



# an eyepiece to the visual arts



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INDIA HABITAT CENTRE

RESONANCES

## Street Life: "I believed there was joy for everyone in the world"

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ECHO

### Echoes

Greetings from the Visual Arts Gallery. 2005 has been a busy year for us and 2006 appears to be even more so. For many of you who are not aware of our Photography Award, I would like to share that the Visual Arts Gallery has been supporting photography in a significant but quiet way. We nurture a young photographer every year through this award in an effort to help them develop their own personal journey and take the art forward.

Roland Barthes once pointed out that the nineteenth century gave us both history and photography. Today, photography continues to transform the ways in which one records, interprets and interacts with the world. It gives us the unearned sense of understanding things, past and present, having both the potential to move us emotionally and also the possibility of holding us at a distance through aestheticising images.

Like Cartier Bresson puts it, "the wonder of photography is to capture a slice straight out of life..." In this edition of the 'I' we are simply celebrating the myriad nuances of photography.

Dr. Alka Pande  
Art Consultant and Curator



Street Life: "I believed there was joy for everyone in the world" Haran



"Today art is not about techniques but about language" Priyasri Patodia



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"When I have earned lots of money, I will show my childhood photograph to my mother ...and implore her to take me back" Tarun Chhabra



Reflections Sandeep Biswas

Exhibition Buzz Rakhi Chib



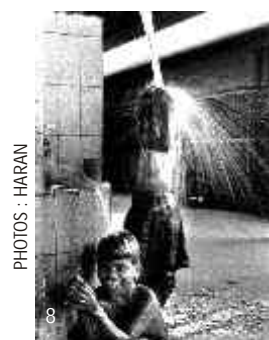
Contemporary issues about photographic theory and practice: In Conversation with? Bandeep Singh



I was eleven years old when I ran away from home. School and studies were never meant for me and the thought of being forced to study was unacceptable. With twenty rupees in my pocket and not a care in the world, I set off. Soon enough, I became a permanent resident of New Delhi Railway Station. Life between the fast tracks was challenging. One day I would be selling bottles of water to passengers, the next day I would carry their luggage. There were times when my spirit would be shaken by the cruel behaviour of coolies, policemen and anti-social elements. But the smiles on the faces of passengers and their excitement at the prospect of travel gave me hope. I believed there was joy for everyone in the world and I was determined to get my share.

I will never forget the day I was spotted by the Salaam Baalak Trust. They asked me if I wanted to study and I cringed at the thought. When they promised me food I thought it was worth taking a chance. If I didn't like the place, I would have a hearty meal and run away. After lunch and a refreshing bath at the Paharganj premises, I began planning my escape. But something inside my heart held me back and I decided to stay on for a while. Suddenly, my fortunes changed overnight. I was given regular meals, a place to stay and most importantly, an education. A class five student, I was put into class three, started enjoying my studies and looking forward to school!

Five years after I left home, I felt the need to go back and meet my family. A person from the Trust accompanied me. My



parents, who had given up all hope of finding me, were skeptical when they saw this slim, confident boy standing in front of them. They began quizzing me about my childhood, showed me pictures of relatives and finally realised that I was actually their



lived on the streets, through my photographs. It was a life I had known and led, a life that made me tough. A life that changed my inner personality and my outer perspective.

I like to take pictures of children who are left uncared for, who have hope in their eyes but no way out of the stark reality of poverty. Sometimes I am so shocked that I forget to shoot. I feel I am still a member of this family and want to work for them, not only as a photographer but as an inseparable part of their life.



I don't see the point in glorifying the poverty, dirt and sorrow of those living on the streets. I want to capture the vibrant colours of street life, the unanswered questions in the

eyes of street children, their zeal to live happily, their will to make a mark, their invincible hope of hearing good news and the happiness that each new morning brings.

Today, I am four-exhibitions-old. I have a job with the country's leading newspaper and the world is my playground. I want to be a photographer to depict the truth of life, which is still not recognized by society. It has been said the death is the truth of life but people do not accept it. I am not a mahatma who aims to change society. I am an ordinary human being who is trying to tell a story through pictures. Street Life is the first chapter in my story.

1. Haran, Playing Caramboard
2. Haran, Remembrance of old days
3. Haran, My second snaps
4. Haran, Thinking of...
5. Haran, My muddy feet
6. Haran, One Umbrella
7. Haran, The game of real life
8. Haran, A shower at the Railway Station

PHOTOS : HARAN

# "Today art is not about

Every expression of art becomes valuable when it goes beyond the implicit meaning, unusual and usual images that make you think or feel, images that come out of the artist's personal or unique expression; and despite the uniqueness can connect to many lives. Images which are of historic importance, capturing legends, images that depict common objects - re-arranged or intervened with, images which suddenly becoming meaningful when they are entitled. All this and more can be created using different tools of art. Photography is one special tool, which can create all this and more. But the final value given to it depends on several factors...

Photography was used for documentation, capturing events, celebrating occasions, preserving lifestyles, fashion, social, economic, cultural and architectural scenarios. Today it's being used as a medium for artistic expression. Whether in the form of photojournalism, fashion, Kitsch, digital painting or photo-realism, it is fast becoming a recognized and valuable form of art.

There is a constant intersection of art with technology in every era.

Though photography is not a new medium it has only recently started sharing the limelight with other forms of art. The demand and value of photographs has already reached a high in the west, where dedicated galleries solely showcase photographs as a medium of art and investment. This trend is spilling into India as well.

Art is a self-generating market, thus an investment in photographs when the prices are low, will yield good returns in the future. Naturally, investing in photographers who already have 'art value' and are being recognized by major auction houses and galleries is a more valuable investment.



Buying and selling photographs is becoming more organized.

Today there are copyrights legislatures and several other means of controlling editions. Like prints, there are limited editions of photographs. Established auction houses like Sotheby's and Christies have been auctioning photographs for a long time, abroad. Names like Marico Mori, Gabriel Orozco and others have been fetching prices, on par with the prices of paintings and sculptures. A Prince Print Sets Auction Record For Photography at Christies Auction November 09, 2005: Richard Price set a record for the most expensive photograph sold at an auction, it was bought for \$1,248,000.

