



SILVER MAGIC
VINTAGE PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE GOLDEN AGE OF HINDI CINEMA –
PORTRAITS BY J.H. THAKKER

14th December 2015 – 12th January 2016

Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum presents *SILVER MAGIC: Vintage Photographs of the Golden Age of Hindi Cinema, Portraits by J.H. Thakker*, curated by Ram Rahman. The exhibition is on view from 14th December 2015 until 12th January 2016.

About the Exhibition

Jethalal H. Thakker (1923 - 2003) came to Bombay as a partition refugee from Karachi in 1947, his father having moved the family from Quetta after the great earthquake. Thakker had apprenticed at a photo studio in Karachi before setting up his own studio there. Moving to Bombay during partition, he set up the India Photo Studio in Dadar next to Chitra Cinema. A chance visit by a young, aspiring actress led to a connection with the film industry. He soon became known for his moody portraits and he developed a signature style of dramatic lighting with spotlights, shadow textured backgrounds and studio props and costumes.

The young actors would come and hang out in the studio, sometimes bringing their own props, and create theatrical portraits together with Thakker. These were performance collaborations in a sense, and many of the resulting photographs were not connected to any particular film the actors were making. Viewing Thakker's work, it is obvious he was very sensitive to the individual personalities of the actors and his studio portraits created fictional stills which are filled with pathos, longing, desire, fear and terror – many of the *Rasa*'s of the actors' craft. These portraits have an intimacy which grips the viewer – the souls of the actors have been captured and we, as viewers feel we know the person. That almost all these actors became superstars and screen icons as their careers progressed, adds a special meaning to the photographs they made together. Many of the photographs became iconic images which defined the actors in the hearts of their fans – Raj Kapoor, Dev Anand, Dilip Kumar, Nargis, Meena Kumari, Nutan, Ashok Kumar, Pran.

Thakker's portrait work is significant not just as a fine example of the studio photography tradition in India, but doubly significant because it created the public image of the Bombay film industry in its golden period in the decade after independence. Thakker's style was quite unique



and the emotional punch he was able to convey, especially in these unique, vintage silver-gelatin prints, is unmatched even in the studio portrait tradition of Hollywood or the other film cultures in India – Madras, Hyderabad and Calcutta. The beautifully toned prints were made under

Thakker's supervision in his darkroom. He was so regarded that Madhuri Dixit, possibly the last in the tradition of the great divas, went to him to do her portraits in black and white. The same studio, the same lights, the same huge view camera he used for his past greats. The result is in this show.

For the first time, many of the photographs Thakker made on the sets in the film studios are going to be shown. Those with an interest in cinema history will recognize the stills from the films of the 1950s and early 1960s. These pictures are terrific records of how the magic of the movies were created in studio sets in the days before digital rendering and manipulation, and are wonderful examples of the inspiration and creativity which went into creating the fantasy and imagined world of the films which have delighted and moved us across the generations.

This is a rare chance for a new generation to see a little-known history of both photography and cinema, and to connect with an important part of the popular cultural history of the city of Bombay, which became a crucial part of our national identity.



About Ram Rahman

Photographer, artist, curator, designer and activist Ram Rahman, initially studied physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and later completed a degree in Graphic Design from Yale University School of Art in 1979. His most recent solo shows include, Bioscope: Scenes from an Eventful Life presented by Bodhi Art in 2008 and Visions of India: Photographs by Ram Rahman at the Cleveland Museum of Art in 2002. Amongst the shows, Rahman has curated are Heat: Moving Pictures Visions, Phantasms and Nightmares at Bose Pacia in 2003 and Noor Devyani Krishna, A Retrospective at the National Gallery of Modern Art in 2000. Rahman recently curated the exhibition 'Sunil Janah Vintage Photographs 1940 – 1960' at the NGMA, Mumbai. He is one of the founding members of the Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (SAHMAT) in New Delhi, a leader in the resistance to communal and sectarian forces in India through its public cultural action. The artist lives and works in New Delhi.

About Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum

The Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum was established in 1872 as the erstwhile Victoria and Albert Museum, Bombay. As Mumbai's oldest Museum, it 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 exhibitions programme which explores the importance of the collection and includes a strong focus on contemporary art and culture.

A series of curated exhibitions called 'Engaging Traditions', invites artists to respond to the Museum's collection, history and archives. 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 also partnered with several international institutions for collaborative 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 has an extensive education and outreach programme that 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, and artistic and cultural developments.

The Museum has become an important cultural hub in the city.

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For Listings:

Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum presents

SILVER MAGIC: Vintage Photographs of the Golden Age of Hindi Cinema, Portraits by J.H. Thakker

Curated by Ram Rahman

Supported by India Photo Studio, Dadar, Mumbai

Exhibition Dates: 14th December 2015 – 12th January 2016

Exhibition Venue:

At the Kamalnayan Bajaj Special Exhibition Gallery

Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum

91A Rani Baug, Veer Mata Jijabai Bhonsle Udyan

Dr Baba Saheb 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 further details, please contact:

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