

Culture of the Streets

Aicon Exhibition: January 20th – February 18th, 2017

Press Preview & V.I.P. Reception: Friday, January 20th, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

35 Great Jones Street, New York, NY 10012

Aicon Gallery is pleased to present ***Culture of the Streets***, an exhibition examining eleven artists' interpretations of the role landscapes and cityscapes play in shaping the cultural history and contemporary lives of the people that inhabit them. The exhibition takes its title from an iconic series photographs on display by **M. F. Husain**, exploring the richly textured urban landscapes of the modern Indian city and its multiplicity of inhabitants. The artists included represent an eclectic mix of both Modern and Contemporary South Asian and diaspora artists working across a wide range of styles and mediums over the second half of the 20th century. The exhibition features work by **M. F. Husain**, **Sanjeet Chowdhury**, **Abir Karmakar**, **Paresh Maity**, **B. Prabha**, **Raghu Rai**, **Jamini Roy**, **Bernardo Siciliano**, **Salman Toor**, **Santosh Verma**, and **Waswo X. Waswo**.



M. F. Husain, *Culture of the Streets Series*, c. 1980s, C-print on archival paper, 11 x 14 in.

The centerpiece of this exhibition is a selection of rarely exhibited yet iconic photographs done by **M. F. Husain**, perhaps India's most widely-known modern artist, in conjunction with **Chester and Davida Herwitz**, who built the largest collection of Modern Indian art in the United States, and worked directly with Husain on many projects throughout their lifetimes. The photography in this series is inspired by Husain's early years as a billboard painter for Indian cinema during its explosion in the mid-20th century, and often present stunning, yet playful, juxtapositions with the large glamorous cinematic images forming a backdrop to the frenetic life and crowds of the modern Indian streets. Chester Herwitz commented on the revelations of these images by stating "there are discoveries to be made in Husain's integration of the people beneath, beside, and in front of the hoardings, in the rich contrast of colors, the similarity of movement on the street and in the hoardings, in the contradictions that can be read in the scrawled graffiti...and the peeled and faded paintings."

A second and similar cornerstone of this exhibition is the work of **Raghu Rai**, perhaps India's pre-eminent photographer. Rai's prolific and internationally acclaimed career has spanned nearly half a century and has focused on candid snapshots of India that masterfully capture the country's continuing regional, cultural, and political transformations. Nominated to the world's most prestigious photographers cooperative, Magnum Photos, by the legendary photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, his work challenges viewers to confront a country where temporalities merge, and people, objects, animals, and buildings collide in a majestic visual symphony.

Following in the steps of Husain and Rai, **Sanjeet Chowdhury** began taking photographs during his college days in Kolkata in the late 1980s. A filmmaker by profession, he shoots on black & white film, but his involvement with photography, however, goes beyond taking pictures. He is a collector of albumen and silver gelatin prints, glass negatives and daguerreotype plates. His other interests include collecting 19th and 20th century Indian prints (lithographs and oleographs), which were exhibited at the Birla Academies of Art and Culture, Kolkata and Mumbai, in 2006.



Waswo X. Waswo, *The Flower Seller*, 2015, Hand-colored b/w photograph on paper, 36 x 24 in.

Representing a more formal or journalistic approach to the camera, the internationally published photographer, **Santosh Verma** has shot 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 a starkly intimate moment through his personal experiences.

Acting as a bridge in the exhibition between these photographic representations of cityscapes, and their counterparts in painting and the plastic arts, is the work of Milwaukee-born, Udaipur-based, artist **Waswo X. Waswo**. Over the past decade and a half, he has been amassing a vast personal collection of Indian prints, etchings, miniature paintings, linocuts and woodcuts. Part of his artistic process, which also includes complex, large-scale installation works, is working in collaboration with master artisans and miniature painters to meticulously layer and hand-color black and white photographs from the artist's personal collections. The result are hypnotic and often haunting hybrids of both images and techniques from the past and the present.

Among a younger generation of Contemporary artists, all exploring urban cultures and cityscapes through the medium of painting are **Salman Toor**, **Bernardo Siciliano**, and **Paresh Maity**, whose subject matter spans the cities of the New York, Lahore, New Delhi, and many other cities throughout South Asia and Europe. Brooklyn and Lahore-based artist **Salman Toor's**

recent work consists of complex figurative paintings, depicting his split-existence between the urban cultures of the U.S. and Pakistan, and range in subject from autobiographical constructs to Art History, Post-colonialism, and Pop Culture. His paintings often depict surreal gatherings of people, romances and adventures in imagined homelands and scenes of conflict in places designated as both East and West.

The work of Indian master-painter **Paresh Maity** ranges from cloudy Calcutta streets, swollen rivers in Kerala, pastoral scenes in France and agrarian villages in Rajasthan all populate his work in saturated planes of color. While technically a resident of Delhi, Maity paints all over the world, spending a maximum of two or three months every year at his studio there. Consummating his role as a nomad, the artist travels the globe armed with his paints, canvases and array of materials, to capture his response to magical and unpredictable experiences along his journey. The sand dunes of Rajasthan, the backwaters of Kerala, the canals of Venice, to the lakes of Geneva, Maity's works capture everything in his distinctive style. Notably, Maity says that it was his time in Rajasthan that made his works explode with color, and there has been no looking back since.

