

#WORLD WIDE WEB

This Is For Everyone

Despite the web being over three decades old, millions of people around the world still lack reliable internet connectivity



Georgina Godwin.



Tim Berners-Lee.

There were many who should have checked out, and ArBIT will try hard to see that our readers don't miss out. At the Jaipur Literature Festival, the inventor of the World Wide Web, reminded the audience of a simple yet powerful idea: the web was created for everyone. In a thoughtful conversation, he traced the journey of the internet from an open, idealistic invention to a complex, commercialized global force, while urging people to rethink the direction in which it is heading.

Berners-Lee began by recalling the origins of the World Wide Web at CERN in 1989. His aim was never fame or profit, but connection, creating a system that allowed information to be shared freely across computers and borders. The technologies he introduced, such as HTML, URLs, and HTTP were deliberately made open so that anyone, anywhere, could build upon them. From the very beginning, the web was imagined as a public good, not a private asset.

The title of the session, *This Is For Everyone*, reflects this founding philosophy. The phrase became globally known during the 2012 London Olympics opening ceremony, when Berners-Lee used it to describe the web as a universal space belonging to all humanity. At JLF, he reiterated that this belief still guides his work today. However, he also acknowl-

edged that the reality of the modern internet often falls short of this ideal. A major part of the discussion focused on how the web has changed over time. Berners-Lee expressed concern about the growing dominance of large technology platforms that control vast amounts of user data. He pointed out that many online services today are designed around profit-driven algorithms that prioritize attention, clicks, and engagement rather than truth, creativity or well-being. As a result, users often lose control over their own data, becoming products rather than participants.

Another key issue raised was inequality of access. Despite the web being over three decades old, millions of people around the world still lack reliable internet connectivity. Berners-Lee emphasized that as long as this digital divide exists, the promise of 'everyone' remains incomplete. Access to the web, he argued, is no longer a luxury, it is essential for education, opportunity, and participation in modern society.

In essence, *This Is For Everyone* was a call to responsibility. Sir Tim Berners-Lee reminded the audience that the web is not just a tool we use daily, but a shared space that reflects our values. Whether it becomes more inclusive, fair, and empowering depends on the choices we make today. The web, he insisted, still belongs to everyone, if we choose to protect it that way.



Scott Anderson.



Abha Sharma

There were some discussions, which are really relevant and important to the world today. So, though the JLF jamboree is over, some soirees should be reported and listened to. This is one of them.

novelist, non-fiction author and war correspondent, Scott Anderson's book *King of Kings*, explores how the last Shah of Iran sealed his own fate.

There was a time when the Shah of Iran commanded a huge army, enjoyed vast oil revenues, backed by a secret police force that seemed invincible. Yet, a revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini forced him into exile and reshaped the modern Middle East and beyond.

Scott was in conversation with Ramita Navai, who is a double Emmy and Robert F. Kennedy award winning journalist, on the last day of the 19th Jaipur Literature Festival on Monday.

"He was brilliant but terribly insecure, always looking for affirmation from America. He loved pomp and pageantry and surrounded himself with sycophants. The Shah was a complex, contradictory figure but what was common about him and also about the people who are surrounded by sycophants is that he gradually lost touch with reality."

The Shah loved being praised, but at the same time was very cynical about the advice he was getting. He was a complex, contradictory figure but what was common about him and also about the people who are surrounded by sycophants is that he gradually lost touch with reality.

By the end, he knew so little about his country and had no interaction with them. He lived in his palace in Tehran and used to fly in his helicopter.

Ramita asked Scott to narrate the incident of the day when he first saw the Shah as an 18 year old in

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The day the Shah arrived, there was a protest by 4,000 anti-Shah Iranian students studying in the United States. So, at the last minute, the Iranian embassy in the US flew in 15,000 pro-Shah demonstrators. The two different protestors were just outside the White House. Both sides broke through the fencing and charged each other.

Washington. "It was 15th November, 1977. The Shah was making his first visit to Washington to meet President Jimmy Carter. He was a bit nervous because Carter came to the office with his ideas of reforms and respecting human rights and reducing American arms sales abroad." The day the Shah arrived, there was a protest by 4,000 anti-Shah Iranian students studying in the United States. So, at the last minute, the Iranian embassy in the US flew in 15,000 pro-Shah demonstrators. The two different protestors were just outside the White House. When the Shah arrived and was being given a 21 gun salute, both sides broke through the fencing and charged each other. It was a mass brawl, which injured about 100 people, including 30 policemen.

"I also sustained minor injuries. It was the most violent day in Washington in a decade. Since the Shah's visit to the US was telecast live on Iranian TV channels, it was not a good optics for the local people to see the demonstrations."