India has been the inspiration for Ragu Rai, the Guru of Indian photography - his work sells for millions abroad. Akbar Padamsee experimented with portraits of nude women using photography as his preferred medium.

These are now valued at more than Rs 1,00,000, for an imperial size print. Baiju Parthan, Gulam Sheikh and others have been experimenting with digital images and their prices too are comparable to those of conventional paintings.

Photojournalism became a very powerful tool during the 80's and 90's.

News photographers captured the downfall of the Soviet Union, the end of apartheid, the AIDS plague, and the Gulf War. They brought the world closer and left indelible impressions on viewers. These were pictures that no painter or artist could have captured as effectively as those present there at that very moment. The destruction of Tsunami hit areas captured all the devastation and poignancy compelling people across the world's borders to contribute and help. Photographs can make and change impressions and intentions, and stay alive as a testimony to the times.

The impact of Kevin Carter's iconic image of a vulture stalking a starving Sudanese child, and others like it, have become possessions of high value for the media, photojournalists and historians alike - stark reminders of the destruction caused by nature and man himself.

## Images from Delhi, Jammu, Lahore, Kargil,



I consider my photography a tool that helps me identify the multi-cultural identities of a generation that has been separated from its original land and roots as part of the entire phenomenon of displacement.

As a photographer, I have been documenting and creating images from the regions where my grandparents and great grandparents always lived. North India's post independence history has been determined by the epochal, geographic partitioning of one country into two: India and Pakistan. The underlying theme in my work is to document people who have been displaced not out of their own choice, but due to various factors - political, social, war, genocide, geographical, in search of work or wealth. Some of it is forced displacement; some of it is out of choice. My grandparents were part of forced migration when they had to leave their home in Pakistan and move to India in search of a safe haven.



The plight of Kashmiri Pundits

Kashmiri Pundits have traditionally had a unique role to play in Indian culture and politics. They see themselves as repositories of traditional knowledge, the founders of the school of Kashmir Shaivism and the Indian theory of aesthetics. Politically, they are equally astute and have given India its most prominent post-independent prime ministers including Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi.

In the last fifteen years, following a wave of anti-Hindu propaganda unleashed by separatist Muslim organizations, thousands of Pundit families were forced to leave their homes in Kashmir and migrate to other parts of the country. The more affluent set up home in Delhi. But more than three lakh



# techniques but about language"

PRIYASRI POTADIA

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Fashion photographers sell not just the commodity; they sell attitudes and lifestyle, while becoming more and more creative, interactive, clever and painterly.

For the fashion photographer, Vikram Bawa, paintings are an interpretation of what the artist feels or sees, capturing a moment in its purest form... "I am always searching for something when I picture something or someone, I want to capture the pulse which moves the subject internally, whether it's an attitude or an emotion, I know that's what will move my viewer". His sensitive lens once depicted a gay couple; the genuine intimacy they shared touched his soul, since homosexuality still remains a lesser accepted expression of love. Though this life-size picture was pulled out from a show, he got thousands of letters, reiterating, that the image had moved many. "Through photography I can freeze time, I capture a moment that I cannot capture any other time"...Vikram believes that India is not yet showcasing photography as an art form because there is lack of funding for photographers; the tools and process are very expensive and there is a need to make people aware of its intrinsic and creative worth.

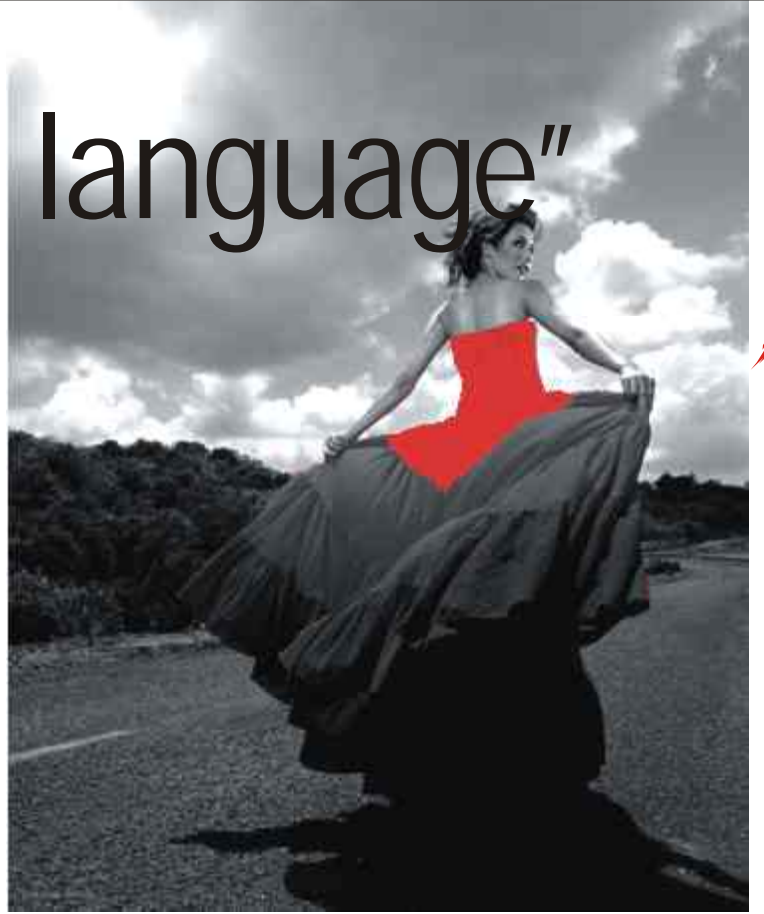
Fine Art photographers have given birth to a unique medium of art and expression, which is a contribution of our times.



