic depiction of the land-owning 'bhatkar' family life as it was then. He wrote:

villages in the heartland of India."

Shyam Babu wrote that "what has fascinated me about Goa is its cultural and social character. It is at once exclusive and broadly inclusive. The two dominant

communities, Hindus and Christians, live cheek by jowl while accepting each other's exclusiveness." He did notice undercurrents: "Political interests have sometimes tended to create schisms and tensions but by and large Goa continues to be an oasis of peace and tolerance."

I first met Shyam Benegal when Talak Productions' first Konkani film, to which I had contributed, was released by his hands. The next morning, I took the opportunity to share one of my stories, because it had an offbeat narrative that I felt could appeal to him. He patiently went through it, and while complimenting me also gently said how it did not suit his film-making style. I appreciated his supportive approach, and noted it again some years later when he

made a point to tell me how impressed he was with the Konkani film *Paltadcho Monis* (2009) made by our young director Laxmikant Shetgaokar.

"I was among the small minority who felt that Goa was an ideal place for our film festival," remembered Shyam Babu, after IFFI in Panjim had proved to be successful, "it is heartening to see that a substantial number of film producers both in India and abroad are now succumbing to the charms of Goa by shooting either sequences or entire films there. May their tribe increase." Amen!



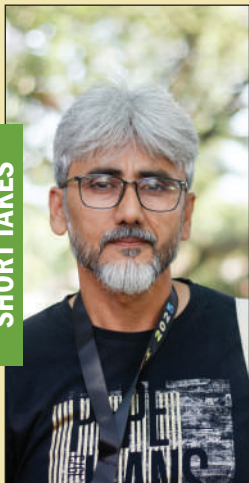
this great man.

In 1976, Shyam Babu returned to Goa to shoot the Smita Patil starrer *Bhumika* (1977). This time he visited the temples of Manguesh, Nagesh, and Shantadurga (the latter was his kul-daivat, the ruling deity of his clan.) Now unearthing his family roots, and he must have visualized how over four centuries ago, during tumultuous times, his forefathers left our shores in a kind of mass migration.

Come 1985 and Shyam Babu was once again here to shoot *Trikal* at the

"For people who are acquainted with other parts of India, a Goan village is a revelation. When you imagine an Indian village, you think of a dusty street lined with mud huts baking in the sun. Goan villages, on the contrary, are set in the lush, tree-shaded countryside. They are usually well ordered with even the most modest dwellings made of stone and brick. Small vegetable plots attached to even the tiniest of homes are set in a verdant sea of paddy dominated by a medieval chapel or church with a commanding view. A far cry from the

SHORT TAKES



I'm interested in watching the authentic, local cinema of Goa, which represents the Konkani culture.

Ajay Kumar Singh
Film Professor
Haryana



I want young people to dive into films, books, theatre and India's cultural richness. It is about living in stories even through life's ups and downs.

Tripti Prakash Mishra
Actor
Delhi



There is a Jafar Panahi film that I'm very excited for. I'm also excited about watching *Alpha*.

Deepak Kodela
Filmmaker
Hyderabad



My students get a lot of exposure when they come here. They realise how much the state loves their culture. Goa is beyond bikinis, booze and beaches.

Deepti Khurana
Asst. Professor
Rohtak

Flagging off the IFFI Parade

BY KINJAL SETHIA

The famous façade of the Old GMC sparkles in the sunlight, and the air is rife with excitement: blooming colours, and the festive sounds that remind us of a great Indian wedding. While we wait for the opening ceremony of the 56th International Film Festival of India – and the 22nd consecutive edition hosted in Goa – the festival director breaks into a dance when the anchor asks how he vibes to Goa. Now the excitement settles in, as Governor Pasupati Ashok Gajapathi Raju and Chief Minister Pramod Sawant come on to the stage, accompanied by the Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting D L Murugan, and Shripad Naik, the Minister of State for New and Renewable Energy. Also in attendance: Muzaffar Ali, Rakesh Omprakash Mehra, Anupam Kher, and Nandanmuri Balakrishna.

IFFI 2025 commenced with the dignitaries watering a sapling—a symbolic gesture towards sustainable growth and hopeful future, invoking the blessings of Mother Nature. Then Sanjay Jaju, Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting took the podium, “This year the opening ceremony flags off a carnival which will celebrate the rich diversity of India and Goa. We also have events like an Artificial Intelligence hackathon and Film Bazaar, ensuring that Indian talent finds a global presence.”

Minister Murugan said “IFFI is a good

way to create a bridge between creative minds of India and the global audiences. The next wave of growth is going to come from content creation and creative minds.”

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant welcomed the audiences in Konkani, and invoked them to proudly celebrate how the development of the state has been happening in alignment with IFFI. “Why is Goa perfect for IFFI? Because Goa is ready to offer world class infrastructure. It is the perfect place to showcase a convergence of creativity, a perfect bridge to take Indian talent to global platforms. It is not only a venue. Goa is an experience. It is a partner in your creativity. Goa is a perfect destination, not only because of scenic beauty but also because of strong policy reform and efficiency, like the Film Finance Scheme which will grant 50 lakh rupees to a film in the A category, single window clearance for faster permission and support to foreign production teams. We are committed to making Goa the creative capital of India,” added Sawant. He shared his aspirations of helping to build a year-end film making ecosystem in Goa.

He added that “two Goan films *Claudia* and *Vaimanik* have been added to the Gala Premier category



Photos by Michael Praveen



in the festival. We are proud of our Goan film makers whose stories are now reaching global audiences. It is truly the Goans who make IFFI what it is, to make it an unforgettable experience for our guests and visitors.”

Governor Pasupati Ashok Gajapathi Raju told the audience that “IFFI continues to serve as a meaningful platform for creative exchange, new collaborations, and the celebration of cinematic excellence. I think of my late colleague and friend Monahar Parrikar, whose efforts have ensured in making Goa the permanent venue. Given the cosmopolitan character, cultural richness and excellent global connectivity of Goa, it is a natural home to IFFI.”

