

The Surface of Things: Photography in Process

20 August 2017 – 19 September 2017



Woman, Untitled, 24 x 30", Digital print with lightbox, 2016

Edson Dias, Uzma Mohson, Sukanya Ghosh and Srinivas Kuruganti,
from conversations with Rahaab Allana



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for the Arts

Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum in collaboration with the Institute Francais en Inde and Alkazi Foundation for the Arts present, **The Surface of Things: Photography in Process**. The exhibition will be on view at the Special Project Space, Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum from 20 August 2017 – 19 September 2017

About the Exhibition

The experimentation with a light sensitive surface eventually led Joseph Nicéphore Niépce (1765-1833), inventor of the first photograph– a heliograph – to create a copy-image of a view through his window in Le Gras in 1826. Almost 200 years hence, to usher a festival of photography during Bonjour India 2017-18, this exhibition invokes the birth of an analogue visual form through a process-oriented exhibit, featuring the works of 4 contemporary artists – Uzma Mohsin, Srinivas Kuruganti, Sukanya Ghosh and Edson Dias.

With every successive generation, photography has worked within set of conventions, but it has also consistently broken norms, reinterpreted histories and forged a fresh representation of reality. It imbibes cultural and political agency by dealing with aspects of spectatorship, autobiography and subjectivity. The images exhibited are intended then to invite readings on the process of image making, suggesting the medium's potential to equate socio-historical concerns with personal positions at a time when the daily production of images through social media has reached an unprecedented, explosive scale – marking the birth of a new maker as well as an ever-growing audience.

The conversation about the medium here veers from usage to intention; practice to purpose, initiated through the interstitial territory of memory making wherein technology, the archive and history meld into a contemporary composite, a layered form. Montage, multiple exposures and the social documentary mode together challenge the claim of any one voice, or singular reading. An intended departure from linearity and narrative hence marks their incremental and studied approaches – lives reconstructed through images by seeing them repeatedly disclose, fragment after fragment, detail after detail, a projection of self as a reference to the world.



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The questions being raised through the content, which will be generated specifically for the exhibition or culled from existing archives of the photographers, deals with practices of new media, as well as the image as an object of historical value and hence, cultural relevance. The exhibition questions not only the essential form of photography that changes over time, but, incidentally, the situations in which it is placed which also changes their meaning. Experimentation is therefore an essential part of a larger concern about contemporary ways of ‘seeing’, and what we may learn from the past – in order to make propositions for the future.

Rahaab Allana, Curator

Brief about Artists’ Works:

Edson Dias’ complete immersion into 19th century photo processes (Salt paper, Albumen and Van Dyke Brown) have a ressurective appeal – a life that is elongated further by multiple exposures of himself, one that he considers to be a psychological enactment of voices from within. The work here assumes the form of a mental mapping of the processes – moving from test prints, to more exacting results –imagined through sketches, hand notes and compositions made in order to stage the moment.

Uzma Mohsin, in collaboration with Bharat Bhushan Mahajan and his son Amit Mahajan, practitioners of street portrait photography – the manual images produced here intersect with a contemporary culture of image making. The title of the series is with reference to the box camera used for this series, also called the ‘minute camera’ as it has an approximately one minute exposure time. This easy-to-make camera democratised photography by allowing ordinary people to have their photographs taken and became quite popular in Afghanistan, India, Pakistan and Myanmar between the 1950s-80s. Personal interests, fantasies and aspirations form an integral part of the resultant imagery as photomontage and ‘trick photography’ were extensively used to create images much like social media platforms. Through intermixing of the box camera snapshot and the analogue montage, the work explores a temporal and material interplay. At times the composite nature of images is further accentuated by an overlaying filter of hand-colouring.



Browsing through the Mahajan archive, and often using it as source material, the images produced, often with unexpected results, are further framed or presented as clips from Instagram, where hash tags and comments run as sub-texts. The ‘virtual’ turn of photography is addressed as a social media, as that too is a space of re-contextualising and extrapolating meaning, achieved here through groupings and trendy juxtapositions.

Sukanya Ghosh’s work assumes three inter-relating forms – composite boxes, overlaying projections and backlit frames as a kind of visual scrapbooking – all three of which fracture and reframe the idea of situated-ness and provenance, as the image traverses across visual platforms and media.

The work centers around a collection of photographs of her family. They range from landscapes, group and individual photos and architectural photos. The work is set in the idea of the photograph as archive and as a repository of recollection and memory. By juxtaposing these images, she plays with time and memory to build imagined histories and geographies.

Citing several modern and contemporary artists (Joseph Cornell, Eadweard Muybridge, Stan Brakhage, Hannah Hoch and William Kentridge to name a few), she assesses her own approach as an investigative one, in order to question the contours of originality and authorship – her combination images filter into a glossary of interruptions, time breakages and inversions, all of which challenge the permanence of the image, stirring its affective, unpredictable scheme.

Srinivas Kuruganti explores on the street, in a studio or in the privacy of ones home, the image produced is also, at first, a memento. And here the exhibit seuges into the archive of Srinivas Kuruganti – an extensive array of images from his time in New York in the early 90s (particularly 1992-97) – manually produced in a darkroom, often in his own apartment. The abandon of a wandering lens and the expanding eye are enhanced with the recurrent custom of trial and error, and foster moments of social inclusion, complicity, and mutual intimacy.

The simultaneity, ease and unpredictability of personal relationships are formally explored through portraiture, abstraction, and street photography, encased as personal frames of reference, a diary.



Some of the more staged images, are perhaps attempts to integrate art with life – through revelries, rebellions and free-spirited communal groups that were on the sanctified path of introspection – that is split open.

This exhibition addresses the analogue head on, and questions its materiality by exploring ways of bracketing, embodying, editing and augmenting ones own practice, wherein the irony and prophesy lies in how the digital has invited a modern means of production into its own evolution and critique.

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 art and culture 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 Museum was in a derelict condition and 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. The Museum has partnered with several international institutions to showcase artists and exhibitions including the Victoria and Albert Museum, British Library, Solomon R Guggenheim Museum and Museum of Modern Art in an effort to facilitate international cultural exchange.

The Museum's education and outreach programme aims to build and diversify the Museum's audiences. 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



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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: www.facebook.com/BDLMuseum

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

Website: www.bdlmuseum.org

E-mail: enquiry@bdlmuseum.org

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About the Institute Francais en Inde

Institut Français en Inde (IFI) is the cultural service of the French embassy in India that connects and implements Indo-French exchanges in various fields. A platform that enables partnerships, IFI promotes academic exchange between higher institutes of learning, enables student mobility and promotes French language. IFI's work also comprises scientific partnerships in research and innovation, capacity-building and interactions with civil society, vocational studies, as well as artistic and cultural partnerships in arts, books, film, fashion, design and more.

About The Alkazi Foundation for the Arts

The Alkazi Foundation for the Arts is a Registered Charitable Trust, dedicated to the preservation of the cultural history of India through extensive research on photography. Housed in the Foundation is the private collection of Ebrahim Alkazi, known as the Alkazi Collection of Photography, which comprises works in the form of photographic albums, single prints, paper negatives and glass-plate negatives, painted photographs and photo-postcards. The collection is particularly strong in areas such as archaeology, architectural history, the urban development of colonial cities, military studies, anthropological studies, portraiture of the people of South Asia and topographical views.



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For Listings

Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum in collaboration with the Institute Francais en Inde and Alkazi Foundation for the Arts present,

The Surface of Things: Photography in Process

Exhibition Dates: 20 August 2017 – 19 September 2017

Exhibition Venue:

The Special Project Space

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

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