



DIFFERENT SHADES

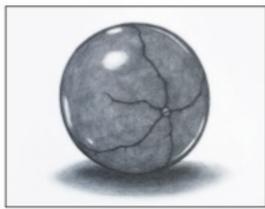
Two years after his demise, over 170 artworks from English singer-songwriter George Michael's collection will be auctioned by Christie's on March 14. The lots include works by Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin, Sarah Lucas and Michael Craig-Martin.

WEEK AHEAD



Language Matters

SINCE 1988, every year French-speaking countries unite to showcase the diversity of Francophone cultures at the Francophonie Week. To take place at Alliance Française de Delhi, the event this year will feature a lecture on "Countering Fake News" at 6.30 pm on March 13. On March 14, films *Mommy* (pictured) and *Origami* will be screened. As part of the festival, an exhibition titled "Living Outlines" has been organised and the Francophonie Méla will be held on March 16.



Painting Reality

ARTIST AKSHAY Raj Singh Rathore's solo titled "un-practiced frugality" will take place at Gallery Espace from March 16 to April 13. Talking about the exhibition, Rathore, who is known for his experiments with different mediums, says, "The vision of the show is political. It will take the visitor towards a new kind of aesthetics which, being rooted in the past, surpasses the present sense of contemporary contemplation."



Classical Notes

IN ITS 72ND edition, the Shriram Shankar Music Festival will open with a performance by Santoor player Rahul Sharma on March 14, along with vocalist Madhup Mudgal and sitarist Shahid Parvez Khan (pictured). On March 15, vocalists Rajan and Sajan Mishra, Manjusha Patil and sarod player Biswajit Roy Chowdhury will perform. On Saturday, Sabir Khan will play the sarangi, followed by flautist Rakesh Chaurasia and vocalist Kaushiki Chakraborty. Pandit Jasraj will close the festival on March 17. At Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra Lawns, Copernicus Marg. Register for free on [bookmyshow.com](http://bookmyshow.com).

SNAP SHOTS



Travelling Words

THE FIRST novel to be translated from Uzbek into English — Hamid Ismailov's *The Devils' Dance* — has won the €20,000 EBRD literature prize, that recognises translated literary fiction in Europe and Central Asia. Known as the "Uzbek Game of Thrones", the book was initially published one chapter after another on Facebook. It was later banned in Uzbekistan, and its printed editions were smuggled into the country. It intertwines the stories of two central Asian writers: 19th-century Uzbek poet Oyxon and author Abdulla Qodiriy, who was imprisoned by Stalin's secret police in 1937. Donald Rayfield, emeritus professor of Russian and Georgian at Queen Mary University in London, especially learned Uzbek to translate the book.



Life of An Icon

MUSIC LEGEND Elton John will release his official autobiography in October this year. "My life has been one helluva roller coaster ride and I'm now ready to tell you my story, in my own words," the 71-year-old music icon wrote on Twitter. The publisher Henry Holt & Co (a division of Macmillan) said in a statement, "A multiple Grammy-winning legend and flamboyant superstar, Elton is the most enduringly successful singer/songwriter of all time. Fans have been eagerly waiting for him to tell his story. Now the wait is (almost) over." John's life will also be chronicled in a film titled *Rocketman*, which will have actor Taron Egerton play the lead role, while Dexter Fletcher will direct it.

young working-class men. Her 1979 work, *Nazi Lady: The Diaries of Elisabeth von Stahlenberg, 1938-48* is a fictional diary of a woman trying to climb the social ladder in Nazi Germany. Her non-fiction book *The Undergrowth of Literature* (1967) is known to be a pioneering study of pornography. Freeman also wrote screenplays and scenarios for ballets, including Kenneth MacMillan's *Mayerling*.



