

Art & Culture



Life is a beach English playwright and actor Noël Coward; (below) Janette Jenkins

Garden of earthly delights

Janette Jenkins talks to **Jenny Hewett** about late thespian Noël Coward, the inspiration behind her new book.

In 1969, *Time* magazine interviewed the quintessentially English playwright, actor, singer, director and professional bon vivant Noël Coward in what proved to be his final few years. "I acted up like crazy. I did everything that was expected of me. Part of the job," admitted Coward.

If Coward's life was one giant performance, then British author Janette Jenkins has teased out his hidden complexities in her novel *Firefly*. The book reimagines Coward's final days in his real-life Jamaican hilltop retreat of the same name.

We meet Coward in his early 1970s when his health is failing. As a younger man he shimmered on stage, gaining energy and verve from the bright lights and attention. But in Jamaica, aged, with "squashy, marbled thighs", and largely alone in his self-imposed tax exile, Coward wilts in the soporific sun. In the book, he lolls around the steaming gardens and floats comatose in his pool, daydreaming about his

former glories. "I like the idea of somebody who once had the world at his feet and now, because of old age, because of illness, because he wasn't quite in fashion, he sort of feels lost," explained Jenkins. "I could have written about when he was on top, a great success. [But] I wanted to write about somebody who has had that, and probably knows they will never get that golden era again."

Jenkins paints a man famous for his many faces; she presents his forcefulness, his charm, his temper, his flirtatious philandering, his razor-sharp wit and acid tongue. "I think he is very different to how people believed or expected him to be," considered Jenkins, speaking over tea in a London café on a drizzly afternoon.

"People always expected him to be 'Noël Coward' – I'm sure that's

true of famous people today."

In *Firefly*, Coward's waning life force is contrasted with his bouncy young Jamaican houseboy, Patrice. Patrice is hired to look after the "boss" – taking him on agonisingly slow walks, cooking him lunch, helping him dress – but he yearns to work as a waiter in The Ritz, London. When he asks Coward to write him a reference, Coward hesitates. This is the

1970s; he fears that Patrice will end up in a South London hovel rather than performing silver service. But there is also a selfishness in Coward. "That is the only bit of power Coward has. [It is] a little bit of him stamping his feet and saying: 'I don't want him to go.

That's my thing, England."

Ultimately, what makes *Firefly* linger long after the last page has been turned is its exploration of the indignity of death. Coward passed away at *Firefly* after a

“I think he is very different to how people believed or expected him to be



heart attack in his bathroom.

"You just think Noël Coward would be lying in bed, having a glass of bubbly, saying something witty [when he died]," said Jenkins. Yet in reality when he collapsed "his false teeth had fallen out".

Firefly is a novel about death, loneliness, exile and, in Coward's case, estrangement from home. Jenkins concludes that it is "not just about Noël Coward. It's a book about friendship and old age, power, immigration and a sense of place. An Englishman, famous for being very English, in somewhere so far away".

Firefly ₹625, available at www.amazon.in.

Festivals

InContext: public art, ecology – Food Edition III Open Day

This ongoing festival on April 17 will see artists-in-residence at Khoj, Ravi Agarwal, Leone Contini, Simran Chopra, Suvani Suri, Sandeep Dang, Srishti Lakhera, Sunandita Mehrotra, Mona Gandhi and Rabbhya Naseer and Hurmat ul Ain present works ranging from video works, food sculptures, performances pieces and more that explore and touch upon on the theme of food and ecology to the public. See Preview on p52. **Khoj International Artists' Association**, 6.30pm.

Gay & Lesbian

Resources

Engendered Space Engendered, a New York-based NGO that deals with issues of gender and sexuality in South Asia, has a gallery, Engendered Space, and an artist's residency, Engendered Home, in Shahpur Jat. They have exhibitions, screenings and events focusing on LGBT issues, by LGBT artists. **Engendered Space**, 125-A Shahpur Jat, Second Floor (4053-9738). Tue-Sun noon-8pm.

Indradhanu IIT Delhi's new gender and sexuality support group accepts all students of the institution and meets twice a month. For information, visit www.facebook.com/IndradhanuIITD.

Lawyer's Collective HIV/ AIDS unit Free legal advice on the connections between law, sexuality and HIV/ AIDS. Call 4680-5555 for details. Mon-Wed 9am-5pm.

Nigah An autonomous collective that holds regular queer events and uses different media to talk about issues of gender and sexuality. Visit www.nigah.org or their Facebook page, Nigah Delhi for updates.

