

Up Above the World Contemporary South Asian Photography

Featuring Atul Bhalla, Sanjay Bhattacharyya, Sanjeet Chowdhury, Anita Dube, Pooja Iranna, Vidya Kamat, Jatinder Marwaha, Huma Mulji, Akbar Padamsee, Raghu Rai, Iqra Tanveer and Santosh Verma.

May 10th – June 22nd, 2013

Press Preview & Opening Reception: Friday, May 10th, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

35 Great Jones St., New York NY 10012

Aicon Gallery, New York is pleased to present *Up Above the World*, a group exhibition featuring twelve Contemporary photographers documenting the rapidly changing South Asian socio-economic landscape and its ever-shifting impacts on issues ranging from the personal to the global. The exhibition looks back through the history of post-independence Indian and Pakistani photography, from the now iconic images of Indian society in motion by Magnum photographer **Raghu Rai** to conceptual artist **Atul Bhalla's** documentation of his epic performances seeking to balance our collective contemporary needs and responsibilities with our shared history and its consequences. As the exhibition's title suggests, the work here, taken as a whole, presents a vast panoramic view of South Asia's complex past, present and future through the vision of a group of artists more varied than encompassing and rooted, both individually and collectively, in the worlds and issues they're seeking to interpret and present.



Jatinder Marwaha, *Untitled 2*, Digital print on hahnemuhle rag paper, 56 x 78 in.

Raghu Rai, India's pre-eminent photographer for nearly half a century, has focused on candid snapshots of the whole of India that masterfully capture the country's ever-evolving regional, cultural and political transformations. Nominated to Magnum Photos by the legendary photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, his work challenges viewers to confront a country where temporalities merge and people, animals, and buildings come together in a majestic visual symphony representative of the complex and often-chaotic tableaux of modern Indian life.

Sanjeet Chowdhury, a filmmaker by profession, began taking photographs during his college days in Kolkata in the late 1980s. His photographic work often highlights the rich, yet sometimes jarring, intermingling of India's multiple pasts and divided present. Discarded Greek statuary, left behind by the British, mixes with discarded Hindu deities and Mughal figures, while makeshift scaffolding stands thinly veiled behind huge advertisements for slick consumer products. Chowdhury's work draws attention to the ubiquitous cultural and economic contrasts so embedded in today's urban India that their rich origins and complex contemporary implications are often completely overlooked.

Engaged with the shared environmental and ethical concerns of a new generation, **Atul Bhalla** is a conceptual artist who examines this new generation's relationship to water and its cultural meaning. Bhalla's works are universally pertinent, examining both our individual and collective relationships with the elements necessary for our very existence. Bhalla's art addresses issues of contemporary needs versus consequent roles of natural, cultural, or built heritage and may be used to decode the contemporary



Huma Mulji, *Housing Scheme*. 2008. C-print on photographic paper, 40 x 60 in.

landscape in India by tracing social constructions and discourses in post-independence South Asian society.

Pakistani artist **Huma Mulji**'s work explores the nuances of a post-colonial society in transition. She refers to the experience of 'living 200 years in the past and 30 years in the future all at once' and investigates the visual and cultural overlaps of language, image and taste and their fantastic collisions. Mulji's photo-based work looks at this phenomenon with a touch of humor to recognize the irony of it, both formally and conceptually. At its core, Mulji's art examines the pace of cultural change. She breathes life and movement into

transformation, rather than dwelling on and following the existing theoretical issues of living and working in a post-colonial nation, opting to apply those stagnant studies to a lived experience.

Critic and art historian **Anita Dube** began creating art as a result of her association with a group of radical artists from Baroda in the 1980s. Dube's work, initially concerned with the corporal body and its properties, soon shifted to broader historical and political concerns. Hindu symbols, such as the upside-down "Tree of Life" are prominent motifs in Dube's work, which deals with issues of mortality, desire, pain and joy. The work draws equally on elements from the present as well as the historical and mythological, while utilizing a variety of materials, including foam, plastic and wire mixed with the human body and bone fragments to evoke the rise, flux and fall of modern industrial structures and societal norms.

Pooja Iranna's world of artistry is one where structures and textures take focus. Through her work in manipulated photography, she examines the underlying energies of inanimate architectural forms, where repeated and mirrored grid-like structures form nets of reflective landscapes that swell and ripple with the repressed organic labor and force through which they were constructed. **Vidya Kamat**'s practice is an on-going inquiry into the ways in which the human body (and the attendant complexities of self-hood) is 'written' by symbolism. Significance is derived from the layers of meaning that can veil the human body, and the artist suggests that perhaps there can be no understanding outside these layers; no 'pure', unmediated relationship to the body.

Jatinder Marwaha uses a flexible and dynamic style for his range of subjects to capture the essence of people and spaces through both studio lighting and location photography. His methods fuse the strengths of both traditional and digital imaging techniques, developing the interactive communication of his portrait and architectural photography through his personal and professional journeys across the world. A contemporary of Raghu Rai as well as an internationally acclaimed photojournalist, **Santosh Verma** has worked regularly for the past 40-years for *The New York Times*, *Bloomberg*, *International Herald Tribune* and *TIME Magazine*, among others. Focusing on the collective experience of both subjective and objective elements, Verma is able to reveal starkly intimate portraits and shared moments of pathos with his subjects ranging widely from scenes of urban collapse and industrial exploitation to sublime scenes of religious festivals and agrarian society.

Please contact Aicon Gallery (Amy@Aicongallery.com) for more information.