(Clockwise from above) Kaaru's installation at The Oberoi in Delhi; Anjalee Wakankar and Sanjib Chatterjee; artists at the Viraat-e-Khalsa Heritage Centre

SHINY VARGHESE

Power of Translation

A new installation by the design firm Kaaru affirms their tryst with craft and consciousness

AT THE lobby of The Oberoi, Delhi, an intricate silvery web hangs wall to wall, floor to ceiling. Dotted at intervals with indigo blue and marigold yellow circles of varying sizes, it's an installation that begs to be inspected further. As one draws nearer, the screen presents three layers of steel fingers hooked one to the other, and the blue and yellow reveal stone inlay of flowers on one side and compact mirrors on the other. This jagged-edged installation can only be seen through the interpretation of the word, "Atithi".

"A guest in India is an atithi. The Sanskrit word literally means one who is without an arrival date, resonating at a deeper level with the inevitable and profound truth of impermanence, which we perceive through the ever-changing nature of time," says Sanjib Chatterjee. This latest installation is a consequence of the 20-year journey of the design firm Kaaru that he co-founded with Anjalee Wakankar in Delhi. In this installation is the deep, slow breath of thought, of past, present and future, represented in overlapping screens, while its varying polygonal shapes brings to memory our body's building blocks of altering cells and tissues. With artisans from Agra, who crafted the inlay, to the Aranmula mirrors done in Kerala, it presents Kaaru as translators, who take idioms of vernacular thought and present it in an urban language.

Chatterjee, an architect from Delhi's School of Planning and Architecture, with Wakankar, who worked with artisans in Vietnam and Cambodia, started their firm at a time when home and craft were not synonymous with everyday life. When we see Gond paintings on wooden boxes today or Sanjhi screen panels in living rooms, it helps to remember that these translations took a long road to get here. Craft revivalist Rajeev Sethi's exhibitions on Indian crafts in Smithsonian and Cooper-Hewitt in 1985 had artisans collaborate with western designers. From tables with brass and Warli inlays to wooden cabinets lined with silk fabric, Sethi



showed that Indian crafts were ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century. However, in the country, there were few who worked in bringing craft home.

Wakankar recalls one of their first projects in 2000, when the temples of Khajuraho were filled with its millennium celebrations. It also marked the beginning of Kaaru's collaboration with artisans. They worked to create a museum line of souvenirs inspired by the temples by using several craft forms of



Understanding the unique cultural nuances, the sensibilities and sensitivities of diverse traditions, and the potential of the individual artisan is imperative  
ANJALEE WAKANKAR

Madhya Pradesh, which were also presented to the then president KR Narayanan.

This is when they met the master artist Jangarh Singh Shyam, for whom it was the first time when he transformed his artwork from canvas to an actual product. "My prior work experience and Jangarh's spirit of a true artist, hungry to explore, taught that an open-minded authentic spirit to collaborate with mutual respect for each other's strengths was the foundation. Understanding the unique

cultural nuances, the sensibilities and sensitivities of diverse traditions, and the potential of the individual artisan is imperative. However, as designers or design entrepreneurs, we venture out with our vision bearing the mantle of creating works wherein tradition and contemporary grow simultaneously into an evolutionary cycle of limitless possibilities," says Wakankar.

They have collaborated with artisans across the country, translating crafts onto stone, wood, cloth and metal. Believers in the handmade and industrial heft, their products affirm Amartya Sen's questions on the function an object performs: "Does it nourish us? Does it increase one's accessibility to the community? Does it enhance freedom?"

One such example is of Pattachitra artists who painted the creation of the universe on the entrance door of a residence in Golf Links, Delhi. Matsya, an avatar of Vishnu, guides the sage Manu and all of humanity on a boat through the floods. Kaaru had done the interiors for this house, which also had sandstone artists from Gwalior create a screen wall depicting waves.

