

Shows

Delhi

Nature Morte
Dayanita Singh
ends 20th Jan 2007

Mumbai

J. Nicholson Gallery, NCPA
"Just by the Way—Rocks, Clouds, Nudes"
Raghu Rai
January 9—17th, 2007
Bombay Art Gallery
Sunil Gupta
February 12—28th, 2007



Nude VII © Raghu Rai, 1985

Info

We are an independent group of individuals who are interested in the photograph, its history and potential future development. We are photographers, curators, editors, collectors, students and others interested in establishing a discourse around the photographic print. We are also interested in providing maximum exposure and access to the medium as well as what happens to the archival legacy of photography in India.

This first issue of the quarterly Newsletter was organised by:

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Pooja Sood/Khoj (Printing & Distribution)

To contribute to March 2007 and future issues, please email suggestions for features and interviews, press information, images and text to Gauri, Radhika or Sunil at the email addresses above.

We would like to thank everybody who contributed so freely of their valuable time and resources.



Travelling Peace Women Photography exhibit

In 2005, an historic nomination was made to the Nobel Peace Prize Committee. It was a collective nomination of 1000 women working in different fields for peace and social justice. They came from over 150 countries, and diverse backgrounds. The nomination to the Nobel Committee formed the heart of a campaign to make women's work visible, recognized and supported.

The exhibition has 500 A5 size cards with the faces of the women activists on one side, and a quote and short profile text on the other side. These cards include 157 women from South Asia and some from other parts of the world. There is also a display of photographs taken by photographer Gauri Gill who travelled all over India to take the nominees pictures. If you would like to show the exhibit in your school or college please contact Retika at contact@sangatsouthasia.com.

In India, it was first shown at the Chinmaya Mission, New Delhi on September 21st 2006, and has since travelled to the American Embassy School (see above), as well as to Manipur University, Imphal to show solidarity and connect Sharmila's struggle for justice with the global struggle for peace and justice.

Grants

Grants are available from the following:

1. <http://www.sarai.net/> (Independent Fellowships and Student Stipend Fellowships)
2. http://www.indiahabitat.org/vag/ihc-fellowship-photography-award/ihc_fellowship_photography-criteria.htm
3. <http://www.majlisbombay.org/culture-fellowship.htm>
4. <http://www.friezeartfair.com/cartieraward/>



Prabheet Singh
Photo Student, Class IX
Bluebells International School, Delhi

camerawork delhi

December 2006
Vol I, No I

"The print is not the object, the object is the emotion the print gives you" — Dorothea Lange



Shahid Datawalla Untitled 2004

“Dress Circle” Shahid Datawala

FOSS-GANDI, Mumbai

15 to 23 November 2006

Born in Calcutta in 1974, Shahid Datawala moved to Delhi in 1990 where he first started to experiment with photography using a technique of scratching negatives. Self taught in several different media, he is drawn to photographing places or things that have been marked by the passing of time.

A true purist in the sense that he doesn't believe in using artificial lighting or modifying a space to help his composition, Shahid inherently applies Henri Cartier-Bresson's

“decisive moment” theory.

“Discovering spaces within spaces is something in which I am particularly interested. I especially focus upon people's interaction with and within these spaces. This exploration is in many situations an essentially intuitive process. Hoardings create an atmosphere. People interacting with hoardings create a story.”

In the two series shown here, the theme of cinema is explored in black and white, inside and outside, through shadow and light, passive and interactive, empty or populated by people and ghosts.

(See cover image)



Chobimela 2006 Dhaka, Bangladesh <http://www.chobimela.com/>

Pablo Bartholomew

What is it about a Festival of Photography in Bangladesh that is so important and exciting?

For a start, that a small country, with little or meagre resources can put up a photo festival. Chobimela is definitely cash strapped and cries for more funds to have better infrastructure and organisation.

And that it would have been infinitely better organised had the myriad and mired political situations popped up a few weeks earlier, with a caretaker government. This meant a change of people in key positions that further compounded, with battle lines drawn, the situation between the two main parties, throwing the country into political turmoil, with bandhs and street demonstrations that ended in clashes and violence.

But that is exactly what made it even more exhilarating - the uncertainty of it all. The bandh, called by the opposition parties, created a ghost town with virtually no traffic on the roads. The street demonstrations ended in clashes, violence and deaths, during the first week of the festival.

