



"This (bourgeois) understanding of the way things are is so pervasive that it comes to seem like a law of nature, and its hero is 'Eternal Man', who recognises his own ideals in the norms of good sense and good taste that prevail at any given time."
- Roland Barthes, "Mythologies"



Jama Masjid, Delhi © IGNCA



Cenotaph of Sangram Singh, Ahar, Mewar © IGNCA



Portrait of a lady © IGNCA

Bold Warrior of Photography: RAJA DEEN DAYAL

**SUSAN
HAPGOOD**

The exhibition in Delhi, *Raja Deen Dayal: The Studio Archives from the IGNCA Collection* presented in early 2011, was a knockout show, spurring greater appetites for all things Dayal. As a photographer on par with contemporaries such as Timothy O'Sullivan, Alexander Gardner, or Eugene Atget, he deserves greater international recognition. The curators contextualized Deen Dayal's images within the framework of colonially endorsed aesthetic norms and genres, and provided ample historical and technical orientation as well. It was a visual feast of 220 digital prints, which were themselves enlarged from photographs made after Deen Dayal's death; they were two generations removed from vintage originals dating back to roughly between 1875 and 1905. Given the comparatively slim body of writing on him, and the acquisition of his voluminous studio archives by the IGNCA, the time is ripe for even more in-depth exploration of his contributions, including his acute sensitivity to the possibilities of the photographic medium, his resonant treatment of specific subjects, the aesthetic and historical import of his work in an international context, and the forthcoming monograph by Deepali Dewan and Deborah Hutton holds great promise. It would be great to have a sober assessment of his agenda, if it could be gleaned, despite the fact that he was obliged to suit others' requirements, working primarily on a patronage and commission basis for British and Indian clients throughout his three-decade career.

As a whole, Deen Dayal's prolific output constitutes--or even creates--a chunk of India's history. In terms of theoretical and postcolonial discourse, his images show how photography could serve as an instrument of surveillance for and subjugation by the British; or how it could be used to supposedly "salvage" that which would soon disappear; some of his work is also spectacular political propaganda, with dazzling displays of power and wealth. And partly because Deen Dayal was born a middle-class Jain from Uttar Pradesh, comfortable with diverse formal and typological vocabularies, his work is sometimes said to introduce a particularly Indian mode of photographic representation. The curators of this exhibition, Jyotindra Jain and Pramod Kumar have steered clear of overdefining his approach this way; idiosyncratic vantagepoints, attention to detail and "thick description" are raised as key attributes of his unique personal idiom. Citing his excellent rapport with portrait sitters, they conclude that his work achieved a balance between fine photographic vision and the performative dispositions of his clients and subjects.

Deen Dayal seemed to immediately grasp the specific attributes of his chosen medium, to intuitively understand the effective ways that photographs lure in the viewer. His foregrounds are rarely neutral; they are effective components used to lead the eye into the composition, whether through diagonal paths and roadways, or graduated forms such as receding columns, or attention grabbing details such as lone individuals gazing out at the viewer, or precipitous spatial drops. His compositional sensibility is innately graphic, even oddly abstract at times--he finds the best vantagepoint to accentuate bold geometric forms and shapes, which then serve to organize the picture plane. In his commercial studio shots as well, attention to all aspects of the composition prevails, with surfaces, fabrics, patterns animating every part of the photograph. And it sounds terribly obvious, but it is hard to overstate his advantageous employment of shadows to trace elaborate filigree patterns. There is a sophisticated visual opulence at play. Deen Dayal was prolific and commercially successful--as a portraitist, as a surveyor for the Archaeological Survey of India, as a photographer for British government and nobility, and as official photographer for the sixth Nizam of Hyderabad. He had photographic studios in Indore, Bombay, and Secunderabad, where in 1892 he opened a zenana studio dedicated to photographing women, the first of its kind in India, run by Mrs. Kenny Levick and fifty staff members. It was a short-lived success, though, due to the deaths of first Deen Dayal's son, and then the "bold warrior of photography" himself, as he was called by the Nizam of Hyderabad. The time of his death in 1905 coincided with the end of an era in any case, because the field of photography was soon to undergo rapid and radical democratization with the introduction of cameras to the mass market.