Sobita Kudtarkar: "I wanted this film to smell like the village"

BY SAACHI D'SOUZA

When I call Sobita Kudtarkar, she was in the midst of final rehearsals of a play at Gujarat University in Ahmedabad. She laughs when I apologise for interrupting. "If I don't move constantly, it makes me restless. It makes me feel scared — like, now what?" she says, already preparing to travel overnight to Goa for the premiere of her film *Halad* at IFFI 2025. Moving between theatre and cinema isn't a side-effect of her career — it's how she breathes. Motion, she says, is her default state. "I will do all kinds of performing arts."

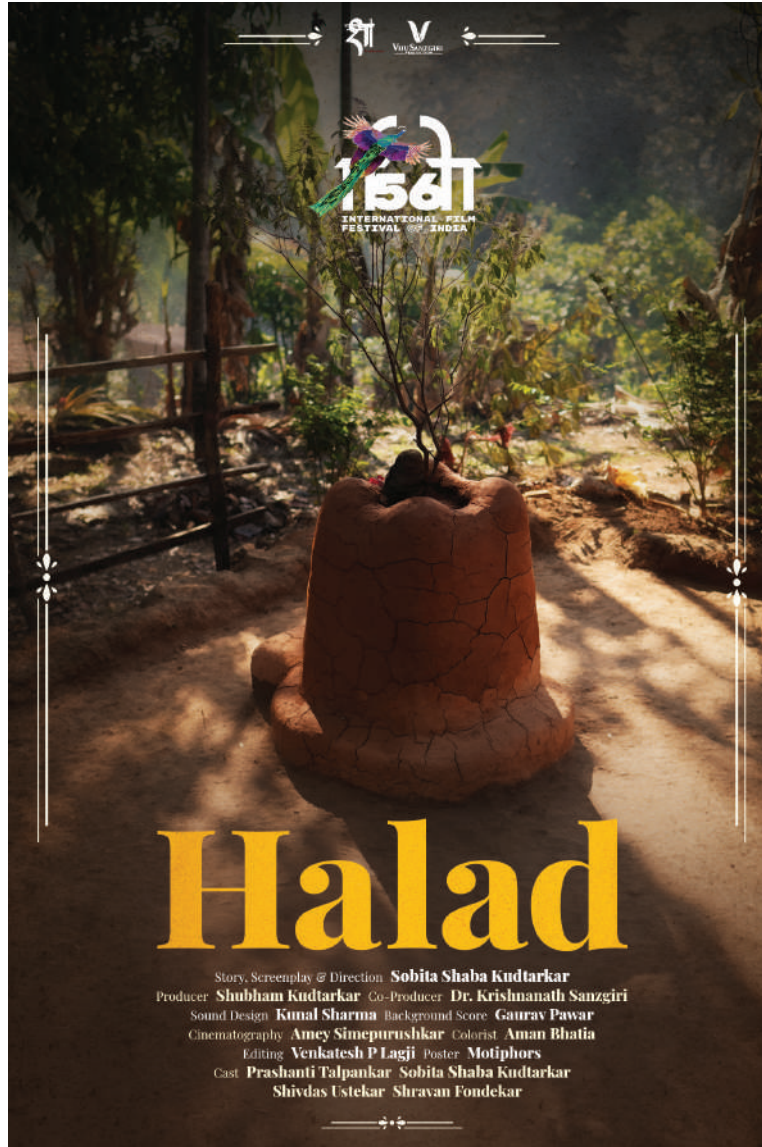
Halad follows a family trapped under an oppressive patriarch, bound by fear, duty, and the weight of social expectation. When a telepathic act of violence brings long-buried emotions to the surface, the film questions whether this "loss" is a tragedy or a release. The film is Sobita's first full-length directorial feature. She's acted for years; she's choreographed, she's directed plays. But directing a film was the one corner she hadn't claimed. "I always saw many stories around me — in the villages — and I kept piling them in a folder. But I never thought I would make a film." The hesitation was simple: "I don't have technical knowledge. I haven't taken formal education in filmmaking. I thought I might fail, I might waste people's time."

In 2023, she ran out of excuses. "I thought — if I don't start now, it will be just another piled-up story."

Directing changed her relationship with acting. She acted and directed in the same film, switching mental gears constantly. "As an actor, my job is to come, act, focus, and leave. I am particular about when I eat, when I take a break. But as a director, I knew the sun was going to set. I had ten minutes to take the shot. I had four shots left, and the day was ending." The process sharpened her. "It definitely made me a more responsible actor for the future."

She's now one of the youngest filmmakers in Goa at a moment when a new wave is visible — young filmmakers are shaping a culture seldom appreciated. Sobita is blunt about the gaps. "Goa needs it. Because our film industry — which we can't even call an industry yet — needs fresh voices." She adds, "Many of us never got any formal learning. There's no institute teaching filmmaking in Goa."

Her critique is structural, not cynical. She sees the loop clearly: "The audience is divided. When there is no audience, there is no money. When there is no money,



producers don't take an interest. And even if they take an interest, you have to tell them how they will get that money back." Technical standards suffer as a result. "We lack the standard that other states have. It's a circle. We keep revolving in it."

Her own film only survived through a combination of self-funding and generosity. "My family helped me financially. And later, when I needed money for post-production, Dr Krishnath Sanzgiri came on board — even though he knows there is no return in it."

Halad is rooted in rural Goa, in Sattari village, and especially in the emotional lives of women. "I won't talk about Goa as a whole, but [in] the villages — I have seen many women silently suffering every day, and they take

it all. They don't even understand that what they're going through is sad and wrong — or that it can be solved." Her protagonist's life "depends on the moods of the husband" she explains. "His mood decides her whole day." Celebrated actor Prashanti Talpalkar, who plays the female protagonist, didn't find it hard to channel the silent violence that women face. "I've known many women like this. It wasn't hard."

She wanted the film to feel like the village it comes from. "I wanted to use our folk songs as background score, our cultural sounds, our folk elements. I wanted this film to smell like the village."

A crucial part of the film's world-building came through her collaboration with cinematographer Amey Simepurushkar. They built their trust while working on *Wagro* (2023). "He's someone who believes in you as a leader. If I want a particular frame, he won't ridicule my idea; he won't overpower it. That faith in the director is needed."

Sobita wants the audience — Goan and otherwise — to understand the artistic potential of her home state. "Goa has a lot of unexplored things to be used in art. We have stories, people, dialects, folk culture. So why not make something true and honest using what we have?"