Born in Rome in 1969, **Bernardo Siciliano** has made New York his home and muse. Capturing the rugged urban sprawl of the city, Siciliano manages to highlight the many tattered edges of its fabric. He then turns his outer-gaze, inward in a series of confrontational portraits. His subjects often meet the viewer's gaze dead on, their expressions vacant. Dark, monochrome backdrops make it difficult to formally situate them, leaving it up to the viewer, perhaps, to see the city reflected in their faces. In his recent work, Siciliano presents a sort of composite self-portrait of his life and in New York.

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

M. F. Husain



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M. F. Husain



M. F. Husain, *Women from Yemen*, 2006, Acrylic on canvas, 58.5 x 46.5 in.

M. F. Husain



M. F. Husain, *Women in Yellow*, 1970, Oil on canvas, 53 x 29 in.

Abir Karmakar



Abir Karmakar, *From My Photo Album - 2*, 2005, Oil on canvas, 72 x 96 in.

B. Prabha



B. Prabha, *Untitled (Women with Water Jugs)*, 1964, Oil on canvas, 25 x 39 in.

Bernardo Siciliano



Bernardo Siciliano, *Summer and Storm (1)*, 2016, Oil on linen, 20 x 27.5 in.

Bernardo Siciliano



Bernardo Siciliano, *Summer and Storm (2)*, 2016, Oil on linen, 20 x 27.5 in.

Jamini Roy



Jamini Roy, *Untitled (City Street)*, Tempera on card, 21.5 x 17 in.

Paresh Maity



Paresh Maity, *Song of Winter*, Oil on linen, 47 x 39 in.

Paresh Maity



Paresh Maity, *Sunlight*, Oil on canvas, 60 x 60 in.

Paresh Maity



Paresh Maity, *The Spring*, Oil on canvas, 54 x 54 in.

Raghu Rai



Raghu Rai, *Dust Storm Created by a VIP Helicopter, Rajasthan*, 1975, Digital print on archival paper, 20 x 62 in.

Raghu Rai



Raghu Rai, *Flower Market, Kolkata*, 2004, Digital print on archival paper, 20 x 30 in.

Raghu Rai



Raghu Rai, *Ganpati Celebration, Mumbai, 2001*, Digital print on archival paper, 20 x 30 in.

Raghu Rai



Raghu Rai, *Preparing for Durga Pooja, Kolkata, 1999*, Digital print on archival paper, 20 x 30 in.

Raghu Rai



Raghu Rai, *The Day Before Ayodhya*, 1992, Digital print on archival paper, 20 x 30 in.

Raghu Rai



Raghu Rai, *Turkman Gate, Delhi*, 2005, Digital print on archival paper, 20 x 54 in.

Salman Toor



Salman Toor, *Avenue B Apartment*, 2015, Oil on panel, 12 x 12 in.

Salman Toor



Salman Toor, *How Can I Explain?*, 2015, Oil on canvas, 11 x 14 in.

Salman Toor



Salman Toor, Imaginary Multicultural Audience, 2016, Oil on panel, 24 x 30 in.

Salman Toor



Salman Toor, *Transliteration Game*, 2015, Oil on canvas, 18 x 17 in.

Sanjeet Chowdhury



Sanjeet Chowdhury, Bamboo Structures, 2009, C-print on photographic paper, 24 x 30 in.

Sanjeet Chowdhury



Sanjeet Chowdhury, *Discarded Statues*, 2009, C-print on photographic paper, 24 x 30 in.

Santosh Verma



Santosh Verma, *Romancing the Rains*, C-print on archival paper, 20 x 30 in.

Santosh Verma



Santosh Verma, *The Approaching Storm*, C-print on archival paper, 20 x 30 in.

Santosh Verma



Santosh Verma, *Washing Elephant Sculptures*, C-print on archival paper, 20 x 30 in.

Waswo X. Waswo



Waswo X. Waswo, *Bike Boys*, 2015, Hand-colored photograph on paper, 14 x 18 in.

Waswo X. Waswo



Waswo X. Waswo, *By Lantern Light*, 2015, Hand-colored photograph on paper, 36 x 24 in.

Waswo X. Waswo



Waswo X. Waswo, *Girl with Field Corn*, 2015, Hand-colored photograph on paper, 24 x 16 in.

Waswo X. Waswo



Waswo X. Waswo, *Road Crew*, 2007, Hand-colored photograph on paper, 24 x 36 in.

Waswo X. Waswo



Waswo X. Waswo, *The Flower Seller*, 2015, Hand-colored photograph on paper, 36 x 24 in.

Waswo X. Waswo



Waswo X. Waswo, *Women in an Oriental Setting*, 2014, Hand-colored photograph on paper, 16 x 24 in.