A final note: There has been some controversy about the display of reprints, exclusively, in the exhibition. Given Deen Dayal's original empowering of his staff, and the permissions his descendents have to reprint images, is it taboo to recreate images, even to enlarge them? As long as we don't unduly fetishize the vintage prints by keeping them preserved and hidden, perhaps it is in keeping with 21st-century image culture to reprint such celebrated images, which are replicable by their very nature.



Susan Hapgood is a curator and art historian currently based in Mumbai, and is also Senior Advisor at Independent Curators International, New York.



Cynthia Emmersely



Richard Hill and his family

A Lost White Tribe- THE EURASIANS OF SRI LANKA

(a work in progress)

**MENIKA
VAN DER
POORTEN**



David Wood

A Lost White Tribe –the Eurasians of Sri Lanka is very much a personal project, looking at some of the last remaining ‘Eurasians’ here. My father is second generation Eurasian and his family have been ‘planters’ in Sri Lanka since the early part 19th century. I grew up in between quite a ‘feudal’ Sinhala family and an Eurasian one. Growing up, it always seemed as if my father’s extended family were larger than life, and wilder than most. Seemingly unfettered by constraints of ‘tradition and culture’, or of being rooted in any one community. Was it just my family or were other planter Eurasians also cut from the same cloth? Who were the Eurasians? What was their story?

The once identifiable Eurasian presence, remnants of a colonial legacy, is now no more. My search for traces of what’s left of the ‘Planter’ Eurasian community is a very personal one, driven by anxiety that soon there won’t be any one left to relate their stories. History of the Eurasian community here is tied very much to the history of the British in Sri Lanka. Although a people with a short (and no definitive) history, their ‘history’, such as it is, is passed on from generation to generation in the form of memories and stories. I grappled with what format it should take, how I should shoot it etc. How could I convey the complex and many faceted nature of the community? Audio visual presentation, book or an exhibition? A combination perhaps? It took me quite few years to do anything as systematic as interviewing or photographing the remaining Eurasians. In the meantime many of my relatives and people I wanted to photograph died, left the country or suffered memory loss.

I started off by doing a series of audio visual portraits of the Eurasian community here in Sri Lanka for *groundviews.org* (A Citizens Journalism website based in Sri Lanka) The series of is now up on a dedicated website, *movingimages.asia*. Working on the presentations took me on a personal journey during which I discovered there are as many stories as there are tellers! It was at times emotionally and mentally very draining, in a way that I didn’t expect. This will always probably be a work in progress, a long term personal project. As I look through the material I have and ponder the next step. I absorb and reflect on my experiences.

Menika Van Der poorten is an artist/photogrpaheer and has been involved with photography education for the last twenty years in London and Colombo.

These photographs (“Nuclear Nightmares” about the aftermath of Chernobyl by Robert Knoth/pixelpress.org) and text (Antoinette de Jong) reached a large, international, and apparently young audience; though depressing, the work could not be denied. On the margins of mass media, without any promotion or other publicity, those for whom conventional media be less appealing were able to find a documentary recommended by their peers, both with this work and through projects by many others (Paul Fusco’s photographs and voice online concerning Chernobyl similarly attracted a massive readership). The community, virtual and abstract, could be engaged. If at least some people respected what was published, found it authentic, then they would spread the word until an ad hoc readership, and community, was born. It was as if in a parallel universe the often-announced death of the photo essay had not happened. And, unlike with print periodicals, many of which shied way from publishing the photographs, the work remains accessible on the Internet long after its initial appearance.