QueerCampus QueerCampus is an independent queer student and youth collective. Their events are free and open to the public and listed on their Facebook page. Visit www.facebook.com/qcampusonline for updates. You can also email qc.contact@gmail.com with any questions and concerns.

Tarshi A helpline for sexuality and sexual health, they offer confidential counselling, information and referrals on health and rights issues. Call 2647-2229 for details. Mon-Fri 9.30am-5.30pm.

Venues

Centre for the Study of Developing Societies 29 Rajpur Road, Civil Lines (2394-2199). Civil Lines.

Goethe Institut/ Max Mueller Bhawan 3 Kasturba Gandhi Marg (2332-9506). Barakhamba Road.

Habitat World India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road (2468-2222).

Hungarian Information and

Cultural Centre 1-A Janpath (2301-4992). Ravi Chowk.

India International Centre 40 Max Mueller Marg, Lodhi Estate (2461-9431).

Khoj International Artists' Association S-17 Khirkee Extension, near Sai Baba Temple (6565-5874). Mahiya Nagar.

Museums

FREE Accountancy Museum Shaving away cash is a natural human instinct and people in ancient times did it too. The museum has a collection of ancient clay pots, which functioned as piggy banks. The oldest specimens from around 8000 BCE were smooth-surfaced. Around 3500 BCE, the pots began to be marked outside to indicate their contents.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, ICAI Bhawan, A-29 Sector 62, Noida (0120-3045946). Mon-Fri 10.30am-1pm; 1.30-5pm.

FREE Air Force Museum Hidden off the Dwarka road behind the old airport terminal, the Air Force Museum doesn't loop-the-loop, though it doesn't crash and burn either. Gallery 1 showcases IAF memorabilia: models, medals and handheld weapons (helpfully captioned "Guns", or in other cases, "Old guns"). The hangar and the outdoor apron have what ought to be the highlights – fighter, recon and troop planes from Spitfires to Sukhois, plus helicopters, ordnance and a captured Pakistani tank – but they're so badly maintained they look like dull replicas.

Palam Air Force Station, Palam (2569-7551). Wed-Sun, 10am-5pm.

FREE Archaeological Museum This museum at the Purana Qila was refurbished and reopened less than two years ago. You'll find terracotta pieces, carved statues and other artefacts here, many dating as far back as 100 BCE.

Purana Qila, Mathura Road. Pragati Maidan. Sat-Thu 10am-5pm.

FREE Children's Museum Ruins meet replicas at this hands-on museum that feels more like a glorified playground, and this isn't necessarily a bad thing. The building was once a DDA Officers' Club, but was seized by the ASI when it was found to be in violation of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (because of the Siri Fort wall next door).

The Children's Museum is at Siri Fort, Siri Fort Road, just before Siri Fort Sports Complex. Tue-Sun 10am-5pm.

FREE Eternal Gandhi Multimedia Museum The father of the nation would certainly wonder at the Eternal Gandhi Multimedia Museum, a high-tech museum built by the Aditya Birla Group in his honour. They say it's "one of the world's first digital multimedia museums", and it's the perfect place for kids to get a dose of new age Gandhigiri. There are plenty of friendly, well-trained guides present, who encourage kids to interact with the displays. "Global Gandhi", an anthropomorphic computer, responds to anyone who comes close and a model steam train traces Gandhi's journey across the country through an audio-

visual display. A fun and educational experience, well worth an afternoon. **Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti**, 5 Tees January Marg (2339-2710). Tue-Sun (excluding second Saturdays) 10am-5pm.

FREE Gallery of Musical Instruments Part of the Museum of Performing Arts, one room houses musical instruments (mostly Indian), many of which are extinct today. The museum was inaugurated by violinist Yehudi Menuhin in 1964, and has a collection of 600 musical instruments, of which about 250 are on display. The other rooms of the museum have a fine collection of traditional Indian masks and puppets.

Sangeet Natak Akademi, Rabindra Bhawan, Ferozeshah Road (2338-7246). Mandi House. Mon-Fri 11am-5pm.

FREE Ghalib Museum For the Ghalib fan, the academy has a one-room museum exhibiting the works of Ghalib, including his papers and other writings. Don't miss the quirky model displays of Ghalib's favourite food. **Ghalib Academy**, Hazrat Nizamuddin West (2435-1098). Mon-Sat 11am-6pm.

Indian Archaeological Museum Not to be confused with the Archaeological Museum at Purana Qila, this is undoubtedly the best of the three museums in Red Fort. It exhibits manuscripts, letters, clothing and jewellery from across the Mughal period (including artefacts from Deccan kingdoms). **Red Fort, Chandni Chowk** (2327-3703). Chandni Chowk. Tue-Sun

10am-5pm. Entry ₹15.

