

camerawork delhi

Dec 2009
VOL I Issue V

"It's true. I don't believe in words, but you can always add something of your own to make it honest." Robert Frank. 1971

Maoist Rebel, Chattisgarh 2009 © Mustafa Quraishi



GG – What is your work as a curator about?

WE – My job is to try and preserve what's worth preserving in photography and encourage people to keep going. We have interns here at the Museum who have learned things and I have met them later in positions of power and influence. I'm for a meeting of like minds, and there aren't that many actually, after all most editions of art books are only 3000-7000. We have a very small world but the people who buy the books are passionate and we try to find them. It's stimulating to see others stimulated.

I like to do major thematic shows, not catalogues of people working in the field but putting together sensibilities, for example my shows on The Face or The Body are what I found most intellectually demanding. Photographers prefer solo exhibitions but I think it's very interesting to put them together because photographs shown together have a special accumulated power.

It's also interesting to go to photographers' homes, and sometimes you try to recreate that in the shows. The French have a great expression – 'mettre en valeur', or to add value, and that's what exhibitions and books do. That's often not very sophisticated in the photography world - the art of presentation - to be able to find the point at which something works, how to hang, the exact distance from the corner, where you place a picture on a page. This is not taught to photographers and curators, they usually learn on the job.

GG - Why photography? Can photographs change the world?

WE – Anybody who exhibits or goes to an exhibition wants to be changed in some way, even if you can't put your finger on what that is. I recently went to Dijon to the Museum there and came out transformed. For me life would be intolerable without art as I'm not interested in religion and find spiritual sustenance in art. Photography and Art are both dialects of the same thing, a conversation really, and can understand each other with some difficulty. With fine art as it is defined in our society you have complete freedom over that rectangle, you can fill it with how you see the world, and if enough of us find it interesting to keep you going we have a conversation.

GG – What are the ideas that you're interested in?

WE – No question at all that the big idea today is the environment, man's imprint on the environment. Not the landscape. All the traditional genres seem to be on the point of disappearing – the nude, the still life, the body was already over in the nineties. The portrait is dead or certainly in the throes of being reinvented, but that whole portrait as a reflection of the inner person thing is over. Photography is undergoing a profound shift. The digital revolution is petering out too now that the novelty has worn off. In curating our show Regeneration Part 2 we have found young photographers are using much less digital manipulation than one would have thought. Because the great attraction of photography is the power to transcribe reality. Even the manipulated comes back to the real. Once the dazzle of multiplying someone five times in the frame is worn out one comes back to the start. There was a huge rage for stereographs in the 1860s and then it petered out and Swarkowski asked the question as to why no serious photographer had ever been interested in them. Perhaps because the game is three dimensions into two! The digital revolution is like that whole craze for digital watches in the seventies!

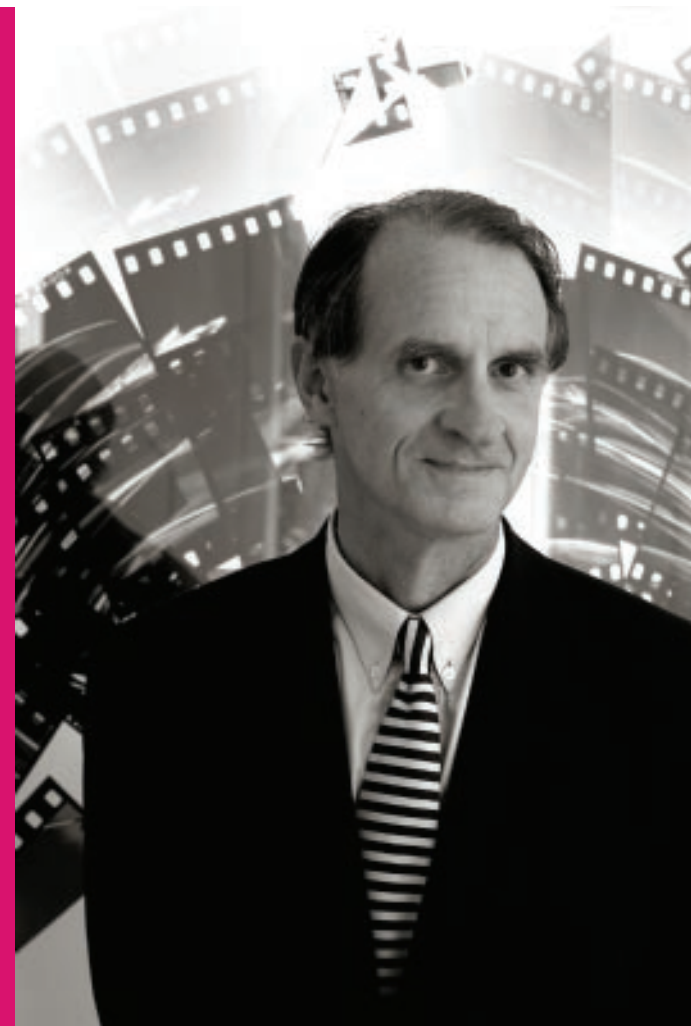
I think frankly that it's all about the connection to reality. If you tell me that this landscape is not real but is a model, well, that's interesting to me for a bit, and for 6 or 8 photos but then it may not be so interesting any more. But there are other kinds of pictures, even from the thirties, that are still interesting to me. Like Hoyningen-Heune. Maybe we'll lose the information some day but still have the archive and then will it still be interesting is the question? Some things are just cultural moments and specific to their time. But others have staying power like Dysfarmer.

GG – How do you relate photography and art?

WE – Well, probably even today in Lausanne there are a fair number of people who would question whether photography is art. And two or three years ago Steichen sold for 3 million pounds but that same year Picasso sold for 135 million. So when they sell for the same amount we can say we are all in agreement. The paradox is that the art world brings a real sophistication - better framing, visual merchandising and so on but they are astonishingly ignorant of what's happened in photography in the last 150 years so they make very poor choices - like Bustamante. So they are very sophisticated on the one hand but very naïve on the other. Some of course like Cindy Sherman and Jeff Wall are known by both but it's arbitrary and has nothing to do with art but commercial structures. For example Friedlander is one of the absolute two or three of the great twenty first century photographers but not on people's lips like a Gursky or Sherman. In the field of art one is also dealing with faith and profound things one can't talk about. To have a common language in anything you need to agree on the meaning of words, but we can also debate them for hours. Perception is eighty percent memory and conditioning and only twenty percent objective vision. So we all have different ideas of what works. People very close to each other, lovers, friends even can have different views and you can multiply that many times over in the art world. But what is amazing is that everyone agrees at the top. Everyone agrees on Francis Bacon, but the second rate is debated.

GG - In India today we are working in a slightly different world to this one. We have galleries supporting photography in recent times, but we still have an absence of photographic education, critical writing about it and so on..