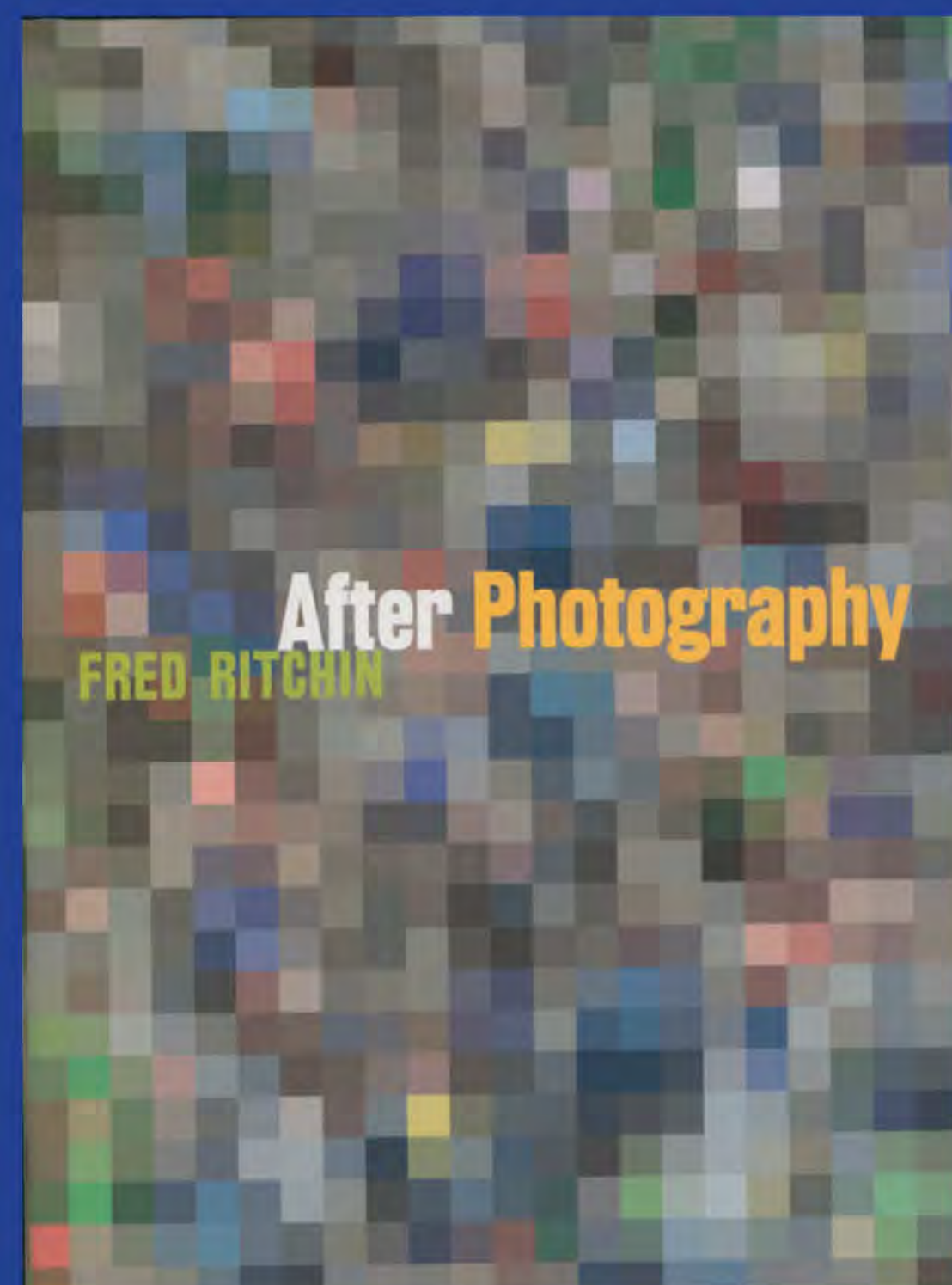
According to Greenpeace, after an exhibition of this work in Kazan, Russia, received extensive media coverage, the provincial government of Tatarstan canceled plans to build a nuclear reactor. More recently, an agency of the federal government there launched a program to relocate families away from the banks of the Techa river, polluted by radiation. The publications of these images and text, in digital and analog forms (a book by Knoth and de Jong, “Certificate No. 000358”, was published in Europe), focused and stimulated debates on nuclear power in many countries and contested the points of view of certain international organizations as to its safety.

Serious documentary work, even now, can serve as a critical component in societal discussion and decision-making. “Purple Hearts,” Nina Berman’s sustained photographic project on the grievously wounded soldiers coming back from the war in Iraq, for example, coupled with her visits to high school students with a veteran of that conflict, has served as an important counterpoint to some of the mythology invoked by military recruiters. Michael “Nick” Nichols’s beautiful photographs of Gabon, made on assignment for National Geographic magazine, were critical in inspiring that country’s leader to transform over 10 percent to his country into a network of natural preserves after he was shown the images in a New York hotel room.

Compassion fatigue is due in large part to media’s repetitive obsession with shock and supreficiality, not to an assumed lack of interest or compassion on the part of readers. Rather than engaging their viewers in serious conversation, media’s response to a fear of being irrelevant has made their irrelevance a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Casting doubts on the credibility of the photograph and other media, the introduction of the digital may be the moment to argue for a more thoughtful, less automatic approach to establishing authenticity, including a more sustained collaboration with the reader.

