

Travel Photo Jaipur A Festival on Wanderlust

A new international outdoor photography festival to be launched in Jaipur in February 2016

www.travelphotojaipur.com

Jaipur, February 2016 : The first edition of **Travel Photo Jaipur** is all set to launch in the *Pink City* from **5-14 February, 2016**. The Festival will be inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Shrimati Vasundhara Raje and is being partnered by the **Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan** and generously supported by **Birla Samrat Chetak Cement**.

Travel Photo Jaipur will showcase a specific kind of photography: travel photography. The launch edition will comprise of fourteen exhibitions from around the world, which will be displayed on large prints at some of the city's landmark locations, including the Hawa Mahal, Albert Hall Museum and Jawahar Kala Kendra, serving to highlight how sites of heritage can be used for contemporary artistic ends.



Aitor Lara, 'Tower of Silence'

During the first weekend of the festival (5- 7 February, 2016), there will be a series of talks and screenings as part of a compelling programme to draw lovers of photography to Jaipur. Some of the confirmed panellists are: Yumi Goto (co-founder and curator of the Reminders Photography Stronghold), Giles Tillotson (Academic and former Director of the Royal Asiatic Society, London), Thomas Seelig (curator, Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland), Cristina de Middel (award winning photographer, Spain), Mauro Bedoni (former photo-editor Colors Magazine), Waswo x Waswo (American photographer based in Udaipur), Rafal Milach (photographer and founder of Sputnik Photos) and Pablo Ortiz Monasterio (founder of Centro de la Imagen, Mexico DF). The festival will also offer two special interventions: a travelling photo studio by set designer and photographer Aradhana Seth and the conversion of the former Jaipur Art School in Kishanpole Bazar into a temporary exhibition space by photographer Akshay Mahajan.

Under the leadership of the Chief Minister of Rajasthan, the Hon'ble Vasundhara Raje, the state has launched a series of initiatives to enhance cultural tourism and cement the state's reputation as a destination for the arts. While many states have long focused on traditional crafts and heritage, Rajasthan is also espousing contemporary culture: Jaipur is already renowned for its annual literature festival which draws in thousands. State-wide efforts are now being made to also provide a supportive environment to the contemporary visual arts, photography and music in collaboration with experts and respected professionals from diverse fields.

"With time, the photography festival could have the same appeal for lovers of photography across the globe as the Jaipur Literature Festival has for lovers of literature. The potential is enormous not only because photography is a far more accessible medium than literature, but also because the city of Jaipur has so many sites that could be transformed into remarkable venues for photographic display" as commented by **Nikhil Padgaonkar, Producer of Travel Photo Jaipur**.

"The residents of Jaipur, who live in one of the most visited and celebrated cities of India, are used to being photographed. With Travel Photo Jaipur, the gaze is now reversed, and it is their turn to observe the photographic wonders of the world", says **Lola Mac Dougall, Artistic Director of Travel Photo Jaipur**.

For further information on Travel Photo Jaipur and high-res images, please contact Meghna Dutta, Account Director, Flint PR, Email: meghna.dutta@flint-pr.com Mobile: +91 9711167343 ; Office: +91 11 4711 9815 / Website: www.flint-pr.com

NOTES TO EDITORS - PHOTOGRAPHERS AND EVENTS

Xiaoxiao Xu, China, *She Huo* (2014)

In February 2014 Xu visited North-West China, a rough and unknown part of the country for the first time. Her objective was to photograph 'She Huo', a centuries-old rural celebration that takes place around the Chinese New Year. Huo literally means "fire", which expels evil spirits, derived from witchcraft and ancient totem worship. The celebration uses costumes, instruments and props as part of a series of elaborate performances designed to bring good harvest and fortune for the New Year. In her photo essay, she attempts to capture its atmosphere of curiosity, alienation, fairytale, mystery and longing that underlies this folk art. She left China at a young age. Photography allows her to explore her identity. These series of photos are the result of that exploration. www.xiaoxiaoxu.com



Xiaoxiao Xu, 'She Huo'

Serena Chopra, India, *The Ancients - Bhutan Diaries* (2002-2006)

