

India Habitat Centre's Photosphere 2016 - 2017
**Panchtattvas – An IHC Initiative on Photography and Sustainable
Development**

Mission Statement

The India Habitat Centre or IHC is one of the most significant non-profit centres in India. In the last twenty five years the IHC has supported the visual arts in a significant manner and using innovative methods. In an effort to promote photography as an art form, the Visual Arts Gallery instituted an award titled the India Habitat Centre Award for Photography in the year 2003. This award, supporting emerging photographers, following a process-based evaluation, is the first initiative undertaken by any organization in India to promote the discipline of photography. The award was a significant contribution to the world of photography in India, when photographers were still struggling to find a suitable platform to showcase their works. The aesthetics of photography were grappling with the need to be recognised, when the award was instituted in India almost over a decade ago, whereas the photography awards like Prix Pictet (sustainability), World Photos Press Award (photojournalism), Deutsche Börse Photography Prize (contemporary photography), Chianciano International Award for Digital Art and Photography (digital art and contemporary photography), to name a few had moved ahead from the debates surrounding photography as an established medium of fine art. Nevertheless, the need of the hour is shifting from the recognition of the power of photography to the appropriation of its power for larger betterment. In a similar vein, the IHC is taking the award a step further with the festival, bringing photography to the dematerialized world. Photography has been instrumental in redefining the aesthetics of blurring spaces between the physical and the virtual world.

We encounter images knowingly or unknowingly at every passing moment in a single day whether they are from the internet, newspapers, phones, or television. Ubiquitous photographic trends and the barrage of images are our reality. The art of visualization is no longer a territory of the anonymous; its overt popularization has redefined the aesthetics of cultural consumption. The democratic value associated with the art of photography acknowledges the blurring of boundaries, moving away from conventional rules and constantly finding new avenues of exploration. Playing a significant role in bringing this trend close to every quarter of our life is the advent of digital technology, which can be said to define our social and cultural networks. The power of image technology to regularly “mediate” and “represent” our life, demands the continual shifts and moves in the

grammar of visual language. Under this umbrella of visuals, the images produced by the camera are not only diverse, multiple and complex but also carry “photographic truth.” With social interactions based on multiple social media platforms, the images circulated via instagram, pinterest et al, the relationship between truth and meaning is no longer an easy one. Finding no single territory of fixity or resolution, the meaning associated with photography calls for social and cultural locations. When we are constantly grappling with the idea to “navigate and negotiate meaning,” the capacity of images to create awareness about social practice is unanimously heightened.

I pay obeisance to the supporting energy of the Lord,

In the form of the earth,

Which remains established as the prime base,

For sprouting the seed of the universe.

Abhinav Bharati, Mangalashloka

Sustainable Development is the grand narrative of the Festival and the *Panchtattvas* is the micro-narrative which strings together Photography and Sustainable Development into the holistic Photosphere. The emphasis of the festival is on mapping new footprints of the photo language, experimental language, to work as a pioneer inventing new languages of photo representation ensuring that the ultimate artwork does not bear an activist slant, look, presentation or texture to it. We are a festival with a green conscience evoking the bhaav of sustainable developments across all genres of photography. Focusing on the five primordial elements, the *Panchtattvas*, i.e. *prithvi* (earth), *vayu* (air), *jal* (water), *akasha* (ether) and *agni* (fire), the Habitat Photosphere photography festival will be creating a new language of photography by commissioning photographers and filmmakers to work on the theme of sustainable development. The Indian understanding of cosmology is set against the aforementioned elements which define the working of the environment and ecology. In Indian mythology, the universe, in harmony with the five elements, is the ideal state of working. The disciplines of dance, astronomy, yoga and medicine seek the balance of these *panchattavas* to attain the ideal self. In bringing the nuances of Indian mythology to the hyper reality of the photography and film world, the festival puts indigenous knowledge to a global reality of images and icons. The theme of the festival is situated in crucial times, when we are constantly living in fear of environmental decay.

