

# SLUM CINEMA SOUND PICTURE

SAMEER TAWDE





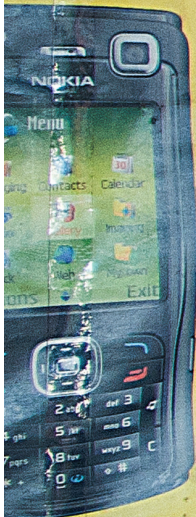




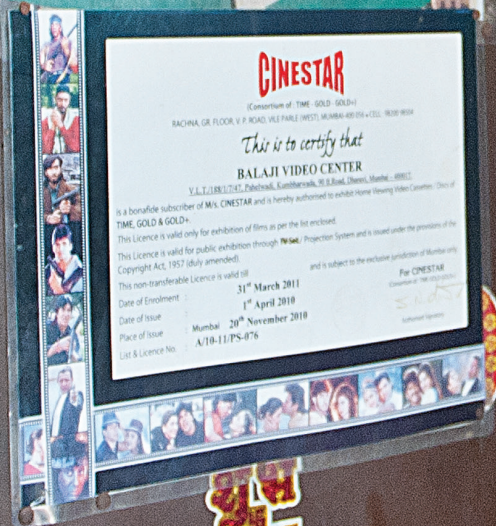


फिल्म पाल  
हैं।

अपना मोबाइल  
संभालकर  
रखिए

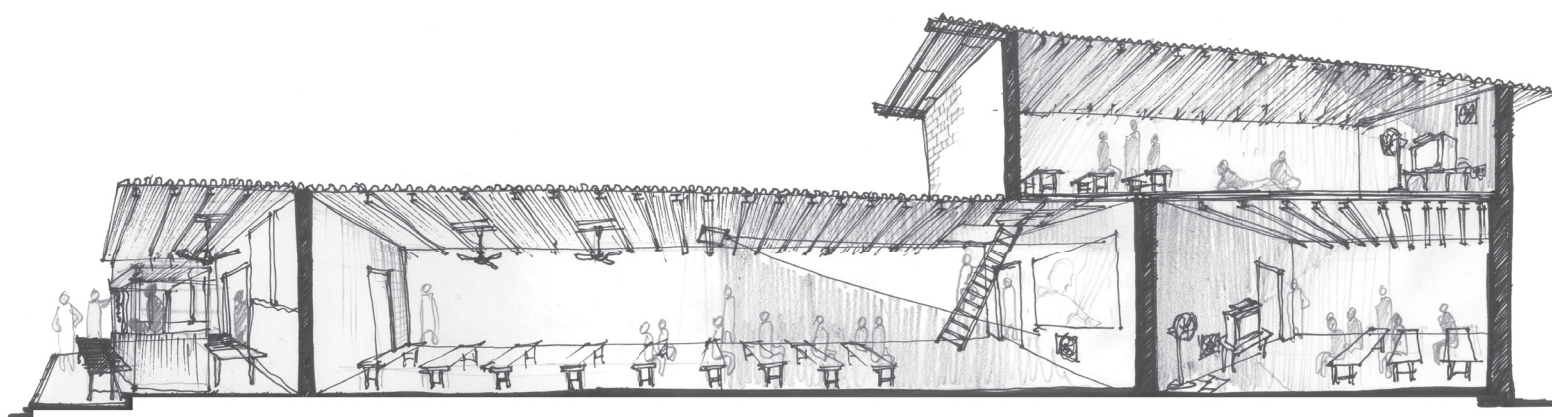


पान, गुटखा,  
लंबाकु खाना  
मना है ! बीडी,  
मिठाई पीना





One way to figure out how many languages are spoken in Mumbai is to hang around shanties that are called 'slum cinema'. In the metropolitan cityscape these shanties are inserted within unassuming rows of lottery ticket kiosks, tobacco shops, tender coconut stalls, tea vendors' carts, mobile phone repairers and so on. They screen films in the regional languages as well as X-rated adult films for the migrant wage labourers who come from surrounding states where different languages are spoken. These establishments, much like their patrons, are located in a special zone of the city, between the unauthorized and the invisible. The migrant workers are generally brought to the city by contractors, to work at daily wages within a system of irregular work flow. Most of them live in language and clan-based clusters, where a 10 x 10 feet room houses up to fifteen people. Near these clusters, then, pop up cheap entertainment shops that show films in their native languages: Tamil cinema at Dharavi, Telugu cinema at Orlem, Bhojpuri at Nalasopara, Punjabi at Sion Koliwada and so on. The near-exile conditions of existence of these floating populations make them a ready, diehard audience for films made in their languages.



The shanty cinemas are equipped with rudimentary infrastructure; they function with cheap video projectors, often managing with a single TV set. So the picture quality is shabby, to say the least, and sometimes barely visible due to lack of control over light coming in from outside. But what keeps the shows going is the blaring sound tracks, which amplify the mandatory erotic song or the hyperbolic sounds of vendetta dialogue or the verbalization of intricate feudal rivalries. The picture, in this case, is generic and can be predicted, but the sound is culture and language-specific, and thus occupies the centre of the viewers' sense of longing and desire. It is these audio tracks, spilling out of the shanties and filling up the street outside, that betray the camouflaged existence of the illegal entertainment shops. Otherwise the shanty could be easily mistaken for just another undistinguished, modest shop catering to a poor neighbourhood of the city.