Serena Chopra has been travelling to Bhutan for more than twelve years, photographing a community as it experienced a shift towards modernity, while preserving its culture. She trekked with a special permit to remote and restricted areas in high altitude regions as there were no roads that led to these faraway villages and nomadic communities. Serena had an intimate experience of the lives of various villagers since she lived with them during her repeated visits. Over the years, Chopra has created an archive of human emotions observed while travelling through a country that has famously been defined as searching for "gross national happiness". In many images, a particular prominence is given to ceremonial masks, representing a variety of deities. The small size of Bhutanese masks that cover the wearer's faces only up to the nose, together with an absence of openings where the divinities' eyes are depicted, ensure that the sitter looks back at the photographer only from the openings in the mouth, thereby fracturing the gaze. This exploration of a land so faraway, yet so close has been catalogued with a discrete classicism that offers an evocative insight into the lives of the Bhutanese people. www.sepiaeye.com/serena-chopra



Serena Chopra 'Bhutan Diaries'

George Osodi, Nigeria *Monarchs* (2012-ongoing)

Pre-colonial Nigeria, boasted many kingdoms whose fate changed with the arrival of the British. In 1963, when Nigeria became a republic within the Commonwealth, the monarchy system was formally abolished. However, the royal families have remained relevant in the political landscape, often serving as intermediaries between their communities and politicians. They still command respect of their subjects and enjoy a godlike status. Beyond the striking personalities, the full regalia and sense of fashion offer an insight into a fascinating material culture. Through these images, we follow the photographer George Osodi's journey of discovery of his own country, and of Nigeria's monarchs who, albeit not holding any constitutional power, remain custodians of peace and an of important cultural heritage. Curated by Ziggi Golding. www.nigeriamonarchs.com



George Osodi, 'Nigeria Monarchs'

Laurent Chehere, France, *The Flying Houses* (2007-ongoing)

Laurent Chehere, inspired by a poetic vision of old Paris, transforms ordinary homes in the outskirts of Paris into fantastical buildings presented as aerial still lifes. Separated from their urban context and broken free from the anonymity of the street, these buildings narrate a story about the individual lives of their inhabitants. From afar, the houses look whimsical and carefree, but upon closer inspection, the details of their dwellers reveal a more complex story. In this surreal universe, immovable assets become just the opposite: a means of transportation that remind us that at times a change of context is all it takes to start travelling. www.laurentchehere.com



Laurent Chehere, 'Flying Houses'

Gideon Mendel, South Africa/ UK, *Drowning World* (2007-ongoing)

After nine years travelling the world photographing floods, South African-born, London-based photographer Gideon Mendel knows that no two floods are alike. It all started in 2007, when Mendel photographed two floods that occurred within weeks of each other, one in the UK and the other in India. He could hardly have imagined that this body of work would become one of most eloquent photographic statements about climate change, earning him the prestigious 2015 Prix Pictet. What is disconcerting about these collaborative and intimate portraits is that, while the sitters pose as if for a conventional portrait, their environment has been stripped of normalcy. Mendel's wanderlust has led him to explore the ancient metaphor of the flood, and to underscore the world's continued vulnerability. www.gideonmendel.com

Aitor Lara, Spain, *Tower of Silence* (2005-2008)

Aitor Lara visited Uzbekistan to follow in the footsteps of Spanish Ambassador Ruy de Clavijo, who travelled through Central Asia between 1403 and 1406. Lara's objective was to compare the diplomat's chronicles with the contemporary situation of a country that was going through enormous transformation after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Both travellers, while separated in time, shared an intense desire to find wonder, that elusive concept that Europeans have consistently tended to locate in Asia, perhaps as an acknowledgement that there were unimaginable wonders to be found in cultures untouched by Christianity. www.aitorlara.com

Eunice Adorno, Mexico, *The Flower Women* (2012)