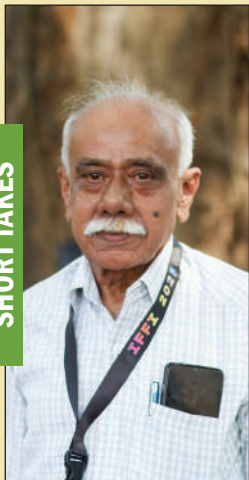
She points to films like *Kantara* and the wave of Malayalam cinema that foregrounds local texture. "They don't glamourise it. They show it as it is. Why can't we?"

For women, she hopes the film sparks recognition — and maybe a shift. She has invited women from her village to the IFFI premiere. "They are not into films, they would never attend the festival, but I wanted them to come and see how the world is outside." The protagonist of *Halad* makes a choice for herself that she believes matters. "Sometimes you watch something for entertainment, but it remains with you. Even if 1% of the influence happens, I'm happy."

As for what's next, she isn't rushing into another directorial. "To be honest, I'm more of an actor than a director. I love being on screen more than behind the camera." But the IFFI selection of *Halad* — and another festival invitation she can't yet reveal — has changed her mood. "Now I'm going to open the folder of my scripts," she says, laughing.

Halad is on November 21st at INOX Panaji, Screen 4 at 12:30 pm.

SHORT TAKES



At this stage of my life, involvement matters more than experience, and I relate myself to the stories and situations I see. I am here to perceive myself through the lens of art.

J V Prasad
Retired
Bengaluru



I appreciate a more honest representation in cinema because world cinema shows things that our censor board would never allow.

Noelyn Santos
Retired
Panaji



There are a lot of artists around here; there are no barriers between anyone, and there is an exchange between culture, traditions and thought processes.

Kiran Yarnam
Actor
Hyderabad



The culture, the climate, the greenery and the visuals here always attracted me, and the festival brings all of it together in one place.

Radhika Sharma
Teacher
Mumbai

Standout Shorts

BY PANKHURI ZAHEER DASGUPTA

Short films at IFFI are often the festival's best-kept secrets. While features command the red carpets, it's in the shorts that filmmakers take their boldest risks both, in form and content. This year's selection is especially exciting. Here are five standout shorts you absolutely shouldn't overlook!

Deepa Didi

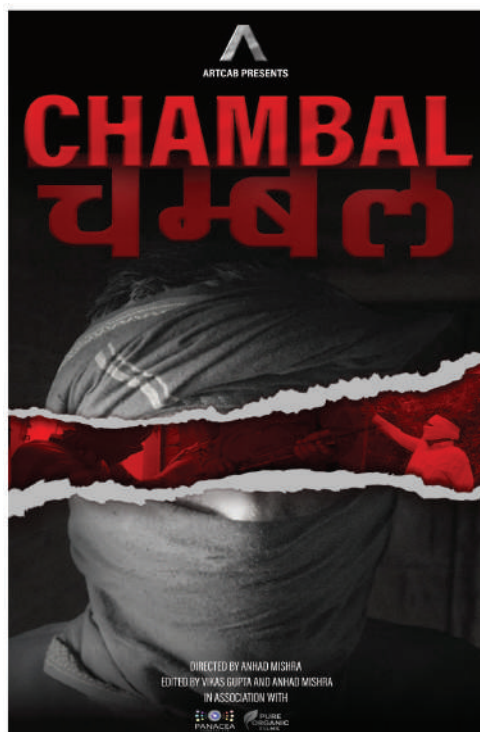
Dir: Surya Balakrishnan
Hindi / 2024 / Fiction



Filmfare-nominated director Surya Balakrishnan's short film is a close look at present-day urban existence. The film follows Abhi, a young professional in a metropolis, and his domestic worker Deepa, whose routine around him through the week anchors the film. The film speaks to the cultivated distance between the urban middle class and the people they employ, which exists despite physical proximity. Set in a small apartment, the film plays with the themes of loneliness, class, and the complexity of human connection. Without moralising, it reveals how people who share space but not lives still shape each other. The film is a subtle, layered look at modern isolation.

Chambal

Dir: Anhad Mishra
Hindi / 2025 / Documentary



Chambal by filmmaker Anhad Mishra is a deep dive into the heart of central India, where guns, tradition, and overt masculinity still shape identity. The documentary is a journey through small-town Madhya Pradesh, exploring how guns, once tied to dacoit life, still function as symbols of pride and political capital. Mishra gathers lived experiences and vivid images, which allow weddings, feuds, rituals, and daily routines to reveal the tradition vs. modernity dichotomy that Chambal embodies. The film is a nuanced take on a much-referenced landscape, portraying how violence, community, and memory evolve across generations.

Hamsafar

Dir: Abhijeet Arvind Dalvi
Marathi / 2024 / Fiction

Abhijeet Arvind Dalvi spins a tender and relatable tale in his Marathi short film Hamsafar. The film centres the story



of a boy and his family who must come to terms with the loss of a beloved old radio. Dalvi explores how objects become vessels of generational memory and meaning in Indian households. The disappearance of the radio sparks a journey steeped in nostalgia and longing. Hamsafar is a celebration of the deeply human impulse to hold on to stories even when they are tied to apparently meaningless objects.

Patralekha

Dir: Abhijeet Arvind Dalvi
Assamese / 2025 / Fiction

The eponymous short film by filmmaker Namrata Datta is inspired by the haunting Bhupen Hazarika song Tomar Dekhon Naam Patralekha. The film explores an unfulfilled romance between a village schoolteacher and an artist who are separated due to their circumstances. As they follow their different paths (she, caring for her ailing mother and he, pursuing art in the city), the quietness between them becomes central to the narrative. Datta relies on contrasting village day visuals with urban evening imagery to create a poetic depiction of the state of emotional suspension. The film



meditates on unfulfilled desire and the tender ache of what might have been. As IFFI prepares to pay homage to Bhupen Hazarika, Patralekha feels especially resonant.

Ru Ba Ru

Dir: Kapil Tanwar
Hindi / 2025 / Fiction



Set in the parched landscape of Rajasthan, Kapil Tanwar's film is a collision of two worlds - that of a Rudaali (professional mourner) and a Nachaniya (folk dancer). The story explores caste hierarchies, societal morality, and women's agency over their own bodies. Tanwar deftly uses the Rajasthan landscape, along with music, silence, and rhythm, to map the characters' emotional terrain. Despite the harshness of their unique circumstances, the two women find common ground in their resilience and solidarity. Ru Ba Ru is an intimate portrait of survival and a homage to the artistic legacy of Rajasthan.

