



HOWARD GREENBERG GALLERY

Raghubir Singh *BOMBAY*

October 26 – December 9, 2017



Raghubir Singh, *Muslim Girl, Nagpada, Bombay*, Chromogenic print, c. 1990-1993

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NEW YORK – An exhibition of street photography by Raghubir Singh, considered India's greatest photographer, will be on view at Howard Greenberg Gallery from October 26 – December 9, 2017. Pulsating with dramatic compositions and his characteristically controlled use of color, *BOMBAY* focuses on one of the artist's most significant body of work. Made in the early 1990s, it led to his book *Bombay: Gateway of India*, Aperture, 1994. The exhibition coincides with a retrospective at the Met Breuer entitled *Modernism on the Ganges: Raghubir Singh Photographs* from October 11, 2017 – January 2, 2018.

Although he lived in Hong Kong, Paris, London and spent significant time in New York throughout his career, Raghubir Singh (1942-1999) dedicated his career to photographing his native India. Singh worked at the intersection of western modernism and traditional South Asian perspectives. He was influenced by the work of Henri Cartier-Bresson, whom he met in Jaipur in 1966, befriended William Gedney to whom he dedicated his second book on Calcutta (a small exhibition of Gedney's work in India will accompany the exhibition), and traveled and photographed with Lee Friedlander. He pioneered color photography at a time when it was unpopular in the west, using it to great advantage to show the vibrant intensity of the country's culture, traditions, and religion. Today Singh's portrait of India during pivotal decades of social and political change is considered unique and unmatched.

Singh photographed the city of Bombay at a transitional point for the Indian economy. Bombay, the country's economic capital stood as the metaphor for the broader changes that had begun across the

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country. Singh's use of reflections are a revealing expression of this change. In the conversation that opens his book on Bombay, he told the British writer V.S. Naipaul, an admirer of his work, about the element of ambiguity and the sense of movement that glass and mirrors provide in his Bombay work. As Naipaul said, "You cannot take it all in at once. You have to let your eye move from centre to centre, so there is constant movement in the picture. I find this quality in your work. It is one of its virtues. The other thing I thought is that, with pictures like these one almost doesn't need words."

Mia Fineman, associate curator, Metropolitan Museum of Art, wrote in her text for the exhibition catalogue, "Singh's Bombay street scenes are filled with a new kind of energy, as if the elements in the pictures are held in suspension by centrifugal force. Hands, gestures, and gazes swirl around a still center point, usually anchored by an individual who pointedly ignores the camera or stares back at it with confrontational directness."

BOMBAY, Singh's first show with Howard Greenberg Gallery, will present 27 images that expose the complexities of the city, moving from unvarnished scenes of poverty to utter opulence. Using a handheld camera with color slide film, he wandered through the city of Bombay recording often intimate moments: a father in bed holding up his infant son, a man deep in thought next to another man sleeping on a doorstep, a pensive teenage girl looking at the camera. Other images focus on Indian cultural traditions. Two men, revelers in the Holi festival of colors are splattered with purple pigment in a 1990 photograph. The festival celebrates the arrival of spring and participants are frequently drenched in pigment powder. Another festival, Ganesh Chaturthi, takes place towards the end of the monsoon season when Ganesh, the elephant-headed deity, is celebrated and immersed in the Arabian Sea. Singh's 1989 photograph depicts a celebration with the enormous effigy of the deity.

About Raghbir Singh

Raghbir Singh was born in Jaipur in 1942. In the 1960s, he began working in photojournalism for Indian and international publications including *National Geographic*, *Time* and *The New York Times*. He was one of the first photographers to insist on the use of color at a time when color photography was not widely used. Over the course of his prolific career, he published 13 photography books, creating an unparalleled portrait of India. The last book published during his life was *River of Colour: The India of Raghbir Singh* in 1998, which marked the occasion of his retrospective exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago. He died at age 56 in 1999 in New York. *A Way into India* was published posthumously by his estate in 2002. His work is in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

About Howard Greenberg Gallery

Since its inception over 35 years ago, Howard Greenberg Gallery has built a vast and ever-changing collection of some of the most important photographs in the medium. The Gallery's collection acts as a living history of photography, offering genres and styles from Pictorialism to Modernism, in addition to contemporary photography and images conceived for industry, advertising, and fashion. Howard Greenberg Gallery is located at 41 East 57th Street, Suite 1406, New York. The gallery exhibits at The ADAA Art Show, The Photography Show presented by AIPAD, Photo London, Art Basel, Paris Photo, and Art Basel Miami Beach. For more information, contact 212-334-0010 or info@howardgreenberg.com or visit www.howardgreenberg.com.

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