Indian War Memorial It's a brief, three-room tour of weaponry and armour from the medieval period to World War I, in a familiar display-case format. The weapons are impressive but sadly their stories are lost; most captions lack any detail about date, origin, or how a device was used (a display of detonating fuses is simply labelled "FUZE").

Red Fort, Chandni Chowk (2327-3703). Chandni Chowk. Tue-Sun 10am-5pm. Entry ₹15.

Kitchen Museum A visit to the Kitchen Museum is part of the tour of the former Viceregal palace. From the turquoise-coloured "Star of India" crockery and a 3-ft-tall brass coffee maker, to a picnic box that doubles as a table for a refined meal even in the wilderness, the museum is well-stocked with kitchenware memorabilia dating back to 1933, the year the British Viceroy's household moved in.

Rashtrapati Bhawan. Advanced booking required; call 2301-2960 for more details. Timings 10am or 3.30pm on Mon, Wed, Fri and Sat. Entry ₹10.

FREE Metro Museum The Delhi Metro Museum occupies the entire gallery of the Patel Chowk Metro station. It is essentially two rows of displays, posters and touch-screen kiosks that explain the history, the technology and some trivia about Delhi's favourite public transit system. **Concourse, Patel Chowk Metro Station** (2334-5851). Patel Chowk. Souvenir shop open Tue-Sun 9.30am-5pm.

— DESIGNER —
Sherwanis Jodhpuri's Kurtas

Sherwani is a dress that signifies royal impression with a touch of ethnicity and modernity. An impressive shopping spree in the amazing state of the art store. Considering variety of choices at the store the shout "Buy from me" its well worth it to shop from Kurta Palace, (South Ex) as you can treasure a good designer outfit for years to come.

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Green the gap

French artist Jonathan Longuet tells **Georgina Maddox** how he literally brings art alive on his canvases using algae as paint.

Jonathan Longuet from Bordeaux, France, is not your conventional artist. For *Green Graffiti/Jungle Me*, he has created canvases and graffiti using algae instead of conventional paint. The exhibited works are the culmination of his two-month artist-in-residence programme at Niv Art Gallery in Neb Sarai. Longuet claims he has studied the behaviour and growth patterns of algae in order to employ "the living plant paint", a solution made from the algae extract, to open a dialogue between us and our biological environments.

Longuet studied art at the Bordeaux Montague Montesquieu for two years. In 2005 he dropped out to join an artist collective. He had his first exhibition in England in 2012. His stay in India also resulted in a productive collaboration with Manou, a popular street photographer. *Time Out* caught up with Longuet at the gallery, where he was conducting a series of workshops with young science geeks and art enthusiasts, and he told us about his love for leaving a mark on the walls.

Did you always plan to come to India?

Actually, I am surprised to be here – I live in Paris and show mostly in England, so one wonders, what are the chances? But it's a globalised world, so when the Niv Art Gallery invited me to be part of their artist-in-residence programme, I immediately accepted. I was already interested in India and had an ongoing exchange with a fellow artist, Manou, who shared his images with me. So I was already tuned into the streets and people through his photography. I took it to the next level when I actually came here.

Painting with algae is very unusual. Tell us how you started.

I have been interested in algae as an artistic medium since 2005. It is a local substance that is freely available everywhere. I wanted to work with a natural substance, a living material, which reflects our life process back to



Flip side Works by French artist Jonathan Longuet



us. Algae are also one of the first life forms in the chain of evolution. I have always had a scientific bent of mind combined with my art practice, which is why I thought it inevitable to bring the two aspects together.

The process takes a lot of time, from two to eight months. I have to work on the canvas. First I go to locations where there is moisture and humidity to collect the algae. Then I use simple bio-reactors to reproduce and duplicate the process of algae that forms naturally. After I have enough, I apply

it directly onto the canvases, while using stencils to block out forms. I am a figurative artist and human beings interest me; you could say I like to catalogue people, their dress, their features and attitude, in fact, people are their own biodiversity. The biggest challenge is to control the algae so that it delineates the forms. I want results quickly, but it is a natural process, so I have to be patient. For this project I had created sketches and drawings six months ahead of actually beginning on the canvases, most of them from the photographs I got from Manou.

The second part of the exhibition comprises photographs of the graffiti and has images of children spraying on the stencils. Was it easy getting the locals to become part of your project?

