

{ DEE FOR DRAMA }

Deepanjana Pal



Ashok Meena. The film makes space for ugliness too, through Paul's use of viral mobile clips, and snippets from TV news coverage of the riots.

How Love Moves is all the more impactful because we, as a society, seem intent on pretending the worst is behind us. Our almost frenzied need to forget runs counter to what Paul has done: remember and feel for that past.

If you're in Mumbai, brave the dug-up streets and traffic to see her film. Since it is part of her solo exhibition (which runs until April 26), it is freely available at Project 88. In a weird way, this makes it more accessible than most documentaries in India.

Perhaps Paul will be able to make a conventional documentary someday, though anyone who knows what that entails in India would balk at the idea.

Last week, filmmaker Anurag Kashyap was venting about just this, on Instagram, after watching the masterpiece that is Adolescence, created by Jack Thorne and Stephen Graham.

It isn't surprising that Kashyap was triggered by Netflix CEO Ted Sarandos's gushing comments about the miniseries. The coffee shops of Bandra and Versova are haunted by the echoes of writers, directors and technicians who blame interfering producers for mangling their work.

"It frustrates me. How do we ever create something so powerful and honest with a bunch of most dishonest and morally corrupt @netflix.in backed so strongly by the boss in LA," Kashyap wrote.

Netflix has admittedly produced little to match Adolescence in years (though it does at least continue to acquire assets such as this series and last year's Baby Reindeer).

Incidentally, if you found Adolescence educational, check out Avinash Arun and Ishani Banerjee's School of Lies, a poignant portrait of contemporary boyhood. The 2023 series is streaming on JioHotstar.

Then watch Shuchi Talati's Girls Will Be Girls (2024; streaming on Amazon Prime), which won the prestigious Independent Spirit John Cassavetes Award last month.

Against all odds, there are storytellers who manage to create work that is impactful, courageous and beautiful. There's one currently showing at an art gallery.

(To reach Deepanjana Pal with feedback, write to @dpanjana on Instagram)

# Can India have its Adolescence?

How Loves Moves, an exquisite film set in Delhi, is showing at an art gallery. Where else must we seek out our best and brightest?

**I**n a far corner of the art gallery Project 88, there hangs a velvet curtain with the Urdu word Dum (Breath) etched on it in gold thread.

A few steps away lies a white body bag, embroidered with peacocks. In the belly of the gallery a large screen lights up to play artist Pallavi Paul's film, How Love Moves.

It takes the viewer to the Delhi Gate cemetery, where the two narrators share their stories, over the course of 63 minutes.

One is an immigrant who came to India, fell in love, and then saw her husband murdered during the Delhi riots of 2020.

The other is a chatty gravedigger named Shamim Khan, who helped bury 4,000 bodies amid the pandemic and the riots.

Their voices keep alive the memory of the many who have been anonymised and turned into data points by death and trauma. "The dead are not worthless," Khan says, at one point. "They're Allah's creations and must be returned to Him with respect."

Paul, 37, is a gifted interviewer. Her subjects seem aware of the camera but not performing for it. There are hauntingly beautiful moments shot by cinematographer



**WATCH** clips from Pallavi Paul's film, How Love Moves

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND PROJECT 88

