



PRESENTING A LESSON

Residents of the German city of Stuttgart are gift-wrapping vehicles, which block sidewalks and bike lanes, in an attempt to punish people who park irresponsibly. According to Zweitrat Stuttgart, the cycling group peddling the initiative, it's a non-violent method and no car is damaged.

WEEK AHEAD



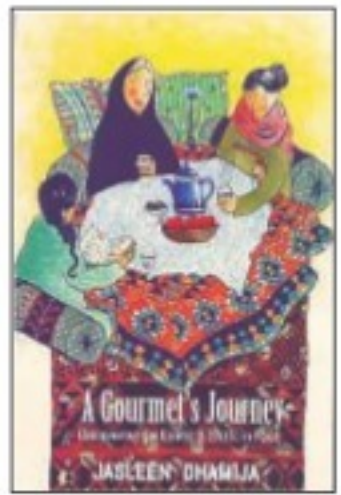
Capturing Life

PHOTOGRAPHER SOONI Taraporevala's solo, "Home in the City: Bombay 1977 - Mumbai 2017", is a collection of black-and-white photographs that reveals the charm of the ever-evolving city of Mumbai and its people. The exhibition has been curated by Siddharth Dhanvant Shanghvi and is in collaboration with Sunaparanta, a cultural centre of arts in Goa. From January 10 to 27, at Vadehra Art Gallery, D-53, Defence Colony.



Jungle Queen

URSULA BOWER lived among the Zeme Nagas in a remote part of North Cachar, now in Assam, in the 1930s and 40s, studying their culture. When the Japanese advanced to Imphal during World War II, she was invited to recruit the local Nagas and Kukis to form an intelligence unit. Based on her life, the play *Ursula: The Queen of the Jungle* has been written and directed by Chris Eldon Lee and enacted by Joanna Purslow. On January 8, 7.30 pm, at The Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road. Entry is free.



Kitchen Talk

VETERAN ART historian, crafts expert and gourmet cook, Jasleen Dhamija, who has authored more than 15 books, is launching her latest book on food, *A Gourmet's Journey: Discovering the Exotic & Erotic in Food* (Women Unlimited). On January 11, 7 pm, at Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre.



Music to My Ears

STALWARTS OF classical Indian music will be part of the Swami Haridas Tansen Sangeet Nritya Mahotsav. The participants include Pt Vishwamohan Bhatt, who plays the mohan veena, flautist Pt Hariprasad Chaurasia, sitar maestro Ut Shujaat Khan and sarod player Ut Amjad Ali Khan. Also on stage will be vocalists Pt Chhannulal Mishra and Shubha Mudgal and kathak exponent Uma Sharma. From January 11 to 14, at Shankar Lal Hall, Modern School, Barakhamba Road. Entry by invitation. Contact: 26432998/78.

The Night is Bright

A santhal village in West Bengal has been playing host to a global art and culture extravaganza, titled Night of Theatre, every year. It turns 10 this year



DIPANITANATH

IN WEST Bengal's West Midnapore district, a santhal village called Borotalpada is coming alive for an annual international cultural event, called Night of Theatre n 10 • La Nuit des Idées. Beginning 5 pm on January 27, the dark hours will be packed with dance-theatre performance, sound art wandering, video installations, photography exhibition and philosophical discussions, among others, created by artists from the village in collaboration with those from France, Germany, Mexico and Canada.

Several santhal dances are being grouped in the programme under the title, "Reske Ened" — Reske meaning joy in santhali. As the Reske Ened dances are performed, Indian and French philosophers will read out small texts on what moves them in life. "Our aim is to try to see what combination of elements makes you feel more deeply and, by consequence, think more critically," says Jean-Frédéric Chevallier, one of the founders of Trimukhi Platform, which organises the Night of Theatre n 10 • La Nuit des Idées with Institut Français India.

While folk and religious traditions in India include night-long performances, the Night of Theatre marks both a movement of audiences from the urban centre to a peripheral space to experience contemporary art forms and a questioning of the notion of "centre" and "periphery". It will include avant-garde creations, such as *Sound Art Wandering*, in which André Éric Létourneau from Canada is working with Sukul Hansda, Chandrai Murmu and Dulal Hansda, from the village, to record, merge and modify local sounds to create aural art that will be played from 10 speakers fixed on the mouth of earthen pitchers and mounted on trees. Ikué Nakagawa from Japan will direct a contemporary dance trio involving young artists from the village: Joba Hansda, Ramjit Hansda and Salkhan Hansda. An exhibition of photographs, a collaboration between



Rehearsals for *Jol E Jibon • La Vie dans L'Eau*; (right) Jean-Frédéric Chevallier, one of the founders of Trimukhi Platform



Élodie Guignard and local artists, will turn the walls of Trimukhi Cultural Centre into a gallery. "You will not see the wall, only photographs," says Chevallier.