If at a corporate office in Gurugram (2007) Kaaru worked with 11 different craft forms, including mandalas from Madhya Pradesh on doors and panels, textiles from Chanderi, and Mysore wood inlay for the conference room and CEO offices, in the first phase (2008-10) of the Viraat-e-Khalsa Heritage Centre, Anandpur Sahib, they got carpet weavers from Mirzapur and zardozi embroiders from Agra and Lucknow to make tapestries that were nearly 50 ft long. From durrie installations depicting Guru Nanak's Kartarpur village to textile panels in gold tissue and white organza embroidered in zardozi threads that recreated the interior ambience of the Golden Temple, Kaaru brought to the fore the idea that teamwork and detailing made all the difference in delivery. "When a person from a village salutes the earth for his food, he registers his debt to the earth. When such knowledge seeps into feeling is when the prayers come and become action. It's a job of a lifetime," says Chatterjee.

Still Got the Blues

SAD isn't just an emotion, for some Mumbaikars it is a way of life — a new short film explores

TANUSHREE GHOSH

IT IS one thing to scramble for space in Mumbai and another to deal with its long, cyclical and unrelenting seasonal spells — heat or rain. What's often termed as a "mood swing" can actually be a condition known as seasonal affective disorder (SAD), which screenwriter Manish Singh tries to capture in his short film *Season's Greetings*. It was screened at the third Indian World Film Festival in Hyderabad on Sunday.

The 14-minute film which, last year, flew to the Chicago South Asian Film Festival, got Special Mention at the eighth Dada Saheb Phalke Film Festival, and was selected for NFDC Viewing Room Film Bazaar 2018. It is 35-year-old Singh's second directorial short. His first, *Suck's Story* (2016), is about how rare Bollywood success stories draw thousands to the city but success remains elusive. "When a Kapoor says he's a self-made man, it makes me laugh," he says.

As a child, Singh watched Hindi films at the weekly screenings organised by his father's employer NTPC Ltd (Kahalgao, Bhagalpur), and parrot dialogues and stories in school. After Class XII, he wanted to try his luck and went to Pune's Film and Television Institute of India in 2000 but was returned home, since he was not a graduate, which was mandatory to apply. After completing his graduation in 2002, he landed in Mumbai in 2007, where he initially wrote dialogues for television serials such as *CID*, *Raju Hazir Ho*, *FIR*, *Channel*



A still from *Season's Greetings*; (left) Manish Singh

[V]: *Heroes*, *Dilli Wali Thakur Gurls* and *Crime Patrol Dial 100*. *CID* was a brief stint since he was "not following the pattern". "The *CID* we watched during my childhood was totally different. They asked me to add humour, which I couldn't do," he says.

"Nobody can teach you writing, they can tell you the rules, but as long as you don't have a thought and observation to see and feel what's happening around, you can't write," says Singh. His first written piece was a feature film, *Democracy*, which couldn't find a producer. "Short films are trending. It reaches more audience than

television, can be made on a small budget, and you don't have to wait for a producer," he says.

*Season's Greetings* opens in a Goregaon-East matchbox room, where the camera pans to a close-up of the ceiling fan, rotating at snail speed, cut to a defunct table fan whose blades the distressed protagonist (Pankaj Jha) moves manually, sweat trickling down his neck. Sugarcanes being re-crushed to extract every last drop of juice is symbolic. The wait for the monsoons seems like drudgery. And when it comes, it brings no respite. The city is flooded, clothes won't dry, seepage, chipping wall paint, mobile phones in polythene pouches and ironing wet rupee notes. The man is irritable at those enjoying the rain or anybody who rings the bell. "I asked the actor to stay on the set, house-bound, for a few days prior to the shoot, to internalise the atmosphere, neither laugh nor listen to romantic songs," says Singh.

"SAD," the film tells, in actor R Madhavan's voiceover, "is more prevalent in areas experiencing long fall (monsoon) or winter. The reduced exposure to sunlight affects serotonin, a brain chemical that affects the mood and makes people feel lazy and gloomy... According to a source, more than 10 million cases of SAD are reported annually in India... Some people experience it in summer as well."