Iran was America's most reliable ally. While America was buying oil from Iran, the latter was the biggest buyer of American arms abroad. The Shah was responsible for quadrupling oil prices, so, there was a massive influx of money into Iran, the gold rush as it is called.

There was mutual dependence between both the countries. Richard Nixon in 1972 anointed the Shah 'as the regional policeman of the Middle-East.' But what was truly upsetting for the Shah was the fact that he was seen by his own people as a 'puppet of the United States."

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There was mutual dependence between both the countries. Richard Nixon in 1972 anointed the Shah 'as the regional policeman of the Middle-East.' But what was truly upsetting for the Shah was the fact that he was seen by his own people as a 'puppet of the United States.' Going back to 1953, the CIA engineered a coup to restore the Shah to his glory because the then Prime Minister was usurping his powers. When the revolution came in, the Shah did introduce economic reforms and fulfilled other promises but he didn't get credit for it. The Iranians continued to see him as an American stooge.



Celebrating Life!

Celebration of Life Day is a special occasion dedicated to honouring the beauty, joy, and resilience of human existence. It encourages individuals to pause, reflect, and appreciate the precious moments that make life meaningful, whether it's time spent with loved ones, personal achievements, or simple everyday joys. The day inspires gratitude, positivity, and mindful living, reminding people to embrace both challenges and triumphs with grace. Communities often mark the occasion with gatherings, storytelling, and acts of kindness, fostering connection and shared happiness. Ultimately, Celebration of Life Day is a tribute to living fully and cherishing every moment.



Ramita Navai.

#KING OF KINGS



(L-R) Scott Anderson - Ramita Navai.



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In the mid 70s at the time of economic boom, when Iran was in its

most prosperous stage, the seminal reforms didn't go down well. Responding to Ramita, he said that we have seen the protests in the past two weeks; very much the same reasons that they took to the streets in 1978 against the Shah. Economic collapse, massive unemployment, corrupt elite. Of course, the main difference being it was more of a religious fervour in 1978 while now,

they are sick of the regime; they want democracy. How did Shah take this accusation that he was merely a puppet? Scott reiterated that he was a contradictory figure. Though obsessed with the west, he becomes convinced that the Americans and the British are conspiring with Ayatollah Khomeini to overthrow him and put Khomeini in office.

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When the 1953 coup was engineered by the CIA, the Shah was a bit unsure of himself and wanted to back out. The CIA officer in-charge told him that this operation was not going to stop. It will go with or without you. And Shah, who was a pilot, decided to fly out of Iran in his private plane.

He just could not separate himself from the fact that he was a western creation. He was westernizing his country, modernizing it but when things flipped, it didn't go well for him. When the 1953 coup was engineered by the CIA, the Shah was a bit unsure of himself and wanted to back out. The CIA officer in-charge told him that this operation was not going to stop. It will go with or without you. And Shah, who was a pilot, decided to fly out of Iran in his private plane. He first flew to his palace in the Caspian Sea and later flew to Rome. He returned three days later when there were signs that the troops were winning. But from that point of time, America started seeing him as a coward.

In 1963, Shah passed reforms known as the White revolution, land reforms and women's emancipation. Khomeini opposed both the land reforms and women's emancipation. He provoked riots and over a 100 people died and Khomeini was sent into exile. At this time, the Americans realized that this man has a spine and he is taking decisions to protect himself. The measures were actually taken by his Prime Minister but Shah took credit for it," Scott added.

Khomeini saw both the Shah and America as his enemy since the Americans have been instrumental in his exile. He was in exile for 14 years when a state controlled newspaper published an article accusing him of being a British agent. The article created a stir and Khomeini's religious followers violently protested. Some were shot down by the army and the police. In Shia Islam customs, each burial is followed by

another public commemoration after 40 days, and there were mass riots killing hundreds. Modern city of Tabriz was gutted. It was the first trigger against Shah.

When the revolution was happening, Khomeini went to Paris where he was interviewed by world media and he became the spiritual guy of the revolution. The American embassy in Iran was massive, about 300 people. Michael Metrinko was one of the only fluent speakers of the farsi language in the embassy. He saw the clerics taking over Iran and anti-American sentiments brewing up. He informed the US but he was ignored, and then came the Iranian hostage crisis in November 1979.

He was the only foreign diplomat in Tabriz when the riots happened and 52 American embassy staffers were held prisoner by the Iranian government for a total of 444 days. Michael Metrinko was believed to be dead during the 14 month old ordeal. The Shah didn't have many advisors. The closest one was his friend and confidant Asadullah, but he was also supposed to kiss the hand of the Shah as a mark of respect as others did.