To begin with, I wanted to leave my mark on the walls, for fun; however, the local people were very resistant and did not allow me to spray the water-graffiti on their walls. This, despite the neighbourhood being quite dirty already; I explained to them that this graffiti was not permanent

and it would fade with time, but it was the children and young people who responded to the idea of doing water-graffiti with stencil. Now, the graffiti is kind of anonymous because both the kids and I have done it and we have not specified who the author is.

The words stencilled are "Green Riot"...

The first time I started experimenting with water-graffiti in 2011 was during the riots in London... I had planned to do graffiti on the street and colonise the place with my ideas. Also, around that time, members of the feminist punk rock band Pussy Riot were arrested during a concert in Moscow [at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour] and so I started to use the name Green Riot, which actually has a very strong manifesto against violence, taken from the feminist movement.

Green Graffiti/Jungle Me is on until **Sun Apr 20** at the Niv Art Gallery. See Exhibitions in Listings.

Rhythm divine



Swingers India Fiesta Latina will see performances by internationally and nationally acclaimed artists

Salsa makes a comeback as the city braces for a Latin dance festival, writes **Chitra Kalyani**.

There are quite a few similarities in Latin and Indian culture, according to Shalu Chopra, co-organiser of the Indian Fiesta Latina, touted as Asia's biggest Latin dance festival. Much like Bollywood, in the world of Latin music too, there is dance, there is passion, and if you dig a little deeper, you'll also find a love story.

Perhaps this is why it's no coincidence that two of the three co-organisers of the India Fiesta Latina, Shalu and Sunil Chopra, met at a dance party for the first time in 2002 and fell in love. Salsa came into their lives on a trip to Florida where they saw people dancing at the bayside. "They changed partners and found themselves dancing again as if it was choreographed," said Shalu. "We realised the step we were following was salsa, and it was a lead and follow dance." Life took a sharp turn for them that very moment. Today, Shalu is the founder of Mundo Latino, an institute for learning the Spanish language and

Latin dancing, which is affiliated with the Embassy of Peru. Both language and dance, Shalu feels, are a means of connecting and bonding. It is not surprising, then, that the festival brought together ambassadors of the 19 Latin countries in the city last month to show support for the event.

India Fiesta Latina took off in 2012 when salsa enthusiast Sunil got together with Neeraj Maskara, an international salsero with experience in organising salsa festivals, including the Amsterdam Salsa and Zouk festival. Maskara, who began salsa dancing in 1998, is known to add a touch of Bollywood and jazz dancing to his acts. Previous editions have seen more than 50 workshops on dance, close to 50 performances and salsa party nights that go on till the morning. This year, the event organisers promise it will be much bigger.

It's easier to host a Latin dance festival in India, with so many hospitality venues available, than in South America, said Sunil, who feels that salsa



teaching has been gaining steady ground in India in the last decade. It is also cheaper and easier for dance enthusiasts from Asia to fly here than to fly to Brazil.

When he is not dancing, Sunil is also a Latin music DJ and runs a technology consulting firm. As "DJ Chops", short for Chopra, Sunil will be inviting audiences to perform along with him, as he plans to pass on Latin percussion instruments – bongos, cymbals, claves, maracas – to them. "It brings them much closer to the rhythm," he says.

The fiesta will be an 18-hour affair. Simultaneous workshops from morning to evening will offer tutorials in various dance forms including salsa, bachata, pachanga and others. "Even novices will find something fun and relevant," added Sunil. Apart from workshops, there'll be performances from evening to midnight. Emcee Papa CJ will further liven up the dancing with stand-up comedy. The line-up also includes the American act Yamulée, which, if it does justice to its African name, promises to be "festive, joyous and free-spirited". The group serves up mambo rhythms onstage with their signature spinning techniques and footwork. Another not-to-be-missed act is a bachata performance by the American duo Ataca & Alemana, whose choreography to the song "Te extraño (I Miss You)" went viral with more than 63 million views on YouTube since it first appeared in 1998.

Social dancing, an invitation to the audience to come on stage and let their hair down, will begin after the formal performances finish and will go on till early hours of the morning. The high point for many will be a pool party on Sunday afternoon, where choreographed performances take place. With Maskara's Bollywood touch added to the heady mix of love and salsa shared by the Chopras, India Fiesta Latina promises three days and nights of stunning dance feats and celebrations. "It's an addiction," said Shalu, about her love affair with salsa. "The more you dance, the more you want to dance."

India Fiesta Latina 2014
is from **Fri Apr 11-Sun Apr 13**
at Leela Ambience Gurgaon.
See Festivals in Dance.