Fred Ritchin is professor of photography and imaging at New York University. Previously the picture editor of the New York Times Magazine and founding director of the Photojournalism and Documentary Photography Programme at the International Centre of Photography. He is also director of PixelPress (pixelpress.org) an organisation that works at the intersection of new media, documentary and human rights.



THE SOCIAL PHOTOGRAPH
Extract from the essay published in “After Photography,” WW Norton, New York 2009

**FRED
RITCHIN**



Paradox 9 from Decoded Paradox © JJ Valaya

Paradox 26 from Decoded Paradox © JJ Valaya



JJ Vallaya

JJ Valaya is a well known fashion designer. These images are taken from his first photoexhibition, held in 2011, Decoded Paradox.



Trucks



Insekt



Still life with a pipe

**KURT
CAVIEZEL**

GLOBAL AFFAIR – Explorations in the Net

Kurt Caviezel photographs the world using publicly accessible webcams. So he does not operate like a conventional photographer – in a particular place with a camera at his eye ready to capture that “decisive moment” in the flow of real events. Instead he sits at home at his computer, “strolls” per mouse click through the whole internet and collects images that appear briefly on his screen before being overwritten again by subsequent images. These images are from all realms of life, between the normally protected (by one’s own four walls) private sphere and the exterior spaces surveyed for security reasons by cameras; foreseeable images as well as totally surprising images.

What Kurt Caviezel observes on his screen and stores on the hard disc of his computer are excerpts from an infinite flood of images produced by thousands of webcams distributed all over the globe. That flow suggests a global perspective and pretends to illuminate all corners of the earth, but the image of the world it actually provides is merely fragmentary, sometimes at a time lag and with quite a number of image disturbances.

Even though Kurt Caviezel has himself never been to the places where these webcam images were taken, the works in the exhibition still display his distinctive artistic handwriting. Caviezel works as an assembler, so to speak, of a world found as an image, not unlike those artists in the 1920s who created new pictorial worlds out of “found images” in printed mass media.

From the exhibition notes by Martin Gasser (Translated by Pauline Gumbers) Swiss Foundation of Photography, Winterthur, 27 February - 15 May 2011

Kurt Caviezel, born in Chur, Switzerland in 1964, lives and works as an independent artist in Zurich



"In all colours and sizes" from the series, "A Better Life". Drying underwear of a group of adolescent boys living in a shelter home in Delhi. © Vicky Roy, 2009

VICKY ROY

Vicky Roy (b.1987, West Bengal) graduated from the Salaam Baalak Trust (SBT). He studied photography at Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi and the International Center of Photography, New York. He also trained with Anay Mann. Time Out magazine recognized him among 25 achievers under 30 in July 2009.



Possibly Johnson, William Ghur Baree (House Holding) Gosaees c.1863, albumen print ACP:D2005.67.0001-00055

Ethnographic photography in 19th-century India appears to encapsulate and reflect several interrelated and, might I add, entangled concerns of the modern world as it developed in the period of colonial rule. It heralded another chapter in the age of the modern episteme and practices of collecting that had emerged since the 18th century. The insecurities of the state functioning under the perennial threat of resistance also looked towards the camera's disinterested yet equally disconcerting gaze on all and sundry, as a measure of security. Furthermore, its appearance generated a heightened interest in the echelons of power to expand the ambit of record as well, embracing concerns of early anthropology that viewed the colony as a laboratory of sorts.

Three photographers in particular who emerge as key figures in the narrative of this genre in the Indian subcontinent are Dr Narayan Daji (1828–75), William Johnson (worked in Bombay c. 1848–61) and Dr Benjamin Simpson (1831–1923). Each exhibited an avid interest in photography at roughly the same time, i.e., between 1850 and 1870, and keenly experimented with the camera to record communities living in India. The two decades in question were significant for photography as the belief in the camera's reliability was at its zenith at this point, resulting in a number of endeavours which encouraged its use and dissemination. This included the birth of Photographic Societies-1854 in Bombay and 1856 in Calcutta and Madras-the inclusion of photography in colonial exhibitions, right from the 1850s, the rise of photographic studios in the aforementioned cities and a zealous involvement of the State in projects such as the eight-volume tome, *The People of India* (1868–75). The latter, in fact, represents a hallmark in the State's investment in image compendia that approached what became regarded as anthropological photography. Its avowed objective to record and decipher communities along the lines of race, caste, religion, and political allegiance worked to the ostensible advantage of a discipline trying to furnish data to test its ideas as well as a state trying to ward off the possibility of further resistance, following the uprising of 1857.