Kitsch art has made art less savvy and more easily understood by the common man; a form that can be expressed very effectively through photography. Photographer Raksha Patel makes a living as a Fine Art Photographer in the US: "I don't differentiate myself from an artist who paints or sculpts, photography compliments my ability to express my creativity". She photographs random, mundane objects, which are generally taken for granted but look unique when highlighted. Her pictures of everyday rural lives in India are appreciated in a foreign market. She wants different parts of the world to understand each other better through her photographs. She wants people to accept things which are an integral part of urban civilization - posters, billboards, taxis, neon lights, movie posters, traffic jams etc, otherwise labeled clutter - by making them a fascinating and colorful part of the landscape. Many artists today, do not want to be slotted as serious, un-understood or too expensive; Raksha's frames are very simple, yet meaningful and kitschy at times.

Travel photographers are @ special tribe of artists. Without them we would be a deprived of exotic and mysterious places and people that live on earth and the exotic sights of other planets.

"I want to show the grandeur and images of the wonders of the world, which they (people) may never see if I don't show them through my pictures", says Prabhash Kejrival an emerging photographer. He says photographs play an important role in keeping spirituality and culture alive. It's still a mystery how once, while shooting pictures in St Paul's Cathedral in Kolkata, three years ago, he captured a shaft of bright light, which he believes is the image of a good spirit who lives in the church. "Photography is a medium of capturing things, which a man with limited intellect cannot see or capture, they surpass a human's imagination", explains Prabhash. He travels to places, which are seldom visited or documented in history books. He once photographed a 100-year-old Yogi, who lives and practices yoga in the bark of a tree. When it was published, many came to visit him, which boosted tourism and the economy of that region. He says photography creates awareness and



people begin to notice minute details of the world normally neglected by our busy minds... "Millions of mysteries and places are yet to be discovered. Somebody just needs to throw light."

Photography is a very versatile and powerful medium of expression, relatively an easy tool it requires less skill to express one's creativity. It's not just for a front-page popular culture or ordinary documentation, but is a new age language of expression. Your very own moments with your loved ones add that soulful character to your homes and workplaces. Our family home in Gujarat has large imperial size prints of pictures taken on holidays, celebrations and candid moments; these are very valuable and therapeutic when we look at them today. It makes me smile every time I look at my slim mother, dressed in lime green bell bottoms with Neetu Singh ringlets, Sharmila Tagore stretched eyeliner, and a plump me frowning next to her, frozen forever in time. It still gives me butterflies when I see the 5ft picture of Ricky and me in my room because he is not there anymore...so many reasons why every expression of art becomes valuable when it goes beyond the implicit meaning.

# t h e N o r t h : Muttan, Srinagar, North West Frontier

became refugees, forced to live in camps outside Jammu. A handful of Pundit families however refused to leave their homes and continue to live in the valley.

The women in this community have suffered the worst and most tragic consequences of this continuing violence. While hundreds became widowed at a young age, others have not been able to settle down in the refugee camps, pining to return to their old lives. The only silver lining is that the community gives tremendous importance to education. As a result, many of the younger generation of women have focused their energies on studying and are pursuing careers in teaching, medicine, law and other fields of human endeavor.

Traveling to Jammu and Kashmir, Lahore and the North West Frontier Provinces in Pakistan helped me understand my family roots. I learnt about their cultural traditions and also understood the political environment from which they came. Most of these places, have, in the last few years, witnessed great political upheaval. Close members of my family have fought in the three wars between India and Pakistan.

PHOTOS : KRITI ARORA



KRITI ARORA

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# "Retouching photographs and digital

TARUN KHIWAL

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**F**ashion photographer, Tarun Khiwal, winner of the Hasselblad Masters Award 2005, and jury member for the 'India Habitat Fellowship for Photography' - talks to Dr Mona Mehta about what it takes to become a photographer par excellence.

Why did you choose photography as a medium of creative expression?

As a child I used to draw and represent my school in various drawing competitions. I was gifted a camera when I was in the 10th class and that changed my life. I soon realized that people behaved very differently in front of the camera than in real life. Old people behave like small kids while children behave like older people! Being a shy kid by nature, my camera was a passport to enter people's lives. It showed me a different world and I was hooked. I am an engineer by training. I left my job as an engineer in 1989 and took to photography as a full time profession. There has been no looking back, since. I have been in this field for the past 16 years... and they have been fantastic. Whatever I am today is thanks to photography. It has helped my travel a lot, and what can be more educating than that.

What kind of training did you have in photography?

I did not have any formal training but learnt by assisting greats like Hardev Singh, Atul Kasbekar and Prabuddha Das Gupta for almost five years.

You are a well-known fashion photographer today. What drew you to fashion photography?

I don't know when this happened. All I know is that I have always been keen on shooting people. My love for shooting portraits just led me to fashion.



Do you have any role models?

I like the works of many photographers, but no, I don't have a role model. Once I finished my assistantship, I realized that no one was looking for a junior Atul Kasbekar or Hardev Singh. It would have been a big mistake to make any one my role model, because in the field of creativity it is important to develop your own style. I had to work hard to come out of the shadows of those I had trained under. I do admire the work of the legendary US photographer, Steven Miesel, because it is changing and evolving everyday, with every shoot.

What is it that you try to capture in your photographs?

Life

What are the essentials for a good fashion photographer?

When I entered the field of fashion photography, I had no clue about fashion. I spent the first six months frequenting the library of the National Institute of Fashion Technology. Even now, if you were to ask me what the next season's trends would be, I wouldn't have a clue. But

interestingly, if you place ten designs in front of me, I would intuitively be able to pick the one which will be a hit in the next season. I am generally right 99.9 % of the time. So, I think intuition plays a great role in this. I would also like to say that it is important to know how to shoot people before you take to fashion photography. Since fashions change very quickly, it is also important to evolve fast. You are as good as your last picture, they say. So it is critical to come up with something new every time, otherwise no one will want you.

