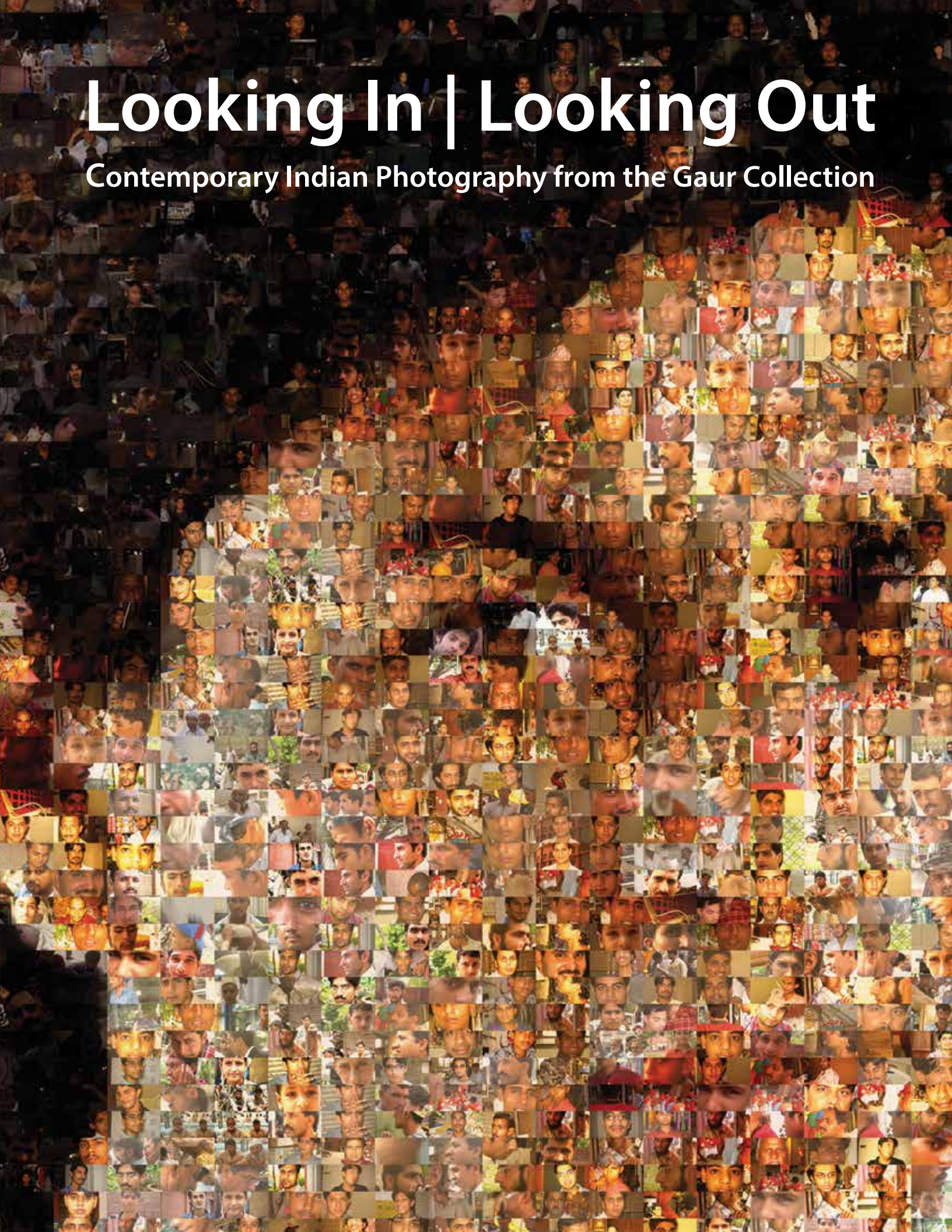


Looking In | Looking Out

Contemporary Indian Photography from the Gaur Collection

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This catalog was published in conjunction with the exhibition: *Looking In/Looking Out: Contemporary Indian Photography from the Gaur Collection* organized collaboratively by BINDU modern and the Stephen D. Paine Gallery, Massachusetts College of Art and Design (MassArt), on view at MassArt from September 28 through December 5, 2015 and BINDU modern from February 13, 2016 through May 6, 2017

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BINDU modern
Home of the Gaur Collection

MASSART
MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

Looking In | Looking Out

Contemporary Indian Photography from the Gaur Collection

Stephen D. Paine Gallery
Massachusetts College of Art and Design
621 Huntington Ave, Boston, MA 02115

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Contents

Director's Foreword 8

Lisa Tung

Return of the Gaze: Indian Photography in Cosmopolitan Contexts 10

Gayatri Sinha

Artist Plates

Photography as Performance Art 17

Sociopolitical Narratives 25

Portraiture 39

Travel and Street Photography 53

Entries by Chloé Zaug, Emily Watlington, Darci Hanna

Artist Biographies 62

Selected Bibliography 66



Director's Foreword

Lisa Tung

Director, Bakalar & Paine Galleries
Massachusetts College of Art and Design

One of the joys of being in the arts is the range of creative people one is privileged to meet. Of course there are the artists with their unique approaches, wondrous work, and expertise, but once in a while you meet special collectors whose singular curatorial vision is matched by their kindness and graciousness. I am fortunate to count Umesh and Sunanda Gaur as friends of the Bakalar & Paine Galleries at MassArt; the benefit of sharing their collection with our community is immeasurable.

The genesis for this exhibition was a comment in passing. In summer 2014, Professor Lois Hetland told me that she was planning a travel course to India, with a goal of formalizing a partnership with the Srishti Institute of Art, Design, and Technology in Bangalore. As the campus museum for MassArt, the nation's only freestanding independent public college of art and design, the Bakalar & Paine Galleries' nimble programming takes cues from the college's diverse offerings. Our mission is to educate and inspire, be accessible to all, and always present thought-provoking new work. Focusing on India provided a rich opportunity toward our mission.

Through her research Lois discovered the Gaurs and wrote an inquiry, and they kindly responded with an invitation. Soon we were visiting their home in New Jersey where we were given a thorough and expert tutorial of the Progressive and Modernist Indian painters as well as contemporary Indian indigenous art. The Gaurs are very special – not only are they discerning collectors of the highest caliber of Indian painting, tribal art, and photography, but rather than cloistering the work in their home they derive immense pleasure from sharing their collection with educational institutions across the U.S.

Looking In/Looking Out: Contemporary Indian Photography from the Gaur Collection offers a window into the contributions that Indian artists have made to the photographic discipline. It is a mini-survey, with artists and works spanning four decades, touching upon many themes and threads that are relevant to our understanding of the art and culture of India today.

This exhibition is only possible through the prescience and generosity of Umesh and Sunanda Gaur. A great thanks goes to them first and foremost. I would also like to express gratitude to Professor Lois Hetland and her travel course for being the catalyst. I am grateful to Assistant Director Chloé Zaug for her detailed oversight of this exhibition's logistics and for authoring the exhibition labels; to Curatorial Associate Darci Hanna for her precise editorial eye and insightful comments; and to Curator of Education Mesma Belsaré and Gallery Education Associate Michael Reback for their thoughtful gallery education programs. Curatorial Fellows Zoe Silverman and Madison Treece and Curatorial Intern Emily Watlington tirelessly gathered research, checked facts, and filled in wherever and however needed – their behind-the-scenes contributions are greatly appreciated. Lastly, kudos to Chief Preparator Rob Gainfort and his able crew for transforming our white galleries into an environment that captured some of the color and glory of the subcontinent.

We are also pleased to collaborate with the Gaurs and BINDU modern to produce this exhibition catalog. Gayatri Sinha's perceptive essay eloquently evaluates Indian photography today; we owe her a great debt. Many thanks to Jeffrey Wechsler for his comprehensive editing; Sneha Ganguly for assisting in various organizational tasks; Ishita Gaur for a lovely design; and Pragati Offset for the production of this wonderful keepsake. *Looking In/Looking Out: Contemporary Indian Photography from the Gaur Collection* continues to educate and resonate.

Return of the Gaze

Indian Photography in Cosmopolitan Context

Gayatri Sinha

Art Critic and Curator, New Delhi

Arguably, the modernity of the photograph in India long preceded the modernity of Indian painting. By the 1850s when India's royalty and curious enthusiasts adopted the new medium, they were already looking at ways to expand its potential into a staged performativity, as well as an instrument of social identity and documentation. There was simultaneously the British Raj's steadily swelling photographic documentation of India, the archaeological sites and exotic locations, rituals, oddity of customs, and impenetrable systems of knowledge.

Nevertheless, when photography in India has a second coming it is in the 1980s, with a younger cluster of photographers that assert and arrive at a new language; it is one that marks a shift from the high seriousness of the Nehruvian modern India to the unfolding of a different social reality. This time the light is refracted not through the enthusiastic, highly conscious reflections of the gaze turned upon the self. Rather it flits and shifts through the prism of a damaged polity, a searing social underclass and the adrenaline rush that extends over the cartography and latitudes of a nation's rush to change.

Several factors fed into this moment of photography's efflorescence. Through the 20th century, the power of the visual image was especially exploited in the popular media during periods of social cataclysm. The photograph imprinted the huge ruptures of Partition, the migrations and movements captured by Henri Cartier-Bresson, the making of Bangladesh, and the suffering of the individual documented by Kishor Parekh and other intrepid photojournalists. These were followed by the 1984 riots in Delhi and Indira Gandhi's assassination, an event that spliced the decade with the spillage of violence. Within this landscape of turbulence and uncertainty the photographers sought and identified their subject.

In the 1980s the two ends of the spectrum were largely held by Raghubir Singh and Raghu Rai, each of whom differently interpreted the shifting scale between portraiture and landscape. From his location within New York and India, Singh heralds a photographic postmodern ethos by making a compelling case for a vigorous, highly chromatic view of his subject, India. Deflecting and dislodging popular Indian photography's comfortable locus in portraiture, with all the accoutrements of staginess and performativity, he led a reversion to the street, its shifting anonymity, and its jagged uncertain frames. Singh sought India for its color, how color was tied in with sacred geographies, and the unselfconscious performance of rituals and celebrations, but also as generic to the land itself. For an ancient culture with a highly codified aesthetic in the *Shilpashashtras*[1] – colors were often drawn from stone or vegetal sources as signifiers of season, fertility, and the event itself. Inspired by Henri Cartier-Bresson's book *Beautiful Jaipur* (1948), Singh was the first Indian photographer to seek and hunt these saturated colors in cities and states (refer to his books on Rajasthan, Calcutta, the Kumbh Mela, and Kashmir). The works on Kerala in this exhibition draw from Singh's passionate engagement with the photographer's role as traveler and witness. The nearly documentary nature of his work renders his figures unindividuated, yet always dynamic. Singh says: "If photography had been an Indian invention, I believe that seeing in color would never have posed the theoretical or aesthetic problems perceived by Western photographers."[2]

"Either you capture the mystery of things or you reveal the mystery."[3] If Singh follows in the line of documentary (street) photography, which challenged the prevalent taste for pictorialism, Rai widened the scope of Indian photography with empathy and the sinewy energy of photojournalism. Like other photographers of his generation, especially those with a background in the media,[4] his practice has ridden and crested the hundreds of news breaks of modern India: for example, the tragedy of the Bhopal gas leak with the surreal excavations of the corpses of children, or Indira Gandhi and her palpable domination over her all-male council of ministers. The taut political theater of those images is however moderated by the slow lyricism of his photographs of India's great musicians, such as Ravi Shankar and Bismillah Khan, or the empathy in his portraits of Mother Teresa and the Missionaries of Charity. Rai's affinity for Cartier-Bresson's "decisive moment," as well as his emotional empathy with his subjects, extends to unknown men and women in quotidian acts of labor. But his lens confers upon them a heroic cast, a belief in the spirit of the ordinary Indian, often against all odds.

Rai and Singh had an influence on a younger generation of Indian photographers, and the ones that follow in the aftermath include some who are represented in the exhibition. In their work the embrace and appropriation of the landscape also opened up the vernacular sites of popular tradition: marriage halls and photo studios, street signage, and the passing jollification of decorative cut outs. The new urbanism of the 1980s was also driven by the democratic impulse on the ground: an examination of state policy, a spirited interrogation of globalization, a flourishing NGO movement vocal on environmental issues – all created an explosive new "reality" of India – heterogeneous and unpredictable. In this period, photography with its mediatic expediency was in the forefront of recording the new emerging India, as well as the one endangered by rapid change. Dayanita Singh's *Adenwala House, Bombay* (2002) records a lifestyle that has been in steady retreat in recent decades. The related subject of the portrait also transformed as the photographer reinvoked the agency of the photograph as an instrument of autobiography or a dramatic staging.

The work of Rai and Singh was to be influential not only in creating a common man's landscape but in opening up a slew of visual strains and influences. The social landscape of Lee Friedlander, and the attitude and style of Garry Winogrand, filter through the work of a successive generation. From the 1980s, the city as an unplanned and unpredictable entity becomes a potent subject: in Ketaki Sheth's *Girl at Ganpati Immersion, Chowpatty* (2002), the crowd at the street level festivity can only be surmised: the child, elevated on her father's shoulders, is freed from the crush and the anonymity for a few minutes, as she shares the open space of the skies with Ganpati. In the more conceptual response that artists have brought to social and ecological causes, the photograph, often as part of a larger installation, has moved from representation to sign.

Gigi Scaria, a migrant to the city of Delhi and a very committed chronicler of its changing skyline contrasts the residue of Sultanate and Mughal architecture from its medieval past with the advancing phalanx of high rise buildings. In a practice that extends across painting, photography, and video, Scaria approximates the growing, choking city to a palpable state of panic. Shilpa Gupta's photographs speak of the constant presence of terror – on street corners, in residential colonies, and the surveillance that this implies. From the somewhat unsettled predictability of these landscapes, Sheba Chhachhi projects into a future, where the figure of the flying Sadhvi as a visitant views the terrible mutations brought on by the corruption of the environment – especially that of her own city, Delhi, and its overburdened, polluted river, the Yamuna. The river and its embankments, now sporting a dense city, lead us to the metropolis as subject, one that in turn becomes a site for the body, and its relationship with a state of flux. Atul Bhalla has dedicated the largest part of his practice to the river Yamuna and its fragile, fraught relationship with the city, and looks at another aspect of the city's water supply. *Piaus I* (2006), a suite of 20 photographs shot in old Delhi, mark a public ritual around water as a cause or a donation. In their decrepitude, these *piaus* or water fountains, also reveal the aesthetics and prejudices of the city.