The most iconic definition of sustainable development was given in the Brundtland Report published by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 and titled *Our Common Future*. It

defines sustainable development as “a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Sustainable development may be defined as an alternative model of development which aims to lower the pressure on natural resources and promotes innovative ways to reduce our ecological footprint. The idea behind sustainable development is that the human’s speed of consumption is not enabling the natural resources to regenerate and that we are gradually exhausting and degrading the natural environment that had been granted to us.

In light of this, the Photosphere festival will use the medium of photography and film to demonstrate its commitment to the protection and preservation of the environment. The Photosphere festival will take place every two years. It is a unique initiative which is looking to help photographers and filmmakers become innovators turning their gaze and lens towards creating a new language and genre of photography and film and using their innovations to tackle the pressing concerns of the world at large. When, every month, photo festivals and fairs are mushrooming in every corner of the world, for instance Les Rencontres d'Arles (France), Visa Pour l'Image (France), Angkor Photo Festival (Cambodia), Fotofreo (Australia), Pingyao International Photography Festival (China), Kyotographie (Japan), the task is to create a niche for the IHC Photosphere. The festival through its process-based fellowship, exhibition, documentation, workshops and seminar aims to provoke thinking and sensitize people towards the need to protect our environment. The festival will nurture photographers and filmmakers and help them innovate, create new documents and sensitize the public towards the true meaning of sustainable development. The aspect of nurturing and dissemination will give a clear edge to the Photosphere over the other photo fairs and festivals across the globe.

Photography is often misunderstood as following repetitive codes embedded in social and aesthetic conventions. The task is to recode these conventions regularly, fixing no single meaning and redefining and reshaping the conventions. The festival, in the same vein, would work to reshape the codes set for photography and film. Under the canopy of photography and film, the shifting values of the term ‘environment’ cannot go unnoticed. Reflecting the same, the festival shall put creative knowledge into artistic practice to display a wide array of spaces and sites and take the opportunity to redefine the links between photo aesthetics, film and environmental art.

- The India Habitat Centre (IHC) announces 4 awards of Rs 2.00 lakhs each to 4 Indian photographers to create a body of work on the theme.
- The Jury reserves the right to curtail or withhold awards in any category if in its opinion no submission is upto to the minimum standards associated with this initiative.

- In addition to this, two renowned photographers - one Indian and one from outside India - will be invited to show unusual juxtapositions of the artworks. The invited photographers shall be highly critically acclaimed and who have made significant contribution to the field of photography through their expertise as a photographer working towards sustainable development and environmental issues.

Through the year, a series of workshops* and talks by selected photographers, artists, and researchers will lead up to the month long exhibition and cluster of workshops in the month of December 2016.

*The dates are tentative and will be confirmed closer to the events. The other details of the workshops, dates and program will be circulated later.

- The exhibition will be accompanied by a photo book/catalogue on photography and sustainable development. The working title of the book will be Panchtattvas (The Five Elements). This will be edited by Alka Pande with five key texts by prominent thinkers in art, ecology, environment, eco feminism. Name of authors are Mike Pandey, Sunita Narain, Ajay Mathur, Amba Jamir, Madhav Gadgil and Dr Alka Pande.
- A series of films on art and ecology, environment and wildlife curated by Rajesh Bedi or Sandesh from Bangalore, as an evening projection program during the festival. We could collaborate with WWF, PSBT, Doordarshan in this case.

Workshop Timetable 5th to 15th December

The week and a half following the opening of the festival featured a cluster of workshops from eminent photographers, curators and cultural practitioners in the Experimental Art Gallery from approximately 10 am to 6 pm.