SHORT TAKES



For me, it is perfect because everyone I work with comes here, and I can meet them over coffee, at cafes, restaurants or beaches.

Nic Camecho
VFX Director
London



I like to watch South American films because they're very local and portray the cultures of their countries.

Rashmi Menezes
Goa Government
Goa



I'm looking forward to seeing season 3 of *The Family Man* and *120 Bahadur*.

Rrohaan Desai
Student
Ratnagiri



Since moving to Goa, the festival fits into my life very easily. IFFI lets me participate and watch interesting movies I would not otherwise get a chance to see.

Rita Rao
Educationist
Goa

Listening Beyond Language

BY SHERRY FERNANDES

Iván Fund’s *The Message* is an intriguing film drifting through the dusty landscapes of rural Argentina. Shot in black-and-white, and set against the strain of his home country’s economic downturn, the film has already won the Silver Bear Jury Prize at the Berlin International Film Festival. It features an incongruous trio of protagonists who survive by selling slivers of hope wherever they can. There are two adults travelling with a young girl who communicates with animals, dead or alive, and they package this gift into paid “consultations” for anyone willing to believe, or desperate for hope.

This is not just a dusty roadside hustle—the sort of trickery one might dismiss as quickly as a spam call—because the idea of communicating telepathically with animals has deep resonance for many. Across India, wildlife rescuers and even pet parents often speak of moments when an intuitive connection has soothed distressed families, guided rescues, or in uncanny instances, helped lost pets find their way back home.

In his review of *The Message* for The Hollywood Reporter, Jordan Mintzer observed that Fund, “who’s a trained cameraman himself, creates a high-contrast, low-budget aesthetic recalling early Jim Jarmusch works like *Stranger Than Paradise* (1984) and *Down by Law* (1986), or Wim Wenders’ movies like *Kings of the Road* (1976). He says by “capturing the simple beauties of nature, whether it’s domesticated animals at home or horses freely roaming the streets of an abandoned town, he makes *The Message* easy to watch despite the lack of any underlying narrative tension.”

Here in Goa, it should be noted that emotional attunement to animals is part of daily life. You can see it next door to the main IFFI venue where fisherwomen feed scraps to market cats, and in quiet friendships between locals and community “streeties”. For some though, this connection runs far deeper, and one such believer is the wildlife rescuer Charan Desai, who uses intuitive animal communication into his rescue work across Goa. He speaks about it without hesitation, in a matter-of-fact tone: “It can be emotionally draining. It takes a toll, but every person has a stronger sense among the five senses. Some people see better, feel better and some understand



through visuals. It’s all part of our perception but we just don’t use it deliberately.”

Desai’s journey began with grief. Years ago, after his dog died, an animal communicator reached out to him. What happened next unsettled him: the medium relayed specific details she had no way of knowing, including the exact circumstances in which the dog had been rescued, and his peculiar food preference of fish and roti. “That shook me,” he recalls. “I didn’t know what to make of it but it was too specific to ignore.”

Since then, Desai has used intuitive communication in several rescue scenarios, particularly with distressed wildlife—an otter trapped in a well, snakes cornered in homes, even an injured crocodile stranded

in a pond. He describes sitting quietly, focusing on the animal, and “asking” what it needs. He insists that telepathy is not magic, but a form of deep connection by using frequencies we may not be actively tuned into. “We aren’t aware that we can connect with others using all senses and not just our voice and gestures,” he says.

When I spoke to Goa-based veterinarian Dr. Amanda Fernandes, she surprised me with an admission. “I just spoke to an animal communicator twenty minutes ago,” she said, laughing at the coincidence. Fernandes has been treating a dog named Tommy for months, performing several surgeries in an attempt to help him. When his condition continued to decline and his suffering became evident, she found herself contemplating euthanasia. Her colleague contacted an animal communicator, who said after “speaking” with Tommy, that the dog was ready to let go. His body could no longer carry him.

Fernandes doesn’t dismiss telepathy outright. “I do believe in it,” she says. “And I have plenty of friends who believe too.” In her own life, she once reached out to a communicator after the death of her cat, hoping for some closure. “It wasn’t so much about accuracy,” she explains. “It was about comfort. When you’re grieving, you want to feel like your pet is at peace. If this helps people feel calmer or supported, I don’t think that’s a bad thing.”

The Message leaves us with a burning question that echoes far beyond the film: does it really matter if telepathy is real, or does it simply help us feel closer to the

animals we love? In Goa, rescuers, communicators and vets all approach that question differently—some trust intuition, others rely on science, many live somewhere in between. But like Anika in this Argentinian movie, everyone is trying, in their own way, to understand what an animal cannot say out loud. Maybe that is the real connection the film is pointing to: not magic or mystery, but the small, human effort to listen more closely to the lives that share our world.

The Message will be screened at INOX Screen III in Panaji on 21 November 2025 at 8:15 P.M. and at INOX Screen III in Porvorim on 22 November 2025 at 10:30 A.M.

SHORT TAKES

I haven’t done any research, but I am open to watching any kind of movie being premiered here.

Sreelakshmi Lajith
Student
Kerala

We are going back to our roots and curating stories that connect with nature, human beings and relationships.

Sri Prakash
Director
Mumbai

A lot of young people are using different kinds of subjects to come out with new films. It’ll be good to hear new thoughts.

Sushama Shiromanee
Filmmaker
Mumbai

It is my first time at this event and I want to cover everything. *Pulp Fiction* is one particular film I haven’t watched in theatres; I want to experience it cinematically.

Vamshi Pasula
Software Engineer
Hyderabad

Omkar Bhatkar: “So many come to Goa to breathe”



Photo by Assavri Kulkarni

BY SHIVRANJANA RATHORE

In his debut feature *Iktsuarpok*—a meditative Christmas-week drama set in Goa—director and playwright Dr. Omkar Bhatkar brings the language of poetry, landscapes, and existential reflection to the screen with a poetic note rare in Indian cinema today. Adapted from his stage play of the same name, the film follows two siblings who travel to Goa to spend Christmas with their estranged aunt, Esther. What unfolds is not conflict in the traditional sense but a slow unmasking—of grief, affection, memory, and the quiet vulnerabilities people rarely allow themselves to face and express.

