

Suitcase Museum

Dayanita Singh

Curated by Tasneem Zakaria Mehta

11 December 2016 – 21 February 2017



Image courtesy: Dayanita Singh

The Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum presents, **Suitcase Museum**, by **Dayanita Singh**, an exhibition curated by Tasneem Zakaria Mehta. The exhibition is on view at the Kamalnayan Bajaj Special Exhibitions Gallery from 11 December 2016 – 21 February 2017.

About the Exhibition

The Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum is pleased to present Dayanita Singh's exhibition, 'Suitcase Museum', a collection of 44-*Museum of Chance* book-objects. Two suitcases make up this museum, presaging the future form of the museum and both condensing and expanding its boundaries. Singh challenges traditional and existing concepts of photography and pushes the medium to speak through other forms like the book, the museum and the archive.

At the Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum, which inspired Dayanita Singh early in her career, she appropriates the Museum's syntax and structure, its formal as well as its ideological function to present new ways of looking at and engaging with art works. This exhibition brings together some of Singh's most iconic images revealing her rigorous attention to form and detail to create compelling images that sublimate absence, loss, pain, loneliness and the "unredeemable" footsteps of time.

In the Industrial Arts Gallery Singh presents *Museum of Chance*, the original museum out of which grew other forms of her museum. The multitude of images both destabilise the act of looking and create new ways of engaging with the image. The photographs take on a life of their own compelling the viewer to recurate and reconfigure the exhibits.

Singh's work has evolved to go beyond the immediacy of the image to seek out its formal as well its ontological and spiritual implications. In the first room of the Bajaj Gallery she invites viewers to share her miniaturised museum space and have a conversation with her about the images. *Museum of Shedding* is about unloading the past and finding that still centre which comes after many years of practice. By domesticating the space with a bed she suggests that all of us can create our own museums - spaces of retreat and knowing.

In the centre room Singh explores the idea of 'Time'. In *Time Measures*, the bundles evoke a painterly quality as if each is a portrait of a secret life, of hidden meanings and untold stories. They gaze out at you beckoning you to imagine what might be there behind those casual folds and concealing knots. In the last room Singh pushes the idea of the Museum to its limits. The Suitcase Museum evacuates all the external elements that might impinge on bringing a collection together and ensuring it reaches the farthest possible destinations.

This exhibition is a continuation of the Museum's curatorial series, 'Engaging Traditions', which invites contemporary artists to interrogate the Museum's history and collection.

About the Artist

Dayanita Singh is an artist who uses photography to reflect and expand on the ways in which we relate to photographic images. Publishing is a significant part of Singh's practice: in her books, often made in collaboration with Gerhard Steidl, she experiments with alternate forms of producing and viewing photographs. Singh's latest is the “book-object,” a work that is concurrently a book, an art object, an exhibition and a catalogue. Stemming from the artist's interest in the poetic and narrative possibility of sequence and re-sequence, the “book-object” allows Singh to both create photographic sequence and also simultaneously disrupt it.

Most recently, Singh's *Museum Bhavan*, a series of mobile museums have been shown at the Hayward Gallery, London (2013), the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt (2014), the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago (2014) and the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi (2016). She has represented Germany at the Venice Biennale in 2013 and has also premiered her *File Room* work at the Venice Biennale in 2011.

Singh has also authored eleven books: *Zakir Hussain* (1986), *Myself*, *Mona Ahmed* (2001), *Privacy* (2003), *Chairs* (2005), *Go Away Closer* (2007), *Sent A Letter* (2008), *Blue Book* (2009), *Dream Villa* (2010), *House of Love* (2011), *File Room* (2013), and *Museum of Chance* (2014). Her twelfth book, *Museum Bhavan*, recently been published with Steidl, is also a pocket museum.

About the Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum

The Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum opened to the public in 1857 and is Mumbai's oldest museum. It is the erstwhile Victoria and Albert Museum, Bombay, that showcases the city's cultural heritage and history through a rare collection of fine and decorative Arts that highlight early Modern Art practices as well as the craftsmanship of various communities of the Bombay

Presidency. The permanent collection includes miniature clay models, dioramas, maps, lithographs, photographs, and rare books that document the life of the people of Mumbai and the history of the city from the late eighteenth to early-twentieth centuries.

The Museum, once in a derelict condition, underwent a comprehensive five-year restoration by INTACH supported by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai and the Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation. The project won UNESCO's international Award of Excellence for cultural conservation in 2005. The Museum re-opened in 2008 with an extensive exhibition programme and is committed to promoting contemporary art and culture.

The Museum hosts an extensive exhibitions programme which explores the importance of the collection and includes a strong focus on contemporary art and culture. A series of curated exhibitions titled, 'Engaging Traditions,' invites artists to respond to the Museum's collection, history and archives, addressing issues that speak directly to the traditions and issues that underlie the founding of the Museum, yet evoke the present by challenging orthodoxies and questioning assumptions. Several distinguished contemporary artists have participated in this programme such as Sudarshan Shetty, Jitish Kallat, Atul Dodiya, L. N. Tallur, Ranjini Shettar, Sheba Chhachhi, CAMP, Thukral and Tagra.

The Museum has partnered with international institutions to showcase artists and exhibitions including the Victoria and Albert Museum, British Council, British Library, Dresden State Art Collections, Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, Museum of Modern Art, Ermenegildo Zegna Group and Guild of the Dome Association in an effort to facilitate international cultural exchange. The Museum has expanded its curatorial initiative to invite external curators, institutions and organisations to present exhibitions related to the focus areas of the collections.

The Museum's education and outreach programme aims to build and diversify the Museum's audiences, encouraging repeat visits and engaged participation with its permanent collections, contemporary exhibitions and activities. On offer is a rich selection of programmes including film, music and courses and lectures on history of art focused on providing stimulating, participatory experiences that respond to different age, interest and language groups, and



recognize a diversity of backgrounds. These experiences are aimed at encouraging critical engagement with Mumbai's history, art and cultural developments.

For more information on Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum, please visit:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BDLMuseum>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BDLMuseum>

Website: www.bdlmuseum.org

E-mail: enquiry@bdlmuseum.org

Telephone: +91 22 23731234

For Listings

The Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum presents, Suitcase Museum, by Dayanita Singh, an exhibition curated by Tasneem Zakaria Mehta.

Exhibition Dates: 11 December 2016 – 21 February 2017

Exhibition Venue:

Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum
91A Rani Baug, Veer Mata Jijabai Bhonsle Udyan
Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marg,
Byculla East, Mumbai 400027

Timings:

10:00 am to 6:00 pm | last entry 5:30 pm
Closed on Wednesdays and certain public holidays

For press enquiries, please contact

Komal Chitnis | kchitnis@bdlmuseum.org | +91 22 23731234