Number	Workshop Leader	Workshop Name	Dates
1	Prabir Purkayastha after graduating from the University of Delhi worked in Thailand as a journalist. Purkayastha returned to India in 1980, becoming one of the country's leading advertising	When not to Photograph	5 TH DECEMBER

	<p>practitioners in agency management and creative campaigns. He began taking photographs in earnest in the late 1980s, primarily in Indochina and India, including in Ladakh, Rajasthan, Assam, and now, Calcutta. During the past decade, Purkayastha has exhibited his work in New York, Chicago, Katonah, Los Angeles, London, Cologne, New Delhi, Calcutta and Mumbai.</p>		
2	Natalie Herschdorfer	Curating and Thinking About Photography in Exhibitions and Books	6 th DECEMBER AND 7 TH
3	Natalie Herschdorfer	Portfolio Reviews	8 TH December
4	Dr Alka Pande	From the Click to the Digital: Photography and Art History	9 th DECEMBER
5	<p>Peter Nagy is the director of Gallery Nature Morte in New Delhi. Peter grew up in the suburbs of New York City and studied Communication Design at Parsons School of Design in New York from 1977 to 1981. In 1982 he</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exhibiting Lens-based Art Works: the pit-falls and pleasures 2. Louise Lawler: The Critical Documentary Mode 	10 th DECEMBER

	<p>cofounded Nature Morte, a commercial gallery in New York's East Village that exhibited a wide range of works by mostly New York artists. Peter closed Nature Morte in 1988 to pursue his work as an artist. He first visited India in 1990 as a tourist and in 1992 returned to live in India for one year, with a base in New Delhi and artist residencies in Baroda and Ahmedabad. Returning in 1994, he settled in New Delhi and reopened Nature Morte there in 1997, which continues today, exhibiting the work of primarily Indian artists in a wide variety of media.</p>		
6	<p>Bandeep Singh is a reputed editorial and fine-art photographer. His work has been published in <i>Time</i> magazine, the <i>New York Times</i>, <i>Fortune</i>, <i>India Today</i> and several other leading newspapers and magazines. His personal work is conceptual and explorative. It is influenced by his interest in Indology and mysticism. His fine-art work has been widely</p>	<p>Creating A Body Of Work: How to Approach a Photographic Project</p>	<p>11TH DECEMBER</p>

	showcased at various national and international exhibitions. He was awarded the Charles Wallace India Trust Award in 2004. Singh lives and works in Delhi. He has been a jury member of the IHC photo fellowship for the past eight years.		
7	Tarun Khiwal	The Staging and Basic Elements of Fashion Photography	12 TH DECEMBER
8	Shormishtha Panja	Interanimation of Word and Image	13 th DECEMBER
9	Parthiv Shah	Gaze-Ungaze A Street Photography Workshop	14 th DECEMBER
10	Aditya Arya started professional photography in 1980 after studying in history at St Stephens College, Delhi University. Arya professionally primarily works in bespoke areas of luxury. The other hat he wears is that of a photo historian. Uncovering historic photographic works, poring over thousands of negatives and vintage prints, honing his skills and knowledge on preservation, restoration and archiving, Arya has played a pivotal role in the formation of	Photo as an archive	15 th DECEMBER

	India Photo Archive Foundation. He is one of the few people working in the area of the photograph as an archive.		
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A film festival curated by Nitin Donde on documentary and animated films on sustainability took place in the Experimental Art Gallery on the 16th of December and then the Open Palm Court Gallery 17th and 18th of December.

From the 19th to 22nd we had show and tell presentations, a schedule for the same is below. Entry was free.

Photosphere Show and Tell Presentations – December 2016			
Climate Change: Do You Know How It Happened?	Sadiq Mohammed – Founder, Green Hatters	19th December Time: 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm Venue: Open Palm Court Gallery, India Habitat Centre	An interactive evening on what causes big weather events.
The Creative Eye – Seeing a photograph	Mahesh Nair – Photographer and Founder of PicsDream	20th December Time: 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm Venue: Open Palm Court Gallery, India Habitat Centre	How you see the extraordinary in the ordinary is key to creating a great body of works.
The Making of 17 Seen Unseen	Kavita Kale – Graphic designer	21st December Time: 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm Venue: Open Palm Court Gallery, India Habitat Centre	Kavita Kale will give an exciting talk on environmental issues and her UNESCO supported graphic novel for young adults, 17 Seen Unseen.