Then there was the ad hoc manner in which the Chobimela unfolded. The inauguration at the National Museum was held without the organisers having official permission to use the premises. The opening night party, held on a riverboat, we thought would last only a few hours. But it was ambushed after it set sail, and we could return only the next morning.

Every photo festival has exhibitions, portfolio reviews, workshops, slide & movie projections, and dinners leading to networking and contact building. But Chobimela added a special input wherein photographers showed and talked about their body of work, from a very intimate and personal point of view. The dialogue between the Bangladeshi photographers and us, the visitors, was emotional and raw. And raw it should remain.

I have to thank Shahidul Alam for strapping together this very intimate and emotional



“What are You?”

TEJAL SHAH

Mirchandani + Steinruecke, Mumbai

September 8 – 30, 2006

Central to this exhibition is Shah's exploration of the pliable language of gender, manipulated in a physical, concrete manner not only by her chosen subjects — members of the hijra community — but also through the media employed. Moving casually between staged performances, music video, documentary and appropriation, ‘What are You?’ creates a direct relationship to her subjects' experience of their own gender.



RAQS Media Collective
From ‘Notational Photography’
<http://blog.raqsmediacollective.net>



Shalini Saran, India International Centre, Delhi
1—9 December 2006



Atul Bhalla, “the piao at fatehpuri”
‘Dilli dur Ast’ Khoj Residency Delhi
28 March— 28 April 2006



q and a with ravi agarwal (gauri gill)

What is your show ‘Alien Waters’ about?

‘Alien Waters’ is about my search for my self and my personal ecology, in the increasingly changing city which the state of the river represents. It was produced between 2004 and 2006.

How did you decide it was time to show, and why did you pick this particular space? Will the people in the photographs get to see it?

It was not conceived as work, but evolved slowly. After doing the self-portrait, I felt I had nothing left to explore or say, and wanted to share it. The IIC gallery offered me space, and I agreed. It is a non-commercial space. There are very few ‘people’ in the photographs and texts, but in a way all of ‘us’ are in there somewhere. It is not about ‘they’ but about I and we, collectively as well. So I think everyone should see it. Showing in public non-gallery spaces is a physical and organizational challenge in Delhi for an individual. Maybe in the future I will. There is also a book called “Immersion. Emergence.” in English, this is being translated into Hindi. That will circulate, I hope.

You have been in documenta11, and that was a year in which the curator picked people that weren’t necessarily artists but also activists or intellectuals making local interventions. Since then you seem to be more comfortable occupying the artist space, since you are showing in galleries all over the world. Where do you situate yourself, and how do you see your work making an impact here?

I think documenta11 also picked artists as activists and intellectuals, and not separately. For me these are false categories. Art practice has to be interwoven with our social and spiritual lives. Only art markets use such differences. I have been photographing since I was 13, and have been showing for a long time before documenta11. My work has been personal and social. The book I did on labour (“Down and Out”, Oxford University Press, 2000) was sold in India and all over the world, but all my work has been local, like any work has to be. The idea of impact through an art practice for me is to raise a feeling or idea to a larger social level. We all try in our little ways, but who is to say what difference we make? We should not stop because of that.



“Equal Dreams: Portraits of Indians” Anay Mann Curated by Devika Daulet-Singh/Photoink

35 life size portraits of Indians. Across disparate social, economic and geographical boundaries. Each photographed in exactly the same way. Sitting on the same chair for a formal portrait. The ‘chair’ functions as a great equalizer between the various people photographed, thus becoming both symbolic and revolutionary. Each image in Equal Dreams marries two traditions of photography – portraiture and landscape in an effort to create multiple narratives within the image. Each portrait is an empowering tale of ordinary people and the landscape they inhabit. The city and its hinterland become sites to explore the great changes and paradoxes facing India today.

You run an NGO, ‘Toxics Link’ full-time. How do you make time for photography, and how do the two relate?

I do not know, honestly. It is like traversing the social and the personal, the outer and the inner. These two are separate, but they deeply interface and inform each other. My time is spent between the two activities as the moment decides. There is separation, and yet none. It is interwoven yet different. From street photography to self-performance...how has the journey evolved? Actually for me the self is there in the street work as well as in the more obvious ‘self performance.’ It is a form, not an ‘object.’ I do and will use that mode which comes to me and I never hesitate to adopt or adapt anything if I feel that is what I need to do. We need to see, observe, feel, react and create. That is all. Everything else is material reality and associated categories emerging from the limits of our individual skills and practices. I see boundaries as a discipline but not as a limitation. We need them to live, but also we need to cross them and recreate them all the time. The human canvas is infinite.