However, the publication in question was also an intellectual and imaginative watershed, moulding later perceptions of ethnographic photography as a form of categorization that effected a closure of identity. It has led scholars to draw a clear demarcation between images that contributed to the corpus of anthropology, and portraiture. According to this line of argument, while anthropological works seek to convey the typical in any community, portraits highlight individuality, most commonly from circles of the elite. However, while the argument remains broadly valid when considering the aspect of class, such distinctions collapse when observed more closely, especially with regard to the work of the practitioners under discussion. Photographers such as Daji and Simpson, who contributed to the first volume of *The People of India* (1868), it could be argued, became unsuspecting players in a political exercise that subjected their labour of love to the vagaries of a state riddled with insecurities, and a discipline that had too many gaping holes. Their oeuvre reflects a profound involvement with their craft, and the subjects before the lens, articulating a vocabulary for ethnographic photography that was much more nuanced than a reductive decipherment might require, expressive of realities that were varied and which often undermined the objectives of a disciplinary practice or state enterprise. Daji's work reflects this in many ways. He was a private medical practitioner, having graduated from the Grant Medical College in Bombay in 1852. Although he closely missed out on obtaining a position as a teacher of photography at the Elphinstone College, Bombay in 1855, he went on to become a council member of the Bombay Photographic Society for the period 1857–61, and exhibited widely in spaces such as the Bengal Photographic Society exhibition of 1857. It is easy to observe his images as cohering to the norms of early anthropological photography, in the manner in which he framed bodies in the 'Koli Fishermen', or 'The Toddywala', each a close-up against a plain backdrop meant to highlight details such as physiognomy, costume and implements held by the subject, and at times accompanied by inscriptions on the print which implied a scientific interest in the subject as specimen. Alongside these however, there appeared images of revered members from communities such as Vairagis (vaishnav ascetics) (Fig. 1), Jain Priests and Vallabhacharya Maharajas that equally intimated a 'vernacular' interest in representations of communally revered, even sacred entities. Here the gaze of the sitter, rather than contained in the picture frame, very often sought out the viewer, quite unusual within the genre at the time, and anticipated a late-19th century trend for chromolithographs of priests, gods and goddesses, which were marketed as mobile shrines that could be hung and worshipped at home.

PARTIAL CONNECTIONS: from the colonial archive

William Johnson, also based in Bombay, balanced his work as a civil servant with an abiding interest in photographing Bombay. With a studio in Grant Road, his sustained interest in the city and its surroundings resulted in several publications on the region and its peoples, including *Costumes & Characters of Western India* (c. 1860). His most famous work, however, done in collaboration with another photographer, William Henderson, was *The Oriental Races and Tribes*, produced in two volumes in 1863 and 1866, one of the earliest ethnographic/ethnological albums produced worldwide, and certainly the first on India, which was illustrated with photo-montage compositions, a combination of two negatives in a single print. There are several examples in *The Oriental Races and Tribes* which undermine the norms of an objective scientific study of races and communities, which would, for example, always consider the anonymity of the sitter the general rule and any personal reference to him irrelevant to an essentially physical assessment. This peculiar engagement with the personal biography of ethnographic examples disturbed the universal objectivity of an ostensibly scientific project. Furthermore, several other posed compositions, along with the descriptive pieces that accompanied the illustrations, betrayed a collaboration between the photographer and the sitter that negated the imposition of a premeditated meaning often associated with such studies. This comes through in the absorbed gazes of 'The Parsis' which evokes a playful theatricality, or the 'Ghar Bhari Gosaees' (Fig. 2) that displays a quite distinct performative aesthetic. Several such examples furnish the possibility of an affirmation of identity, associated rather exclusively with a later tradition of studio portraiture and/or self-portraiture.