Bhatkar describes his lifelong artistic draw to the existential, “I tell stories that are simple on the surface but deeply personal. And the personal is political.” Goa, for him, has long been a place where this interiority becomes possible—a space where the city-worn can step out of their concrete-jungle masks and be. “So many come to Goa to breathe, to pause,” he says, “the film comes from that place

of shedding to come into our humanity.”

The director has been visiting Goa for years, and *Iktsuarpok* emerged as a love letter to this place that has offered him the space for contemplation. First staged five years ago, the play was born from specific Goan spaces where he has found grounding—chapels, markets, *balcões*, the smell of jaggery and kokum—and the film allowed him to finally shoot in the very locations that shaped the story. “It felt like the play manifested into something larger,” he says, “scenes written with a particular beach or chapel in mind were finally filmed there, almost like these scenes lived there.”

But *Iktsuarpok* is not a postcard of Goa. It’s a sensorial, lived-in portrait that acknowledges the tensions between masks and realities. Entering spaces to shoot, he noticed how some residents welcomed the filming; while others remained guarded. He doesn’t romanticise this. Instead, he weaves these dynamics into a film that honours Goa’s textures without claiming them. Subtle cultural cues—flowers, markets, local foods, the shifting greens of the

land, a passing reference to a church—appear like gentle footnotes for those who recognise them, never demanding attention.

At its heart, the film is a study of the unspoken, and what we say in between words. Bhatkar’s characters—like his theatre—are conversational rather than confrontational. “I create characters who talk,” he says. “Even when they fight, they sit and talk to each other. Life can be made like a dream if we allow ourselves sensitivity and vulnerability.” *Iktsuarpok* moves with that dreamlike quality: unhurried, attentive, almost luminous in its stillness. Even its poems—written by Bhatkar—extend this sensibility, offering what he calls “landscape poems” rather than songs.

The title itself references “iktsuarpok,” an Inuit term describing the anticipation of waiting for someone to arrive, an emotion that runs through the film like a soft ache. Loneliness, longing, distances, faith: these thematic pillars filter through the imagery, echoing influences from Souza to Angelo da Fonseca, from Emily Dickinson to Kierkegaard.

Despite its quietness, or perhaps because of it, *Iktsuarpok* resists the Western festival tendency to view India through narratives of poverty or sensationalism. “Some people who’ve seen the film abroad couldn’t believe India makes films like this,” Bhatkar says, half amused, half resigned. “But I’d rather the film reach people than chase preconceived expectations.”

With a theatrical release planned for Christmas, followed by OTT release, Bhatkar hopes the film finds those who need its gentleness. “*Iktsuarpok* is a dream,” he says. “I want people to leave the theatre and behave like my characters—open hearted, communicative, unmasked.”

The dream he speaks of is not an escape from life but a reminder of how life could be. And in the slow unfolding of a Goan Christmas week, *Iktsuarpok* becomes exactly that: a small, tender possibility.

Iktsuarpok is screening at the Film Bazaar on November 23rd, 2-4 PM at Qube 1.

Kristen Stewart's Radical Chronology of Water

BY POULOMI DAS

In May earlier this year, when actor Kristen Stewart bowed her debut feature *The Chronology of Water* in the Un Certain Regard section of the Cannes Film Festival, something shifted in the room. The moment she closed her screening to a four-minute standing ovation, it wasn't just applause. It was recognition: she had finally made the film she was meant to make all along.

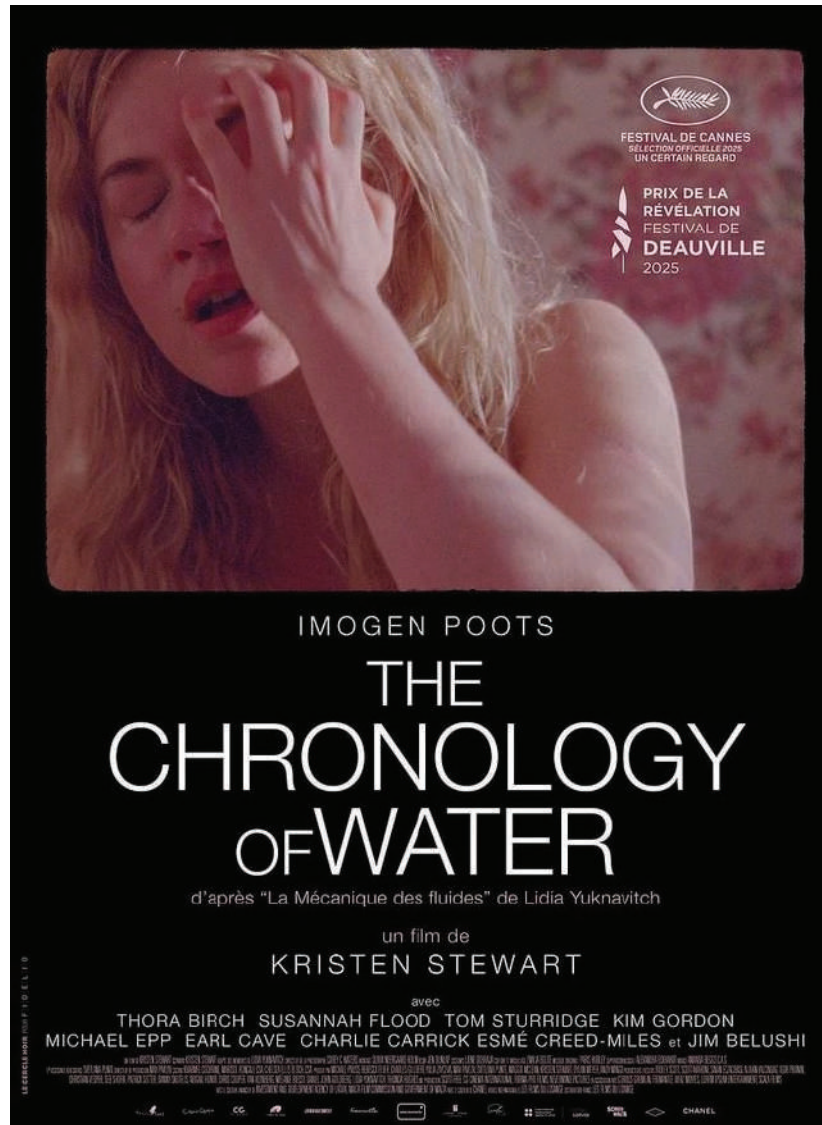
Her decision to adapt Lidia Yuknavitch's eponymous 2011 memoir is a filmic echo of the obsessions that have threaded through her work for the last decade: memory as fracture, female interiority as battleground, sexual ambiguity as political stance. In interviews, Stewart had said that reading the book made her feel suddenly, sharply present—"like someone turned the lights on inside my body." That reaction is telling.