WE – I'd say, don't go heavy with theorists, they'll kill it. Start with working photographers and open-minded curators,



© Phillippe Pache photographe, Lausanne

don't go with people who have fixed ideas, you don't want to create a class of disciples in awe of certain ideals in Europe and America. What young photographers need is mentors. My career started in Montreal, photography was really an emerging field in the seventies and there were only a handful of people doing things in England, France, America, so you could very quickly get to know the movers and shakers and find out what was happening. I started a small center of contemporary art called Optica and brought in people like Friedlander. I think it's necessary for young photographers to see that commitment. You can be like Lartigue who just emerged out of nowhere like a magic wave, but it's more likely that photographers in India today will have seen a lot of work, I think mixing photographers, bringing in people from elsewhere and having debate is important. I don't mind universities coming in but professors can be a danger because they start to impose their own ideas, and one doesn't want people imitating others. But a very few people is all it takes to make a lot happen and people may have to wear several hats to get things going. A circle of friends is how ICP came about.

And to young photographers I would say, don't make excuses as to why you can't do something, just do it. You can earn a living some other way but the main thing is to make the work. Like Woody Allen said, "Ninety percent genius is just showing up".

GG – Hasn't the history of photography been quite Euro-centric, or America-centric? We have only heard of people like Sidibe very recently.

WE – I have a tiny problem here. I think there is a kind of colonialism at work here, a patronizing one, once you decide you neglected an area culturally, you grab anything from there that looks hip, the China situation is hilarious for example, they have realized what we

want and are producing it on demand, and we grab it because it looks like what we want it to look like. So there is a danger that being open will become looking at our own reflection in the mirror. We are looking for a big African photographer and so we will make one up if we can't find one.

Historically yes, the centers have been in the West. Let's just take an analogy of opera. One can only have operas in big cities with a lot of support and patronage from rich families, where there are long traditions. Then there are feeder cities all over, like singers in small towns in Canada gravitate to the bigger cities like Toronto and the cream of those singers go even further. I am not talking as an elitist but as a sociologist, and you can't just decide to start an opera somewhere, it takes a long time for things to happen. When someone emerges, like an Alec Soth or Loretta Lux you know they have the gift. But you also don't know if someone is going to be brilliant for a short period of time or go on consistently year after year.

GG – You've looked at so much photography - anyone particularly close to your heart?

WE – Many, many, so many that I have to talk in metaphor. When I teach I show the old greats like Cartier Bresson, Brandt, Lartigue and students still go wow. And I can give you a hundred names from today...Ed Burtynsky, Lynne Cohen, Robert Polidori. Sometimes you are wild about something for a brief period of time, others give you a slow pleasure. I have an eccentric theory of photography. It seems to me that the photo is always on the threshold of whether it is alive or not, passes over that line or not. No amount of theory can make it come alive if it isn't, or any cultural framing. The photo needs to always guard a little of its mystery otherwise you eat, digest and are satiated and don't want to see it again. Barthes uses the word Punctum, it is something miniscule but Loretta Lux has it. An anonymous photograph may have it.

WILLIAM EWINGS

Director of the Musée De L'elysée, Lausanne, Switzerland in conversation with Gauri Gill



The Director's Chair © Sunil Gupta

Director, Photoink, New Delhi
in conversation with Sunil Gupta

Devika Daulet-Singh

SG-Originally, you were publishing and you had a team of photographers?

DDS - They were all people who had just picked up the camera a year or two earlier, it was actually quite frustrating. When Anay Mann came in, I thought, thank God, for a change here is somebody looking beyond the street. I think he had no idea what he was doing. He said, "this is all I know." And it was interesting because he managed to get the first Habitat Award. And then he started working with me editorially. He developed an aesthetic with portraits that business magazines were interested in and that's how our niche got more and more refined.

SG - When did you start to look outside of this group of people for curating exhibition purposes?

DDS - I don't think it was something that I thought about consciously. By 2005, in any case I was fed up with Habitat, I'd seen how difficult it was to work with Habitat. One had gelatin prints, framing was expensive, and it was up for only ten days and I said to myself, this is ridiculous! So I said then, we need to have our own space. And I began looking in 2005, but sealing had started. I think at that point Arles happened. Then this space came up, I found this in Sept 2007.

SG - What's the medium term future of the gallery? It's become your public face.

DDS - You're right, it's my public space, it's my playing field. No one tells me when to bring the show down. That's the loveliest part about the gallery. To have the freedom to take something

up or down when you want to. And I think the idea always was to show what we are familiar with and to also add, and once a year bring in a photographer from outside. To see how we can challenge the status quo. Open up the field little bit.

SG - How many shows in a twelve month period?

DDS - We did six or seven last year, this year five. And I don't think I'm going to do more than five a year. I can't, not if I'm having to sit and edit and make books. If someone walks in with forty five pictures and says here's a show then that would be very easy, in fact, but that's not how it's happening.

SG - You're doing each one from scratch?

DDS - Not each one, even if I do two from scratch, I'm finished. I've just done the Barcelona show, which is keeping me alive in the institutional world, because that's a world I'm very attracted to, but it takes a toll on the gallery. I don't want to confuse my institutional practice with what I do at the gallery. Institutionally, I'd love to work with you, with Gauri Gill, with Sheba Chhachhi, with everybody. There's no conflict there. There's nothing selling, I mean it's not for sale. No conflict. And even if there was a sale it would go back to the gallery or the artist.

SG - What about the future? You were wanting to set up an institutional base?

DDS - I do. A lot of the things I have done in the past nine years have been

moving me along in that direction. People have learnt to digitise, archive and create databases. I wasn't hired to do "Umrao," I offered to do "Umrao." So that's where my long term interests are, how to preserve a photo archive. I love doing that.

SG - Do you have a vision then for a photography institution?

DDS - Absolutely. I really like the International Centre of Photography, New York model. As much as I found lots of issues with it's educational programme, fifteen years ago, I really like what it's become now. It's a museum, a bookshop and educational programme. I aspire to that model. How long it will take I don't know, but I aspire to it. Teaching is something inside me, people may debate my editorial, curatorial skills, but I'm very confident about my teaching. That is there, that's what I did at Photoink, that's how it started. Working with people who had just picked up the camera. I'm only there to ask them difficult questions and get them to think a little broader. I give (to the photographers I work with) hours of conversation and dialogue. When I was in college people used to say to me that I'll remember the hours of critique that I got there; in a museum people will walk past your pictures in a few seconds. Nobody will talk about your pictures after you get out of school. I'm hoping that people learn to be able to defend their work, that's the real challenge for me. You and I once had a conversation about having a workshop..., you've got to start someplace.