"We don't do anything normally because we are not normal," says Chevallier. Apart from writings books on philosophy and arts, he continues directing dance-theatre performances and his latest, to be premiered at the Night of Theatre, is *Jol E Jibon • La Vie dans L'Eau*. It takes place in the waters of a lake at the outskirts of the village. "I have been working on a poetical text that is used also for the performance. It is composed to oblige you to think. Or at least that's what I am trying. I wrote the main parts in French but we

translated them with the team of Trimukhi Platform and use it sometimes in Santhali, sometimes in English, in French or in Bengali. Even if you listen to them in your own mother tongue, the words will trouble you inside. And it is combined with the vision of bodies evolving in the water as you sit on dry land to watch this show," says Chevallier.

He has been a resident of West Bengal since 2008. Married to artist Sukla Bar, whose video installation is a part of the festival, he is trying to master the art of rolling out Bengali sentences. As one of the founders of Trimukhi Platform, he has started learning Santhali, and is called "Jean-da" in the village. If there is a curatorial idea

in the festival, it is not focussed on conveying a message or telling a story alone. "These artists create work that awaken the sensations and the thoughts of each one in the audience, and for each one in a different manner," says Chevallier.

Part of *Bonjour India* programme, *The Night of Theatre n 10 • La Nuit des Idées* will take place at Borotalpada, West Bengal, on January 27. The journey starts on January 27 at 1 pm from Howrah station, Kolkata, coming back to Kolkata next day at 11 am. Entry: Rs 2,400, with 20 per cent discount for students and senior citizens. For booking online: <http://trimukhiplatform.org/nightoftheatre10anuidesidees/>

ON THE LOOSE



LEHER KALA

Side Effects

Students don't need cell phones in schools

LAST MONTH, France decided to ban mobile phones in schools, including in senior classes, calling it a requirement of 'public health'. While usage was already prohibited in classrooms, kids were allowed to use them on breaks at lunch and between lessons. But after noticing that children were busy staring at screens rather than playing a sport in their free time, it was decided a ban from age 6 was in order.

There is no greater challenge to modern parenting than the smart phone. There is an argument that in an era of terrorism a phone is necessary for children in case of emergencies, to call their parents. That need could be met with a good old-fashioned Nokia, that has only a call and SMS function. In most Indian schools, students' phones are confiscated immediately, if found. A few international institutions use the iPad as a teaching device and are more lenient when it comes to technology but all are in agreement, for the adolescent age group, there's nothing to be gained by unrestricted access to electronic devices. A conversation I witnessed recently, between three 15-year-olds discussing a fourth's legion of followers and 'likes' on Instagram was terrifying, in the sense that their interactions seemed just as hollow as most adult conversations online are: full of shallow praise and profusions of affection, meaningless tripe that costs nothing since all it needs is the click of a button. It's perfectly fine for jaded adults but for kids who have yet to form important bonds, they need face-to-face conversations, even arguments. That's much more likely to happen while dorking around with a ball, or having impassioned discussions on books and movies. Speech, vocabulary and ideas develop by talking and listening, not by gazing dumbfounded, into coloured, graphic oblivion.

It's not all bad, concedes Scott Steinberg, in his book *Parenting High-Tech Kids: The Ultimate Internet, Web and Online Safety Guide*. Apps, video games and high tech toys are, let's face it, far more fun and exciting tools for kids to learn from. Steinberg advocates 30 to 60 minutes of screen time a day for tweens and says with the right guidance and supervision, it can boost creativity. Of course, to use technology for optimum effect, the parent will have to make an effort and take a crash course on the software options that teach maths or history in inventive ways. The issue arises when parents who are busy eking out a living, don't have the time to monitor their children's digital lives and cell phones usually end up getting used for the worst reasons. As a diversion to boredom. Cheating becomes remarkably easy. Games with those shrill tones or just surfing the Internet leave you feeling vaguely dissatisfied, all too full yet empty, at the same time. The access to pornography, and an over dependence on social media at a vulnerable age is deeply worrying. I don't know one parent who doesn't struggle with managing their children's screen time. A broad ballpark, according to Steinberg in his book, is never more than 120 minutes a day, no matter what the age.