After his death during the revolution, the only other person who could advise Shah was his wife Farah. She was an intelligent and educated person, who sensed the brewing dissent in Iran. She did tell the Shah that the people were tired of them but he would not listen to her.

He was diagnosed with cancer but he kept it a secret for a long time. Though he shared a special bond with Carter and Iran was so important to the US, still they didn't know he was ill.

Responding to Ramita's question if he had sympathy for Shah, Scott said, "Yes, I think the Shah was a weak man, but not evil."

Are there any lessons from the past? Why do you think political Islam succeeded when liberals, leftists, Marxists stalled? He said, "I don't think this Iranian revolution started this wave of religious nationalism. This you see in all faiths, including Buddhism. Even in the America of the early 1970s, there was this religious revival."

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#JAIPUR ART WEEK 5.0

Jaipur Becomes India's Global Art Stage

In its fifth and most ambitious edition to date, Jaipur Art Week 5.0 marks a decisive expansion in both scope and vision, drawn from over 450 international applications

● Toshi Vijay

This winter, Jaipur is poised to assume a commanding place at the forefront of India's contemporary art landscape as it hosts Jaipur Art Week (JAW), Edition 5.0, scheduled from 27 January to 3 February 2026. Set against the resplendent architectural and cultural milieu of Jaipur, celebrated globally as a UNESCO World Heritage City, the festival unfolds as a sweeping, city-wide cultural moment. With its scale, ambition, and international reach, Jaipur Art Week 5.0 firmly establishes itself among the most significant and expansive contemporary art festivals in the country, while projecting Jaipur as a vital global centre for artistic exchange.

Conceived and presented by the Public Arts Trust of India (PATI), Jaipur Art Week has steadily evolved into a formidable cultural movement that reimagines the relationship between art, public space, and civic life. Founded by Sana Rezwani, Chairwoman of PATI and a visionary leader within India's cultural ecosystem, the festival is anchored in an artist-first, access-led philosophy. It brings contemporary art out of the exclusivity of enclosed galleries and into the shared spaces of the city.

Now, in its fifth and most ambitious edition to date, Jaipur Art Week 5.0 marks a decisive expansion in both scope and vision. Drawn from over 450 international applications, more than 100 artists from India and across the world will present works across historic landmarks, public sites, and multiple venues throughout the Pink City. The programme encompasses over 15 large-scale solo presentations, a substantial group exhibition, cutting-edge digital and new-media showcases, and international student presentations.

The curatorial framework for this edition has been shaped by a distinguished international jury comprising Anita Dube, Renu Modi, Wood & Harrison, and Andrea Emelife. Deepening the festival's intellectual and conceptual rigour, selected artists were further supported through mentorship by eminent practitioners and



thinkers, including Vibha Galhotra, Gigi Scaria, Thukral & Tagra, and Shuddhabrata Sengupta.

At the forefront of this edition is the featured Presentation by Gigi Scaria (Delhi), a seminal figure in Indian contemporary art whose practice has consistently engaged with urban transformation, political structures, and lived realities, both nationally and internationally. The expansive artist roster spans a compelling spectrum of voices and practices, including Ankit Dey, Ansh Kumar, Arushree Suri, Boris Colin Alphonse, Edgar Masseur, James Johnson-Perkins, Kaanchi Chopra, Maya Kumari Sathar, Mohd. Intiyaz, Michael Shaw, Natasha Galeic, Naveya Sah and Shreya K Agarwal, Oliver Saurabh Sinclair, Pascal Ungerer, Poojan Gupta, Riyaz Uddin of Jaipur's Pink City Studio, and Zoya Chaudhary, artists whose works traverse material innovation, environmental consciousness, performance, film, public art, and the reimagining of traditional forms.