I was startled by a PTL photograph on the front page of The Telegraph in Calcutta last year. A woman in a lush silk sari was standing in front of a distinguished-looking audience seated in an opulent hall, recognizably in the Rashtrapati Bhavan. (I could make out the prime minister and his wife in the front row.) The woman stood there holding her face with both hands. Her face was tilted upwards with the eyes closed. I thought she was singing a song. It could have been one of those exclusive classical music soirées that take place from time to time in the residences of heads of state all over the civilized world. There was something operatic about the woman. If the setting were not so obviously Indian, she could have been singing an aria to a select gathering, which looked rapt, but perfectly poised, as it listened to her passionate outpouring of song.

Then I read the caption, "Teardrops on a medal". The woman in the picture was an army widow who had come to receive her dead husband's gallantry award from the president. The report began, "A wail breaks out inside Rashtrapati Bhavan's Ashoka Hall..." She was not singing an aria. She had lost her composure in public and was howling with grief. The photographer had clicked immediately after her wail broke out, but before the audience had time to react. So their faces still had that stonily cultured look, which contrasted chillingly with the woman's posture and expression. This is what made the photograph shockingly operatic, perversely beautiful.

One of the functions of art is to transform suffering and grief into something that we call Beauty for want of a better word. In the process, pain turns into performance, and photography, even when it does not intend to produce art, colludes with this process through its ability to arrest the motion of life at any arbitrary moment. Photojournalism, especially, creates drama out of disaster (and often in an unexalted way), sometimes leaving us in a sort of moral quandary. I have found myself deeply discomfited

by some images that have won the World Press Photo awards – images that provoke a confusion of response, leaving the viewer unpleasantly suspended between the ethical and the aesthetic. The reverse seems to happen in sports photography and in pictures of performing musicians or dancers: play looks like pain. Straining footballers look like characters in a Passion Play, like Christ and his torturers, caught up in a drama of grimaces and contortions that



"Tomoko Uemura in her Bath, Minamata, Japan, 1972" © W Eugene Smith

This photograph has always been viewed as an extremely private moment made accessible to the outside world by tragedy. Gene told me it was Ryoko Uemura, the mother, who suggested the bathing chamber. This was no grab shot, no stolen moment. The image was planned and set up right down to the use of supplemental flash. Like any good environmental "portrait," this potent picture was an effective collaboration, a visual dialogue, if you will, between subject and photographer. — Jim Hughes, The Digital Journalist, 2000

is disturbingly Gothic in its intensity when viewed out of context. And the effect on the viewer is strangely comic or amusing, rather than disconcerting.

When we take unthinking comfort in photography's documentation of the Real, we tend to forget its more sinister relationship with the Unreal, for the archives of photography could be more full of fiction than of truth. The reassuringly objective could become the treacherously subjective in photographs, and this is the pleasure as well as the menace of photography. My favourite portrait

TRUE LIES

Aweek Sen

of myself is a photograph that makes me look inscrutable and profound, as if taken exactly when I was seeing into the life of things. But all that I was doing when this photograph was shot was trying to hold myself still at the particular tilt in which the photographer wanted my head in relation to my body. I remember my mind being quite blank during those precarious and uncomfortable moments. So, that portrait is at once perfectly fake and perfectly true, making me a face that was never there, but a face that is now part of the person I have become.



An Interview with Meenakshi Singhania

Conservator, Vadehra Art Gallery
talks to Suruchi Dumpawar

a go ahead, I started building a database of people who could be featured by attending various photography shows and researching on the internet. I also got associated with Sunil Gupta and Radhika Singh, who became co-curators and that is how Click! happened.

Logistically Click! must have been a challenge given its scale and span?

Yes it was, it involved a lot of effort as far as the logistics go, but what made things simpler was the fact that we asked the photographers to make prints on their own and we provided them with a set of instructions. But sending them to London was another challenge, but we sent only single print of each photographer and the acrylic frames made sure that we didn't have any unwanted accidents while shipping.

Since Vadehra art gallery is an art gallery, do you get a lot of photographs to conserve or restore?

Not really restoring, I would say, people in India do not value vintage prints so much as to spend money on getting a photograph restored. And with the coming of digital prints, we have had instances in the gallery where in case a digital print gets damaged, the photographer prefers to replace the edition with a new print rather than restoring the damaged one. It is also partly because of the fact that when you restore a photograph it is bound to show.

So what do you do to ensure the longevity of the photographic print? What is the basic care any photograph needs?

While making the photograph there are few things which are very important, the paper the photograph is printed on and the way it is framed. I advise people to use rag based paper as wood based paper is high on acidic content. Even the frames should not be made of wood for the same reason, and while framing the environment of the photograph should be sealed as the flow of air causes deterioration. Apart from that a photographic print needs cleaning and retouching at times.

And what about storing and displaying the photograph?

While storing and displaying a photographic print three things have to be kept in mind, the humidity, the temperature and the light. While displaying the photographs, direct light should not fall on it. Photographs should be stored in a dark room with control over humidity and temperature, humidity causes mould growth and variation in temperature causes expansion and contraction of the layers in the print which is not really conducive for the longevity of the photographs.

Given the current scenario do you think the Silver Gelatin prints have been replaced by digital prints?

No, I think the Silver Gelatin Prints are coming back in fashion, a lot of professional photographers use them still and many amateurs also are printing manually. Only thing is that restoring these photographs can be a challenge because when it comes to restoring the emulsion layer on which the image is captured, things become a bit complex. So I would advise people who are making Silver Gelatin prints, to store them in a conducive environment which ensures the longevity of the print.

Give us a brief about your background ? how did you get into Art conservation?

I had been painting since childhood and was always interested in art, I did an M.A. in Conservation from National Museum , I chose Conservation from the three courses on offer for no particular reason as such. In 2001 I joined the Vadehra Art Gallery and have been with them since as an art conservator and restorator.

Are there any courses on photography restoration and conservation in India?

Not any that I know of. As far as photography conservation goes, I have tried to read a lot of books and articles about it and garner knowledge. On my own Photography conservation and restoration is still not taken very seriously in India because there is not much market.

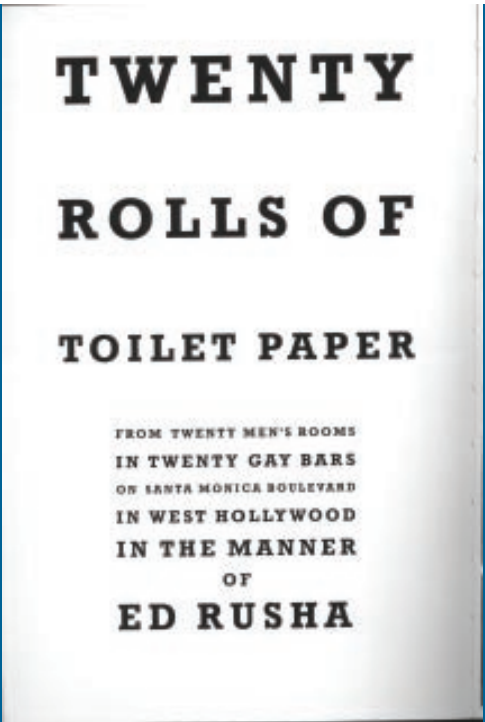
So how and when did you get interested in photography? How did Click! happen?