## HISTORY

# Raja Deen Dayal: A Vivid name in Black and White Photography

SAMARAENDRA RAJ SINGH

Samaraendra Raj Singh is a Delhi based, whose work concerns itself with the emerging identity of India and its artistic Expression. srs4@hotmail.com

**T**he principle of making images with the use of reflected light has been known since antiquity. In the 1500s, it was seen in the 'camera obscura', a pinhole device used as an artists' aid. Eventually, photography evolved from being a mere assisting tool, into the process of making permanent images. It quickly developed even further from a documentary record into an art form in its own right with its own unique language. Credit for this transition can be attributed to the efforts of early visionaries such as Peter Emerson and Alfred Steiglitz who, as far back as 1903, had already set up dedicated art galleries and publications.

Photography came relatively early to India, and by 1855 there was already a well-populated 'Photographic Society of Bombay'. Among the many pioneers from the nobility, the name of Raja Lala Deen Dayal stands out. Born in 1844, a civil engineer by training, he was introduced to photography while working as Head Administrator and Draughtsman of the Public Works Department at Indore. Anecdote has it that perchance, he offered to assist an English photographer who was so impressed with his grasp of the medium that he gifted him all his equipment. This unleashed a creative genius who left us a vast commentary on the India of his times - likened to the unearthing of a perfectly preserved, ancient metropolis.

Aided by encouragement and his indefatigable self-study, Raja Deen Dayal soon developed into a fully-fledged photographer. So meteoric was his rise that by age 30 he was already acclaimed and collected. This can be fully appreciated by the fact that at that time it was customary for well-to-do Indians to journey all the way to Calcutta for their portfolios, bypassing local Indian photographers in order to garner the snob value of big English names.

Following the prospect of a rewarding career, Raja Deen Dayal soon made photography his full-time occupation. His work on the views of India and 'salon' photography found a ready market. After his vivid coverage of the Prince of Wales' visit in 1857, he was appointed the official 'Photographer to His Excellency the Viceroy of India'. He opened his own studio, soon adding many branches and employing more than fifty people.

In addition to talent, Raja Deen Dayal also possessed a keen sense of timing and enterprise, which urged him to present a series of photographs to the 6th Nizam of Hyderabad, taken during a ceremony of troops. This led to his appointment as the Nizam's court photographer and the award of 'Raja Musavvir Jung Bahadur do hazaar wa ek hazaar sawaar wa alam' - translating rather poorly into 'The Brave King of Photographs entitled to 2,000 foot and 1,000 mounted soldiers'.

As honours and titles poured in, the Raja was also awarded a 'Royal Warrant' by Queen Victoria. In 1893 he was exhibited at the 'World Colombian Exposition' in Chicago and acclaimed warmly by the international press.

Raja Deen Dayal used the bulky bellows camera with large format, dry collodion plates, which he carted all over in railway trains, automobiles and even bullock carts, as he toured India on his missions. His training in draughtsmanship and eye for detail helped him forge his own unique vision, and his compositions are considered unusually ahead of his times. Prime among his contribution is his preservation of the traditional art of the Indian court painter. This glorious facet of royal-life encompassed a vast diversity ranging from formal portraiture to the depiction of hunting scenes, durbars, the beauty of nature, and even curiosities. It is common to find portfolios representing elaborate court scenes painted with

scores of accurate, individual portraits along with minute details of the floor and balustrade patterns, verifiable even today.

Though the advent of photography sounded a death-knell for court painters, Raja Deen Dayal carried on the principles of their tradition. He took great pains to train himself and could fit hundreds of people into a 10"x12" plate at one time. His attention to detail and meticulous planning ensured that no part of the photograph went unnoticed, and that the props and surroundings contributed to its authenticity. No stone was left unturned to ensure visual balance between the foreground and background, proper lighting of details without looming shadows, and due space and attention to the characters.

The vigorous, naturalistic renditions of Indian painting also found resonance in his work as he miraculously managed to freeze an array of bullocks, elephants, horses, and other restless creatures for the long durations required for exposure. In his work we also find the artist's insightful, personal commentary on the lavishness and destitution of the Anglo-Indian confluence depicted through British costume parties, the Royal Indian obsession for extravagant hunts, studio photographs of the brown sahibs and the zenana, vistas of Indian landscape, and the relief work for the famine in 1900.

After Raja Deen Dayal died in 1910, his business declined until his grandson Amichand, who displayed much of his grandfather's zeal and passion, successfully revived it. Recently, an upcoming multi-cultural complex in Hyderabad has been named after him. Though thousands of his invaluable plates were sold at the rate of scrap glass, the IGCA in New Delhi has managed to put together a sizeable collection. He can be visited on the website: [www.deendayal.com](http://www.deendayal.com), developed by his great-granddaughter Hemlata Jain.

# manipulation are two different things"

Do you see any difference in the way fashion photography is perceived in India and internationally?



Both fashion and photography are relatively new in India, as compared to the west. It will take some time before we catch up but we are getting there. All we need is to create more original ideas.

What measures can be taken to ensure that photography is also considered a major art form in India?

We need many more initiatives like the one taken by the India Habitat Centre to promote photography as an art form. It is good that IHC has instituted a photography fellowship and frequently holds photo-exhibitions. More importantly, what we need is a world-class institute, with a great faculty dedicated to teaching photography. It was the lack of such an educational facility that forced me to become an assistant. I often meet new photographers and feel that though they have the talent and eye for photography, they lack the education and knowledge to sustain their talent.

Since you were part of the jury of the India Habitat Centre Photography Fellowship, what were the trends you perceived in the entries?

What I saw was a mix. There were a few original ideas, however, there were others who could not sustain the



continuity of their chosen theme. There is talent, but what is missing is education, I feel.

What advice would you like to give to the newcomers in this field?

Be original. Try to evolve and get in touch with your own sensibility instead of aping any one else. Most importantly, try to impress yourself first; if you are impressed with your work, others will be impressed with it too.

What are the new techniques in photography? And what are the pros and cons of digital photography?

I don't use techniques in my work; hence will not be able to comment much on that. However, I would like to say that it is unfortunate that the new generation of photographers, using digital cameras, will never know or learn, what it is to develop



Regarding contemporary photography, who do you rate as the best photographers in the country?