There are no universal rules for parenting, and that applies to regulation, or lack of, towards electronics. In the holidays, my six-year-old rolls out of bed, opens her tablet and goes to her own profile called 'Kids' on Netflix. She can't tie her shoelaces or brush her hair but she knows the WiFi password, and navigates her way with any remote or app. I have seriously considered disconnecting my Tata Sky and my WiFi to put an end to this daily irritant of arguments that end badly. Obviously every generation will have a different experience growing up and maybe, this inexplicable attachment to a screen, is just how it was meant to be for today's kids. As parents, we have to wonder whether it's nostalgia for a childhood that was much less complicated that makes us see this widespread adoption of technology so suspiciously. Or if we are actually in danger of raising a nimble-fingered, cryptic generation that's speaking and listening less.

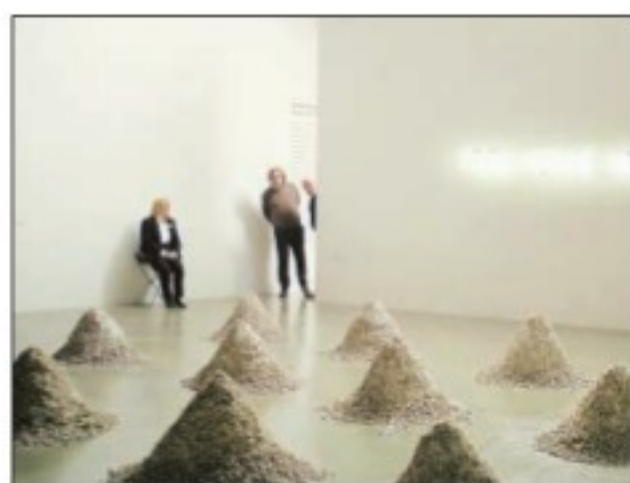
'Indian films should feature in the competition section'

Christian Jeune, director of Film Department at Cannes Film Festival, talks about its selection process

ALAKA SAHANI

FOR INDIAN filmmakers, the Cannes Film Festival has remained one of the choicest platforms to showcase their newest work. Yet, year after year, they have failed to secure a place in the competition section. Christian Jeune, director of the Film Department of the festival, says: "Believe me, we are dying to get more Indian entries and to have them in the competition section. We have had some very good films at the festival, *Masaan*, *Titti* and *Ugly*. But they were not in the competition. Indian films should feature in the competition section of other festivals too."

During his recent visit to India, Jeune explained the process of picking movies for the festival. "We try to make the best selection possible. Of course, there will be mis-



Christian Jeune (left); a still from *The Square*

takes, as the selection is based on personal choices." So, there are movies that the festival didn't pick but they went on to become successful eventually? "Yeah. Probably," says

Jeune with a chortle.

However, in defense of the festival's selection process, he says, "The audience at Cannes is very different from other film festivals. It consists of professionals, mainly mediapersons. While selecting movies, we have to keep that in mind. The flip side of this is that the mediapersons expect every movie to be a masterpiece. Sometimes, we don't select certain films assuming that they would be at risk in Cannes, where they will be open to severe criticism. However, it is okay to take a risk." Jeune, who is the main contact for sending entries for the festival, believes that films are more "kindly judged" at other festivals, compared to Cannes.

However, Cannes gives the global visibility that most filmmakers aspire for. Last year's winner, *The Square*, is currently in the Oscar race for the Best Foreign Film Award. While Jeune concedes that winning

Palme d'Or gives a film "a lot of exposure", there have been occasions when the winners of the top award at Cannes have not had a great run at the box-office.

When asked about the statement made by actor Jessica Chastain — who served on the festival jury last year — about the representation of women in films, Jeune said: "We are not making the films. We are selecting them." While presenting the jury report, Chastain had stated, "One thing I really took away from this experience is how the world views women from the female characters that I saw represented. And it was quite disturbing to me, to be honest. I do believe that if you have female storytelling, you also have more authentic female characters." Referring to Chastain's statement, Jeune added, "This is something to do with our society. This discussion should take place at various sections of our society."