I had been passionate about photography from the beginning but only in 2005 I got a chance to study photography at the Fototechnik school run by Amitabh Bhattacharya and Tirtha Das Gupta. After having done the short course at Fototechnik, I approached Aseem Vadehra with the idea of a Photography show at the Vadehra Art Gallery. On getting

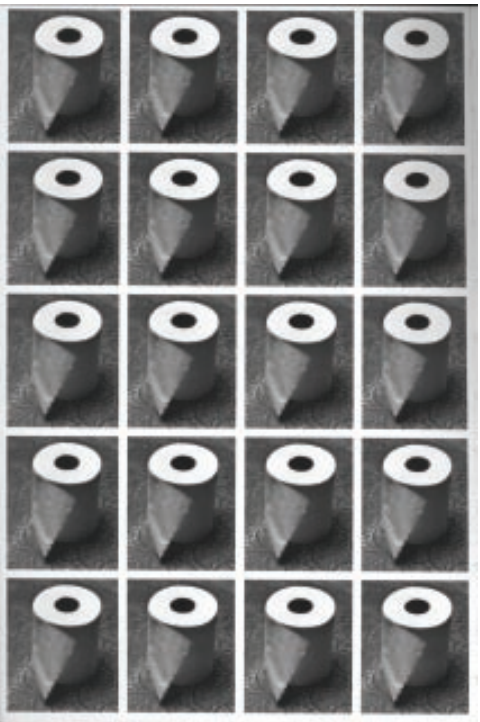


Nobody wants to hear someone telling them that if they're twenty six, they're

going to have to work at least ten years in order to develop an authentic point of view; it's not something that's easy to accept. This is what is so inconvenient about being young. Everyone envies youth so much, but the truth is being young is terrible. It's frightening: you have to make many very serious decisions. It's a marvellous period in one's life, but terrible at the same time.



© Duane Michals, from the book, "Foto Follies: How Photography Lost its Virginity on the Way to the Bank", Steidl, 2006



Duane Michals
spoke with Enrica Vigano,
Madrid, 22 June 2001

DUANE MICHALS

"Conversations with Contemporary Photographers,
"Umbrage Editions, New York 2005

... I mentioned to a friend of mine that small ideas need exaggerated reproductions. On the one hand, great ideas can survive very well in a small reproduction. I think the more trivial the work is, the more you have to do to realise it. In this sense, at least, size matters.

... If it doesn't affect you, it's not art, it's decoration. Bonnard once said something amazing that there are two kinds of paintings: sentimental and decorative. I think a vast amount of art is mere decoration. Whatever piece of art that is no more sufficient in size to encase in a frame and hang in the vestibule of a bank or in a museum is decoration. But I think passion, intimacy, whatever makes you feel something, it doesn't have to be enormous, it has to affect you in some way. When you see it, it should make you think: Yes, I know what that is. But we live in a world today where the louder you scream, the more attention you get, and there is no room any more for the whisper, for intimate sensuality. We're surrounded by constant noise. I think art galleries and museums have all turned into amusement parks.

... The camera is like a typewriter, in the sense in which you can use the machine to write a love letter, a book or a business memo. I mean, it's nothing more than an instrument, like a camera. Some are used simply to document reality: a face you pass on the street, a car accident. I think a camera can also be used as a vehicle of the imagination. Photography is an art, but it will always be a lesser art, always, because of the way in which the majority of photographers use a camera. They lack the most essential ingredient: total invention. So that while photographers continue to commit themselves to "encountering" photographs instead of "inventing" them, they will continue spending their lives looking for something. They will continue cutting up visual reality into little pieces, always dedicated to "encountering" their photographs. What they do is choose, what's more, what they see is, more often than not, something that's been told to them by John Szarkowski or Richard Avedon. They see what the history of photography has told them must be a photograph.

... If Cartier-Bresson had taken these people and said to them: "I want you to sit there on the edge of the Seine and eat lunch on the side of a boat; I'll stay here, and you guys eat," that would be inventing a photo, and not observing it and encountering a moment. Not that there's anything bad in what he did. One of the best aspects of photography is that when one's memory fails, photography is there to offer faith in things. That's why photos become more and more precious the older one gets.

AWARDS

THROUGH THE CRACKS OF A MIRROR DAYANITA SINGH

It was a moment that had been etched in her mind. In a workshop with Eugene Richards, one of the greatest photojournalists of our time, Dayanita had been asked, as had all the other workshop participants, to “photograph each other naked”. She was not comfortable with this, and questioned the value of such an exercise. “Trust me,” Eugene had said, “I want you to realise how vulnerable one can be facing a camera.” It was to be a turning point. Eugene might not have known, but it was this ‘vulnerability’ that Dayanita Singh chose to explore as her medium.

It was as a curator of the show “Positive Lives” an exhibition on people’s responses to HIV/AIDS that I was first introduced to Dayanita’s work. As I looked through the archives at the respected Network Agency, I saw competent photo essays on sex workers in India. The work did not excite me. India, was known for its exoticism, its misery, its otherness. An Indian photographer, documenting the same stories that western photojournalists had established as the face of this great nation, was a disappointment. I could hardly dispute the images. She was a fine photographer, and while the prints I was shown lacked the quality one might have desired, the photographer was clearly one skilled in her art. That for me, was not the issue. I was later to discover that it was not the issue for this remarkable photographer either.

The images Dayanita produced for Positive Lives were breathtaking. The exquisite composition and her sense of moment were the tactile elements that made her images stunning, but more persuasive was the humanity in her photographs. The tender relationships, the joy, the shared pain, the sense of belonging that she was able to nurture and portray. It was then that the trouble started, a trouble that I am glad I came across. We had meticulously gone through the issues of representing people with HIV/AIDS. They risks people faced due to stigma. The physical dangers the display of the images might lead to. Dayanita’s concern for the people she had photographed meant she had to protect them all the way. It was frustrating for me as a curator. To find pictures which were sublime in their construction, to be left behind, because the photographer felt there was too great a risk of repercussion. Too great a threat, of perhaps things going wrong. We put together a great show, but I knew, photographically it could have been much greater. I also knew we had done the right thing. Dayanita remembered too well, how vulnerable one could be facing a camera.