Stewart's filmography maps her obsessions clearly. In *Personal Shopper* (2016), she wandered through grief like a half-lit hallway. In *Spencer* (2021), she played a woman drowning under the weight of her own mythology. In *Seberg* (2019), she traced the cost of visibility on a female psyche. Across all these films, she has been drawn to atmospheric tension: the way trauma sits under the skin, the way desire complicates the stories women are allowed to tell about themselves.

Similarly, Stewart's early directing experiments proved that she had a singular voice. Her debut short *Come Swim* (2017), was a study of emotional suffocation told through drenched imagery and dream logic. Her short in *Homemade* (2021), a pandemic anthology shot during the lockdown, showcased her willingness to blur the line between performance and confession. Adapting Yuknavitch's blistering, non-linear memoir, then, feels like a logical next step for a filmmaker who has always been attuned to formal risk and emotional intensity.

Yuknavitch's memoir is no neat narrative. It is a sensual, painful autobiography organised in five acts of episodic vignettes: a childhood marked by violence, teenage years defined by competitive swimming, adulthood spent in a churn of addiction, a devastating stillbirth that changed everything, and an artistic awakening by way of language and desire. The writing is lush, physical, and fearless—full of heat and salt and skin.

Memory, Yuknavitch insists, is not chronological; it's tidal. Scenes come like flashes—water as an image and motif—so the book feels cinematic in its jump cuts, its repetitions, and its visceral sensory language. That makes



it both irresistible and treacherous as source material.

But mounting this adaptation was anything but easy. Stewart, who also wrote and co-produced the film, spent years writing and rewriting because she knew that translating Yuknavitch's fragmented interior world into cinema would require more than a straightforward biopic. Securing funding was another mountain: as she admitted in interviews, making a film that foregrounds female rage, sexuality, trauma, and redemption is simply not "an easy sell."

The Chronology of Water is an adaptation that comes with the kind of challenges that could deter most directors. Yuknavitch's memoir has no conventional narrative spine. Its power lies in rhythm, sensation, and the courage to sit in discomfort. Translating that to film requires a director comfortable with ambiguity—willing to trust images over exposition, willing to let the movie

breathe in uneven, tidal patterns. As it turned out, Stewart, with her instinctive feel for emotional dissonance, is exactly that filmmaker.

The film follows Lidia (Imogen Poots) across years and selves: the girl swallowing fear in her childhood home, the athlete slicing through pool water in search of silence, the woman struggling to survive addiction, heartbreak, and a grief so deep it threatens to swallow language itself. And through it all, water recurs—cleansing, drowning, rebirthing.

What makes Stewart's vision exciting is its refusal to sand down the roughness of the text. She leans into Yuknavitch's non-linearity. She uses jagged edits, whispered voiceovers, and images that feel like bruises tenderly coming into focus. There's a bodily urgency to her style as if she's less interested in recreating events and more interested in transmitting sensation. She is interested in the way trauma changes your breathing, in the way desire rearranges a life, in the way women reclaim themselves sentence by sentence.

More importantly, Stewart approaches the material with an empathy that feels distinctly lived-in. Her film isn't about trauma as spectacle. It is about survival as art. She appears drawn to the way Yuknavitch writes shame without flinching, desire without apology, and forgiveness without forgetting. And so, the film understands that the memoir's beauty lies not in its pain but in its permission—its insistence that women, especially those who have been bruised, can reauthor themselves even if that requires breaking themselves open first.

Yuknavitch has always said she writes toward "the misfits, the runaways, the people who think they don't get a seat at the table." Stewart directs

toward them, too. *The Chronology of Water* feels like an offering, a hand extended from one survivor to another, saying: I see you. I understand the chaos. Let's build something from it.

In a film landscape still shaped by male traditions—linear structure, emotional stoicism, neat resolution—*The Chronology of Water* feels radical simply for embracing mess. Stewart's debut proves what her performances have long suggested: she is an artist drawn to thresholds and contradictions, someone who thrives where emotion overwhelms language. And adapting Yuknavitch's memoir—a story about drowning and breathing again—proves to be the perfect canvas for a filmmaker learning to speak entirely in her own voice.

The Chronology of Water screens at 6 pm on 21st November at Inox Panaji Screen 1V.

SHORT TAKES



I am excited about *It Was Just an Accident* because it won the Palme d'Or, and I've followed the director for almost 15 years.

Dhruv Sekhar
Filmmaker
Hyderabad



I bring my students here so they can watch films, meet filmmakers and learn beyond the classroom. Cinema reflects society.

Dr. Nisha Pawar
Professor
Kolhapur



It is the best film festival in India and all of Asia. It is out of the box – the places and the people, also.

Tom Emmatty
Director
Kochi



From child artists to senior citizens and from film lovers to students, everyone is here. I want to understand the audience and what they expect from us.

Helly Chauhan
Casting Director
Gujarat

The Sea Wolves (1980) was a prominent international production shot in Goa, and created a sensation in the state because it starred some of the biggest names of its time - Roger Moore, Gregory Peck, David Niven and Trevor Howard. Inspired by a true story from World War II, it was shot on location around Fontainhas, Vasco da Gama, and other picturesque localities. This scene recalls one where Roger Moore and Gregory Peck sit and scout from an old cafe, waiting to spot a spy.



Illustration by Govit Morajkar

Pranaam Panahi

BY SACHIN CHATTE

Only a few, select filmmakers have experienced personal and professional tribulations akin to those of the great Iranian director Jafar Panahi. His movies have faced bans, he has been arrested a couple of times, and for extended periods of time, he was prohibited from leaving his country.

