

# SHADOWS OF A DISTANT HOME

An artistic journey through home, migration, and identity, where cinema and visual arts converge, writes **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Kabir Khan, Imtiaz Ali, Mihir Bhattacharya (Producer of My Melbourne) and artist Ajay Singh Bhadoriya exploring the art exhibition



## FINDING ART THROUGH HOME

As the festival drew to a close with Five Films for Freedom, an online celebration of LGBTQIA+ narratives, it was clear that this was an invitation to engage, challenge, and rethink the spaces we inhabit, both physically and emotionally.

Standing amid these artistic expressions, whether in the dark of the screening hall or the luminous glow of an art installation, there was a shift. This Festival served as reminders that in the chaos of borders, histories, and identities, storytelling remains our most powerful way of finding home.

Art and cinema are powerful forms of expression that capture human emotion, identity, and the stories we tell ourselves to make sense of the world. Walking into the 1 View World Film Festival at Travancore Palace, curated by Myra Mukherjee, felt like entering a living canvas, where each frame, each brushstroke of storytelling, attempted to grasp the elusive, shifting meaning of home, migration, and belonging. This was part of something much larger: *Desh Pardesh*, a multidisciplinary art exposition exploring history, displacement, and identity. Art exposition that explores notions of home, migration, gender, race, and memory across mediums and aesthetics. Bringing together several projects from micro solos by artists, designers, and architects to group shows, film festivals, and performances, in a range of mediums and scales, that respond to the complex notion of 'home' that occupies the central place in the imagination of both the local, global, and Diasporic deliberations in the global south today.

## AT HOME IN THE WORLD

While the festival showcased cinematic brilliance, with auteurs like Imtiaz Ali, Kabir Khan, Onir, and

Rima Das telling stories of the marginalised and misunderstood, it was the accompanying art exhibitions that gave the event its depth. Future Past Continuous, a group show, featured paintings, installations, and visual provocations that whispered stories of migration and memory.

The connection between cinema and art was undeniable. Take *The Shameless*, the festival's centrepiece, which unfolded like a haunting painting - dark, visceral, and poetic. Anasuya Sengupta's award-winning performance pulled audiences into the story of Renuka, a woman navigating the violence of survival and the longing for freedom. It was a moving portrait of resilience, much like the evocative works displayed at *Desh Pardesh*, where the idea

of 'home' was not just a place, but an aching question. The city premiere of *Puratna - The Ancient* added another layer to this exploration of time and memory. With the legendary Sharmila Tagore marking her return to Bengali cinema, the film became an introspective mirror, reflecting how history, family, and unspoken truths shape us.

*Desh Pardesh* extended beyond paintings and film. Dance and performance became another medium of storytelling, none more powerful than, performed by Nriyagram. The piece captured the feeling of Hiraeth, a Welsh word for a deep, unfulfilled longing for something lost. It was a wordless narrative, told through movement, of memories fading and reappearing like ghosts.

At Bikaner House and Stir Gallery, micro solos and queer art shows expanded this dialogue. The exhibition questioned not just where we belong, but how identity is constructed in an ever-changing world. Do we carry home with us, or does it remain a distant echo?

The visual arts segment featured over 55 artists from across the country, each responding to the themes of migration and belonging through diverse artistic mediums. From painting and sculpture to new media art and interactive installations, the exhibition

showcased how contemporary artists engage with the evolving landscapes of home and identity. The selection of artworks highlighted both personal narratives and broader socio-political concerns, reflecting the fluidity and fragmentation of cultural memory in a rapidly changing world.