I look back to the stroll through her flat in Delhi, the photographs taken by her mother, juxtaposed with her own. She had been questioning her own work for some time. Questioning her ‘success’ at producing images that regurgitated the “India” the west already knew. She chose to become a mirror to herself, and in that process begin a journey that would create a window to an everyday world. An everydayness that other photographers had shunned. Dayanita and her camera merged into one. She became the fly on the wall, the confidant, the muse. the critic. Before sub-continental literature had made its indelible mark, Dayanita was writing visual novels about middle class India. The glitzy, private, solemn, contradictory, celebratory world of the India today.

She harnessed photography’s unique ability to record detail, its penchant for capturing the fleeting. Its ability to make time stand still. She made the ordinary, special, and the special, ordinary. She also made an important shift within the profession. Recognising that the medium had shifted from the Life Magazine visual spectacles, aware that the spaces for visual journalism had shifted, Dayanita, took on the spaces that other photographers had feared to tread. Her venture into museums and galleries, her indisputable presence as an artist, has challenged the traditionalists in the field of art, who had been unable to grasp the magic of this new medium. Her presence while imposing is also path breaking. A new generation of photographers will wake up to this wider canvas. Some will take it upon themselves to explore this new space. And the ripples will spread. Dayanita meanwhile will continue to nurture the vulnerable. Through the cracks of her mirror she will take us to the other side.

SHAHIDUL ALAM

Global Voices Online » Bangladesh, India: Photos On Positive Lives | December 6, 2008

Dream Villa © Dayanita Singh

Selected for
Masterclass, World Press
Photo, Amsterdam
SOHRAB HURA

“Untitled” from the series, “Life is Elsewhere” © Sohrab Hura

“Wooden Horse, Pratima Art Studio” from the series, “Portraits of Emptiness”
© Suruchi Dumpawar

The India Habitat Centre
Photography Fellowship 2009
SURUCHI DUMPAWAR

“Doctor”, from the series, “Variety Entertainment” © Nandini Mutthiah

The Tierney Fellowship

The Tierney Fellowship was created in 2003 by The Tierney Family Foundation (New York) to support emerging photographers. The Foundation works with partners in different countries to access artists around the globe in a democratic manner. India was included for the first time in 2008 through their initial partner organisation, Fotomedia. From 2009, NID has been added to the India programme.



2008
NANDINI
MUTHIAH/
FOTOMEDIA

“Untitled”, from the series, “Indian Jewish Identity”
Kochi, 2009 © Rahul SR

2009
RAHUL SR/
NATIONAL
INSTITUTE OF
DESIGN



© Ashish Avikunthak

P.S. The Droit De Suite Does Exist in India

Lawrence Liang

sold for a lot of money, they rarely get a share of this. Thus even as Tyeb Mehta broke all records for the amount paid for his painting, in an interview to the Sunday Tribune, he complained about India not having a law which entitled him to a percentage of the proceeds arising out of a resale of his work.

Following the example of Mehta, artists across India have been demanding that the principle of Droit De Suite be incorporated into Indian copyright law. It will come as a relief, but also perhaps a bit embarrassing for artists to learn that the principle has indeed been a part of Indian law for close to fifteen years now. Hidden away within the intricate net of the copyright act, this provision has rarely been noticed and seldom used, it is perhaps time for us to spread the good news around.

And good news it certainly is, because Droit De Suite or the right to a share in resale is a principle that was designed to protect the long term interests of the artist. The principle emerged after World War 2 to benefit the widows of artists who were died in the war. The rationale for the provision is rather straight forward: Artists who have sold their works for a small sum of money should benefit from subsequent sales which may fetch a much higher sum of money. It is argued that in the long run this is an equitable principle which provide further incentive for creativity. It seems perfectly rational that unlike other works in which the buyer makes incremental changes, in the case of a work of art, it is the same work in which greater value accrues. There are some reservations about the droit de suite with people arguing that the principle acts as a disincentive for further sales. This is a predictable argument, given that we live in a world where collectors and art dealers are always far richer than artists. The only bad news is that the provision is not applicable for photos and it is time for photographers to fight for the inclusion of photography in the Indian Copyright Act.

Droit De Suite is recognized in Art. 14 of the Berne Convention to which India is a signatory, and was incorporated into the Indian Copyright Act on the 10th of May, 1995. In a rather modestly numbered provision (coming after the mighty Sections. 51 and 52 of the Act), Droit de Suite is incorporated in Sec. 53A and states the following:

In the case of resale for a price exceeding ten thousand rupees, of the original copy of a painting, sculpture or drawing, or of the original manuscript of a literary or dramatic work or musical work, the author of such work if he was the first owner of rights under section 17 or his legal heirs shall, notwithstanding any assignment of copyright in such work, have a right to share in the resale price of such original copy or manuscript in accordance with the provisions of this section:

The provision says that the share shall not exceed ten percent of the resale price, and also provides for the Copyright Board to fix different shares for different classes of work. It is unfortunate that the Copyright Board is yet to fix the percentage for different classes of works.

It is important to note that the section is only applicable where the artist was the original owner of the work. In other words, it will not be applicable to works that have been specifically commissioned. It is also clear that the intention of the section is for the right to be inalienable since it survives even if the work has been assigned. In that sense it is akin to the moral rights of an author or the special rights (right to be identified and right against distortion of the work), which cannot be alienated by a contract.

It is intriguing that the law makers chose to leave photographers out of this right, and photographers would do well to campaign for their inclusion in this provision, while artists who have been lucky to be included would do well to start using the privilege granted to them.

Guru Dutt's masterpiece Pyaasa ends with a haunting image of the paupered poet Vijay returning to a ceremony felicitating his achievements even as everyone believed him to be dead. It is said that the inspiration for Pyaasa came from two lines of a poem "Seven Cities claimed Homer dead, through which the living Homer begged". It is an accepted fact that new artists and photographers rarely make a lot of money through the sale of their work, and by the time they become famous and their work is

Over the last thirty years, Mr. Ebrahim Alkazi, Chairman, of the Alkazi Foundation for the Arts has amassed a private collection of photographs known as the Alkazi Collection of Photography (www.acparchives.com), an archive of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century photographic prints from South Asia. The care and concern with which this has been done expresses the passion and dedication of the collector in trying to piece a trajectory of practice, namely art practice in India initiated and mobilised in multitudinous ways by the birth of the camera. These images are not merely tools or modes for awakening our sensibilities. They are real remnants that allow the public access to a world of cultural exchange, often before the birth of many countries as independent nations.

