

doesn't operate from the melodramatic rules of opera like Bollywood."

A Bollywood movie without songs? No melodrama? Just what is going on? The Indian film industry, Ball reports, is in trouble and ready to try something new. Just as conventional Bollywood movies are breaking into the mainstream overseas—appealing to both ironic GenX-ers and nostalgic Indian expats alike—many moviegoers in India are

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rejecting what they perceive as outdated fluff. The Indian film industry turned in one of its worst years financially

in 2002—only nine of the top 65 movies made a profit domestically and the top 10 films took in half as much money collectively as they did in 2001. In the wake of this, industry insiders seem to have realized that not all filmgoers in the subcontinent have identical tastes. Some

Indians, it seems, are not up for escapist musicals built around lavish song-and-dance numbers and formulaic poor-boy-meets-rich-girl-whose-parents-oppose-the-match-but-relet-in-the-end plots. Many Indian critics have already declared the era of the universal movie hit over—an upsetting fact for an industry, Ball reports, that Indian magazine *Filmfare* once called “the one unifying factor in an otherwise diverse land.”

For the first time, Bollywood has begun to target specific audiences—most notably, India's emerging middle class. Many industry insiders point to the growing number of urban Indians who have access to cable television as one reason for the shift to more realistic, less campy films. “More and more audiences are getting to see Hollywood-quality films where the production values, the story lines—the whole sensibility—[are] different,” *Filmfare* editor

Shashi Baliga tells *MovieMaker*.

Not everyone is happy about this shift. Some critics fear that as studios zero in on India's more affluent urban population, the nation's rural and poor majority will be forgotten altogether. Others worry that Bollywood, like so many other national cinemas, will simply fall prey to Hollywood styles. (*Kaante*, the movie about street crime, is actually an unabashed remake of Quentin Tarantino's 1992 film *Reservoir Dogs*, filmed in Los Angeles with an all-American production crew, no less.) But for many others, including *Times of India* film critic Meenakshi Shedde, these changes have been a long time coming. “Realism has stumbled out of the closet and into our movies at last,” Shedde says. “We now have films for audiences who are not embarrassed if their brains tag along to the movies.” **U**

MARK KASTEL

Growing Art

From Wisconsin to Thailand, visionary artists are going back to the land, postmodern style

BY JOSEPH HART

THE HEADQUARTERS OF Dreamtime Village occupies the former post office and Oddfellows' hall in the tiny town of West Lima, Wisconsin. In the kitchen, elderberries are fermenting in a five-gallon bucket. Out back, a jumble of pots contains an array of plants including loquat, lemon, fig, and bay trees. Past a profusion of kiwi vines lies the art group's latest project: the Driftless Grotto of West Lima. Today, the grotto consists of a masonry arch and a few paths cut through the tangle of weeds that surround an ancient tree. But some day, says mIEKAL aND, a poet, artist, and co-founder of the community—and a guy who likes to reverse the usual relationship of capitals to small letters in



Dreamtime Village pioneers (with mIEKAL aND standing second from right) pose at their Driftless Grotto project in Wisconsin.

his name—the grotto will include a mosaic fence, a system of tunnels, a “bog garden” of carnivorous pitcher

plants and, as a centerpiece, a huge structure he calls a “time machine,” featuring a blue-glass tower.

Somewhere between the elderberry wine and the time machine lies the operative philosophy of Dreamtime Village, an intentional community where a surprising brew of anarchy, agriculture, and art has drawn hundreds of visitors and residents over the past decade. This experiment in cultural innovation, 100 miles west of Madison, is part of an emerging trend known as art farms. But call Dreamtime Village an art farm, and you'll get a correction from aND. "We call it a 'permaculture hypermedia eco-village.'"

And if the confluence of art and agriculture conjures up images of fiddle tunes and basket-weaving, you've got the wrong idea. aND's studio, upstairs in the Oddfellows' hall, contains, along with a jumble of homemade instruments and books, a state-of-the-art computer system where he pursues his latest passions: digital video, avant-garde Web poetry, and the creation of type fonts based on pre-alphabetic languages (like Linear B, the oldest surviving Greek script, and Indus Valley Script, the undeciphered written language of Pakistan and Afghanistan in 2600 B.C.E.).

In addition to the post office, the group shares ownership of the town school and gymnasium—abandoned decades ago—a former hotel, a few houses, and two plots of land not far from the town. Nearby is a three-acre plot planted with some 200 species of plants, including apple, peach, and cherry trees, several grape varieties, hazelnut and chestnut trees, and dozens of herbs and native plants—all intermixed with what other farmers might call weeds.

In Thailand, another community blending art and intentional living called The Land was founded by an international group of artists including installation artist Rikrit Tiravenija, the Danish group Superflex [see p. 9], and German designer Tobias Rehberger. In addition to an art and design studio, it features experimental rice paddies, which are planted to provide year-round harvests that feed not only project participants, but local victims of Thailand's AIDS epi-

demic as well. And in Rotterdam, Netherlands, the designer and artist Joep van Lieshout has established AVL-ville, an art and design "free state" with its own currency and laws. Van Lieshout's project combines elements of self-sufficiency and sustainability with a tongue-in-cheek mythology. The compound, the size of two football fields, includes an organic farm and studio and living spaces designed by artists. Such projects, Hans Ulrich Obrist writes in *Wired* (June 2003), represent an attempt to overthrow the tyranny of the traditional art gallery, the "white cube" with its assumptions about what art is and isn't.

aND goes even further. "Rather than saying my art is this painting or this particular work, we're trying to apply creativity to everything we do." At Dreamtime Village, the goat pen or the garden is as much an art project as anything produced in the studio.

Despite its physical remoteness—two hours from Madison, three from Minneapolis, four from Chicago—Dreamtime has a palpable influence on the wider world. Many who have sojourned there at one time or another in the past decade have gone on to apply the group's philosophy to other projects in art and indie media (a key player in New York's influential Autonomedia publishing collective, Ben Meyers, is a former Dreamtime intern) and permaculture (another former intern founded The Urbana Permaculture Project in Urbana, Illinois, which explores the possibilities of an edible urban landscape). Dreamtime is also a stopping point on the anarchist activist circuit—veteran anarchist theorist, author, and Islamic scholar Hakim Bey, inventor of the "temporary autonomous zone," has spent a lot of time there. This is part of the point, aND maintains. Dreamtime functions as an incubator for new ideas and an example of an egalitarian, art-centric way of life. "The idea is not so much to get people to change," says aND, "but to model a way of being, that a place like this can exist."

Joseph Hart is a contributing editor of Utne.

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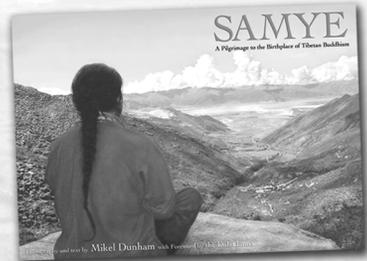
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