However, none of these challenges have deterred Panahi from pursuing his passion for filmmaking. Most remarkably, after being subjected to a 20-year ban on making films in 2010, he has nonetheless proceeded to direct four highly successful productions including *It Was Just an Accident* (2025) which won the Palme d'Or at Cannes earlier this year, and will be showcased at IFFI.

Panahi grew up in the shadow of another great auteur, Abbas Kiarostami. As the famous story goes, Panahi left a message to Kiarostami expressing admiration for his films and the desire to collaborate. This incident is reminiscent of surrealist filmmaker Luis Buñuel reaching out to French filmmaker Jean Epstein for a job. In the end, Kiarostami hired Panahi as his assistant on *Through the Olive Trees* (1994), and it was not long before the young filmmaker made his debut with *The White Balloon* (1995), which was scripted by his mentor. The story of a young girl wanting to buy a goldfish laid the groundwork for Panahi's storytelling style, where a simple story is transformed into deeply humane, philosophical, and captivating cinema. This approach remains evident today; the first aspect that struck me after watching *It Was Just an Accident* at Cannes earlier this year was the plot's simplicity and how Panahi adeptly expands it into various threads, seamlessly incorporating different themes.

Panahi's inclination to take uncomplicated subjects and develop them into feature films persisted with *The Mirror* (1997), where he was inspired by a girl sitting on a park bench in Busan, gazing into the distance. *The Circle* (2000) won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, along with several other accolades, but also led to complications with Iranian authorities. The narrative

centred on three women, and to effectively communicate a social message, the director employed various cinematic techniques such as handheld shots, close-ups, and a constantly moving camera to portray the different protagonists.

His subsequent film was also prohibited in the country. *Crimson Gold* (2003) drew inspiration from the true story of a pizza delivery man who turned to crime, and won the Un Certain Regard prize at Cannes. Following that, Panahi's challenges continued to escalate with *Offside* (2006), which he filmed on location during a football match. Although women are not permitted to attend such events, he depicted ardent female fans disguising themselves as men to gain entry. Utilizing non-professional actors and students, he navigated the restrictions to make a film that won the Silver Bear Jury Prize at Berlin.

In fact, beginning with *Offside*, every film Panahi has produced is worthy of having a film made on it. Right from the process of shooting, to the grievances and

opposition he faced, and the battles he was compelled to fight, each one is a cinematic journey in itself. Then, of course, he was imprisoned in 2010 with that 20-year ban imposed, and despite an international outcry, it remained enforced, preventing him from leaving the country.

Nonetheless, it did not take long for Panahi to deftly circumvent the attempts to silence him – *This Is Not a Film* (2011) premiered at Cannes, with stories circulating about how it was smuggled out of Iran on a pen drive. After that came *Closed Curtain* (2013) and *Taxi* (2015). The latter was showcased at IFFI that year, and I recall watching it at Kala Academy during an afternoon screening. When the end credits rolled, I found it difficult to leave my seat; it was incredibly impactful. Later that same day, a midnight screening of the film was announced. And I found even greater enjoyment in watching it a second time within a span of 12 hours. I frequently use this example during film appreciation workshops to demonstrate that an entire film can take place in a taxi and still be captivating enough to warrant a second viewing, within hours.

Towards the end of *Taxi*, there is a scene where Panahi, who is driving the whole time, picks up Nasrin Sotoudeh, a real-life human rights lawyer, and engages in conversation with her (the entire film is filmed from inside the taxi). In that last scene, she places a bouquet of roses on the dashboard, visible to the camera, and states, "This is for the people of cinema." She adds, "Because the people of cinema can be relied on," while looking directly into the camera and addressing the audience, reposing faith in the people who love the arts.

In 2022, Panahi was once again arrested and imprisoned. That year, *No Bears* was released, in which Panahi also acts. When he made his entrance on screen, I felt a strong urge to whistle and applaud, welcoming this real-life hero to the screen.

However, there was another special moment during this year's Cannes Film Festival. As I exited the media center, I spotted a gentleman dressed in black, wearing his signature glasses, accompanied by festival officials, making his way toward the press conference room. For a brief moment, I was frozen in place, starstruck. I am not certain if he noticed me from behind his glasses, but it doesn't matter; I saw him and gently bowed my head. I wished I could have

performed a *sashtang pranaam* in the Indian tradition, to pay my respects to this remarkable filmmaker and human being.



Illustration by Sayali Khairnar

Mundo Cinema

BY VIVEK MENEZES

There are films from 83 countries being screened at the 56th International Film Festival of India, and they have been made in an amazing 90 different languages. Just look around the historic festival "campus" from the Old GMC building to the Maquinez Palace, and you will see there are citizens of at least 68 countries all around you, plus thousands more delegates from 30 states and union territories all across India. So much diversity, an amazing plurality, with everyone interacting and engaging with each other in perfect polite harmony. This begs an obvious question: why can't the rest of the world be like IFFI?

It is not a joke, because we all know the tensions of our times, but the evidence of this festival is nonetheless right in front of our eyes. We can see that nothing is censored here, but society does not collapse. We are continually addressed by so many tongues in an infinity of registers, but none of us is acting threatened, or posturing to shout everybody else down. Religion has its place, never encroaching further, while an amazing plurality of voices is constantly questioning almost everything imaginable. Yet, it bears repeating, society does not collapse.

In our everyday lives we have become used to decrying screens – the ubiquitous smartphones and their algorithmic tether – but here it is the lure of the big screen that brings us together. I like how the great John Berger described the experience: "What is saved in the cinema when it achieves art is a spontaneous continuity with all individuals. It is not an art of the princes or the bourgeoisie. It is popular and vagrant. In the sky of the cinema, people learn what they might have been and discover what belongs to them apart from their single lives."

This beautiful evocation inevitably invokes Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, and those famous Upanishadic lines written more than 2000 years ago, which read loosely translated as "one is a relative, the other a stranger, say the small minded. The entire world is a family, live the magnanimous."

If ancient Indians recognized our essential interconnectedness, and we all act that way during this laid-back, lovely festival, how come the same does not apply after the curtains come down? Why do we go back to building walls, and sitting apart, and shunning difference, instead of focusing together on what is really important? The truth is the answers are in the films being featured this amazing banquet of global cinema, and coming across loud and clear in all those different languages from that bewildering array of countries across the globe.