The core of the Collection comprises works in the form of photographic albums, single prints, paper negatives and glass plate negatives from India, Burma, Ceylon, Nepal, Afghanistan and Tibet. Almost every region with a history touched by the British Raj is represented. These vintage prints document sociopolitical life in the subcontinent, through the interdisciplinary

THE ALKAZI COLLECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Rahaab Allana

fields of history, architecture, anthropology, topography and archaeology, beginning from the 1840s and leading up to the rise of modern India and the Independence Movement of 1947. The Collection is particularly strong in the areas of archaeology, architectural history, the urban development of colonial cities, military studies, Princely India and ethnographic portraits of the people of South Asia, as well as landscapes and topographical views. This broad categories of images allows us to understand the cross cultural networks at play in South Asia, through imperial, commercial, social and cultural means. We may then ponder the question, how do collections hold up a mirror to popular identity of nations created abroad by the vast circulation of images.

Over the past few years, the ACP is being catalogued, documented and researched by curators, historians and teams of scholars. The material is now being made available to the academic community and the general public through a series of publications, accompanied by exhibitions and seminars. Each volume, under the editorship of a specialist in the field, examines a particular region or topic represented in the archive, encouraging cross-disciplinary approaches and interpretations. The Collection of 19th Century material is currently housed in The Alkazi Foundation for the Arts, a registered charitable trust based in New Delhi. Forthcoming title later this year includes: The Waterhouse Albums: Central Indian Provinces edited by John Falconer.





Didi House Diffuser



The Photogrammata of Lazlo Moholy-Nagy

Hans Varghese Mathews, Bangalore 2009

The photographic experiments of the modernists are seen as curiosities, usually, beside their painting and sculpture and architecture: but one wonders if historians will not come to think them the more revealing remnants, actually, of what Walter Benjamin famously called the Age of Mechanical

Reproduction. How the image pervades daily life now is what tempts one to think they will: for only through the agency of the photograph could the image have come to contain quotidian awareness, almost, as it now seems to.

I am assuming that the historiography of art remains an intellectual discipline, of course, and does not become a sort of scrivener – subsisting in identificatory routines that pigeons might be trained to better execute, as the philosopher and critic Arthur Danto suggested once, in an essay titled *Animals as Art Historians* – requiring no more of its future adepts than a ready eye and an appetite for ‘intimate biography’.

The seeming replication of the visible world in the photograph may be termed mechanical, when that is set beside the manual rendering of appearance that painting was bound by at the inception of photography: and Benjamin’s Age may be thought to have begun with the daguerrotype, which reproduced appearances with a fidelity that challenged the naturalism – which is more than a mode of illusion, merely – that was then regnant in painting. The fact of challenge is worth noting: and photography would not have had the consequences it had for painting, and for pictorial representation generally, if the norms of European painting hadn’t been what they were in the middle of the 19th century. The Age of Mechanical Reproduction began to end, it appears, with the advent of the digital computer: because the simulation of appearances through the computer should become, as its uses grow, as much a daily fact as their photographic reproduction. Putting things so assumes that the digital simulation of appearance differs from its mechanical reproduction in the relevant way: I am supposing now that the former process involves human agency in some markedly other way than the latter does; and that may not be as obviously the case as it seems.

But even if the age of the photograph is passing, or past, photography and its ancillary *techné* must have long since done their work of shaping both how human beings see and how they produce images.

Those who are persuaded that how we see is a matter of physiology, only, will balk at the technology of imaging being assigned a constitutive role in the process: and the circumstance that the patterns of a socially achieved perception may not be commensurable with such regularities as our neural apparatus exhibits will very likely deter them as little as it would a confirmed *physicalist* – as those philosophers call themselves, who suppose that the terms of the natural sciences suffice to construe the human world. I can only hope that such readers are able to entertain, momentarily at least, a contrary supposition.

One way to get a sense of how the photograph may have done its shaping work is to consider early uses of the medium that had claimed for themselves the status of art: and those experiments of Moholy-Nagy’s which he called ‘photograms’ provide almost egregious examples now. These were produced by exposing raw film to a source of light, after having interposed some object or other between the two: with the object always much nearer the film than the light presumably. The results may be thought a species of shadow: only far more permanent. But to see them only thus, as samples of *materialized shadow* say, is to concede that such visual differences as may obtain between individual photograms – or between them and everyday shadows – is of no moment to what they significantly are. We cannot recapture just so the visual charge they must have had for Moholy-Nagy and his contemporaries: which the suggestiveness of the coinage “photogram” would in some way have induced, one thinks. But it seems almost impossible to now reconstruct how verbal suggestion might have then inflected visual attention; and their muteness before us seems an index, however oblique, to the reshaping of perception that photography has effected.

One is tempted, all the same, to wonder if Moholy-Nagy’s photograms do not in their way anticipate, as Duchamp’s famous urinal is supposed to, the putting of that fatal question which brings to its appointed end the historical development of art. Or so Danto hypothesized: and *what is the difference*, this climactic question asks, *between a work of art and something that isn’t one, when there is no interesting perceptual difference between the two?* One expects that a *complete aesthetic entropy* would attend the making of art after just such an ending: and the current condition of the anglophone artworld at least – which he characterised thus – seems to bear Danto out.

I feel bound, however, to provide some more direct example: and a concoction of Moholgy-Nagy’s which seems to show an infant hanging from electric wires should serve me well enough. What will snag our eyes here, I am sure, is the *kaccha* quality

portfolio

“Each of these photographs is constructed around a frame within it.

(They could even be photographs of frames.)

The frames do not contain the event.

They illuminate it, reflect it, observe it, and watch it pass.”



Flagchrist



Maharashtrtv

PRIYA SEN

of the image: the baby's hands do not close around the wires as they should. They could be made to clench 'naturally' easily enough now, using some common image-processing program like Photoshop: and the ready availability of such technical means has very likely led our eyes to expect a verisimilitude that may not have mattered much to the intended beholders of this image. The lack of finish our eyes find may, in fact, obscure the sort of finish this image did once have: Moholy-Nagy was a more than able graphic designer, and we mustn't suppose that he would have exhibited anything which lacked finish in his eyes. A surer index, then, to how photography and its attendant *techné* have reshaped perception is the roughness that modernist experiments upon the photograph will now seem to display: which, to note it again, probably obscures the kind of finish they did possess for their intended beholders. I shall advert again to these claims, at the end of this essay, with what I hope will be a telling example.

Part 2 will appear in the next issue

ANNU MATTHEW

The Virtual Immigrant
Tasveer touring show
2009



Sushma © Annu Matthew



Man on Bed © Bharat Sikka



BHARAT SIKKA

'The Road to Salvador do Mundo'
Gallery Nature Morte
New Delhi
October 24th - November 28th 2009

Tea time and the popularly known 'chai gate' at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad serves as the most ideal for a conversation about the new Photography course conceived and designed by Dr. Deepak John Matthew.