The city is also the site of rapidly shifting framing, the constant act of looking and being looked at in passage. Rashid Rana's *Ommatidia III* (2004), with a portrait of Shahrukh Khan, one of South Asia's most popular film stars, follows in a line from Hrithik Roshan (*Ommatidia I*) and Salman Khan (*Ommatidia II*). The embedded pixels of hundreds of images in Khan's portrait, much like the cluster of ocular units or *ommatidia* in the eyes of an insect or crustacean, suggests the act of looking and being looked at, caught in the circuit of the gaze between the public and the media. Drawn as we are to examining the work, looking in, looking out becomes both an act and a condition. A more direct and pre-digital version of the complexity of the reproducible image in the South Asian field – a work which in a way anticipates Rana – is Ram Rahman's *Capital Studios, Connaught Place, Delhi* (1986). In the cluster of photographs of national leaders and ordinary portraits there is a sense of the mood of the nation: the last shadows of Socialist India under Indira Gandhi, and the dissolution of social hierarchies that the photograph implies.

The photograph is also a site of recuperation and recovery, often in spaces removed from one's own. These may be sites that evoke nostalgia, not because we inhabit them, but because the truth of the past appears to shine through the material residue of jagged stone or polished wood. On two separate occasions Riyas Komu visited Karachi's graveyards, and the residual document humanizes expectation.

Here it may be instructive to recall early Indian photography; the Gaur Collection presents at least four or five different kinds of performative engagement. Approximating the temper of the early 20th century James Waterhouse, who photographed Begum Secunder of Bhopal (1862) writes, "I was constantly employed in taking pictures of the Begum in various dresses of Native ladies. I had no time to take the same picture twice as the Begum changed her dress immediately." Christopher Pinney who recollects the narrative writes, "In one image the Begum appears in satin pyjamas, a gold embroidered black jacket and a cap with a Bird of Paradise plume which all offset her recently awarded Star of India. In another image she is flanked by three *chowriburdars* wielding the bushy tails of Tibetan yaks. The Begum wears a kincab jacket embroidered with blue and gold with feathers or fur around the collar and very loose Turkish trousers…" and so on.[5]

Begum Secunder of Bhopal's playing with the quick change of clothing, the posing and the re-enactment, presage a pleasurable engagement with the camera: to confer the power to re-constitute, re-present, re-enact. There is also the instance of Maharaja Ram Singh II of Jaipur, a dedicated photographer who decided to enlarge his social and personal engagement through the instrument of photography. Ram Singh II's extant archive of 2700 glass plate negatives suggests that he began photography early in his life. Yaduvendra Sahai, curator of his collection in the City Palace, Jaipur writes, "He must have set about learning this art very early in life in the 1840s when he was in his teens because by 1850 or so he had already set up his *taswirkhana (foto-ka-karkhana)* in the rooms…of his palace." Singh very early invited British subjects such as families of the residents of Baroda, administrative and military officers and their families to his studio to be photographed. Here the simulation of British landscapes or idealized scenes for his subjects creates an aspirational style that exceeds the studio effects of later photographers. It also anticipates Singh's own understanding of the power of the photograph to proclaim and disseminate a critical change in his own identity. By the early 1860s, images of Singh dressed as a Shaivite *sadhu* begin to appear. At the core of this representation was a shift in Singh's own faith from Vaishnavism, the faith of the ruling family, to Shaivism. In recognition of the power of the photograph to communicate this great shift, Singh used the photograph as an ally in the creation of his identity.[6]

Vivan Sundaram's *Re-take of Amrita* (2001) appears as a sequel to his grandfather Umrao Singh Sher-Gil's photographs. Umrao Singh's photographs of the Sher-Gil family, many of which are posed and hint at multiple fictions, are further rendered elaborate and complex by Sundaram's digital intervention. Sundaram spatially increases the span by introducing elements from the Amrita Sher-Gil paintings. The images migrate through mediums and time to create a narrative of innuendo and possibility, as if the subjects were being breathed life into in a narrative of uncertain truths. The academic nude, a presence in Sher-Gil's Hungarian paintings, is echoed several decades later in Akbar Padamsee, who, like her, worked and trained in Paris.

The conflation of narratives, associations, and images of different cultural origins, and the odd thrill of recognition, is used by Vivek Vilasini in *Between One Shore and Several Others (*Potato Eaters *after Van Gogh)*, 2008. Vilasini's subject in a photo series is the *Kathakali* dancers, the ancient performance art of Kerala. Traditionally males perform both male and female roles from the epics and the *Puranas*, with a heightened, gross idealization of gestures and expressivity that pushes into an exaggerated performativity. In Vilasini's staging of iconic paintings as performed photographs, the transverse gaze that locates significant works from the canon of western art history in an Indian vernacular context is a way of speaking back from the margins. Embedded in this series is a postcolonial retort, a reverse racination from "The Imaginary Orient." Vilasini suggests that the shock of seeing the *Kathakali* performers contains the kind of cultural encounter that must have sprung up on the peripheries, in their encounter with western art. Most importantly, this photograph addresses the issue of a reverse Orientalist position. "Orientalist painting depicts a world of timeless customs and rituals, untouched by the historical process, that were drastically altering Western society at the time,"[7] writes Linda Nochlin in "The Imaginary Orient."

The performative photograph, using the dense and complex history of India, has an innate dual potential: One aspect makes the subject aspirational and the photograph an object of wish fulfillment, and the other is performativity as an instrument of subversion. Indeed the subversion – as it is a time bound transgression, with its innate element of play, enactment and crossing over across time, history or gender roles – would suggest both provocation and a sublimation of desire. It also creates categories that have undergone redefinition over time. In the series *Native Women of South India: Manners and Customs* (2003) the artist Pushpamala N. performs three iconic figures: Ravi Varma's *Lady in Moonlight*, *Lakshmi*, and *Yogini*, a Deccan painting. Pushpamala N. speaks of the layers invoked in this collaboration with Clare Arni in their concept for the project: "Pushpamala N., South Indian artist, and Clare Arni, British photographer who has lived most of her life in South India – *one black, one white* – play the protagonists in a project exploring the history of photography as a tool of ethnographic documentation. Playing with the notions of subject and object, the photographer and the photographed, white and black, real and fake, the baroque excess of the images subvert and overturn each other."[8]

Pushpamala N. uses iconic works of the Indian sub-continent that celebrate the convention of formal beauty with a dual intent. She is at least partly complicit: a recognized work of art from the past that celebrates womanly beauty, heroism, or sacrifice is staged as a mimicry of the "past." Its imaging of the female body from turn-of-the-century oil painting or early Indian, black-and-white cinema, is now vivified by a brief storyline, reconstructed and played out by Pushpamala N. M. Madhava Prasad in his well-argued piece *The Last Remake of Indian Modernity* suggests that in her work this submergence and vivification of the past is like a glimpse, a reminder, and a dredged-out memory of our "lost modernity;" at the same time the image of woman retrieved and recast also projects her into our present and future.[9]

In a darker vein, the "performing" of Indianness, with a specific reference to color and ethnicity is brought out by Annu Palakunnathu Matthew in her series *An Indian from India* (2001-2007). Matthew plays the unindividuated Indian of colonial photography, allowing her subject to bear the burden of this typology of nativism. The bodily and non-verbal cues that the performative photograph enables has a long history in India. If genders as drag and as the heterosexual normature are two ends of the spectrum, there are many splinters of nuance between, which accommodate self-portraiture within the gesture of performance. In the case of Jitish Kallat's *R.S.V.P. – The Closet March* (2005), we are reminded of Adorno, who says that photographs embody "a two-dimensional model of reality that can be multiplied without limit…displaced both spatially and temporally."[10] In this replication in a fitting room, versions of the self are "tried out," always reflecting back on another, virtually becoming a question on self-representation and artistic freedom.

An insatiable making of the self and the desire to expand the proliferation of the record has interesting examples in Indian photographic history. The notion of a cross-dressing male artist is difficult to explain outside the fluid and yet conservative lines of gender identity in India. As a photographic subject it links with a long tradition in Indian theatre of boys playing women's roles, and being celebrated, such as famed Marathi actor, Balgandharva.

In the case of Chapal Bhaduri playing Devi Sitala (the goddess of the pox and snake worship), the narrative is complicated by the history of female performativity by male artists in India, the more contemporary view of cross-dressing, and Bhaduri's own admission of being a gay actor who impersonates and "becomes" female in traditional *jatra* performances. By freezing close-up stills of Chapal Bhaduri transforming himself – through makeup and the wearing of a *sari* – the graded response is to one of a transformative sexuality, a middle-aged male body in drag and the final outcome of the "unlikely goddess." Here the immanence of the female deity as appropriated by the actor seems to be a compensatory mechanism, one that occludes the awkwardness of his body, or the appearance of a failed masculinity into an image of empowerment, social acceptability, and dissemination. The emasculation that female impersonation implies somehow translates into images of *Shakti* or an empowered, even invincible femininity.

A conflicted view of gender is also played out by Ravi Agarwal in the photograph titled *Fragments* (2008). Agarwal's practice as a photographer is informed by his involvement with issues of the environment, particularly the pollution and ecology of Delhi's river, the Yamuna. This work stands at the cusp of his photographs on the Yamuna and its degradation from a medieval inspiration for romantic and Bhakti poetry, to a neglected intra-city canal, and his work such as the series *The Impossibility of Being Feminine* (2006). Here Agarwal examines a piece of driftwood and his own body pieced together from a torn photograph, making the virulent damage to the one interchangeable with the other.

Viewing the Gaur Collection as a brief glimpse into photographic practices in India, we stand at the edge of the last flourish of conventional analog photography and its gradual convergence with digital tools, the submergence of documentary modes into conceptual art frames. A cultural distinctiveness emerges, although it may not be a primary intention any more than representing a subcontinent is. What we may see then is one view of the atlas or a partial cartography, one that brings renewability and an ease of narrative to the images. The photograph moves out of the realm of the exotic into one where visual tropes can be disturbed, vivified, and told anew.

1. Texts (c. 6th century) that delineated techniques of the various Indian arts including sculpture, dying, textile, pottery, etc.
2. Singh, Raghubir, and David Travis. 1998. *River of Colour: The India of Raghubir Singh*. London: Phaidon Press.
3. Quoted in Day, Elizabeth. "Raghu Rai Interview." *The Guardian,* January 17, 2010, Arts sec.
4. Rai was photo editor with *The Statesman* and *India Today.* H. Cartier-Bresson appointed him to Magnum Photos in 1977.
5. Quoted in Pinney, Christopher. 2008. *The Coming of Photography in India.* London: British Library.
6. Sinha, Gayatri. "Performance in Photography: A Bridge Between Ram Singh II of Jaipur and Contemporary Photographers." In *Art and Visual Culture in India 1857-2007,* edited by Gayatri Sinha. Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2009.
7. Nochlin, Linda. "The Imaginary Orient." In *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth- Century Art and Society.* New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1989.
8. De, Aditi. "Performance Photography." *The Hindu,* March 28, 2004.
9. Madhava Prasad, M. "The Last Remake of Indian Modernity." www.criticalcollective.in. October 1, 2014.
10. Adorno, Theodor. "The Form of the Phonograph Record." In *Essays on Music.* Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2002.





Photography as Performance Art

Performance art is generally experienced live, but what documents it and ensures its enduring life is, above all, photography. Yet photography plays a constitutive role, not merely a documentary one. When performance is staged expressly for the camera, often in the absence of an audience, the images that result are recordings of an event but also autonomous works of art.



Vivek Vilasini *Between One Shore and Several Others* (Potato Eaters *after Van Gogh*) | 2008
Archival print on Hanemühle photo rag paper | 55 x 67 inches

Noting the dominance of Western art in the canon of art history, Vilasini asks, *"What is the art of the guy who eats puttu and kadala for breakfast?"* Countering Western visual tropes, Vilasini inserts ritual *kathakali* dancers into well-known paintings and photographs.

Van Gogh's *Potato Eaters* (1855) portrays five fatigued peasants sharing a meager meal in a dreary cabin. In his version of the canvas, Vilasini replaces the figures of the original painting with the dancers native to his home state, Kerala. A stylized and dramatic classical dance, *kathakali* performances are considered religious rituals that often last an entire night. Performers carefully adorn themselves with elaborate costumes and makeup and wholly assume the persona of the characters they are portraying. The dancer on the left of Vilasini's photograph wears yellow face makeup, a color often used to depict the gods or heroes in *kathakali* plays, and sits at the head of the table. Three red-faced dancers glance at each other across the table in makeup typical of demonic characters. At once jarring and humorous, the work confuses cultural references in order to consider the many sources of identity and belonging.

