

Published Date:	15 Sep 2025	Publication:	India Today [National]
Journalist:	Devarsi Ghosh	Page No:	62
MAV/CCM:	332,500/65.95	Circulation:	550,000



FESTIVAL ▶

## DISRUPTIVE CINEMA

Selections at the *Emami Art Experimental Film Festival* show that, if you have patience and passion, budgets are secondary

**I** don't teach experimental cinema to my students; I encourage them to experiment." These moving words by American experimental filmmaker Leighton Pierce guided Indian filmmaker Mehdi Jahan as he curated 15 Indian and 27 international films out of 1,100 submissions for the fourth *Emami Art Experi-*

*mental Film Festival*. To be held in Kolkata from September 11 to 14, the festival encourages "alternative practices in moving image-making". According to Jahan, who also teaches at Kolkata's Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute, he has observed a resistance "to experimental cinema within the majority of Indian film schools,



Welsh filmmaker Scott Barley, whose iPhone-shot *A Ladder* is part of the official selection; top-left,

Rushnan Jaleel and a still from his experimental film, *The Dithering Veil*

where the instructional framework predominantly favours narrative cinema... which stifles the possibility for students to develop their own language of cinema." For example, Mumbai's Rushnan Jaleel, whose *The Dithering Veil* is an official selection, has been experimenting with film since he was 16. "The solitary handcrafted nature of Stan Brakhage and Phil Solo-

mon's films fascinated me," he says. "I realised that you could make films without a budget, expensive equipment or even other people." The festival is focused on "archival experimental filmmaking practices", says Jahan, where the films treat personal or official archives "as a living, breathing, dynamic, and restless entity susceptible to revision, interruption and reanimation, as opposed to a static repository of the past". To that effect, *The Dithering Veil* was shot for over two years on a cheap camcorder and makes use of several in-camera and editing techniques, such as makeshift lenses, superimpositions and extremes of

focus and zooming. Welsh filmmaker Scott Barley, highly regarded in the experimental film scene, is also part of the official selection. Barley is optimistic about the future of experimental film in India and the larger Global South. "The advent of digital and the democratisation of equipment have made it possible for anybody to make a film," he says. "You don't need money to make a film. Money is a very weak currency relative to other things. Time, resilience, passion, limitation, intuition, vision—these are the currencies that make a work truly great." ■  
—Devarsi Ghosh