Our conversation begins with his vision of photography education in India which is pioneering in the country. "A program that recognizes photography as a medium of art expression and delves deeper into an academic inquiry was completely lacking in the country. The social nature of Photography in the country has evolved since its advent but nothing that yet leads us into a research based approach to study its nature, exists. The Photographic practice itself needs to go through an evolution" and Deepak believes that an academic institution like National Institute of Design can deliver a formal training geared towards such goals. I ask him to explain the role of design and "Design", he says, "is omnipresent and not at all a fancy term, the way most people like to reckon with it. Photography Design (as the course is called) is the construction of a frame or making of a picture based on the same principles that run through any design process". Perhaps it is the rhythm, contrast, harmony and balance that are most crucial when complemented with the thought in making a photograph.

NID has collaborated with the University for the Creative Arts at Farnham in UK to award a dual

by Mridul Batra

degree program. The Program was first launched in 2008 as one year certificate course and with two successful runs, has been validated for a two year Post graduate diploma in Photography Design starting in June 2010 along with a Master in Fine Arts dual degree award from UCA. For course development, the UK Research and Educational Initiative in India has awarded a grant of 50,000 GBP. Deepak adds that the Tierney Foundation in New York has also awarded a fellowship to one of the students (Rahul S.R.) this year for his work on Jewish Identity in India.

Dr. Deepak John Mathew, Coordinator, Photography Design and Visiting Faculty, Sunil Gupta with the first batch of photography students at NID



"Most of our students work is an intervention into the already existing and photographically captured spaces and represents a different visual style, something that contemporary photography relates to, and is a significant departure from the documentary style photography". Deepak holds the strong belief that the course is offering a new conceptual language that is thoughtful, conceptually innovative and aesthetically provocative. It promises to define Indian photography - to be viewed at the world stage as one coherent language.

FACTFILE

The new session starts June of every year based on admission notification at www.nid.edu. Entry is through a written test commonly held by NID every year followed by portfolio evaluation, studio test and personal interview with a final selection of 10-15 students. Tuition fee is as per NID norms.

This is a course, underpinned by a theoretical framework with instruction in research methodology and professional practice. It demands a high level of commitment to independent productive activity. The taught courses in the past have included modules on composition, lighting design, art history, science and liberal arts (semiotics, narrative theory and communication studies), fine art photography etc. Students can access NID dark room and printing facilities along with large format and medium format equipment. NID is well equipped with professional lights studio and latest iMacs for the workspace. Students can experiment at the metal, wood, ceramic and paint workshops.

In Focus:

Industrial Pollution, India

SRINIVAS KURUGANTI

Ankleshwar in the state of Gujarat and Patancheru in the Southern state of Andhra Pradesh are home to two of the largest Industrial estates in Asia. Over 5000 factories in these provinces produce much of the world's supply of generic drugs, pesticides and dyes. Many of the smaller scale industries do not treat their waste. Untreated effluents seep into the groundwater with the result that the productivity of affected farmland is reduced. The air is thick with the smell of pesticides and pharmaceutical by-products making it hard to breathe.

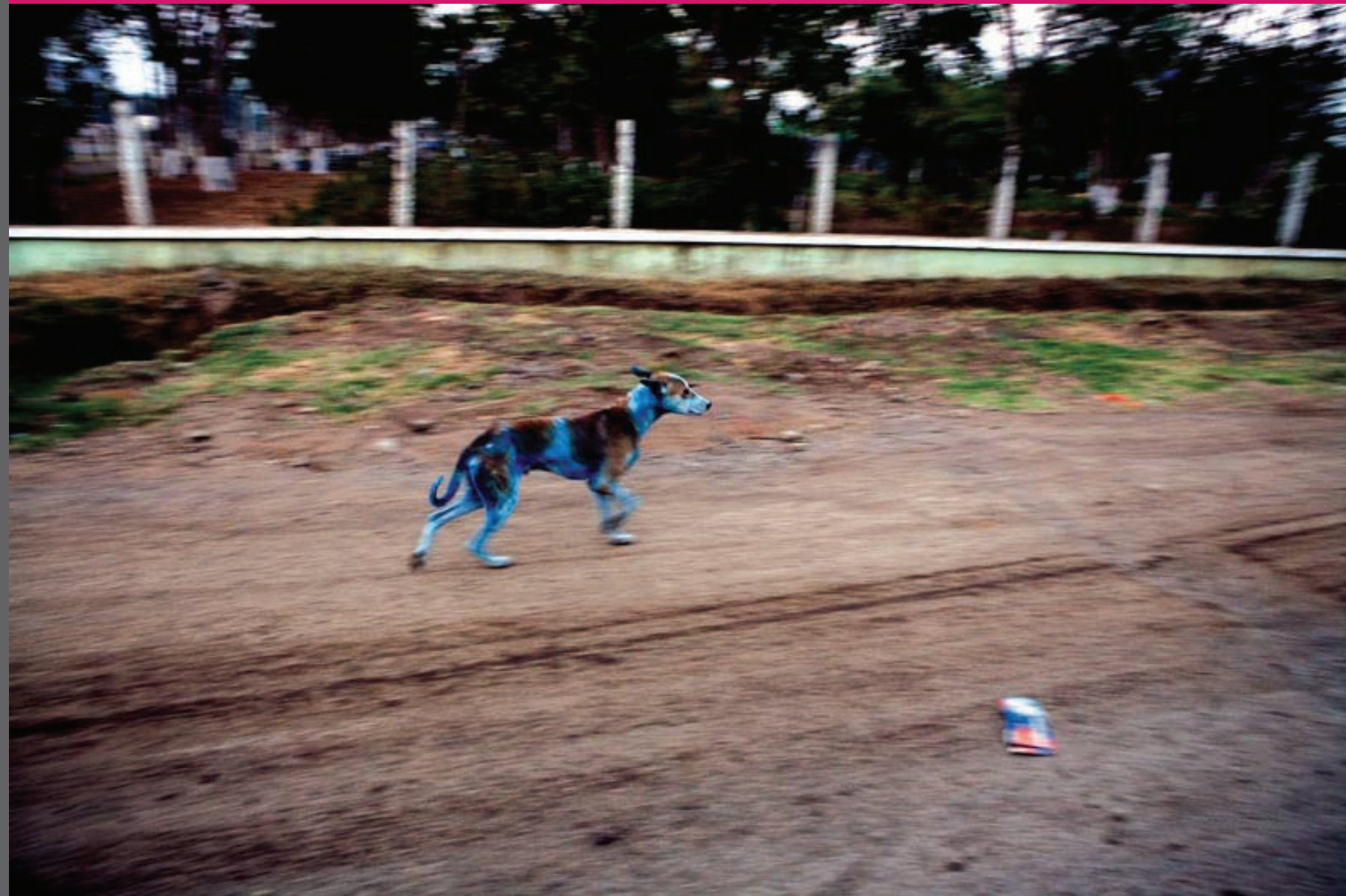
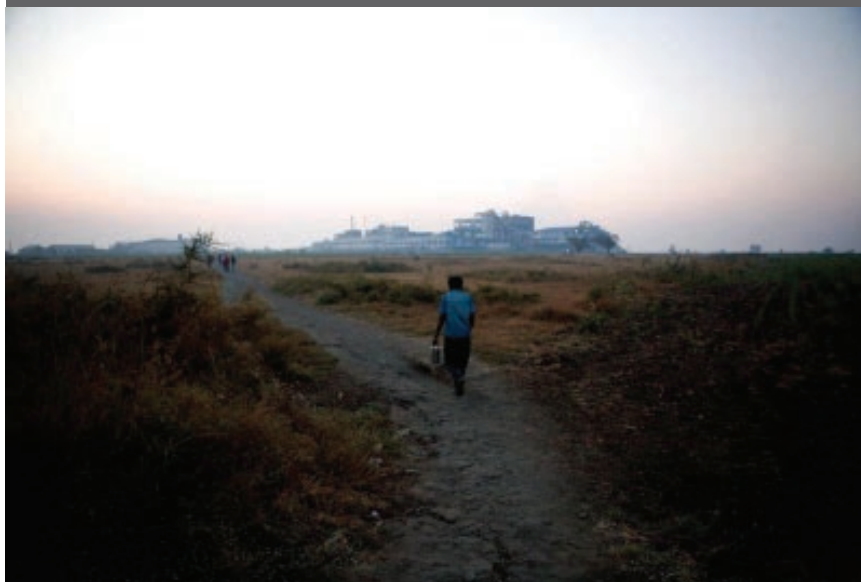
The extremely high levels of pharmaceuticals in waterways used by the local population and flowing into major rivers, have caused worldwide concern that this is creating conditions that could lead to the proliferation of drug resistant bacteria in the future as well as major environmental consequences.