Flower Women is an examination of the life stories of a group of Mennonite women who gave Adorno access to their intimate spaces and daily experiences within their communities, located in Durango and the Onda Zacatecas regions of Mexico. These images subvert the notions of Mennonite culture as being conservative and rigid, by highlighting the emotional bonds between these women and the harmony they live in. The photographer communicated with the women either in Spanish, or in the German spoken within the community but also through gestures that universally speak of friendship, secrets, amusements. These images are, in some sense, a continuation of that conversation and complicity. Adorno, while sharing the same nationality as the sitters, has ventured into a culture to which she will always remain an outsider. www.euniceadorno.net

Luis González Palma, Guatemala

The series 'The Annunciation' (a 2007 collaboration with Graciela de Oliveira) is a study of the hands of classical Western paintings depicting the announcement of the angel Gabriel to the Virgin that she would become the mother of Jesus. We wish to read these sophisticated translations of hand paintings into photography as a reflection on the universality of certain hand gestures. When travelling in a land whose language is foreign to us, gestures of the hand instinctively become the first mode of communication. In 'Via 7' (2008), the gaze moves downwards to present us with portraits of shoes. These are mass produced, working class shoes, used till they are threadbare, and belonging to people so entrapped in the drudgery of their daily lives that they can only dream of travel, reminding us that it is a luxury beyond the reach of many. www.gonzalezpalma.com

Anna Fox, United Kingdom, *The Pulikali Tigers* (2011-2012)

Pulikali play (in Malayalam, 'Puli' means leopard or tiger while 'Kali' stands for play) is a ritualistic transformation typically performed during Onam, a harvest festival held each year in Kerala. Fox approached the pulleys with her large-format camera and a request: just before she shot them, she asked them to strike a dance pose that counters the rigidity of the studio photograph with the improvisation of performance. She also asked the tiger-performers to take their masks off, in order to reveal the contrast between fiction and reality. Fox is a traveller-photographer with a soft corner for India, a country that she first visited in 1984 and that she has returned to innumerable times ever since. www.annafox.co.uk

Catherine Balet, France, *Looking for the Masters in Ricardo's Golden Shoes* (2013-2015)

On a summer day, a few years ago, Catherine Balet was having breakfast with her friend Ricardo at a Paris café. She suddenly had a vision of him as the famous Picasso as portrayed by Robert Doisneau. Almost like children at play, they agreed to re-enact the famous photograph, initiating the "search for the masters", a series that features today 110 photographs, which will be published by Dewi Lewis in 2016. The septuagenarian Ricardo thus became the photographer's muse, a charismatic sitter who added to these re-creations one element from his own life: the golden shoes. The shoes soon became a leitmotif to re-visit the golden moments of photography, from a first self-portrait of 1839 to contemporary trends. Using a very contemporary practice, the appropriation, this journey through the history of photography questions our perception of memory and makes us wonder what makes a picture iconic. www.catherinebalet.com

Nishant Shukla, India, *Brief Encounters* (2008-2009)

Till date, the train remains India's favourite means of long-distance travel, and travel as a theme has preoccupied photographer Nishant Shukla for some years. In 2008, Shukla embarked on a train trip that took him from Jammu Tawi to Kanyakumari and in 2009 from Okha to Guwahati, thereby reinterpreting the existing railway grid through his own personal experience. The result is a series of portraits of people he encountered on his journeys. Says Shukla of this endeavour, "By recording different 'types' of people against the consistent backdrop of the train, the camera granted me the license to interact and stare at my travel companions". www.nishantshukla.com

Siya Singh Akoi, India, *The Dog Show Project* (2009-2010)

In the winter of 2009-10, Siya Singh Akoi started a cross-country tour of dog shows, visiting twelve cities, between Chandigarh and Chennai. In order to draw the viewer's attention to tiny details of the portraits and to make her subjects feel more aware of themselves as they stood in front of her, the photographer journeyed with a makeshift 9×9 foot 'studio' made of cloth. Singh Akoi was interested in exploring the commercial nature of dog shows, for she felt the canine breeding market was transforming the relationship between 'man and his dog'. She was interested in exploring the nuances of this new bond shaped by business interests. There are some photo essays that stoke in the viewer a curiosity about the circumstances in which the photographs were shot, a desire to understand the photographer's journey. Singh Akoi's series is one such instance, in which her determination to travel, sometimes in uncomfortable circumstances in order to capture her subjects, underscores every portrait. A lover of canines herself, Singh Akoi has never paraded any of her own eight dogs at shows. "My dogs don't wear collars and don't know how to walk on a leash" she says, "and my handsomest one would probably bite the judge."