Future plans?

No plans. Just continuing involvement and being in life the way I know and continue to learn

Photographing India: Journeys with Raja Deen Dayal and Henri Cartier-Bresson

Satish Sharma

Juxtaposed in different rooms in the IIC Annexe, the exhibitions become a great chance to explore different visions of photography in India and to look at important issues that are raised- about photographs as Historical Documents and photographs as Art

The photographers were legends in their lifetimes- one Indian and the other French. Both men had photographed India and, not surprisingly, saw two different Indias - but with visions that they seem to have exchanged across their cultures.

Deen Dayal, in his Portrait Studios and in his documentation of Indian monuments and people, continued to work in a largely colonial mode. It was the Frenchman, Henri Cartier Bresson who tried to bring a certain Asian sensibility to his work. Influenced by Zen, his photographs are about photography as Zen. The dhyan of their ‘decisive moment’, was not just about a peak moment but also about the aesthetics of a split second 35mm Leica frame which brought a pictorial order to the chaos of the Indian street.

Their gaze remains western, though. Deen Dayal’s “Indian” eyes and the Frenchman’s focus on the Indian street remains the gaze of outsiders. Deen Dayal, an Indian ‘insider’, adopted and worked within the form and format of his colonial contemporaries. And Bresson, despite his apparent empathy with India and sensitivity to Asian culture, remained an outsider seeing history in the making, but framing ‘decisive moments’ that are more about the formalist aesthetics of the photographic frame than about a decisive social and historical document.

Presented as digital reproductions, these exhibitions seem to foreground the photographs as historical documents, as preservers of documentary information - as archaeology of our fast changing times. This is not on Photography as Art - despite the original collections being archived in what is called the Indira Gandhi Centre for the Arts.

Presenting the work as Art would have meant displaying the originals and framing them to show the signature black border Bresson uses to show that he prints the full 35mm frame and that the photograph for him is made when it is shot and not in the darkroom

The colonial and the courtly, decisively documentary, vision of Deen Dayal is countered by the street (but hardly subaltern) view of Bresson who sees the street and its signs but, unable to read the subtext, he reduces the frame to a matter of found Surrealist Art.

In the end, one is a little disappointed. The works are digital duplicates that don’t do justice to the tonal perfection and patina of 19th century prints or to the neutral greyscale that Bresson uses for his work. It may be that we are being weaned away from the idea of the original and being prepared to accept a world and a time where the original will be kept out of sight and all we will experience will be the digital duplicate.

My Queer Camera Mario D’Penha



Using the camera to think through the multiple layers and lenses of my sexuality has been a fantastically exploratory experience for me. For the last five months, I have been part of a workshop facilitated by Sunil Gupta on the relationship between the camera and queer-ness. My camera has been wonderful because it has helped negotiate a distance between me and the issues I’ve had with my body, my relationships, my desire, my sense of belonging, and my sexuality, laying all of these bare to a particular kind of scrutiny that would have been possible only through their visualization. Ironically, and perhaps predictably however, that very same visualization also brought me into a closer and more understanding relationship with myself.

In one of the early series of photographs that I created for the workshop, I looked at popular cultural depictions of relationships, from idols of Radha and Krishna at a local restaurant, to a heterosexual married couple’s letterbox that carried both names, to advertisements offering discounts to married couples, and contrasted them to pages from a diary that I had been keeping for the first time in my life which talked about my lack of and longing for a relationship, particularly with a beautiful Valencian man whom I had met. Taking the cloak off that disaster of a non-relationship, and analyzing it through the language of the visual image, not only helped in bringing closure to that period in my life, but also made me understand the importance we all accord to the pleasure and pain of being with someone.

Later, I went on to create nude images of myself, my defiant naked body challenging and confronting the gaze of the camera. In the pictures I nurtured an insubordinate, almost rebellious glance back at the lens, but this, I knew was the only response that an otherwise vulnerable body, with a horrifyingly appalling body image, could muster up when gazing back at the camera. Fortunately however, the nude images were the easiest to create, and to put it very crudely, once done and displayed, there was little to separate me from the rest of the world. That process did actually aid my confidence and increased my comfort with my own body, something that would have been very difficult otherwise, and it for this reason that I am thankful.



Mumbai © Rafil Kroll-Zaidi 2004