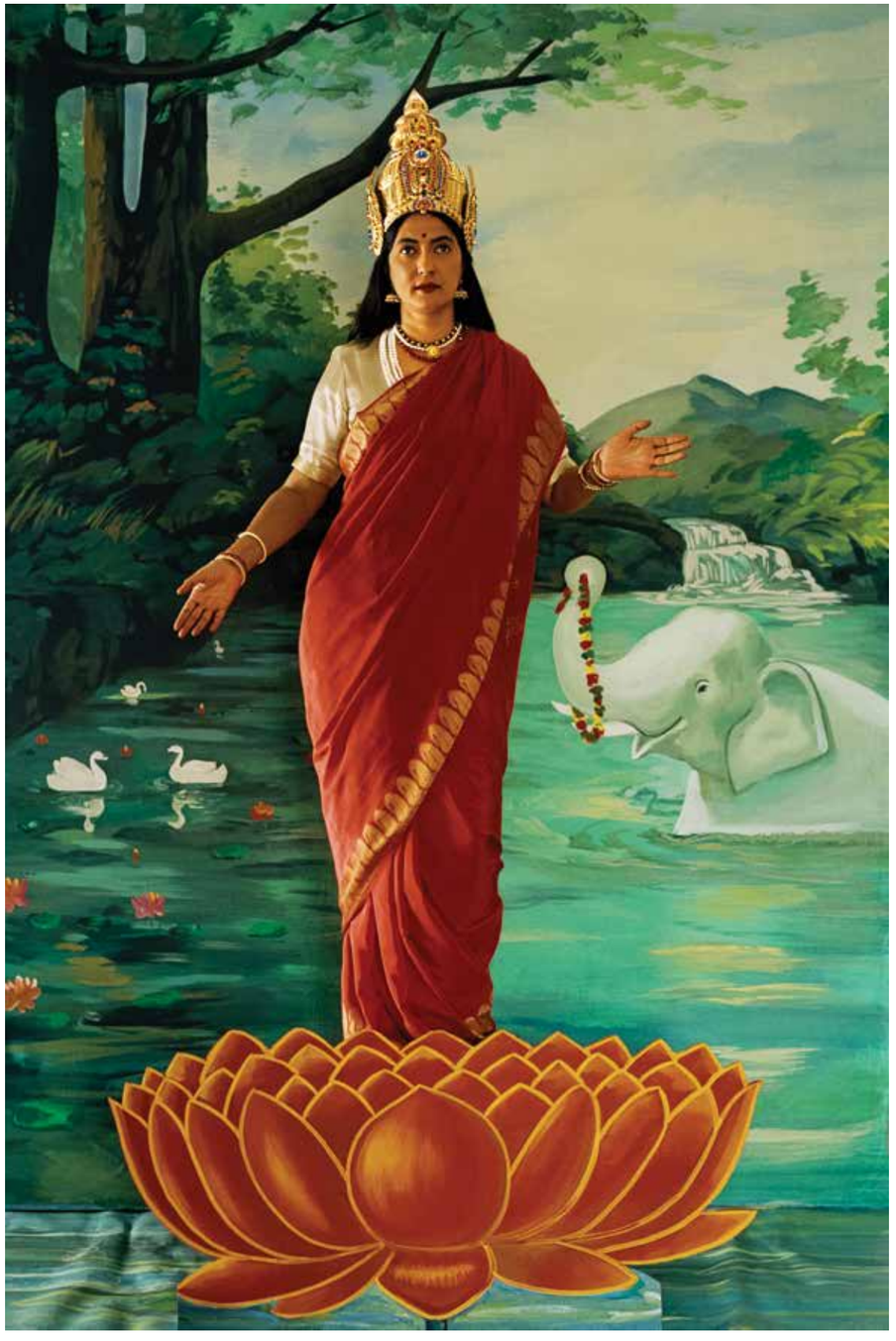


Pushpamala N. and Clare Arni *Yogini* | 2003
Chromogenic print ed. 3/20 | 21 x 17 inches

Pushpamala N. appropriates classic examples of Indian womanhood in her series *Native Women of South India: Manners and Customs*. These works, from a series of over 200 photographs, are tableau-recreations of Indian cultural archetypes: depictions of Hindu goddesses, colonial and ethnographic photography, family studio portraits, and Bollywood cinema. British photographer and photojournalist Clare Arni documents Pushpamala's performances and worked with her closely throughout the series; together they investigate notions of subject versus object, photographer and photographed, truth and fiction. *Yogini* references a 17th-century Indian painting titled *Yogini with Mynah*, made famous in the West as the cover of Stuart Welch's widely used art historical survey entitled *India: Art and Culture 1300-1900*, which came to represent the Indian woman as a spiritual ascetic. *Lady in Moonlight* and *Lakshmi* re-interpret 19th-century paintings of the same titles by Raja Ravi Varma, widely considered one of the greatest painters of his time. Varma's works were championed for their blend of Indian miniature style with the techniques favored by European painters. He was one of the first artists in India to reproduce his paintings as mass-produced lithographs, which were subsequently printed by the thousands and became iconic images found in many homes. Drawn from epic stories and mythology, Varma's images came to embody a popular aesthetic and classic representation of women. Pushpamala N.'s reclaiming of the figures in the paintings challenges the veracity of the photographic image – she has become the painting through reproduction – while also simultaneously embodying both the role of object and creator.



Pushpamala N. and Clare Arni *Lady in Moonlight* | 2003
Chromogenic print ed. 3/20 | 21.5 x 14.5 inches



Pushpamala N. and Clare Arni *Lakshmi* | 2003
Chromogenic print ed. 3/20 | 21.5 x 14.5 inches






Naveen Kishore *Performing the Goddess* | 1999
Digital print on archival quality ultra-smooth fine art paper in 12 parts ed. 1/5 | 22 x 32 inches each

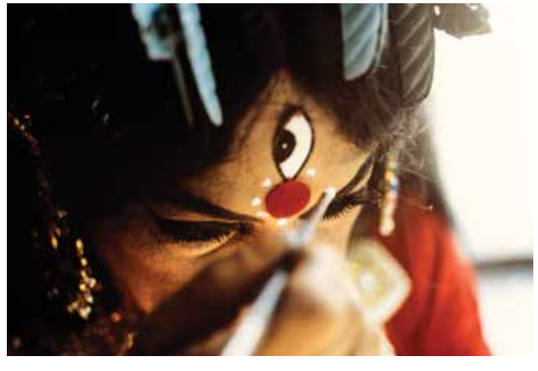
This series is the first of five video and photographic documentaries by Naveen Kishore looking at traditional *jatra* performers. Typically a four-hour musical performance preceded by an instrumental concert, *jatra* is a form of popular folk theater in the Bengal region of India. Historically an all-male cast play both male and female roles in a melodramatic, highly stylized performance. Thematically varied, *jatras* can be inspired by religious texts, epic poems, regional cinema, or contemporary news events.

In *Performing the Goddess*, Kishore follows Chapal Bhaduri, a *Sitalapala* performer, enacting the saga of Sitala. The goddess of spring diseases, Sitala is widely worshipped in east India, where smallpox was a major killer until recently. Because the professional performer is typically commissioned by poor areas with poor health facilities, Bhaduri is often paid only Rs.70 ($1.50) for each performance. As global public health awareness increases the market for such performances, which are both a form of religious ritual and informational, has declined. In an effort to keep the theatrical tradition of *Sitalapala* alive and support artists like Bhaduri, Kishore donates the proceeds of each photograph's sale directly to the performers so they can continue to do their work. *Performing the Goddess* follows Bhaduri's professional and personal life, from his nightly transformation into the deity, to his troubled relationship with his sexuality, and what it is like living on the fringe of conventional society.










Sociopolitical Narratives

Sociopolitical photographers facilitate interactions that incorporate viewers as direct participants and present alternative models for the civic and artistic ways in which we engage the world around us. The works tend to bring out unexpected commonalities across difference, disconnectedness, and marginalization. The artists use images, relationships, experiences, interviews, events, and many other media in their projects while navigating with an eye to ethics, representation, power dynamics, and social justice.



Jitish Kallat *R.S.V.P – The Closet March* | 2005 | C-print | 64 x 192 inches

In his works of social critique Jitish Kallat often serves as his own protagonist. In this self-portrait taken in a dressing room in a shopping mall – a space that is both public and private – the photographer is alone but aware that he is on display, both to the mall's security camera and his own.

> I made *R.S.V.P. – The Closet March* in 2005 resulting from a chance, perplexing experience of seeing oneself infinitely duplicated inside a mundane fitting room of a clothing store. It felt as if one was caught in a space-time conflation and lost in a mysterious Misner-like space. The self is seen here holding up a placard, which is both inverted and multiplied endlessly while asking oneself to respond. This frozen soliloquy occurs within the room of mirrors where the self is both the bearer and the recipient of the message.

Kallat often employs the panoramic format in both his photographs and paintings. According to the artist, the "truth" – something photography claims – lies not in a single image, but is situated somewhere in between the multiples. Kallat has incorporated text, references to pop culture, television, and graffiti into his practice that includes collage, photography, installation, and painting. Throughout his diverse media he has often featured portraiture as a means to critique urban problems, explore social injustice, and look closely at global and Indian politics.



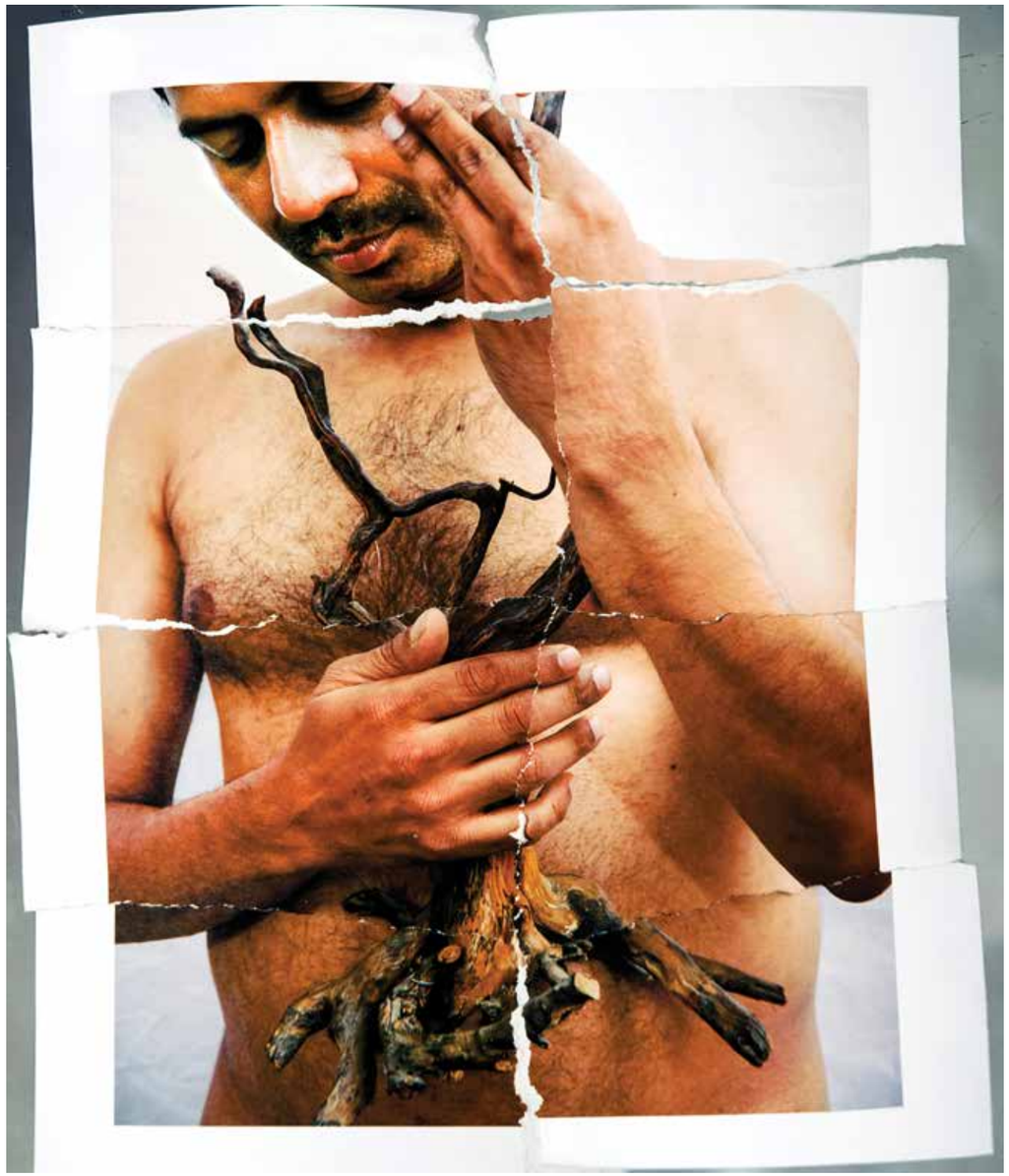


Ravi Agarwal *Riverbank* | 2007 | Archival inkjet print ed. 3/5 | 42 x 72 inches

Ravi Agarwal, the founder and director of the NGO Toxics Link, combats environmental destruction caused by rapid urbanization in India through his nonprofit work. Photography is an integral part of his activism. He considers his artwork an "aesthetic intervention" that strives to engage viewers in the natural world around them, and he believes images of the river remind viewers why its preservation is imperative.

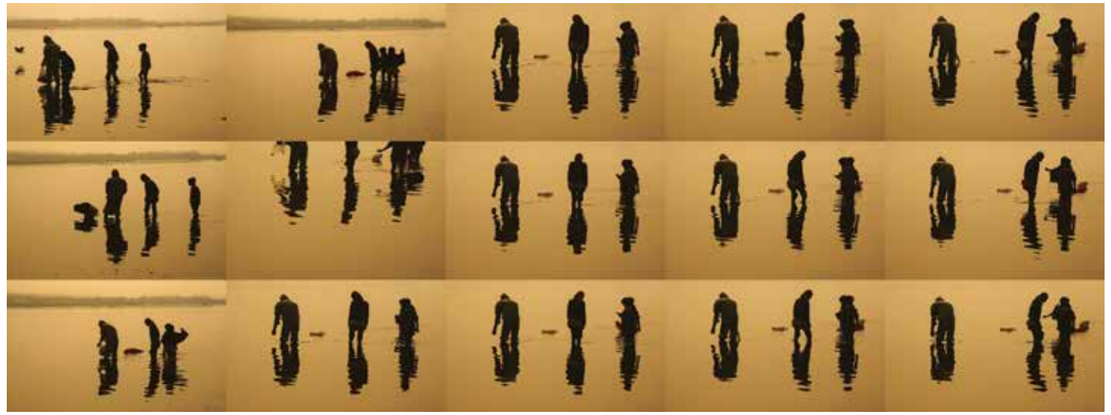
> I became an engineer, an entrepreneur, an activist along the way, and in many ways my search was driven by the world I could only see through my camera. We seem to have lost our sense of mortality, frailness, and interdependency. My camera produced an order and a retreat, which was only mine.