Bharat Sikka, Prabuddha Das Gupta, Jatin Kampani, Atul Kasbekar, and newcomer Tarun Vishwa Gupta are some of the best.

Tell us about your most unforgettable moment in the field of photography?

Being selected as one of the 12 Hassalblad Masters for the year 2005, was one of the best moments of my life.

# Symbiosis: Man and Trees

RESONANCES

This ongoing project was inspired by a hoarding hung on a tree by the banks of Hyderabad's Musi River. This legendary Tree had saved 150 lives during the flood of 1908.



Over the past two years I have been photographing the symbiotic relationship that exists between man and trees, focusing on several aspects that reflect this interdependence - in and around Hyderabad. On this journey, I discovered the many and diverse faces of the inextricable bond that has always connected trees and people: from the purely mundane of vendors displaying their wares against tree trunks and advertisements strung on branches to the religious, where trees are adorned and worshipped daily. The images vary from the purely aesthetic to unique spiritual renderings.

The project is significant from two angles. First, the concentration on the aesthetic and artistic has developed into an interesting visual culture. Second, in the name of progress and development, many of these trees - some of which have played an integral role in local communities for decades - are being ruthlessly cut down to widen roads. Thus, this project will become an important photographic archive of what will soon be lost - and lost forever.

During the past two years, I have covered most of Hyderabad and Secunderabad in more than a thousand frames. Sadly, I have been unable to cover regions outside Hyderabad or extend the scope of the project due to a lack of financial resources. A fellowship would help me fulfill a more creative



PHOTOS : RAMA VEERESH BABU

purpose in range and content, of the connection between trees and people. I have heard of interesting, multi-dimensional man-tree interrelationships from other parts of India - and would like to produce an in-depth, comprehensive study of the subject.

During the course of the Fellowship I would like to range further afield to explore age-old linkages that exist in different communities and traditions across the vast sub-continent. In the first six months, I would concentrate on the south, for instance on sacred groves such as Swami Shola in the Yellagiri Hills, the devarakadus of Kodagu district, the kavus of Kerala, and the Doddasampige in the Billigirirangana Hills, amongst others. During the latter half I would like to explore the relationship of trees with the people of Chattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh; such as during the Sarahul festival, which is dedicated to the worship of the Sal tree. I would also like to cover other sacred trees like the



Banyan on the banks of Jyotisar Lake near Krurkshetra, believed to be the last witness to Lord Krishna's narration of the Bhagawad Gita.

My former exhibitions project the beauty and benefit that trees contribute to our lives. The Fellowship will help to develop an environmental project through the eyes of the camera.

RAMA VEERESH BABU

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# "When I have earned lots of money, I will show my childhood photograph to my mother ...and implore her to take me back"

TARUN CHHABRA

The writer is a Delhi-based photographer who for years has been documenting the lives of street children with the help of his camera. tarunchhabra1968@yahoo.com

All this began after the birth of my daughter in 1998. I started comparing her life with the life of children living on the streets. In winter, when my daughter was wrapped up in a double quilt, these children were sleeping without any warm clothing. When my child was fed after every two hours, these children were struggling to find food twice a day. When we nursed our sick child all night, these children lay unattended for weeks near railway tracks. When my child was in the secure hands of her mother, these children were living under the cruel shadow of hard-core criminals and cops. This comparison disturbed me a great deal and I could not bear to ignore all these differences. My soul was in a state of unrest.

When I started spending time with some of the children they began to share their experiences with me. Over time our relationship grew and I started seeing them as family. Finally, I became a part of their landscape. I loved their company as they did mine. They would tell me their problems related to food, health, work, security etc. I tried my best to solve them with help from some NGO's but I was not satisfied and wanted to do more by helping as many children as I could. Unfortunately, as an individual it was very difficult for me to finance the resources needed for my dream to come true. The only way was to tell more and more people about these children's problems and motivate them to come forward and help this abandoned segment of society.



In 1997 I had got a diploma in photography from Triveni Kala Sangam and decided to use this medium as a tool to express my inner emotions. With little money and no sense of direction I chalked out a plan and started working on my mission.

As I was living at Rohtak (Haryana) about 75km away from Delhi, the first problem was to reach the city as early as possible to capture the early morning life of children living in and around the railway stations. I started waking up at four



to reach Delhi before dawn and unflinching followed this regime, day after day. Here, I would walk for hours across the length and breadth of the New Delhi and Old Delhi railway stations in the hope of capturing a rare moment in their lives - one single moment that would reflect the tragic predicament of the child living on the streets.

Soon I was visiting all the places where street children spent their lives, like the Inter-State Bus Terminal, Nizamuddin Railway Station, Hanuman Mandir, the Red Fort and its surrounding areas, Chandni Chowk, Observation Homes and Child Care Centres run by the government and NGO's. I tried my best to show how these children somehow manage to find food, how they suffer from deadly diseases, how they manage to get shelter, and how they are constantly exploited, sexually and physically.

When I was unable to shoot even a single frame after weeks of hard work under extreme weather conditions, at all odd hours of the day and night I was very frustrated. I decided to leave the project halfway. My days were spent wondering if it was all a waste of time, why I was doing this at all, and that too for no money? I was totally confused and walked the path of total uncertainty for some time. Colleagues and friends advised me not to waste any more money and energy and switch over to the lucrative fields of fashion, modeling and advertising.

One day while crossing New Delhi railway station, an eight-year-old child named Raju, whom I knew, came up to me and requested me to take his photograph. He had run away from home because his parents were very poor and unable to feed

him. When I asked him the reason, he said, "when I grow older and earn a lot of money, I will return home and show my childhood photograph to my mother so she can recognize me. And I will implore her to accept me back as her son". I was very touched and couldn't bear to see him crying any more. As I photographed him I said a silent prayer... unable to stop my own tears. My soul was troubled and all night the deep innocent eyes of Raju haunted me. I berated myself for discontinuing the project. Soon the thick clouds of confusion disappeared...the next day I was back on my reclaimed path



PHOTOS: TARUN CHHABRA

with fresh energy and a deep commitment. From that day I have never looked back.