In 2001 I began a series of projects that look at the effects of India's rapid industrial growth on working communities and their environments. I have photographed the coal mining districts of Dhanbad and the ship breaking yards of Mumbai. In 2006 I began documenting the industrial towns of Ankleshwar in the state of Gujarat and Patancheru in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

This ongoing project focuses on how local communities are affected by largely unregulated industrial expansion and in particular the environmental pollution it creates.



This project looks at the effect of industrial pollution on the health of local communities in the Patancheru district of Andhra Pradesh and Ankleshwar, Gujarat where over 3000 chemical, pharmaceutical and dye factories release an alarming level of toxic waste into air, ground water and agricultural land.



Info

Camerawork Delhi is supported by Pro Helvetia – Swiss Arts Council which initiates, supports and presents projects that reflect the multicultural character of Switzerland and South Asia."

swiss arts council

prohelvetia

Design Vivek Sahni Design © 2009 • www.viveksahnidesign.com

Co-editors Gauri Gill, Sunil Gupta & Radhika Singh

Contact Us

gauri.gill@gmail.com • sunilgupta@mac.com
radhika@fotomedia.in

The Seagull Foundation for the Arts, Kolkata presents a new initiative to promote young artists in all fields of art: The Seagull Open House.

If you are an artist yourself—making films, writing plays, doing theatre, dabbling in visual arts, performing music or dance—and would like to showcase your talent, here is your opportunity. Two Saturdays a month, Seagull Arts and Media Resource Centre is yours. Come exhibit your art. Bring your friends and admirers. And we will bring our audience. bishan@choicemakers.org

PRASHANT PANJIAR

Pan India, A Shared Habitat.
Tasveer, travelling show,
2009

Dhanshiri and Nikita, daughters of Suresh Lonkar, the traditional 'Nagada' drum player of the Tulsibagh Temple, sit in the Nagadakhana (drum-house) which also serves as the living room of their home. The room overlooks the courtyard of this ancient temple. Lonkar plays his drums at regular intervals from an open window. He believes he is the last in the line of hereditary Nagada players in the city.

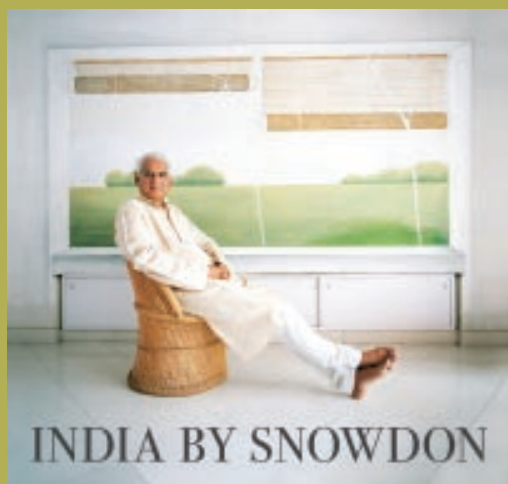


VIVEK SAHNI DESIGN

INDIA BY SNOWDON

An exhibition of photographs by Lord Snowdon

Photoink, New Delhi
December 12, 2009 – January 30, 2010
11 am – 7 pm

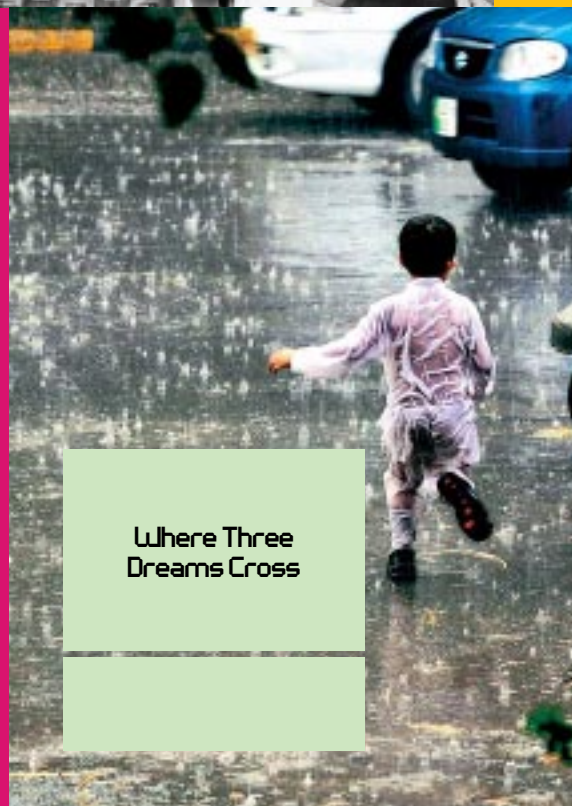


WHERE THREE DREAMS CROSS:

150 Years of Photography from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh

Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK
21 January–11 April 2010

Fotomuseum, Winterthur, Switzerland
12 June–22 August 2010



Loneliness in your dreams © Ariel Ruiz i Altaba

Shows



MINIMAL LANDSCAPES

An exhibition of photographs by Ariel Ruiz i Altaba

Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre
January 8 — 18, 2010