The work of Benjamin Simpson, though covering a different geographical region, was marked by a similar fascination with photographic portraits of tribal communities in Northeast India. Simpson's photography was carried out alongside a successful medical career, which culminated in his appointment as Surgeon General to the Government of India in 1885. Once again, while Simpson's work is chiefly recognized as documenting tribal communities which appear in the first volume of *The People of India* (1868), and more so for their lithographic reproductions in later publications, his original photographs stand apart for their remarkable skill and sensitive observation (Fig. 3). Although features such as the vignetting and soft focus sought to create a certain aura around the subjects, his portraits were nonetheless infinitely more expressive than later representations of Northeastern communities, significantly removed from the typicality that characterized the genre. In fact, they remained without precedent in the history of representing communities from the region which turned to a pre-photographic, draughtsman like rendering after his early forays, and notably remained so well into the early 20th century, presumably considered better suited to the depiction of 'tribal' identity as an aspect of material culture and artefactual history. The appreciation they received in the circuit of colonial exhibitions, as simple yet thought out, artistic compositions was a world removed from their later regard and function.

Examples such as these, which surface through a closer consideration of individual photographers, reveal practices that are richly layered, more so than their regard as 'ethnographic' might allow. Their influence on succeeding trends in studio photography, anthropological photography, photographic self-portraiture and even aspects of popular visual culture allows for a reassessment of the colonial archive and its competing claims.

Akshaya Tankha was a researcher at the Alkazi Foundation for the Arts from 2008 to 2011. He has just started a PhD at the University of Toronto.

AKSHAYA
TANKHA



Simpson, Benjamin Mishmi Hill Tribe. Assam. c. 1862, albumen silver print. ACP: D2005.88.0001-00028

Daji, Narayan Bhyrajee, a worshipper of Ram-Chandra c.1855-70s, albumen silver print ACP:2005.01.0001-00013





Khetoshe waiting for a friend. Circular Road

In my ongoing project about Dimapur, in the State of Nagaland, I take photographs of people and of selected aspects of the town with the intention to present a personal, nuanced and contemporaneous vision of the place, and through it, a complex idea of people usually labelled under the limited tag of traditional Naga identity. The portraits and the pictures of the town reveal the spirit of Dimapur, its way of life, its divisions and fractures, and the changes underway from a traditional to a modern way of life. At the same time, the portraits depict shared experiences – youth and aging – and universal emotions and behaviours – confidence and shyness, seduction and reserve, sadness and joy –, making one aware of what people have in common independent of their place of birth, their ethnical or religious origins.

Zubeni Lotha is a photographer from the northeastern Indian State of Nagaland. She has a photo studio in Dimapur called Not Just Passport Size and has published work in Outlook Traveller and The Caravan. The pictures selected by Camerawork are from an ongoing project on Dimapur which combines portraits in black and white and pictures of select aspects of the city. She has also been photographing drug rehabilitation centers around Dimapur and video parlours in the town, as well as documenting bee culture and honey production in different communities in Nagaland. Her other work in the northeast includes a project on the mining community in the Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya.