Over the years all kinds of hardships have come in my way - my camera was often snatched away, there were confrontations with the police and stall owners, many altercations with those that suspected my mission... One day I noticed an older boy beating a younger child whom I knew. I immediately rushed to

help him. Though the child managed to free himself and run away, the older boy caught me by the neck and took out a knife (used for pick-pocketing) to attack me. I ran; he chased me down the platform. Though I was terrified I luckily managed to jump into a running train and save myself.

As problems mounted so did my determination to pursue my task. More importantly, I felt a deep sense of responsibility towards these children.

My work is an attempt to examine closely, the hardship and joys, the integrity and exploitation, the strength and vulnerability, the magic and the madness that is intrinsic in their lives. It is my mission to tell it like it is. Not by ignoring or trivializing the grueling background within which these children grow, learn and create. But on the contrary, to explore the wealth of feeling and joy that is so palpable, in spite of the extreme adversity around them. It is the beginning of an endeavor to dignify their lives.



## E E E X X X H H H I I I B B B I I I T T T

EXHIBITION BUZZ  
COMPILED BY RAKHI CHIB  
March - May 2006

### TATE BRITAIN

1. Art Now: Jamie Shovlin  
4 February - 23 April 2006

Jamie Shovlin is interested in the tension between truth and fiction, reality and invention. His painstakingly researched and executed works combine inherently flawed systems, pseudo-scientific exactitude and doubtful philosophical propositions with the seemingly objective experience of the archive. Shovlin's work questions the way in which we map and classify the world around us in order to understand it.

For Art Now, Shovlin has created new work, which uses the conventions of museological display and wildlife documentaries. Using drawings, collage, text, sound recordings and projections, the installation explores a juxtaposition of his mother's subjective view of the wildlife in her suburban garden with the scientific rigor of Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection, as set out in *The Origin of Species* (1859).

### 2. Tate Triennial 2006: New British Art

1 March - 14 May 2006

Every three years, Tate holds a Triennial exhibition at Tate Britain showcasing contemporary art. This is the third Tate Triennial and is curated by Beatrix Ruf, Director of the Kunsthalle Zurich, taking an international perspective on the current British art scene. It includes work from different generations of artists working in a diverse range of media. Many of the artists featured in this exhibition address themes of sampling or re-processing of cultural material. While the appropriation and juxtaposition of images and facts is a recurring theme most commonly associated with post-modernism, the Triennial identifies a significant re-energization of these themes in current practice.

There are varying approaches to the use of reference material: from John Stezaker's ongoing series of collages, to The Otolith Group's use of archival footage. Visual codes and imagery, often from competing influences, are combined to create highly personal languages and narratives. For example, Rebecca Warren draws from a

variety of sources, from Edgar Degas to Helmut Newton, to create roughly modeled clay figures.

The exhibition takes place in the Upper Galleries, the Lightbox space and the central Duveen sculpture galleries at Tate Britain. A key aspect of this year's Tate Triennial is the staging of a performance programme, which highlights the collaborative nature and multi-disciplinary practices of many of the artists selected.

List of artists: Pablo Bronstein, Angela Bulloch, Gerard Byrne, Marc Camille Chaimowicz, Lali Chetwynd, Cosey Fanni Tutti, Enrico David, Peter Doig, Kaye Donachie, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Luke Fowler, Michael Fullerton, Ryan Gander, Liam Gillick, Douglas Gordon, Mark Leckey, Lucy McKenzie, Daria Martin, Simon Martin, Alan Michael, Jonathan Monk, Scott Myles, Christopher Orr, The Otolith Group (Kodwo Eshun, Anjalika Sagar and Richard Cousins), Djordje Ozbolt, Oliver Payne and Nick Relph, Olivia Plender, Muzi Quawson, Eva Rothschild, Tino Sehgal, Linder Sterling, John Stezaker, Rebecca Warren, Nicole Wermers and Cerith Wyn Evans.

### 3. Photographs and Television Shows by Andy Warhol

27 January - 11 March 2006

Hauser and Wirth London present an exhibition of photographs and television shows by Andy Warhol. Curated by Anthony d'Offay, Warhol's World features over three hundred unique and previously unseen prints, selected from the collection of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Taken between 1976 and 1987, these images vividly depict the vibrant social scene surrounding Warhol.

Featured individuals include Jean-Michel Basquiat, Mick Jagger, Debbie Harry, Diana Ross, Robert Rauschenberg, Jerry Hall, Bianca Jagger, Grace Jones, Demi Moore, David Hockney, Kenny Scharf, Diana Vreeland, Paloma Picasso, and Ozzy Osbourne.

### Galveston Arts Center 2127 Strand Galveston, Texas

The Photo Project: An Act of Dedication and Perseverance & Robert Langham: Intimate Expanse  
March 4 - April 9, 2006

Galveston, Texas On Saturday March 4, 2006, the Galveston Arts Center presents two exhibitions in conjunction with Fotofest 2006. The Photo Project: An Act of Dedication and Perseverance presents four photographic projects organized by the Texas Photographic Society and selected by Anne Wilkes Tucker of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. In recognition of the 60th anniversary of the fight for Iwo Jima, Will Michels photographed a battle reenactment hosted by The National Museum of the Pacific War located in Fredericksburg, TX. His Iwo Jima + 60 series chronicles the not only the historical moment, but also the many volunteers who dedicate their passion to honor those who fought. Patricia Sandler combines text and portraits to explore memory, relationships and identity. Family Outcomes offers brief glimpses into hidden narratives of family and close friends.

# REFLECTIONS



**SANDEEP BISWAS**

The writer is a Curator, collector and art gallerist based in Bombay priyasri6@yahoo.co.in

Photography is just another medium like any other form of fine art. A camera is just a tool, the way a brush is for a painter and a chisel for a sculptor. Photography has been generally considered a realistic medium and a medium for documentation. Though photojournalism considered photography an art, the medium on the whole remained isolated from mainstream art in India. Recently it has started getting its much-delayed acceptance. Even the art viewer, the art lover and the buyer now recognize photography as an art form.