For Agarwal, the heavily-polluted Yamuna River – the largest tributary of the Ganges – is a metaphor for the cycle of life, death, and rebirth. Part of a series of photographs and a video created during an eco-art residency, Agarwal traces the journey of the river through densely populated urban areas to fields of marigolds, a site for farming, religious ceremonies, and now real estate development. Agarwal has been documenting this river since the 1990s; in 2011, he held a public art festival on the river, hoping to inspire good stewardship by drawing crowds to see the site first hand. As an artist activist, Agarwal sees his work as all encompassing: aesthetics can inform the social, which is political.



Ravi Agarwal *Fragments* | 2008 | Archival print ed. 9/40 | 30 x 20 inches

Fragments was created for Khoj Artists Association's portfolio of self-portraits titled *Auto-Portraits*. Khoj is a nonprofit artist-led contemporary art space in New Delhi that provides financial, physical, and intellectual space for artists through workshops, residencies, exhibitions, and events. In Agarwal's version of the self-portrait, he reinterpreted a work of his titled *Personal Ecologies*, which was an exploration of the ethical inseparability of nature and self. Interrogating the boundaries between human, natural, and political considerations in the context of environmental sustainability is a recurring theme in Agarwal's work as an artist/activist.

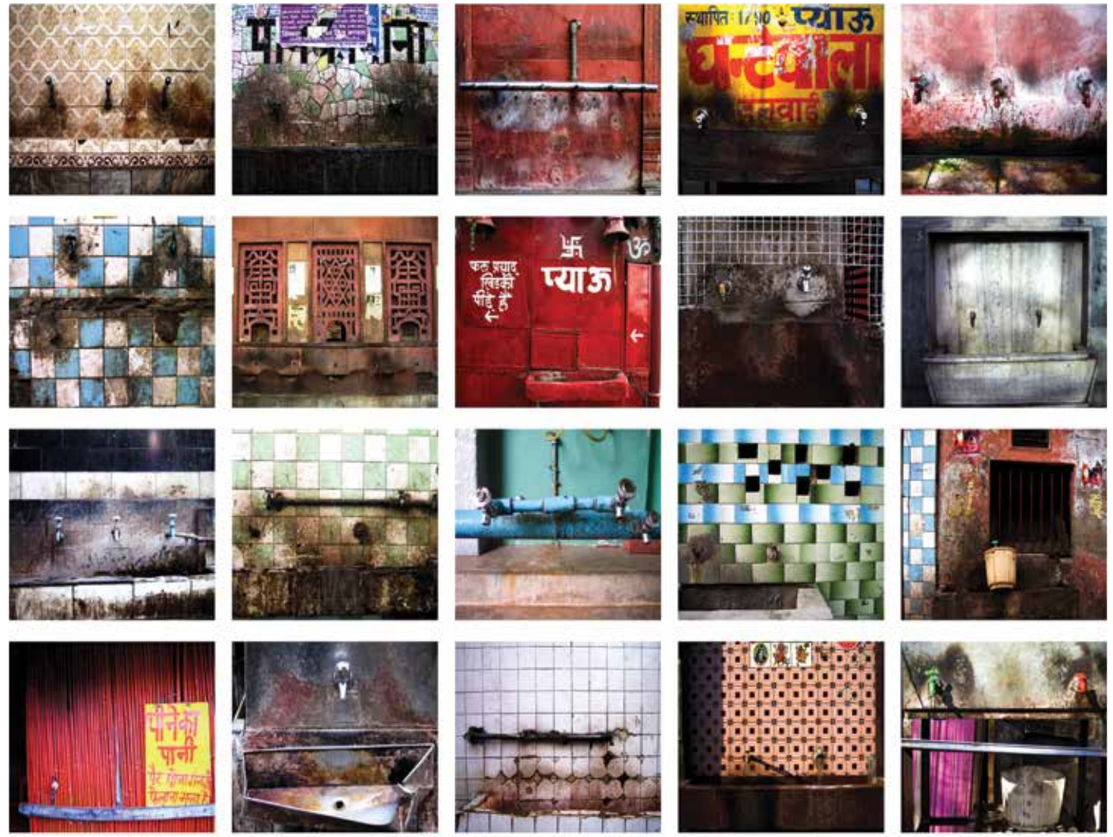


Atul Bhalla *Yamuna Morning IV* | 2007 | Digital print A.P. 1/2 | 37.5 x 85 inches

Atul Bhalla explores water in the context of its historic, religious, political, and spiritual importance through his photographs and video installations. Disturbed by the environmental and ethical impacts of India's rapid urbanization on the nation's water, Bhalla's work is urgently political. Yet of equal importance to him is the deep cultural significance of water, and rivers in particular, in India. Historically considered feminine, rivers have been linked to rites of passage, worshiped as a divine life force, and personified in poetry, literature, paintings, and sculpture as goddesses. Despite being sites of gathering and ritual, the rivers of India have recently become sites of conflict and pollution. There is a clear irony and sadness for those seeking purification in the nation's rivers when confronted with extreme environmental degradation, major health concerns, and restricted access. Natural sources of water are no longer safe, life-giving, clean, or free.

> My work is an attempt to understand water. How I perceive it, feel it, eat it, drink it, wash in it, bathe in it, swim, wade, sink or will drown in it. How I drench, soak, douse, moisten, quench, dilute, dampen, cleanse or purify. How I excrete tears, sweat or urine. How it falls, drops, floods, inundates, levels, buoys, lashes, gushes, swells, and ripples. How it exists as a fog, mist, cloud, steam, snow, sleet, rain or puddle. How it contains or is contained. How it is dammed or bottled.

Yamuna Morning IV is part of a larger series looking at the poetic, aesthetic, and deeply rooted connections to the water. Spending many hours walking and traveling on its banks, Bhalla strives to rediscover the river in its pristine state. In a series of film still-like images, we see children on the banks of the river at dawn, collecting coins the day after they were tossed into the river during a festival. Bhalla hopes to remind us of the origins of our connection to the river: communal, spiritual, and untroubled.



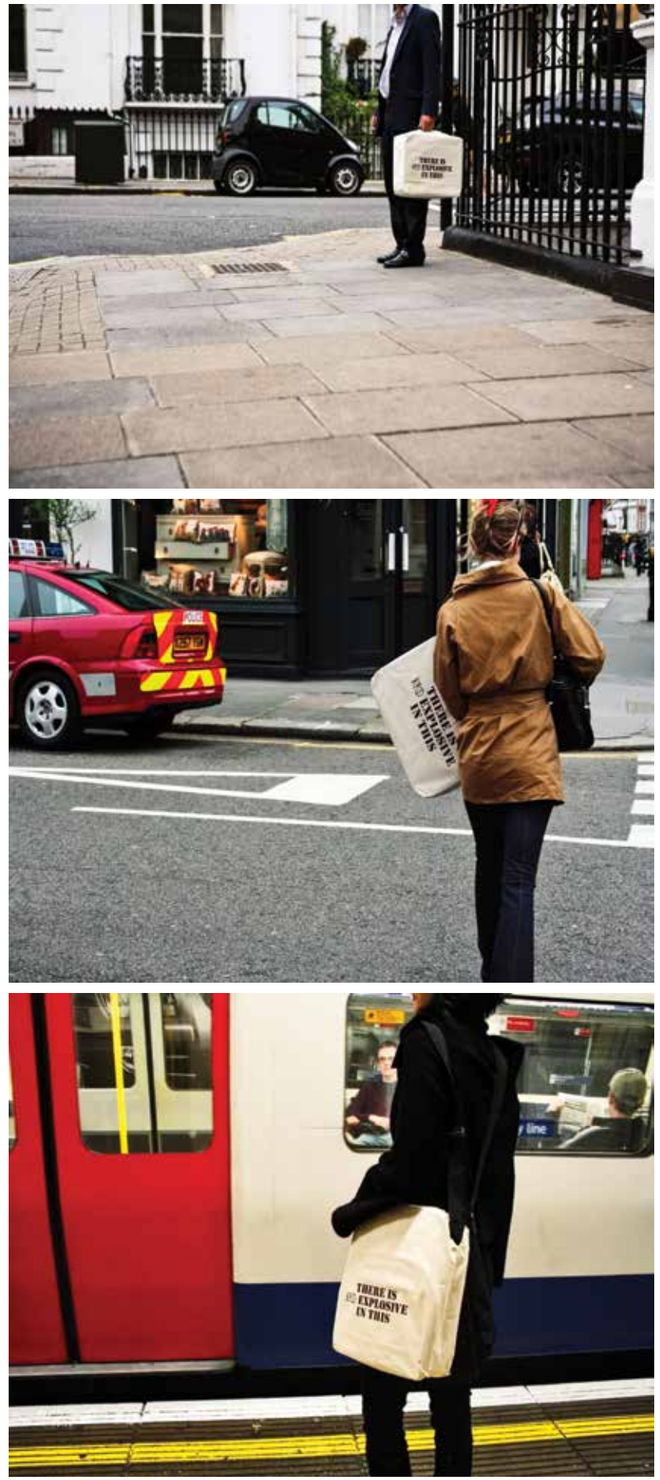
Atul Bhalla *Piaus I* | 2006 | Digital print in 20 parts ed. 1/3 | 13.8 x 16 inches each

Atul Bhalla has been looking at the close relationship between water and urban environments for over a decade. In *Piaus I* Bhalla unflinchingly depicts twenty of New Delhi's public drinking fountains. In various states of neglect and disrepair, these fountains are found primarily in the older, poorer parts of the city. While the water is free, it is sourced from the Yamuna River, which is suffering from toxic pollution. In the newer, wealthier parts of the city, water is available bottled, purified, and for sale. Along the same vein as *Yamuna Morning IV*, Bhalla continues to explore the politics of water, documenting its regulation, distribution, and control as an issue of basic human rights.



Shilpa Gupta *Untitled (Camouflash* series*)* | 2007 | Digital print on Flex | 25 x 39.5 inches

Shilpa Gupta's photographs appear casual yet are boldly critical. Her direct method of depiction looks at social norms implemented by dominant groups and the tensions they generate. Mining universal and timely global anxieties, Gupta infuses her work with humor and wit. *Security Cap* reverses the gaze onto those who often enforce and monitor us. With an empty symbol of "security," Gupta asks us to question these omnipresent markers of power and what they ultimately stand for. The iconography of power is similarly explored in *Untitled (Camouflash* series*)* in which a blinded, weaponless, race- and gender-ambiguous figure is dressed to suggest a military uniform. Viewers come to the image with their own assumptions about the dress, stance, and person and consider how they arrived there. What is militant for one person is nationalist for another; what is aggressive for one is protective for another. In *There is No Explosive in This,* Gupta encouraged viewers to leave the gallery carrying the pictured tote bag. Carried out into urban centers (downtown London, the Mumbai airport), this interactive work plays on our general fears about safety in the public context while challenging embedded racial and social stereotypes. Throughout her work, Gupta's audience is decidedly global; she is interested in how we all approach common concerns and the international urban environment.



Shilpa Gupta *There is No Explosive in This* | 2007
C-print on archival paper ed. 1/6
28 x 42 inches each print



Shilpa Gupta *Security Cap* | 2008 | Digital C-print on acid free paper ed. 21/50 | 40.5 x 27.5 inches



Sheba Chhachhi *Untitled* | 2007 | Archival print ed. 23/40 | 17 x 22 inches

After documenting the women's movement in India for over a decade, taking images of women struggling to change their condition, Sheba Chhachhi had an epiphany. When she observed a bevy of press photographers asking women at a demonstration to pose like her candid shots, she realized she was feeding a new stereotype: the militant Indian woman. Disenchanted with Western-style documentary photography's false objectivity, Chhachhi began collaborating with her subjects to create their image instead of simply observing and capturing them. Now, she incorporates collage, studio photography, installation, and kinetic lightbox images into her artistic practice. Still fascinated by the typically unseen and unspoken worlds of women, she focuses her camera to speak for the silenced and celebrate female strength, both mortal and divine, and retell mythological stories that relate to contemporary experience. These themes often intermix to include mythic and social considerations of the female body, ecological pollution, and urban transformation.

The print featured here is a multifaceted self-portrait in which Chhachhi dissolves the boundaries between herself and the elements: earth, water, fire, and air. Exploring her relationship to the landscape and its flora and fauna, her face becomes one with the riverbank while she simultaneously observes the earth from above in the form of a bird. It is a metaphorical rather than literal self-portrait that gives her multiple viewpoints into the natural world and her place within it, as she contemplates the fragility of human endeavors, both material and spiritual.



Gigi Scaria *City Uprise* | 2006 | Digital print on archival paper ed. 4/5 | 37.5 x 73.5 inches

Gigi Scaria moved from a small southern village in India to the capital city of New Delhi to pursue his artistic career. Through his videos, paintings, installations, and photographs he studies the rapid economic, industrial, and urban growth happening around him. His fascination lies with the alienation often felt by migrants in cities and the constant change and flux of the urban landscape. As he writes: "The city tries to betray its own people by its ever-changing physical appearance. It appears to us as a constantly changing unattainable space; the city wages war against our collective consciousness."

City Uprise shows a skyline growing organically as opposed to being constructed. While it can be humorous to imagine this, the absence of human activity and the inevitability of industrialization is ominous. Large cities have attracted rural migrants because of their employment opportunities, but poor planning has not afforded sufficient land for housing developments. So as cities are built, slum populations rise. This paradox reminds Scaria, who was raised in the Catholic Church, of the story of the Tower of Babel: a symbol of incoherence and exclusivity under the guise of construction.