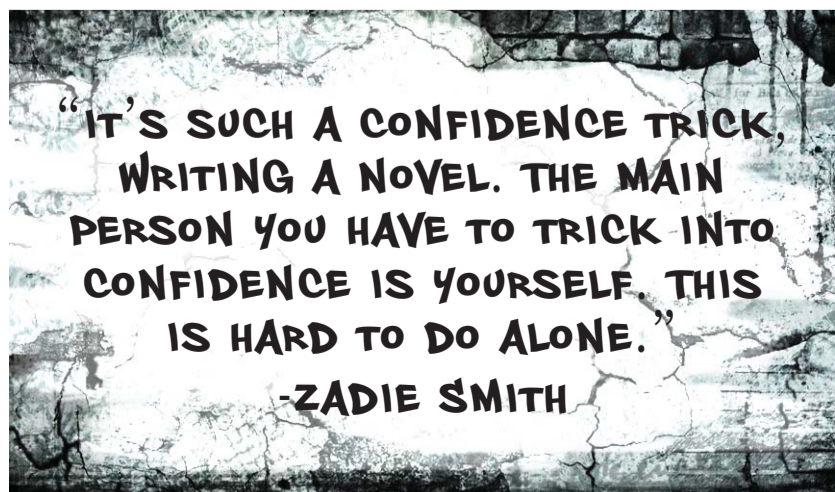
The group and collaborative exhibitions further enrich the festival's curatorial breadth, featuring artists such as Aditi Patwari, Aman Kumar Bavariya, Ayantika Sajwal, Dhruv Poddar, Naveed Wali, Parth Itwala, Ridam Kumar, Riya Bhagat, Roshan and Rohan Anvekar, Shagun Agarwal, Sumit Naik, Subhash Deka, Yash Chaudhary and Yashika Goel, whose AI-driven works have been showcased at institu-

Adding further gravitas to the edition, acclaimed artist and curator Anita Dube will also present a special work titled *Andha Yug*, a deeply evocative and introspective piece that engages with themes of vision, power, and moral ambiguity. The work extends Dube's long-standing inquiry into materiality and the politics of looking, offering a contemplative and resonant presence within the festival's curatorial landscape.

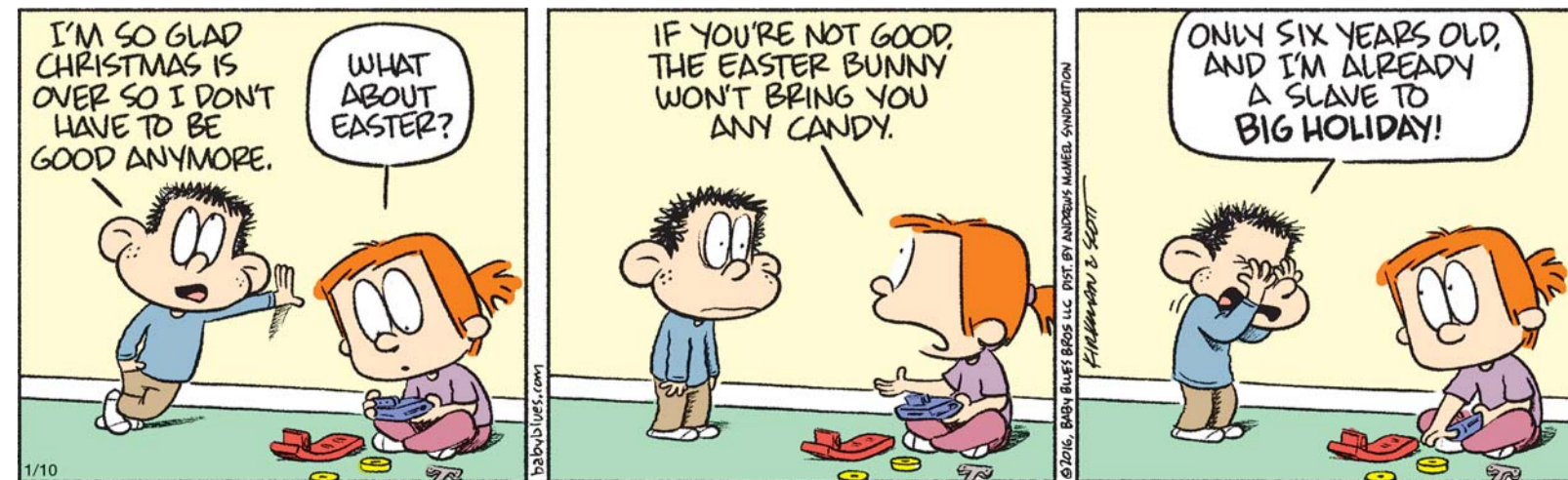
Extending well beyond exhibitions, Jaipur Art Week 5.0 offers a robust and thoughtfully curated public programme of talks, artist walk-throughs, and community-oriented initiatives, reaffirming its commitment to cultural accessibility and dialogue. PATI's free Proposal Writing Workshops, which supported over 600 artists during the Open Call phase, remain central to its mission of nurturing emerging voices and democratising access to national and international platforms.

With its expansive city-wide footprint, distinguished international participation, and sustained focus on emerging and experimental practices, Jaipur Art Week 5.0 marks a moment of collective pride not only for Rajasthan but for India's evolving and increasingly global cultural narrative.

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