Photography has become more common in art shows, today. It is encouraging that those galleries and art institutes, which did not look at photography as another form of art, are now including it in their exhibitions.

An introduction



I am a photographer who grew up in a family of artists surrounded by the paintings of my parents and other artists from around the world. Paintings with a poetic inference always appealed to me, as they expressed the inner world of the artist. Therefore, fine art has had a very strong influence on me. I was always an artist at heart, but it took me a couple of years after college, to discover my medium of comfort.

Initially, like all young street photographers, I started taking pictures of

people and places, influenced by the photojournalistic approach I saw in books and magazines. After some time I realised that I wasn't expressing myself as an artist since I was only portraying what I saw rather than what I felt. So the struggle of finding myself as an artist with the camera started.

After years of working in the streets, I began realizing the possibility of capturing abstract images in real life street photography. To begin with I started experimenting with reflections where multiple images layer into one single image merging and creating an absolute surreal visual. I was looking into an alternate reality existing in reflections on water, sometimes on the streets and sometimes on windows. In these reflections reality simply merged and recreated itself from a new poetic perspective. I saw stones merging into a reflection of a building in water, erased towers in water as if they spoke more than the actual image itself.

For me this became a new way of expressing my feelings about the contemporary world; expressing the life we live, all our desires and the struggle to achieve the impossible. Like catching and freezing our own reflection. There has always been an unconscious struggle for me to survive and fight through this artificial world of desires and consumption. These images don't have a direct social or political statement. They are my inner feeling and reaction to the world.

For me, my work is a surreal visual poetry. My images tell a story of the subconscious human of today's world - his real self and the self he has to create to survive in this changing world. Through my work I want to lift the mask of reality to reveal an alternate vision, which lives within my thoughts.

Reflections are an attempt to discover infinite possibilities in the medium. Just the way art has developed through various movements, breaking out of realism and moving towards impressionism, expressionism, surrealism, modernism and post modernism.



PHOTOS : SANDEEP BISWAS



In photography, this kind of work was successfully achieved by the American Jerry Uelsmann, Alain Fleischer from France and Sir David Hockney in Great Britain, who raised photography to a totally different platform. I have grown up seeing a lot of brilliant work in India, but all in the area of photojournalism. Much has changed and now artists are working on photo installations and bringing a fresh vision to their images and expression, which is helping to break the path of conventionalism.

Photography has the possibility of not only capturing what a photographer sees but of looking and portraying beyond that reality.



## I I I O O O N N N B B B U U U Z Z Z Z Z Z

Capturing objects and their purity of form is the subject of Yoshi Abe's series At Night. Light & shadow / color and composition dominate the artist's study in simplicity. What was to be a vacation turned into a journey and photographic project for Susan Bank. Campo Adentro (Deep within the country) chronicles the lives of tobacco farmers in the Pinar del Rio region of Cuba. The second Fotofest exhibition is Intimate Expanse, a solo show from Robert Langham that represents two different bodies of work. The first is a series of blooming trees he photographed at night for stark contrasts and the second a series of landscapes from stunning Shiprock, New Mexico.

**Museum of Contemporary Photography, 600S, Michigan Ave, Chicago**

**ANTICIPATION**

**March 18 - May 20, 2006**

Susanne Kutter (Germany), Andrea Bowers (United States), Karin Müller (Switzerland), Smith/Stewart (England, Ireland), Tatterdandelion (Northern Ireland), Fischli & Weiss (Switzerland), Janet Cardiff & Goerge Bures Miller (Canada), David Bate (United Kingdom), Troy Williams (United States)

This exhibition explores the role of anticipation in contemporary art through the work of nine artists and artist teams who probe the nature of suspense in their video and still photography. Rather than concerning themselves with the communication of narrative, these artists are more interested in our psychological response to their work and the experience of the space in which it

occurs. Many of them focus on the tension between the moving and the still image, and using devices such as doubling, slowness, repetition, rhythm, humor and suspense, make us acutely aware of the act of looking, often by provoking a visceral response. By investigating the mental space of illusion, the artists in this exhibition fully engage with film, video, and digital technologies to question the very nature of perception.

**Museum of Contemporary Photography, 600S, Michigan Ave, Chicago**

**ANDRE KERTESZ: ON READING**

**June 06 - August 12, 2006**

This exhibition celebrates the most important single donation of photographic works to the Museum in its 25 year history. Andre Kertesz, while generally under exposed in galleries and museums during his lifetime (1894 - 1984) was and is widely acknowledged as a mentor and main influence by photographers and artists in other media of his generation and the two following. This body of 120 photographs, made between the early 1920s and the late 1960s, records his public observations of the private act of reading. Approximately half were published in the book On Reading (Grossman, New York) in 1971.

**Michael Hopen Gallery**

**Miroslav Tichy & Jacques Henri Lartigue**

**9th June - 17th June 2006**

At first glance, Miroslav Tichy, a down and out from the Czech Republic, and Jacques Henri Lartigue, one of the greatest photographers of the 20th Century, have very little in common. Upon closer inspection there are striking similarities, in both subject matter and approach, in the work of these two artists and their stories are uncannily parallel despite their disparate backgrounds. It is for this reason that The Michael Hopen Gallery will be holding the very first simultaneous exhibition of the work of Miroslav Tichy and Jacques Henri Lartigue.

Tichy and Lartigue, both self-taught photographers, used the camera to produce aide-memoires of the seductive world around them. Similarly they trained as classical painters, Lartigue, at the Academie Julian in 1915 and Tichy, at the Academy of Arts in Prague up until 1948. Their work was produced for personal pleasure and they kept it to themselves, never intending it to be exhibited. This

pure motivation, uncorrupted by the desire for fame, explains why neither was recognised until late in life. Lartigue was nearly 70 when his first solo exhibition was held at MoMA, New York in 1963 and Tichy was 79 when his first retrospective was held at the Kunsthau Zurich in 2005. Most importantly, both artists were completely enchanted by women. With awe and tender loving care they produced their captivating images of everyday muses - ordinary women shopping, sunbathing, sitting on benches or simply strolling around. The greatest link between Tichy and Lartigue is their talent for recognising and capturing latent female beauty.