Riyas Komu *Karachi Series* | 2005 | Archival print ed. 1/10 | 13.5 x 19.5 inches

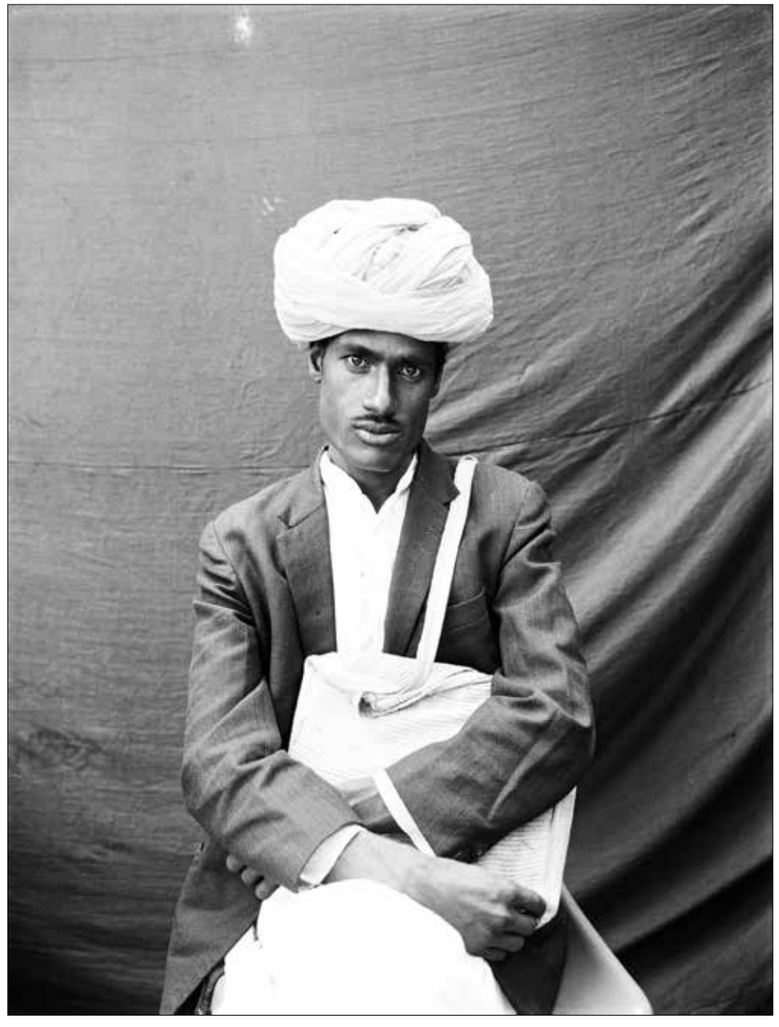
Riyas Komu comes from a politically active family and sees his artwork as having overt political overtones that embody universal concerns. He states: "However we claim to have advanced – individually and collectively – certain things will never change: the woes of the working class, famines, floods, suffering farmers and laborers, they will always be there."

These images, from a series of fourteen, were taken during a residency in Karachi, Pakistan during which Komu explored his interest in death and urban dualities – glamour and poverty, construction and decay. The graveyard scene carries an even heavier weight when set in Pakistan, a nation often described in Western media as "the epicenter of terrorism." Throughout his work, Komu strives for a representation of the individual experience (in this instance the unique gravesites) and the global (death as a human condition). Considering his work an archive of our time, Komu seeks to capture timeless concerns located in current contexts.



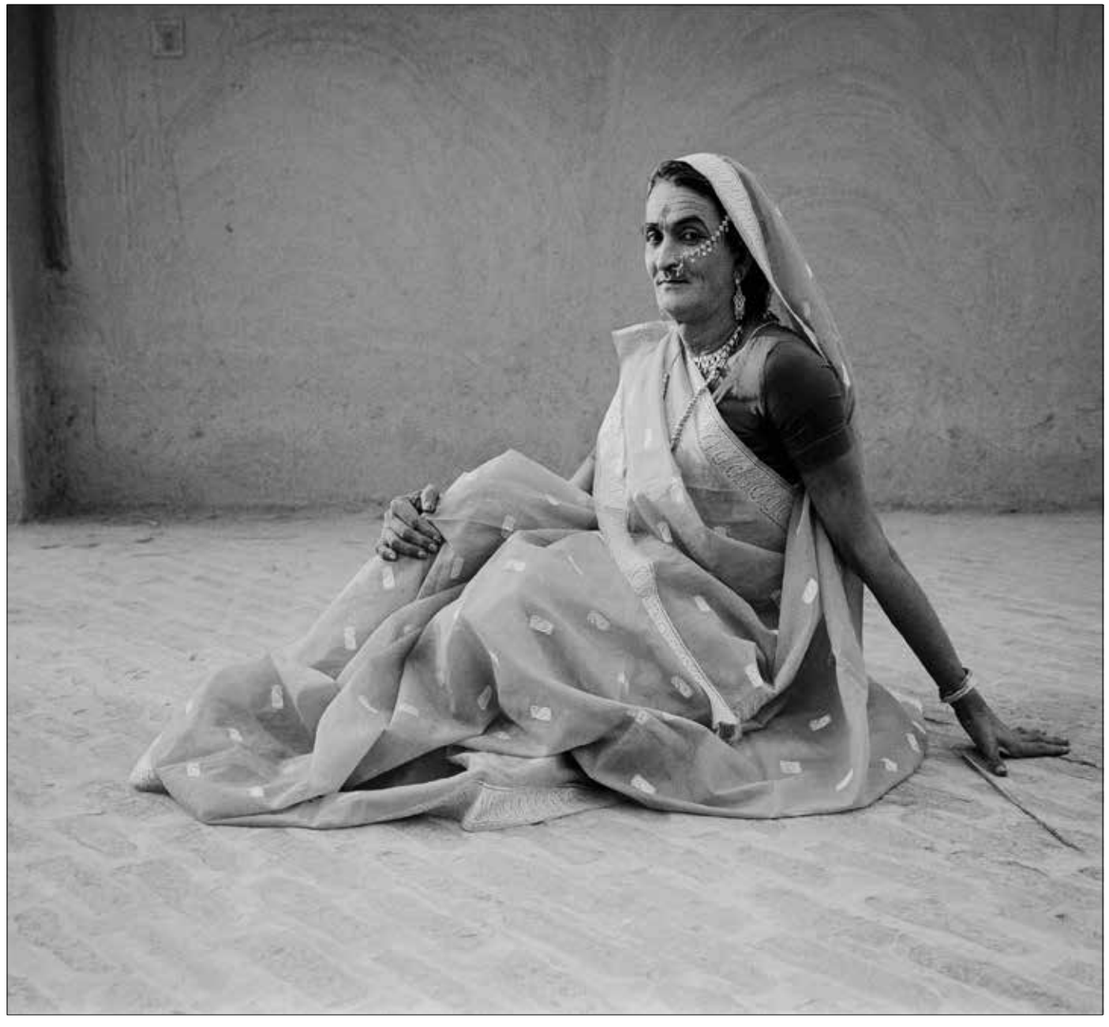
Portraiture

The emergence of photography in the 19th century prompted a decisive shift in the long-standing tradition of portraiture, a transformation it continues to fuel today. While some Indian photographers have used stark and luminous large-scale portraits to capture solitary subjects whose direct, unselfconscious gazes penetrate the picture plane, others have used the medium to generate a wide range of portraits, from staged scenes filled with psychological tension, to documentary portrayals. These myriad approaches reveal a desire to push the limitations of both the medium of photography and the genre of portraiture by re-appropriating outmoded practices and embracing new ones.



Ram Rahman *Folk Singer, Delhi* | 1987
Digital print on Harman FB A1 archival paper ed. 1/10 | 48 x 38.5 inches

Ram Rahman, a prominent figure in contemporary Indian photography, has gained international recognition through his photographic output and his curatorial and scholarly projects. He has nobly used his success to create platforms for other Indian photographers – many featured in this exhibition, such as Vivan Sundaram. Both fierce believers in artistic freedom, Sundaram and Rahman founded SAHMAT, a group of artist activists who work in opposition to censorship in India. Formed after the 1989 murder of Safdar Hashmi, a communist playwright and director best known for work with radical street theater, SAHMAT acts as a platform to create and maintain a space for cultural resistance in an increasingly conservative sphere.



Ram Rahman *Bhavai Actor, Delhi* | 1983 | Digital print on Harman FB A1 archival paper ed. 1/10 | 33 x 40 inches

Bhavai Actor, Delhi is part of a series of portraits of performers from traditional folk theater. All-male troupes, playing both male and female roles, sing, dance, and continue a rich oral tradition infused with social criticism and laced with humor that often ridicules caste structures and pompous behavior. Rahman, with his interest in art as activism, has created formal portraits of these subversive actors and others working in a similar vein, such as *Folk Singer, Delhi*. This body of work celebrates their professions, documents a diminishing art form, and continues the dialogue begun in their performances.

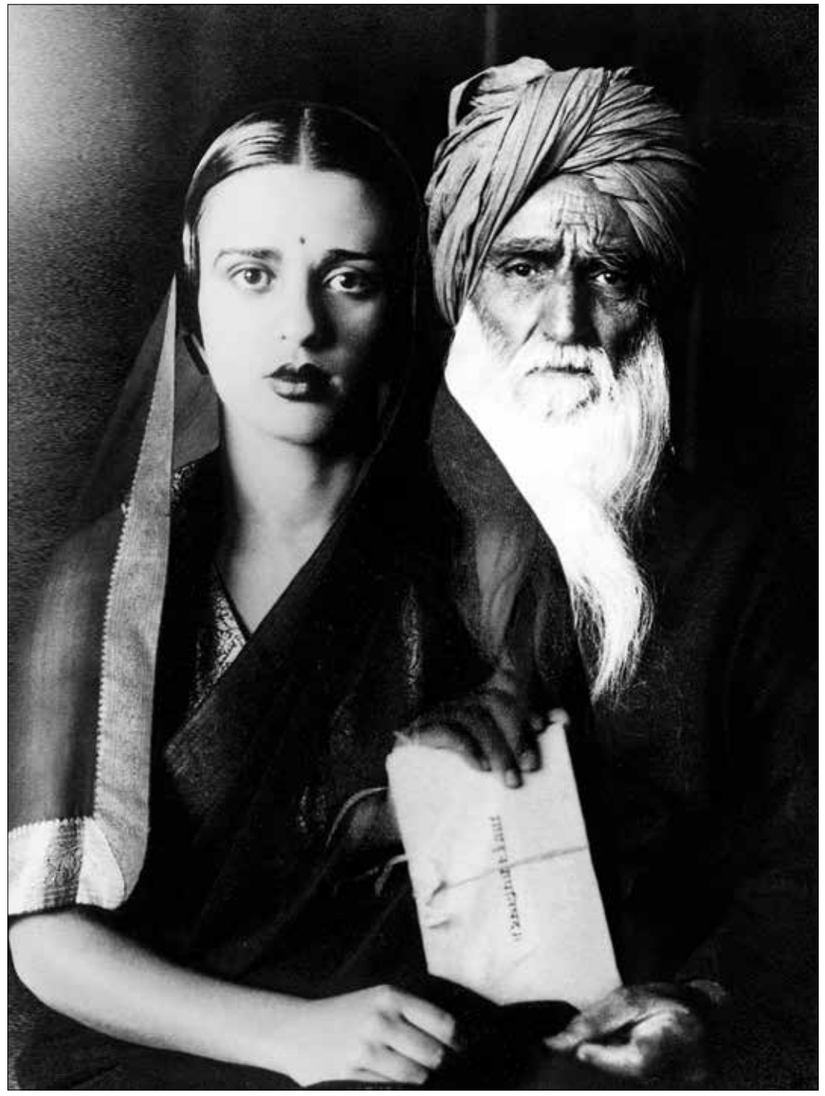


Ram Rahman *Capital Studios, Connaught Place, Delhi* | 1986
Digital print on Harman FB A1 archival paper ed. 1/10 | 40 x 48 inches



Akbar Padamsee *Untitled-Nude* | 2005 | Digital print on archival paper ed. 2/9 | 23 x 33 inches

After India's independence in 1947, modernist painters rejected past traditions, broke away from revivalist and nationalist trends, and looked to Paris for inspiration. The Progressive Artists Group, with which Akbar Padamsee is associated, came together against academic realist traditions and for an absolute freedom of subject and style. Invited to Paris by F.N. Souza, a founding member of the Progressives, Padamsee lived and worked abroad for 17 years. He found early success in Paris, where the renowned André Breton nominated him for a prize from the *Journal d'Art*. Working mostly in painting and photography (though also exploring film, sculpture, and mixed media), Padamsee has a deep interest in faces and the human figure as vehicles for formal exploration. In his photographic works Padamsee strives for sculpting with light and shadow, which he believes are the essence of the media.



Vivan Sundaram *Father-Daughter,* from the series *Re-take of Amrita* | 2001
Archival digital pigment print ed. 10/10 | 19 x 14 inches

Vivan Sundaram's photomontages reconstruct his family's narrative, sourced from his aunt's paintings and grandfather's photographs, who were both well-known, successful artists. Amrita Sher-gil, Sundaram's aunt, is considered the first professional female Indian artist and is one of the country's earliest Modernists. The artist's grandfather, Umrao Singh Sher-Gil, was a scholar and amateur photographer, now seen as a pioneer of Indian photography. Sundaram's grandmother, Marie Antoinette Gottesman was a Hungarian opera singer, and the family spent much of their life in Europe. Using this unique family history with accompanying visual material, Sundaram creates rich black-and-white photomontages that mingle generations and decades in a single image.



Vivan Sundaram *Amrita with Cousin Viola,* from the series *Re-take of Amrita* | 2001
Archival digital pigment print ed. 10/10 | 19 x 13.5 inches

Amrita with Cousin Viola merges Sundaram's grandfather's photograph of Amrita with an image of her painting of her cousin Viola. Sundaram considers Umrao's photographs of his daughter as similar to depictions of women by Manet and Matisse – sensual, and in this case perhaps, bordering on incestual. However, the subjects' confrontational and direct gazes at the viewer distinguish these depictions – empowering both Amrita and model Viola. The two photographs montaged to make *Father-Daughter* also depict a confrontational gaze, bringing as Sundaram writes, "a message of self-knowledge, and death." This series is strikingly personal – recalling familial narratives, reconstructing complex relationships, and evoking universal themes of narcissism, sensuality, and the difficulty of navigating between generations.