DIMAPUR: Personal Photographic Approach

**ZUBENI
LOTHA**

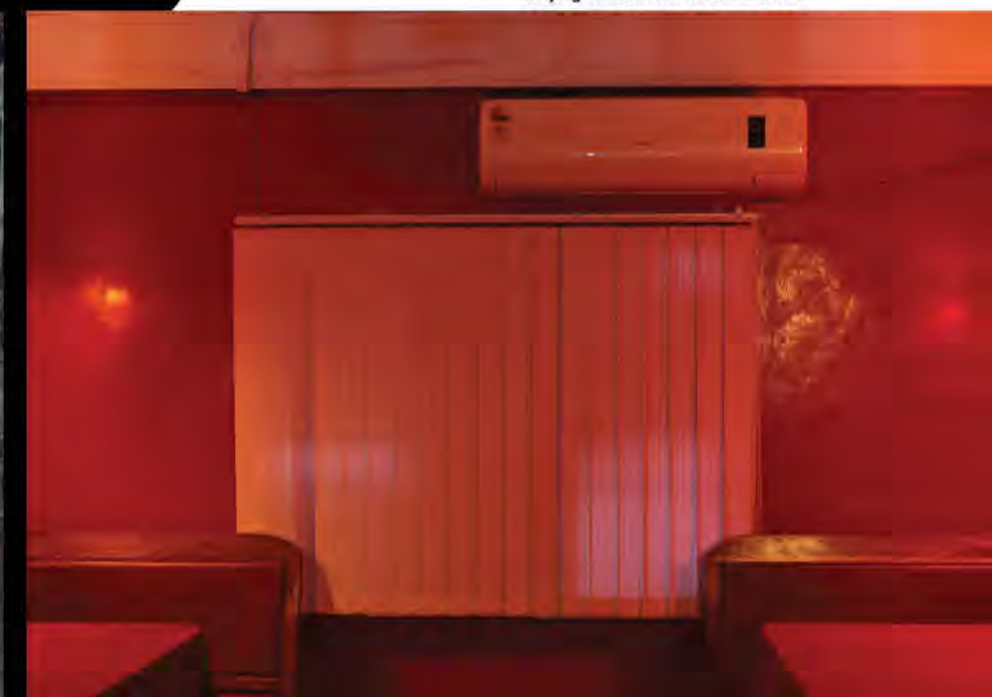


Che Guevara and ball. IMC Hall

Wall of Eros cinema hall. Eros Lane



Beijing Restaurant. Circular Road





Seshan 26 . 50"x20" inkjet print 2010

These panoramas (named for their nearest Metro stop) depict the changing landscape on the advancing fringes of Shanghai, China in the Spring of 2010. Here the land and water reflects the rapid social shifts occurring within the city while buildings simultaneously rise and fall from the mud which itself is a suspension of previous structures.

Daniel Leivick is an American photographer focusing on the built landscape from both a personal and a sociological perspective. He received a bachelors degree in studio art from Stanford University and is currently a masters of fine art candidate at Arizona State University.

DANIEL LEIVICK

Seshan 14 . 65"x20" inkjet print 2010



DELHI-BASED ARTIST WINS CANADA'S TOP PHOTOGRAPHY PRIZE

-By Zafri Mudasser Nofil | Agency: PTI

Delhi-based artist Gauri Gill has bagged this year's Grange Prize, the most prestigious contemporary photography award in Canada. She was selected by a public vote for the USD 50,000 award, given away by Art Gallery of Ontario and Aeroplan. Nandini Valli and Canadians Elaine Stocki and Althea Thauberger were also in the fray. The Grange Prize annually pits two Canadian photographers against two from another country — this year India.

In its verdict, the jury said, "Gauri Gill has recently emerged as one of India's most significant young photographers. Gill's practice is complex because it contains several seemingly discrete lines of pursuit. These include her more than a decade long study of marginalized communities in Rajasthan, of women from different generations and their often tentative encounter with modernity. Gill's work also addresses the twinned Indian identity markers of class and community as determinants of mobility and social behaviour. In these works there is irony, a rugged documentary spirit and a human concern over issues of survival."

Born in Chandigarh, she studied at the Delhi College of Art, the Parsons School of Design, New York and Stanford University. She started exhibiting in 2007 and her work has been shown widely in India and across the world. Gill found it very interesting that so many people entered the debate by bothering to look and vote.

"Photography is quite democratic in that sense, both in it's making and viewing. Most people can and do take photographs now - and have an opinion on it - and many who may not speak English or have access to other languages of privilege can access photography in some way. We often wonder who looks at our work, so it's good to know there is an engaged audience. I hope the prize also leads people to take a look at the various series in depth - I work in long series - and not only individual frames," she said.

According to Gill, in photography there is the question of power - of who is represented, who is made visible by the camera and who then becomes a "part of our collective consciousness as a society, and how we choose to see ourselves".

She feels there are people who are simply rendered invisible by the powerful mainstream. "I hope my work may in some small measure acknowledge those who may be considered at the margins but are also my friends, and honor my experience of knowing them."



Sunita, Nirmala and Sita. From the series Ballika Mela. Image courtesy the artist and Nature Morte Gallery



The Delhi Photo Festival, is India's first international photography festival, was held from 15 to 28 October 2011. The festival was a joint initiative of Nazaf Foundation and the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. There were more than 70 Photographic shows, print and digital, from 25 countries being exhibited during the festival. The print exhibitions will run through the two weeks, but all major interactive events of the festival were scheduled in an action-packed Opening Week, from 15 to 23 October 2011, featuring daily screenings of slideshows, films, lectures, artists' talks & seminars by leading Indian and international photography experts.

For details of the Photographers who were exhibiting, giving talks or conducting workshops, please visit our website www.delhiphotofestival.com

Info

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