For further information about this exhibition please call the gallery on 020 7352 3649 or email us on gallery@michaelhoppengallery.com

# Contemporary issues about photographic theory and practice: In Conversation with Bandeep Singh

**BANDEEP SINGH**

The writer, a Delhi-based news photographer working India Today, was jury member for the 'India Habitat Centre Fellowship for Photography'.  
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**W**hat is photographic design? How does it operate in photography?

Design in photography operates at the sub-conscious level. To phrase it more precisely, there is a design sense, which governs the usage of visual graphic elements in the photograph. At the time of looking through the viewfinder, the eye sees a vision of reality in front of the lens as an arrangement of visual elements e.g. - the landscape is space, the tree trunks are lines, the mountains and clouds are shapes and forms. Preceding the press of the shutter is the process of arranging these visual elements as per an innate design sense and intent: this is the act of composition. This design sense, which can be formally developed and worked upon, operates at the instinctual level in the actual photographic process, somewhat like the understanding of the raga and sur, which underlies even a popular film song. A heightened interest in design gives a pronounced effect in the photograph even if shot in a fleeting moment.

What is the graphic element in a photograph?  
What is the inherent power of a photograph?

The graphic power of the photograph comes from the element of reality, which is fused with the medium. Unlike painting, which is generally a figment of the imagination, the line and form representation in almost all genres of photography is a record of reality. The photographer adds value to this using light as a chisel to mould and emphasize that which he seeks to photograph. So, unlike a painting, which seeks to be life-like, photography uses life itself to record an impression of life. This reference of reality gives the image its graphic punch. For example, the power in these photographs is to see the actual element of grass and how the graphic composition and value addition of lighting infuses line and form with a palpable, perceptual feel.

What lends itself better to a graphic rendition color or black and white?

Much as I would like to answer black and white, the truth is that the graphic quality of the image depends on the effective use and control of the visual elements and the nature of feeling to be communicated. The absence of color information means less noise and fewer elements to control so the elements of line and form emerge stronger in the photograph. This also makes the black and white photograph a greater abstraction of reality where the idea and the theme have a greater play and voice - hence the 'artist's preference for the black and white medium. On the flip side, there are many photographers who camouflage ordinary work under this medium's graphic quality somewhat like blank verse makes more poets than poetry.

In the reverse situation, the abstraction of black and white takes the visual further from a direct identification with reality. For news and travel pictures, where immediacy of identification with the actual situation is desired, the black and white medium can be quite inadequate. Ever seen food in black and white? Try imagining the Iraq bombing pictures minus color or

consider why most prefer seeing movies in color. The contemporary approach to bridge this gap is the use of muted de-saturated color.

There is a perception in modern art that symmetry is old fashioned whereas asymmetry is contemporary. Do you agree?

Again this depends on the approach. While symmetry is classical just because we arrived at it earlier, it is contemporary as well. One just has to see it non-simplistically. To arrive at symmetry via asymmetry is a routine act of modern art. Often, what is visibly asymmetrical is a complex exploration of symmetry. It is more a style statement. The difference is the expansion of symmetry beyond the formality of expression and the defined space of the medium. Now, symmetry is more and more like a conclusion left to the mind to resolve. Instead of the final value we have the equation and various processes to arrive at the value. It remains asymmetrical till it is unresolved.

Technology is rapidly altering photography from the way we knew it? Is that for the better or worse?

Technology is just a leveler of skill. It makes for a democracy of talent. The big challenge is for imagination and creativity to expand along with technological development. When that does not happen the change appears threatening and the mere adaptation of technology looks shallow. We are in the center of an immense tectonic shift in photography, the advent of the digital process. The challenge is not the Megapixel value to match film - that is a logical development, which will follow. The challenge is for the mind to incorporate digital processes into creative visualization.

Bandeep Singh is currently working as a photo editor with a leading news magazine. He is also the co-judge of the Habitat Award for Photography. His works have been exhibited in India and abroad.

PHOTOS : BANDEEP SINGH



## Director's Epistle

It looks as if life is on a fast-forward for India and those of these days. There was India everywhere at Davos, there is the stock index leaping over everywhere at home, and the prices of art works show that there is a 'buy' tag to nearly everything. So, is the increased love of art, part of the acquisitive instinct of the rich or is there a growing fondness for aesthetics that was latent until now, but has bloomed and spread so dramatically. Much as I would like to assume that it is the growing fondness for art, I have to say that everything points to the fondness for money multiplying that is stunning the art scene in conjunction with other non-art choices.

There can be no doubt that this is the moment of joy, as artists who once struggled to create spaces for their images with little support from government or corporations, can now revel in the ever widening constituency of connoisseurs and buyers of art.

In all this euphoria, one pauses to wonder whether we are making a mark on the global art scene. For various reasons, I get the feeling that we are not. Apart from the attention of rich, non-resident Indians, we still have to find a place in the international milieu of art, where our own distinctiveness will stand as a symbol of creativity and style. India still continues to be represented through its heritage rather than the derived brilliance of the present context. There has to be a reckoning of the confluence of the mystic and modern science and this synthesis and its graphic and artistic expression will echo and resonate a global perspective.

It was JW Gardener who said that, 'life is the art of drawing without an eraser'. In this edition of 'I', there are articles on living in refuge, some glimpses of street life, a description of the relationship between a bridge and life in a city. This collection, each a unique perspective of the author, will make for a satisfying reading experience. In addition, there are articles on photography as an art form, and Bandeep's conversation on contemporary issues about photography's theory and practice through the act of taking a picture with the camera.

Happy browsing!

Raj Liberhan  
Director

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