Dayanita Singh *Adenwala House, Bombay* | 2002
Silver gelatin print mounted on aluminium ed. 1/7 | 39.5 x 39.5 inches

After studying photojournalism in New York, Dayanita Singh started her career but never felt part of the "boys' club" of Indian photojournalists and soon found herself frustrated by assignments that only emphasized the country's poverty for international audiences. Although well known for her documentary photographs and portraits, she considers herself a photographer-by-accident and strives to push the art form into innovative directions that blur the lines between photography, art, and bookmaking.

Her attempts to capture more than just disasters or the "exotic" in her homeland led her to subjects that represent an extremely broad range of Indian society. In her book *Privacy,* this includes privileged views into the lives and homes of her extended family, friends, and acquaintances. Raised in a well-to-do family in the nation's capital, she reveals elements of such middle and upper class lifestyles in India that are rarely seen in the West. This series highlights both traditional and post-colonial symbols of prosperity and offers glimpses of the elite surrounded by their possessions and proudly presenting themselves and their affluence for her camera.

With minimal captions, Singh tries to avoid reducing her images to textual explanations. She asserts, "The where and when is a burden on photography. If people know why and where it was taken, they think they understand the image and they can move on." Leaving a bit of mystery adds a poetic quality to the work, and allows the photo collections to function as visual novels, which serve as open-ended points of departure for larger conversations about India today.

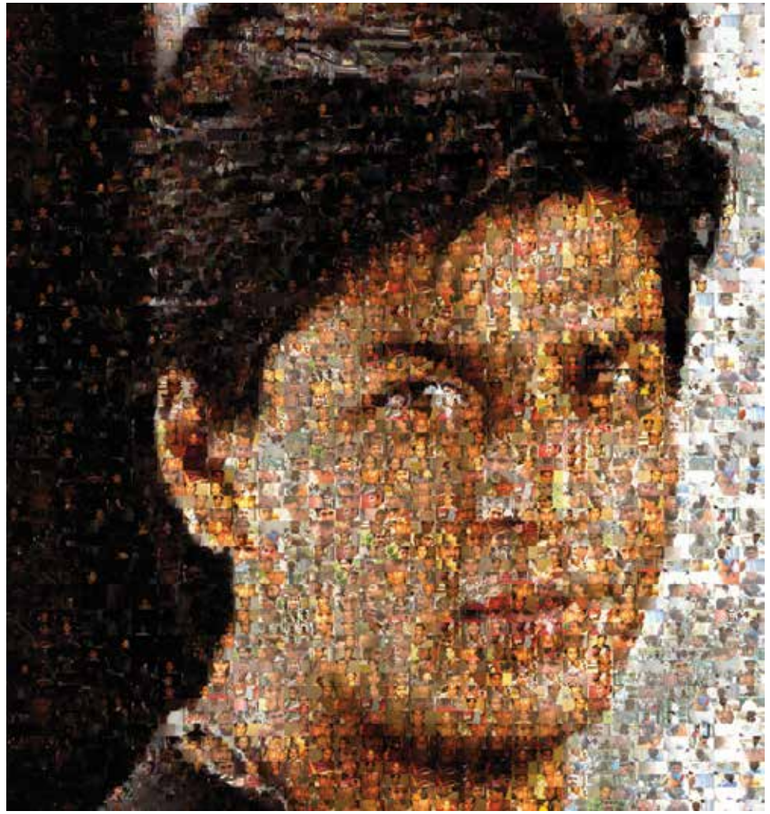


Dayanita Singh *Sent a Letter* | 2008 | 7 softcover books housed in a handmade cloth box
Courtesy Morton R. Godine Library Artists Book Collection, Massachusetts College of Art and Design

Dayanita Singh resists titles, for her individual photographs as well as for herself. Shying away from "photographer," she considers herself a book artist and has been making small photographic journals of her travels in India for decades. Each is made with a specific person in mind, either her traveling companion or someone she thought about on her journey. Returning to her studio, she makes two handmade copies in accordion-folded notebooks, sending one to the friend who inspired it and archiving the other in her "kitchen museum."

Sent a Letter includes seven of these visual diaries, one of which also includes her mother Nony Singh's photographs from Dayanita's childhood. The artist credits her mother's love of photography and her archival skills as inspiration and sees her upbringing in a house filled with photo albums as serving as the foundation for her artistic practice.

Realizing that the visual process is not complete when the shutter closes, Singh has developed novel ways of displaying and distributing her works beyond gallery walls. In addition to publishing books professionally, she also gives her work away to people on the street, exhibits it in store window displays, or invites colleagues to pass it on to strangers.



Rashid Rana *Ommatidia III (Shahrukh Khan)* | 2004
Digital chromogenic print mounted on Diasec ed. 5/20 | 31.7 x 29.8 inches

Widely considered Pakistan's most prominent artist today, Rashid Rana studied painting at the National College of Arts in Lahore, and later at MassArt. Turning away from painting in the mid-1990s, he is now perhaps best known for his software-generated composite images that embody contradictions – a large image of a Persian rug composed of tiny found images from slaughterhouses or a woman in a burqa made up of stills from Western pornography.

> In this age of uncertainty we have lost the privilege of having one worldview. Now every image, idea and truth… encompasses its opposite within itself. Thus we live in a state of duality. This internal conflict translates into my work, on a formal level, as well as having geographical, historical, and political connotations.

Rana has also discussed the challenge of being a South Asian artist in the international art circuit. He found that this series of images has given him the voice expected from his region (with images of Bollywood actors, veiled women, Islamic architecture) while simultaneously speaking to a global audience. While Rana initially found fitting within an iconographic trope to be frustrating, the resulting work speaks to broader themes and formal concerns.

This portrait of actor Shahrukh Khan (the "King of Bollywood") is made up of found photographs of local men from Lahore, Pakistan. Khan is one of the world's most popular actors, with an estimated net worth nearing $600 million. The title *Ommatidia* refers to the lenses that make up the compound eye of an insect, refracting and illuminating the surrounding world, much like our pop culture icons are often assumed to do. By literally using the faces of everyday people to construct an image of Khan, Rana suggests that revered celebrities are merely the invention and reflection of the viewing public.



Photograph by J.N. Choate, Pennsylvania, before 1882

TOM TORLINO, NAVAJO,
ON ENTRY TO CARLISLE SCHOOL, CARLISLE, PENNSYLVANIA



Photograph by A.P. Matthew, Pennsylvania, before 1993

ANNU PALAKUNNATHU MATTHEW, INDIAN
ON ENTRY TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Annu Palakunnathu Matthew *Tom Torlino, Navajo, on entry to Carlisle School, Carlisle, Pennsylvania / Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, Indian on entry to the United States of America [An Indian from India]* | 2001-2007
Digital collage print on Concorde Rag, diptych | 24 x 29.5 inches

Annu Palakunnathu Matthew has always been interested in photography as document, something that evokes memories and records the past, yet is also often a fabricated scene embodying the presumptions and desired outcomes of the photographer. Whether a cherished family snapshot or record of a historic event, an image shows only what wants to be remembered and passed on to the next generation; much is left just outside the frame. Throughout her work, Matthew deftly looks at the connections between the past and present and the ways in which images can shape culture.



Photograph by Case E. Draper

KAW-CLAA WITH NOSE RING



Photograph by A.P. Matthew

ANNU WITH NOSE RING

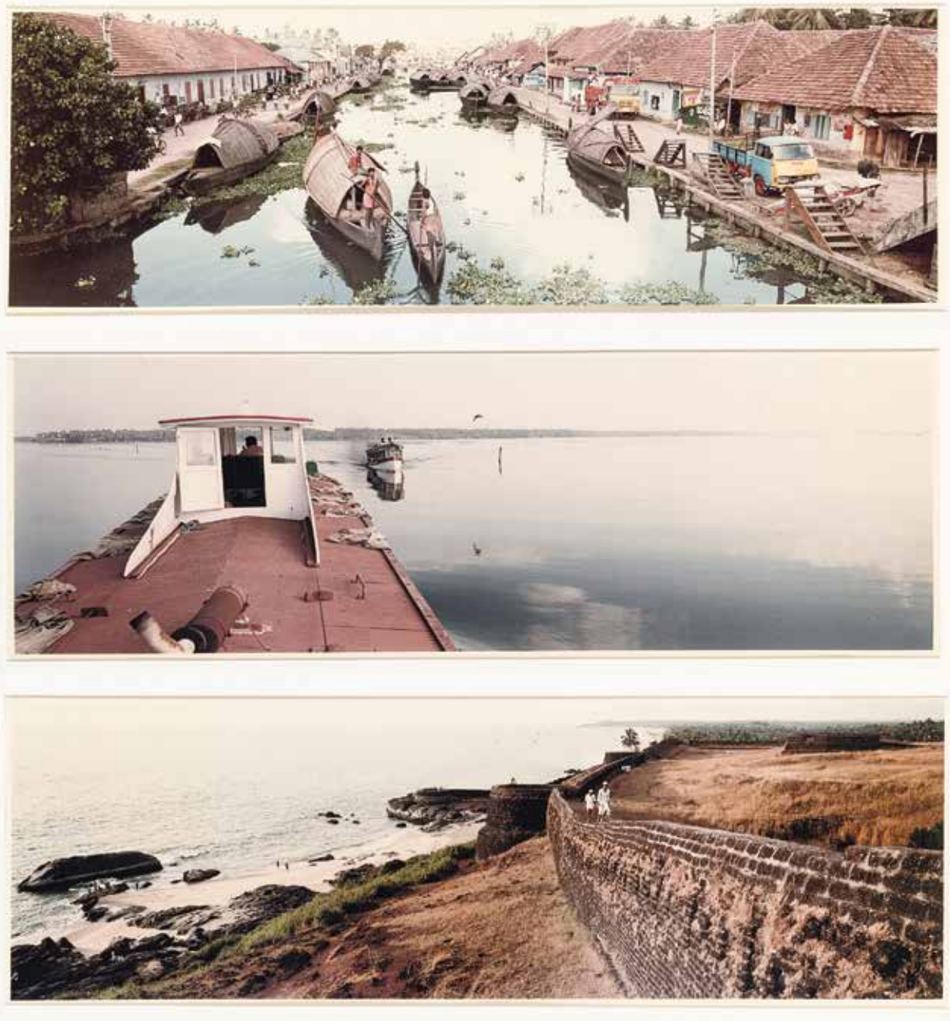
Annu Palakunnathu Matthew *Kaw-Claa with Nose Ring / Annu with Nose Ring [An Indian from India]* | 2001-2007
Digital collage print on Concorde Rag, diptych | 24 x 29.5 inches

In her series *An Indian from India*, Matthew wrestles with her own "otherness" and the legacy of documenting minority cultures. Because Christopher Columbus misidentified indigenous Americans as "Indian," Matthew, raised in England and now living in the U.S., must regularly explain that her heritage is Indian *from India*. In this series of diptychs, she pairs self-portraits with 20th-century ethnographic images of Native Americans. After photographing herself in "made-up" clothing Matthew photoshops herself onto the same background as the original image. Through this series, she also parallels two colonial views of "primitive natives" – the European's view of Native Americans and the British Raj's view of Indians, each of which documented their subjects in a similar fashion. Matthew's series often address ideas of cultural belonging and what it means to be, like her, "transcultural."



Travel and Street Photography

Raghu Rai, one of the photographers in this exhibition, has written of this genre as follows: "A creative moment is an intuitive moment which comes as and when you are fully present. So, it is all connected. When the connectivity is so complete, *hum usko bolte hain 'darshan'* (I call it the divine moment. Darshan, literally-seeing). *Jab 'darshan' hua toh tasveer main bhi toh darshan hoga na*? (When you have this divine moment then it will reflect in your photos.). Darshan is so much more than seeing, witnessing, or glancing. It brings everything together: the energies, vibrations, physicality, and the visual experience."



Raghubir Singh *Untitled; Country-craft transporting coconut products from villages to Alleppey warehouses lining a canal; Mappila boys walking the ramparts of Bekal Fort, built by Kaladi Nayakas (1500-1763), the karnataka kings, from the series 'KERELA – The Spice Coast of India'* | 1986 | Color coupler prints ed. 4/20 | 8.5 x 26.8 inches

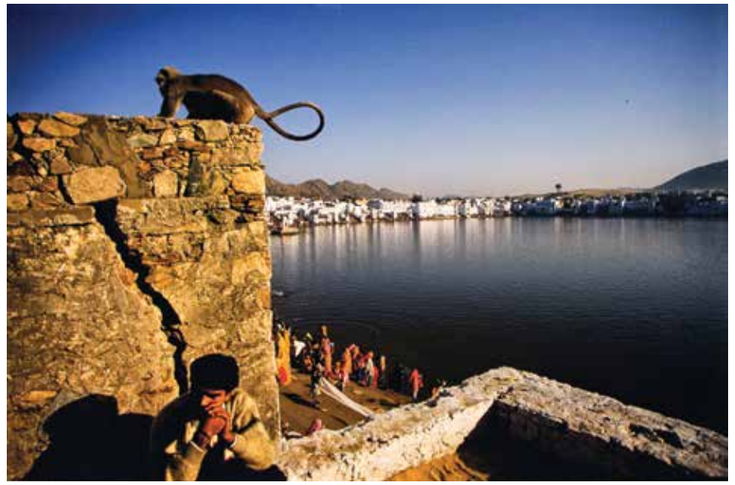
Raghubir Singh, a pioneer of color photography, started his career as a photojournalist for *The New York Times* and *National Geographic*, documenting India's urban and rural transformations of the 1970s-1990s. Later, his work took the form of monographs. Despite living in New York and Paris, and teaching at the School of Visual Arts, Columbia University, and Cooper Union, Singh always returned to India to make his images.