As we kick off yet another edition of IFFI in Goa – itself one of the great historical hubs of globalization and global

interconnectedness – Team Peacock has been reflecting about just how special this opportunity is. We get to gather together as one, to listen and learn side by side. To allow new voices and unfamiliar perspectives to impact our future ways of being. And that brings us back to the same old question that doesn't have an answer: if it can happen here, why can't it be the same everywhere? Why can't the whole world be just like IFFI?

Illustration by Sayali Khairnar

Pragyaverse

by Pragya Bhagat

we share more than you know

an obsession with the dramatic, language no bar. popcorn crunch. soda fizz. the solace of big-screen celluloid, its ability to tether us to the present. laughing and screaming with a hundred strangers. the spank of a jump scare. trailers. the space between action and cut. and when the credits roll, the quiet tuck of scene into pocket, the drive home with it, the memory it evokes months later. becoming your favourite character. finding a new favourite character. offering the stories you love to the people you love. the ceremony of walking into darkness, only to emerge reborn in community.

56th International Film Festival Schedule - 21st November 2025

INOX PANJIM - AUDI 1

9:00 AM
NO OTHER CHOICE

1:15 PM
THE FAMILY MAN (S:3)

3:45 PM
CROMA

6:00 PM
120 BAHADUR

9:15 PM
ALPHA

INOX PANJIM - AUDI 2

11:30 AM
Inaugural Ceremony of
Indian Panorama 2025

12:15 PM
KAKORI
AMARAN

4:45 PM
AANIRAI
TANVI THE GREAT

8:00 PM
GROUND ZERO

INOX PANJIM - AUDI 3

9:15 AM
WE BELIEVE YOU

11:30 AM
MY MELBOURNE

1:45 PM
1942: A LOVE STORY

5:15 PM
ASAMBHAV

8:15 PM
THE MESSAGE

INOX PANJIM - AUDI 4

9:45 AM
GLOAMING IN LUOMU

12:30 PM
HALAD

3:15 PM
DE TAL PALO

6:00 PM
THE CHRONOLOGY OF WATER

9:00 PM
DREAMING IS NOT SLEEPING

MAQUINEZ PALACE AUDI 1

9:00 AM
WOMAN AND CHILD

12:00 PM
LULLABY FOR THE MOUNTAINS

2:00 PM
MIROIRS NO 3

5:30 PM
UMRAO JAAN

8:45 PM
MAGELLAN

ASHOK AUDI

10:00 AM
BETTER GO MAD
IN THE WILD

1:00 PM
GORGONÀ

4:00 PM
ATROPIA

7:00 PM
THE BOOK OF SIJJIN
AND ILLIYYIN

SAMRAT AUDI

10:30 AM
ORPHAN

1:30 PM
DJ AHMET

4:30 PM
SWEETHEART

7:30 PM
SILENT REBELLION

INOX PORVORIM - AUDI 1

10:00 AM
CALLE MALAGA

1:00 PM
FIUME O MORTE!

4:00 PM
GODS OF STONE

7:00 PM
GIRLS ON WIRE

INOX PORVORIM - AUDI 2

10:15 AM
GAMAN

1:15 PM
MALLISWARI

4:15 PM
PARTY

7:15 PM
EK DOCTOR KI MAUT

INOX PORVORIM - AUDI 3

10:30 AM
GRACE FOR SALE

1:30 PM
THE LITTLE SISTER

4:30 PM
READY OR NOT

7:30 PM
CAMEL

INOX PORVORIM - AUDI 4

10:45 AM
BLUE HERON

1:45 PM
PHANTOMS OF JULY

4:45 PM
HUNGARIAN WEDDING

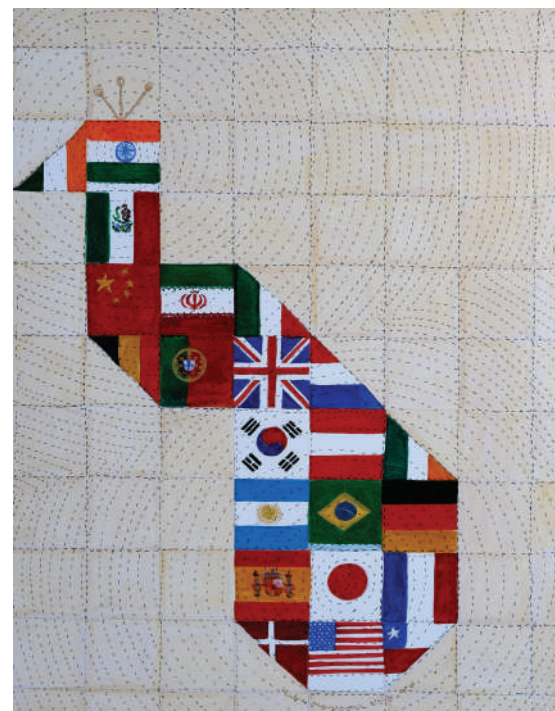
7:45 PM
RAINS OVER BABEL

RAVINDRA BHAVAN MADGAON

4:00 PM
TANVI THE GREAT

MAGIC MOVIEZ PONDA

6:00 PM
TANVI THE GREAT



For today's lovely, textured exclusive *The Peacock* cover painting, Shilpa Mayenkar Naik has chosen to represent the world in the form of our favourite bird, via the medium of traditional Goan quilting – 'Manno' in Konkani – where generations of women have lovingly crafted hand-stitched quilts by joining together left-over fabric pieces and scraps (mostly in squares and triangles) to make familiar and friendly patterns. The artist says her own beloved grandmother "used to hand stitch them in unique ornate spirals and circles."

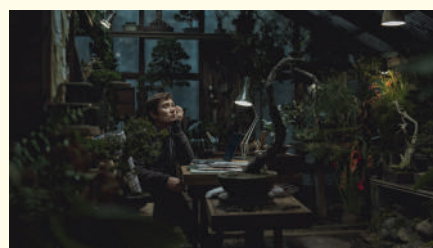


ENTERTAINMENT SOCIETY OF GOA



INOX PORVORIM AUDI I
10:00 AM
CALLE MALAGA

MAQUINEZ PALACE I
2:00 PM
MIROIRS NO 3



INOX PANAJI AUDI I
9:00 AM
NO OTHER CHOICE

INOX PANAJI AUDI IV
6:00 PM
THE CHRONOLOGY OF WATER