Tabab	Ashim Ghosh – Multiple media artist and inventor	22nd December Time: 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm Venue: Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre	A performance, demonstration with sound, live music, and projections. Ashim will also initiate an interaction on the issues of sustainable development.
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Other Past Events Through the Year:

1. Photosphere's first workshop with French artist Pascal Monteil that took place on the 19th and 20th of December, 2015 was a great success. After the inauguration of the installation of some of his photo-based works in Jor Bagh metro station on Friday the 18th of December he gave a seminar and engaged in a riveting conversation with Dr Pande and was also kind enough to take questions from the audience on his art practice. The following day's workshop was so successful that by popular demand we organised another session on Sunday as well so that as many people as possible could benefit from it. More than 60 people attended.
2. Due to an overwhelming response our deadline was extended from 5th February to 25th February, 2016. Our esteemed jury met under the Chairmanship of Mr Rakesh Kacker, Director of the India Habitat Centre and the Artistic Director of Photosphere, Dr Alka Pande. It was held at the IHC on 5th March, 2016 to deliberate upon the entries received. More information about the awardees chosen and their work can be found at our website here:
http://www.indiahabitat.org/page?view=photography_award_2016
3. An exhibition of photographs by Tony Clancy, Arati-Kumar Rao & Juhi Saklani was mounted at Jor Bagh Metro Station on March 21, 2016. We hosted a talk by Tony Clancy titled Framing Nature: Garden And Art In History: March 21, 2016. He was in conversation with Dr Alka Pande. There was also a practical photography workshop on 19th March with Tony Clancy and writer/editor Anita Roy.
4. In May we had two events under the Photosphere banner. The first was a talk on 3rd May by Italian artist Bruna Rotunno to supplement her exhibition Women in Bali, a photographic exploration of the

nuances of everyday life for women in Bali. The second was a workshop on 14th May on Writing for Photography by FHEA, British art historian and educator, Dr Grant Pooke.

5. In July, 2016 we had a workshop on image making by renowned photographer and educator Parthiv Shah on 16th July, 2016 called Self Portrait to Selfie. It was a resounding success with approximately thirty participants who clamoured for more and advanced workshops.
6. In August, 2016 we had a workshop called Talking Photography: Speaking for Others (August 13th and 20th). It was a two day workshop to educate and inform new and veteran photographers around telling stories from new perspectives using image and text. It was led by Justin Coombes who holds a PhD in Fine Art from the Royal College of Art. He lectures at Southampton Solent University and the Ruskin School of Art, Oxford University. His writing has appeared in Photomonitor magazine, the Journal of Visual Studies and the London Evening Standard. He has held solo exhibitions at Space and Paradise Row Galleries and holds a number of awards including the British Oxygen Company, Arts Council England and the Oxford University Research Council in the Humanities.

Important Dates (subject to change):

Upload Press Release on World Habitat Day at IHC website: 5 October 2015

Public announcement with the launch of Pics Dreams at the VAG, IHC: 5 November 2015

Last date of application submission: 25, February, 2016

After meeting of jury team consisting of environment, art and cultural experts

Announcement of 4 awardees: 5, March, 2016

Submission of body of work and artist statement: 31st October, 2016

Printing of artworks: 7th to 20th November 2016

Mounting of exhibition: from 21st November, 2016

Festival Dates: 1-31 December 2016

Submission of five essays mother catalogue: 31st December, 2016

Final edit, layout of mother catalogue: February, 2017

Mother catalogue to become available by: July, 2017

The Team

Director of IHC Photosphere: Rakesh Kacker

Joint Director: Somya Dave

Artistic Director: Dr. Alka Pande

Mentors and Advisory members: Aditya Arya, Bandeep Singh, Parthiv Shah, Prabir Purkayastha

Project Director: Neha Mathrani

Project Coordinators: Dilpreet Bhullar, Saurabh Rai

Project Assistants: Suprabha Nayak, Aditi Tandon

Interns: Thomas Xavier Christine, Rashmi Kapoor, Apoorva Singh, Syed Mohammed Afnan

Executive Consultant: Anita Kathpalia

Public Relations: Persona, Poonam Goel