MAfIA, Argentina, *Alto Mar*, 2014

According to the World Tourism Organization, the quest for leisure is the primary motive for travel for approximately 60% of tourists. Ever since the second half of the 19th century, when the phenomenon of mass tourism first emerged, the seaside has come to epitomize the touristic escapade. Coincidentally, this is also a period which saw the rapid expansion of photography, and it should come as no surprise that the two have developed a privileged relationship, with photographs validating the tourist experience. The coastal city of Mar del Plata in Argentina experienced a construction boom from the 1950s to the 1970s, and successive waves of 'development' have transformed it into the largest beach resort in Argentina. Around 2 million tourists visited Mar del Plata between the 1st of December of 2013 and the 26th of January of 2014 alone, a number four times larger than the total population of the city. In these portraits, Argentine sitters uninhibitedly display their bodies in the midst of a crowd of bathers. The use of flash creates a sense of studio and decontextualization. This has the effect of individualizing the subjects despite the sea of humanity surrounding them, and subtly questions the phenomenon of mass tourism. www.somosmafia.com.ar

Rafal Milach, Poland, *In the Car with R* (2010)

'In the car with R' was a book-project that resulted from a road trip that Polish photographer Rafal Milach undertook with Icelandic writer Huldur Brejdfjord in 2010. "To do the ring" is an Icelandic expression that refers to a trip around Route 1, the highway that encircles the country. It is a journey most Icelanders undertake at some point in their lives. Despite the apparent innocuousness of the endeavour, the writer warns us that doing the ring is fraught with danger: a lot of journeys on this road have ended in either divorce or in pregnancy. These risks of travelling with others are further aggravated when the travellers, on account of their different disciplines, acquire different rhythms and pace. The writer grumpily observes: "travelling with a photographer is a bit like shopping with a girlfriend who wants to look at all the clothes and try everything on - a never-ending drag." 'In the Car with R' is a poignant narration of a trip that -despite the misunderstandings- necessitates two different ways of seeing to engage each other: "When it comes to traveling (and photography?), what you see matters less than the way you look at it." www.rafaamilach.com

Collateral exhibition: **Karen Knorr. *India Song* (2008-ongoing)** Exhibition courtesy Tasveer Arts. www.karenknorr.com.
Venue: Amer Fort

SPECIAL INTERVENTIONS

The Merchant of Images: Jaipur Edition

Award-winning production designer/art director and photographer Aradhana Seth brings her globetrotting photo studio to Jaipur, and takes up residence at the iconic Hawa Mahal. Seth, whose portfolio includes production design on films like Deepa Mehta's *Earth* and art direction on Wes Anderson's *Darjeeling Limited*, started this project in her home studio and took it public for the first time at the Indian Summer Festival in Vancouver, Canada where it arrested the city's imagination. The Jaipur edition has a special backdrop painted by a group of painters from Rajasthan, and will invite the public to be playfully depicted as travellers.
Venue: Hawa Mahal | Timings: 10 a.m to 1 p.m. 2 p.m to 4 p.m. | Entry: Free

Akshay Mahajan (photographer and founder of blindboys.org) has taken over the former Jaipur Art School in Kishanpole Bazaar and created a site-specific exhibition using old postcards suggesting the idea of journey with a few trompe-l'oeil surprises. This is our homage to the postcard genre, which created, in the early decades of the medium, an unbreakable bond between travel and photography. Venue: Former Jaipur Art School in Kishanpole Bazaar | Timings: 09:30 to 16:30 | Entry: Free

For further information on Travel Photo Jaipur and high-res images, please contact Meghna Dutta, Account Director, Flint PR, Email: meghna.dutta@flint-pr.com Mobile: +91 9711167343 ; Office: +91 11 4711 9815 / Website: www.flint-pr.com