The film does not specify if SAD cuts across classes, and whether the seasonal vagaries by themselves trigger depression or aggravate a pre-existing condition. It is revealing nevertheless. "After watching it, people said, 'aisa bhi kuchh hota hai' (something like this happens?)" says Singh. He would board rickshaws, record the drivers' rants, play it on loop at home, and laugh, until it wasn't funny anymore. The film took two years to make. Singh says, "I would ring up (the DOP) Madhavraj (Datar) in Chennai and say, 'badal aa gaye Mumbai mein, pack your bags and come'. When he arrived, the rains stopped. So we shot the interior scenes and waited for the next monsoon."

ON THE LOOSE



LEHER KALA

Poll Goals  
New age experiments in governance

YOU KNOW there's an election in the offing when the newspapers are inundated with full page ads by political parties, congratulating themselves on their achievements, and declaring fantastical future plans. Of late, it's impossible to miss the AAP blitzkrieg. Everyday there's an ad promising free treatment to accident victims, and a pledge to make Delhi the best city in the world. One can't help but be a little taken in by the scope of AAP's ambition. It requires a certain audaciousness to try and implement startling policies hitherto unthought of by any previous government. For example, the addition of the happiness curriculum in Delhi's government schools launched in 2018, and even taken forward to hospitals (though it was very short-lived).

If nothing else, AAP deserves full marks for originality, for tapping into the spirit of the Sadhguru generation who value lofty concepts like self-fulfillment and the pursuit of joy. Previous governments have stuck to humbler and no doubt, far more pressing issues. God knows there are enough of them like electricity and running water, bad air and traffic jams. There is an excellent argument in the fact that government school students in India lack solid foundational skills — survey after survey has found kids in class VII can't do basic division or read. So considering this state of deep illiteracy, the idea of time being wasted on a happiness class instead, seems laughably outrageous. Having said that, there is no doubt that being a student in India is highly stressful, and for teenagers especially, the years pass by in a blur of unending examinations. There are long term consequences when kids are faced with crushing pressure and are constantly preparing for either acting a test, or a resume-building, extra-curricular activity.

The Indian education system is built on the ideal that students in 12th must (philosophically) de-prioritise everything but academics to get that elusive 95 per cent, which will then magically sort out their future. Whatever helps in shattering this ludicrous myth, that any one-time event is potentially life-changing, must be encouraged. The Delhi government's happiness curriculum has a daily 45-minute period that begins with a five-minute meditation, followed by lessons on values and well being. It's a long shot but maybe this class may give children (and their parents) the perspective to realise that there is much more to look forward to in life than good grades. Adults learn the hard way that happiness is ephemeral and chasing it, counter-intuitive. If students are urged early on to consider what makes them really happy, their chances of choosing work they find meaningful, the byproduct of which is happiness in any case, will be so much better. AAP is onto something here by recognising, that cultivating that insight is a prerequisite for a successful life.

Meanwhile, the happiness project that was extended to hospitals in January has been a spectacular failure. Inspired by a video from Brazil, where a group dance by medical staff to uplift patient morale was successful, Delhi Health Minister Satyender Jain, amid much fanfare, grooved for the cameras to Falguni Pathak's songs at GTB Hospital in January. Not surprisingly, the doctors and nursing staff weren't as enthusiastic about shaking a leg for the patients, since there is chronic shortage of manpower and many of them routinely put in 20-hour shifts. After that, to expect a doctor to double up as an entertainer as well is really asking for a bit much. Besides, other than being a fleeting distraction at best, it's hard to see how a doctor dancing serves a patient languishing in hospital. Since we are living in the age of ketamine nasal sprays and psychotropic cures, maybe it's unwise to write-off dance therapy entirely. Perhaps there's cause for cheer that a political party isn't afraid to defy convention with these new age ideas and remain undeterred by the occasional, amusing misadventure.

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