This series, *Kerala – The Spice Coast of India*, is a pictorial study of a region at the southwestern tip of India on the Malabar Coast. Singh initially visited Kerala as an American journalist to document the first major success of the Communist Party in a democratic country. As a major spice port, Kerala has been adored by Westerners for centuries, but this event revived Western fascinations. It held Singh's interest because its geography, art, and caste system differ from the India he knew growing up. His practice is research-heavy and his publication for this series includes a thirty-page history of the coast that is didactic as well as personal.



Raghu Rai *Delhi Businessman Feeding the Seagulls, Jamuna, Delhi* | 1998 | Pigment print ed. 5/10 | 22 x 55 inches

Raghu Rai began his career as the Chief Photographer for *The Statesman*, an Indian English-language daily newspaper, and was later a photojournalist for *India Today*, the country's leading news magazine. After an exhibition in Paris in 1971, Rai was nominated to join Magnum Photos, a prestigious international photography cooperative, and became its first Indian member. In 1972 he was the first photographer to receive India's highest civilian honor, the Padamshree, for his series about Bangladeshi refugees of war. His work includes in-depth looks at a wide array of subjects including Sikhs, Mother Teresa, and the Taj Mahal; he was also commissioned by Greenpeace to document survivors of the Bhopal Gas tragedy. His work is often presented in essay form, whether as a book or magazine, and is deeply rooted in a tradition of documentary photography, recording all facets of a place, event, or person. Rai views his process as a spiritual coming together of the mind and body, and the resulting images to be a lasting record of a facet of life. He has dedicated his later career to founding a school for documentary photography in Gurgaon and creating an expansive archive of 150 years of photography in India.



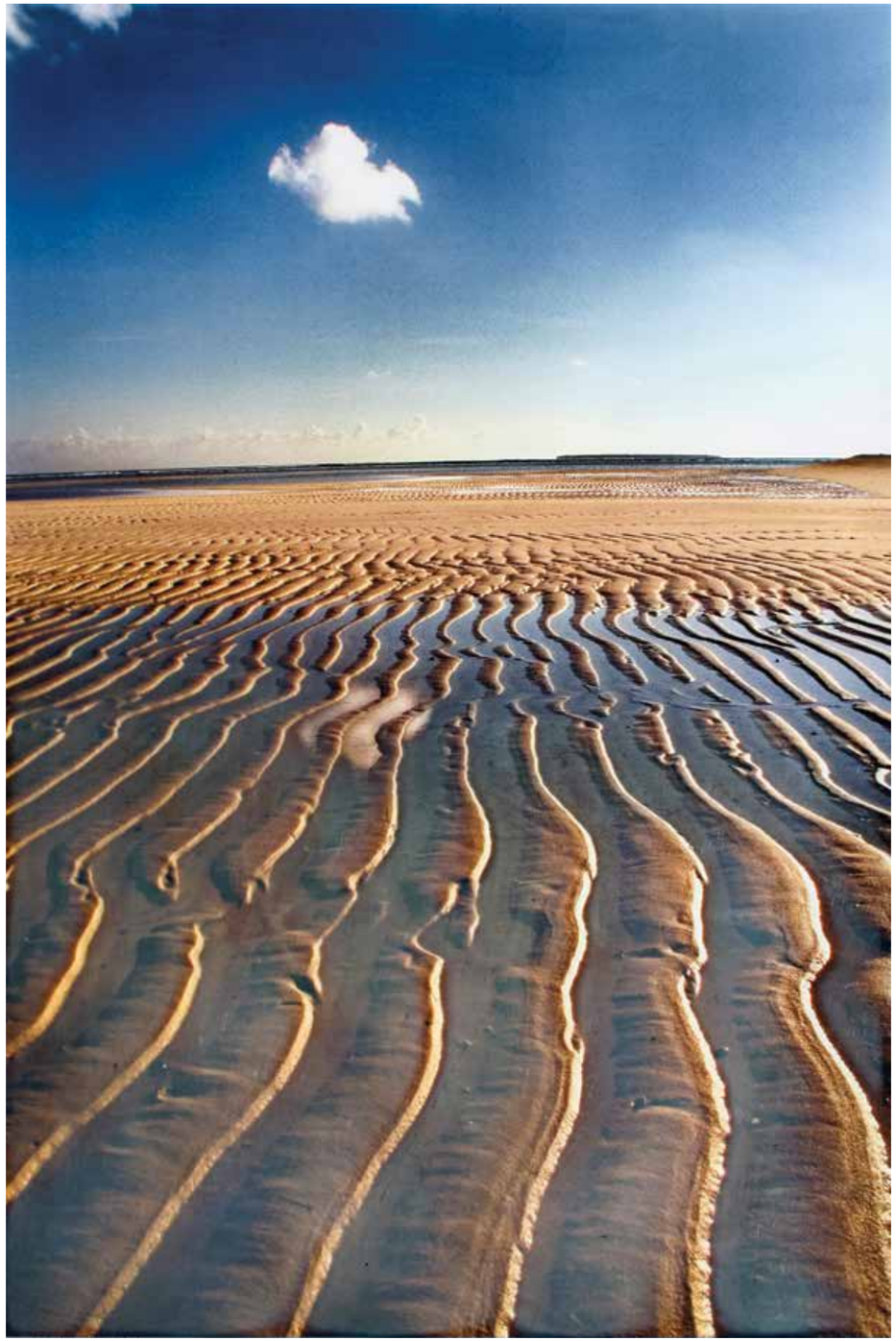
Raghu Rai
Pushkar Lake, Rajasthan |1998
Pigment print ed. 2 /10
20 x 30 inches



Raghu Rai
As the Sun Rises, Rajasthan | 1994
Pigment print ed. 1/10
18 x 26 inches



Raghu Rai
Aerial View, Lakshadweep Island | 1998
Pigment print ed. 2/10
18 x 27 inches



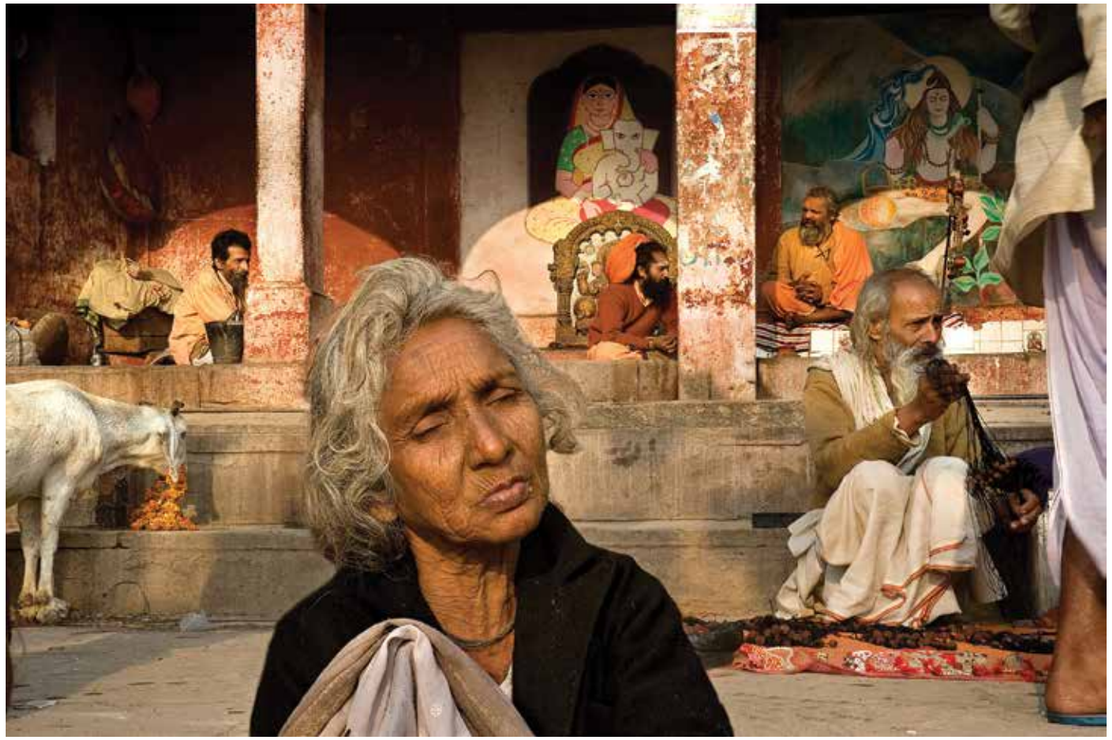
Raghu Rai
Combed Beach, Lakshadweep | 1998 | Pigment print ed. 1/10 | 30.5 x 20.5 inches



Raghu Rai *The Colors of Faith at Triveni Sangam, Mahakumbh* | 2013 | Archival pigment print ed. 1/10 | 24 x 34 inches

"The purpose of photography is to document the times we are living with sensitivity and commitment, because this is going to be tomorrow's photo history."

– Raghu Rai



Raghu Rai *Faithful in Varanasi* | 2008 | Archival pigment print ed. 1/10 | 20 x 30 inches

"Either you capture the mystery or you reveal the mystery, everything else is just information."

– Raghu Rai



Ketaki Sheth *Girl at Ganpati Immersion, Chowpatty* | 2002 | Silver gelatin print | 14.5 x 22 inches

Ketaki Sheth is one of India's most celebrated street photographers. Studying under acclaimed photographer Raghubir Singh and later in the United States, Sheth has completed several series that have been widely exhibited and published in book form.

The two works on view are from Sheth's *Bombay Mix* series (1989-2004), which deftly captures the spirit of living in a dense urban environment. Bombay (now Mumbai) is the most populous city in India, and one of the world's megacities. Sheth captures the vibrant urban chaos through the city's mix of wealthy and poor, white-collared and manual laborers, calm and manic, young and old through the equalizing lens of black and white imagery. Her version of the city is void of the call centers, steel and glass skyscrapers, and the secular lifestyle associated with the metropolis.



Ketaki Sheth *Portrait of Falak* | 1990 | Silver gelatin print ed. 1/12 | 20 x 24 inches

"Here is a haunting photograph of two little girls, angel and imp. The girl in the center is gaudily attired, fair, and pristine; she could be any of the middle class children of the city, cosseted, pampered. But she is sad, a sad angel. Behind her is another girl in a shaggy dress, laughing mockingly, out of focus, dark, cheaply shod – the excluded. The one girl, still, composed, pensive; the other manic with energy; and in the background, an older lady sitting on a cot, indifferent to either one of them. And there you have the whole story-mix of Bombay: the fortunate, lost in contemplation; the unfortunate, whose only defense is laughter, and the rest of the city, choosing not to see."

– Suketu Mehta



Artist Biographies

Ravi Agarwal

Born in 1958, Ravi Agarwal is an artist, environmental activist, writer, and curator. He is the founder of Indian NGO Toxics Link and has been internationally recognized for this work. Agarwal lives and works in New Delhi.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:
The Needle on the Gauge: The Testimonial Image in the works of Seven Indian Artists, Contemporary Art Centre of SA, Adelaide (2012)
Critical Mass, Contemporary Art from India, Tel Aviv Museum of Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv (2012)
Generation in Transition: New Art from India, Contemporary Art Centre in Vilnius and National Gallery of Art, Warsaw (2011)
After the Crash, Orto Botanico Museum, Rome (2011)
Indian Highway, Serpentine Gallery, London (2008)

Atul Bhalla

Atul Bhalla was born in 1964. He received his Bachelor's degree from Delhi University and a Master's degree from Northern Illinois University. Bhalla lives and works in New Delhi.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:
Beyond The Self, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra (2011)
Paris-Delhi-Bombay, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2011)
Water, Rutgers University, Zimmerli Art Museum, New Brunswick, NJ (2010)
INDIA: Public Places/Private Spaces – Contemporary Photography and Video Art, Newark Museum, Newark, NJ (2007)
Watching Me/Watching India – New Photography from India, Fotographie Forum, Frankfurt (2007)

Sheba Chhachhi

Born in 1958 in Harare, Ethiopia, Chhachhi was educated at Delhi University and the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad. Chhachhi lives and works in New Delhi.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:
Evoking the Pause, Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum, Mumbai (2011)
Between Stories, Gallery Paolo, Milan (2009)
India: Side by Side – Indian Contemporary Art, Centro Cultural Banco do Brazil, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo (2011)
Chimera, the Collectors Show, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore (2012)
Sheba Chhachhi, Walsh Gallery, Chicago, IL (2008)

Shilpa Gupta

Shilpa Gupta was born in Mumbai in 1976 and in 1997 graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Sculpture from Sir J.J. School of Art. In 2004 she was recognized as International Artist of the Year by the South Asian Visual Artists Collective of Canada. She lives and works in Mumbai.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:
My East is Your West, Palazzo Benzon, Venice Biennale, Venice (2015)
Will We Ever be Able to Mark Enough?, Galerie im Taxispalais, Innsbruck (2013)
Descriptive Acts, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA (2012)
A Bit Closer, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, OH (2010)
2652, Dvir Gallery, Tel Aviv (2010)
Half a Sky, Center for Contemporary Art, Linz (2010)

Jitish Kallat

Born in 1974, Jitish Kallat received his Bachelor's degree in Painting from Sir J.J. School of Art in 1996. He currently lives and works in Mumbai. Kallat's body of work includes painting, photography, collage, sculpture, installations, and multimedia works.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS:
Public Notice 2, Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Paddington (2015)
Epilogue, San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA (2013)
Circa, Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne (2012)
Public Notice 3, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL (2010)
First Information Report, Bose Pacia Modern, New York, NY (2002)

Naveen Kishore

Born in Kolkata in 1953, Kishore received his Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature in 1973 from St. Xavier's College. He established Seagull Books in 1982 to provide a platform for high quality arts and culture publishing. In 1987 he created the Seagull Foundation for the Arts. Kishore lives and works in Kolkata.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:
The Art of Beautiful Books – In India and Germany, Internationales Literatur Festival, Berlin (2014)
Tramp, Royal Norwegian Embassy, New Delhi and the Seagull Foundation for the Arts, Kolkata (2012)
Naveen Kishore, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi (2008)
Woman/Goddess, The Queen's Gallery, The British Council, New Delhi (1999) and Indian Centre of Art and Culture, New York, NY (2001)

Riyas Komu

Riyas Komu was born in 1971 in Kerala. He received Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Painting from Sir J.J. School of Art. He is the co-founder of the Kochi Biennale Foundation. He lives and works in Mumbai.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:
India: Side by Side – Indian Contemporary Art, Centro Cultural Banco do Brazil, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo (2011)
Paris-Delhi-Bombay, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2011)
Oil's Well, Let's Play!, Fondazione Amaldo Pomodoro, Milan (2010)
India Xianzai: Contemporary Indian Art, Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai (2009)

Annu Palakunnathu Matthew

Annu Palakunnathu Matthew is Professor of Photography at the University of Rhode Island. Born in 1964, Matthew has a BSc in Mathematics from Women's Christian College, Chennai and an MFA in Photography from University of Delaware. Matthew lives and works in Kingston, RI.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:
Generations: Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto (2015)
Beyond Bollywood: Indian Americans Shape the Nation, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, Washington, DC (2015)
INDIA: Public Places/Private Spaces – Contemporary Photography and Video Art, Newark Museum, Newark, NJ (2007)
Identity: An Indian from India, SEPIA International, New York, NY (2004)
Memories of India, Houston Center for Photography, Houston, TX (2000)

Akbar Padamsee

Born in Mumbai in 1928, Padamsee graduated from the Sir J.J. School of Art in 1940 with a diploma in Painting. Although he is best known as a painter, Padamsee has experimented with filmmaking, sculpture, and photography. Padamsee's first solo exhibition was held in Paris in 1952 at Galerie Saint Placide, Paris, France. In 2010 he was awarded the Padama Bhushan by the government of India. Padamsee lives and works in Mumbai.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:
The Body Unbound, Rubin Museum of Art, New York, NY (2011)
Sensitive Surfaces, Galerie Helene Lamarque, Paris (2008)
Photographs (2004-06), Guild Art Gallery, Mumbai (2006)
Akbar Padamsee, Museum of Contemporary Art, Montreal (1967)
Seven Indian Painters, Gallery One, London (1958)

Pushpamala N.

Pushpamala N. was born in Bangalore in 1956. She studied sculpture at MS University where she completed her Bachelor's degree in 1982 and Master's degree in 1985. The artist has frequently collaborated with British photographer Clare Arni, who spends most of her time in South India. Pushpamala N. lives and works in Bangalore.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:
Postdate: Photography and Inherited History of India, San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA (2015)
Beyond the Self, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra (2011)
Re-Frame – 7: Experimental Films from India, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2009)
Edge of Desire, Asia Society, New York, NY (2005)
Century City, Tate Modern, London (2001)

Ram Rahman

Photojournalist, artist, curator, designer, and activist, Rahman initially studied physics at MIT. Later, he completed a degree in Graphic Design at Yale School of Art in 1979. Born in 1955, Rahman is one of the founding members of the Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (SAHMAT) in New Delhi, a leader in the resistance to communal and sectarian forces in India through its public cultural action. The artist lives and works in New Delhi.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:
Striking Resemblance: The Changing Art of Portraiture, Rutgers University, Zimmerli Art Museum, New Brunswick, NJ (2014)
INDIA: Public Places/ Private Spaces – Contemporary Indian Photography and Video Art, Newark Museum, Newark, NJ (2007)
Bioscope: Scenes from an Eventful Life, Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi (2008)
Middle Age Spread, National Museum, New Delhi (2004)
Visions of India: Photographs by Ram Rahman, Cleveland Museum of Art, OH (2002)

Raghu Rai

Raghu Rai was born in 1942 in Jhang, Pakistan. His career in photography started in 1965, a year after he began to work for the leading newspaper, *The Statesman*. From 1982 to 1992, Rai served as the director of photography for the newsmagazine *INDIA Today.* He has served on the jury for World Press Photo from 1990 to 1997. In 1971, Rai was awarded the Padmashree by the government of India. He lives and works in New Delhi.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS:
In Light of India: Photography by Raghu Rai, Hong Kong International Photo Festival, Hong Kong (2014)
My India, Western Australian Museum, Fremantle (2012)
Bhopal 1984-2004, Melkweg Gallery, Amsterdam (2005)
Raghu Rai's India – A Retrospective, Photofusion, London (2002)
Raghu Rai Retrospective, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi (1997)

Rashid Rana

Rashid Rana was born in Lahore, Pakistan in 1968. He received his BA from the National College of Arts, Lahore in 1992 and MFA from Massachusetts College of Art and Design in 1994. Rana lives and works in Lahore, where he teaches at Beaconhouse National University.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:
My East is Your West, Palazzo Benzon, Venice Biennale, Venice (2015)
Labyrinth of Reflections: The Art of Rashid Rana 1992-2012, Mohatta Palace Museum, Karachi (2013)
Apposite/Opposite, Chemould Prescott Road and Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai (2012)
Translation/Transliterations, Hong Kong Art Center, Hong Kong (2011)
Meeting Point, Nicholas Robinson Gallery, New York, NY (2010)
Perpetual Paradox, Musée Guimet, Paris (2010)

Gigi Scaria

Born in 1973 in Kerala, Scaria completed his Bachelor's degree in Painting from the College of Fine Arts, Thiruvananthapuram in 1995 and MFA from Jamia Millia University in 1998. In 2011 he was one of five artists to represent India at the 54th Venice Biennale. Scaria lives and works in New Delhi.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:
Dust, Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne (2013)
Critical Mass, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv (2012)
Indiavata (India + Avatar): Contemporary Artists from India, Gallery Sun Contemporary, Seoul (2008)
INDIA: Public Places/ Private Spaces – Contemporary Indian Photography and Video Art, Newark Museum, Newark, NJ (2007)

Ketaki Sheth

Born in Mumbai in 1957, Sheth received her BA in English Literature from Bombay University in 1979 and MA in Communication Arts from Cornell University in 1980. Sheth began taking pictures of Mumbai in the late 1980s, under the guidance of renowned photographer Raghubir Singh. She lives and works in Mumbai.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS:
On Belonging: Photographs of Indians of African Descent, National Portrait Gallery, London (2015)
A Certain Grace – The Sidi: Indians of African Descent (2005-2011), National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi (2013)
Bombay Mix: Street Photographs, Cité du Livre, Aix-en-Provence (2008)

Dayanita Singh

Dayanita Singh was born in 1961 in New Delhi and studied Visual Communication at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad and documentary photography at the International Center of Photography in New York. She has published twelve books. Singh lives and works in New Delhi.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS:
Museum of Chance – A Book Story, Max Mueller Bhavan, Mumbai (2014)
Go Away Closer, Museum of Modern Art, Frankfurt (2014)
Dayanita Singh, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL (2014)
Go Away Closer, Hayward Gallery, London (2013)
Chairs, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, MA (2005)
Privacy, Hamburger Bahnhof Museum for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2003)

Raghubir Singh

Raghubir Singh was born in 1942 in Jaipur. Inspired by Henri Cartier-Bresson, Singh was a self-taught photographer who worked in India and lived in Paris, London, and New York. In 1998 the Art Institute of Chicago organized a retrospective exhibition of his work that was on view at the time of his untimely death. He was awarded the Padmashree by the government of India in 1983.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS:
National Museum of Photography, Bradford (1987 and 2005)
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (1989 and 2003)
The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL (1998)
Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (1984)
Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, CA (1983)

Vivan Sundaram

Vivan Sundaram was born 1943 in Shimla. He received his Bachelor's degree in Painting from MS University and a diploma in Painting from The Slade School of Fine Art in London. The artist lives and works in New Delhi.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:
Making Strange: Gagawaka + Postmortem, Fowler Museum at UCLA, Los Angeles, CA (2015)
Paris-Delhi-Bombay, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2011)
INDIA: Public Places/Private Spaces – Contemporary Indian Photography and Video Art, Newark Museum, Newark, NJ (2007)
Amrita Sher-gil, Tate Modern, London (2007)
Re-take of Amrita, Hungarian Centre, New Delhi (2000)

Vivek Vilasini

Born in 1964 in Kerala, Vivek Vilasini earned a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Kerala University in 1987 before turning to art and studying sculpture from traditional Indian craftspeople. He lives and works in Bangalore.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:
Art and City in the 21st Century, Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, Barcelona (2010)
Indian Highway, Serpentine Gallery, London (2008)
Between One Shore and Several Others, Visual Arts Gallery, New Delhi (2008)
INDIA: Public Places/Private Spaces – Contemporary Photography and Video Art, Newark Museum, Newark, NJ (2007)



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Atul Bhalla

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Bhalla, Atul, and Maliha Noorani. 2012. *Yamuna Walk*. New York: Sepia Eye and Seattle: University of Washington Press.

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Shilpa Gupta

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Banaji, Mahzarin, Kaushik Bhowmick, Noam Chomsky, Shilpa Gupta, Caroline Naphegyi, and Sandhini Poddar. 2009. *While I Sleep.* Paris: Le Laboratoire.

Adajania, Nancy, Shilpa Gupta, Shanay Jhaveri, Quddus Mizra, and Peter Weibel. 2010. *Shilpa Gupta*: *Why do I remember.* Munich: Prestel.

Westen, Mirjam, Renee Baert, Kate Delaney, and Shilpa Gupta. 2012. *Shilpa Gupta: Will we ever be able to mark enough?* Montreal: Fonderie Darling.

Jitish Kallat

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Nagy, Peter. 2005. *Jitish Kallat: Panic Acid*. Singapore: Bodhi Art.

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Pushpamala N.

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BINDU modern

Home of the Gaur Collection

BINDU modern is a private, not-for-profit art gallery located in New Jersey. The mission of BINDU modern is to promote awareness of modern and contemporary Indian art by engaging with art enthusiasts, educational institutions, community organizations, and art museums.

The gallery primarily focuses on presenting scholarly exhibitions originating from the modern and contemporary Indian art collection of Umesh and Sunanda Gaur, which has been developed over more than two decades. The collection started with works by members of the Progressive Artists Group – F.N. Souza, M.F. Husain, S.H. Raza, K.H. Ara, S.K. Bakre, and H.A. Gade – which was formed in India at the dawn of independence in 1947. As the collection expanded, they added the second-generation modernist artists such as Sudhir Patwardhan, Nalini Malani, and Ganesh Pyne. The Gaurs were also among some of the earliest collectors of contemporary artists such as Atul Dodhiya and T.V. Santosh, and are now active collectors of contemporary indigenous art of India and contemporary Indian photography.

In 2002, the Gaurs approached Rutgers University's Zimmerli Art Museum to organize a multi-collector exhibition of Indian modernism. This resulted in the largest exhibition to date of modern and contemporary Indian art in the United States. *INDIA: Contemporary Art from Northeastern Private Collections,* turned out to be a ground breaking exhibition for its time and several scholarly publications were published in tandem with the exhibition. Subsequently, curated shows from the Gaur Collection traveled to Fairfield University, Rutgers-Newark, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Georgia Museum of Art.

In 2007, the Gaurs spearheaded an effort at The Newark Museum to organize a large-scale exhibition on modern Indian photography and video. They introduced the museum to exceptional scholars who eventually became the exhibition's curators: Gayatri Sinha, independent curator and scholar in India, and Paul Sternberger, Associate Professor of Art History at Rutgers University. *INDIA: Public Places/Private Spaces – Contemporary Photography and Video Art* was the first, and to date the largest, international exhibition of its kind.

Two years ago, BINDU modern mounted an exhibition of contemporary indigenous art. There was an overwhelmingly positive response to the show from art scholars and enthusiasts alike. This led to the idea of a new endeavor for BINDU modern: to expand its scope into organizing traveling exhibitions to be shown at galleries and museums nationwide.

This has resulted in two concurrent exhibitions in 2015: *Looking In/Looking Out: Contemporary Photography from the Gaur Collection* at the Stephen D. Paine Gallery, Massachusetts College of Art and Design (MassArt), Boston, and *Many Visions, Many Versions – Art from Indigenous Communities in India* at the University Galleries, William Paterson University, Wayne, New Jersey. The Gaurs thank gallery directors Ms. Lisa Tung and Ms. Kristen Evangelista at these institutions respectively, to have had the confidence, vision, and foresight to be the venues for BINDU modern's inaugural travelling exhibitions.

The formation of BINDU modern and its exhibitions would not have been possible without the insightful advice from the Gaur's longtime friend, Mr. Jeffrey Wechsler, former Senior Curator at Rutgers University's Zimmerli Art Museum. Jeffrey serves as BINDU modern's consulting curator and guides the gallery in all aspects from project ideas to exhibition designs to catalogs.



Gayatri Sinha is an art critic and curator based in New Delhi. Her primary areas of interest are the issues of gender and iconography, media, economics, and social history. As curator her work has been in the domains of contemporary art, photography and lens-based work.

She has curated extensively in India including at the National Museum, the National Gallery of Modern Art, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art in New Delhi, and most prominent art galleries in India. Internationally, she has curated major projects at the Grand Curtius Museum and the Musee Ansembourg, Belgium; the Korean International Art Fair, Seoul; and Fotographie Forum, Frankfurt. She has also served as a consultant to the India Art Fair Delhi, the Kochi Biennale, and Minsheng Museum, Shanghai.

In 2007, Sinha co-curated, *INDIA: Public Places/Private Spaces – Contemporary Photography and Video Art*, at The Newark Museum, New Jersey. To date this exhibition stands as the most comprehensive study on the subject.

Sinha is a visiting professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum, Mumbai. As an art critic, for several years she wrote a column for *The Indian Express* and *The Hindu*. Sinha is the founding director of *Critical Collective*, and the archive www.criticalcollective.in, which works towards knowledge in the arts.

BINDU modern
Home of the Gaur Collection

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