



MILLENNIUM DREAMS

*A collaborative photography project under the aegis of Neel Dongre Awards/Grants for
Excellence in Photography (2013) by India Photo Archive Foundation.*

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Published under the Aegis of **Neel Dongre Awards/Grants for Excellence in Photography**
by India Photo Archive Foundation

Organized by India Photo Archive Foundation
Curated by Aditya Arya

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Front Cover Image - Chandan Gomes
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**This project would not have been possible but for the generous support
extended by Ms. Urmilla Dongre**

Catalogue Design: Revati Anand

Produced by India Photo Archive Foundation

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India Photo Archive Foundation is supported by Suresh Neotia

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India Photo Archive Foundation Presents

MILLENNIUM DREAMS

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Excellence in Photography (2013) by India Photo Archive Foundation.*

The “Millennium Dreams” is a photography exhibition under the aegis of Neel Dongre Awards/Grants for Excellence in Photography by India Photo Archive Foundation. This project aims at providing a visual interpretation of the Millennium city-Gurgaon.

The Foundation presents a collaborative photographic project by eleven photographers presenting different interpretations of Gurgaon through distinctive artistic, documentary styles; and **curated by Aditya Arya**, a leading practitioner, a photo historian and archivist.

Artists:

Vaibhav Bhardwaj, Chandan Gomes, Manoj Bharti Gupta,
Vinit Gupta, Arvind Hoon, Saumya Khandelwal, Natisha Mallick, Aparna Mohindra, Vicky Roy, Ajay Sood and Monica Tiwari

Millennium Dreams

Millennium Dreams — as a concept, it is irresistible and when laid within the framework of a city, it simply begs to be translated into images. Think of the rich possibilities in the very word ‘millennium’: there is an overwhelming sense of riding on a cusp, of surfing towards change on the wave of a new moment in time, of hope (perhaps), and certainly of a ruthless forward thrust.

In a word: Gurgaon, the Millennium City. A showpiece of modern India in its latest, most glittering, urban construct. A city which exploded into being, accelerating from a small-scale agricultural area into a mega-urban sprawl under the astonished gaze of its staunchest supporters and its harshest critics. The naysayers will point to its uncontrolled mushrooming, its lack of infrastructure, its woes of water and electricity, its dangerous social inequities and shameful contrasts between expensive condominiums and abysmal hutments. Optimists will dwell on its buoyant commercial enterprises, many of them top multi-national companies operating from shimmering glass-fronted high-rises, its five-star hospitals and malls, its world-class golf course.

Like a chrysalis, Gurgaon, the Millennium City, is both phenomenon and enigma, and its continuing dilemmas and complexities are explored in this exhibition. Eleven photographers, who vary in age and outlook, bring different, sometimes irreverent, perspectives to their images. Don’t look for prettily constructed narratives here; these interpretations silently pose uncomfortable questions about identity and development or unwrap layers where ‘everything conceals something else’ (Chandan Gomes quoting from Calvino). But throughout the exhibition you are aware of the power of the image to evoke response, almost forcing the viewer into the frame as a participant and not just an observer.

Millennium Dreams is a shape shifter, and the photographer the magician who directs perception. In the days and nights that are depicted we see faces of the city and its dreams that are commentaries on its very existence. During the day it is a restless organism of uneven evolution, its contradictions of hope and fear, of urban and backward, traced through powerful images of ceaseless motion. Colour as well as black-and-white photographs, some in diptych, capture the grit, the essence, of Gurgaon and give an almost tactile sense of its ferocious and unrelenting construction and scale; throughout, the human figures are poignant visual comments on loneliness and displacement. Gurgaon by night sizzles with activity, with the surreal reflections and electric colours of well-heeled young professionals seeking respite from their stressed lives. Here too is the glitter of the night concealing the grime of the day, here the abstract elegance of the sweep of the metro line and its tubular structures, the swirling movement of impatient cars, the ornate and make-believe world of the wedding venue. The night is also a seething mix of raw, impressionistic images, some in almost hallucinatory acid colours and some in black-and-white; each of us will read a different story here.

But, like Pandora’s box, hope also floats out. Happiness isn’t the sole preserve of the well-off; it lies in celebrations and togetherness, cricket in an urban wasteland and the sheer joy of youth. Perhaps that is the last word: the unquenchable spirit of Millennium Dreams.

AshaRani Mathur



About AshaRani Mathur

AshaRani Mathur is a freelance writer and editor who has edited and produced books on aspects of Indian life and culture as well as art catalogues for the Festivals of India – for which she was Director, Publications and Publicity – and also edited the inflight magazines of Air India and the former Indian Airlines. She has scripted documentaries for television and authored books on textiles, jewellery and shawls (among others) and written on subjects as far apart as restaurant food, travel and ancient India. She was music producer for the label Music Today, and served for a year with INTACH as Director Cultural Affairs. Currently a Trustee on the Prem Bhatia Memorial Trust, a media-related Trust.

Millennium Dreams Deconstructed...

In the 80s, during my early years of photography, when I visited Gurgaon on assignment, the road beyond Qutab Minar was a nondescript, unmarked single lane surrounded by scrub land. Much has changed and evolved in the last 35 years. The celebrated 'Millennium City' has been mired in considerable controversy but what is of essence is that we are witnessing the making of one of the most iconic elaborations of these times. Inevitable chaos always precedes any such scale of intervention.

In the last fifteen years of my professional life as a photographer and a resident of Gurgaon, I have been witness to one of the most rapid urbanization projects in the form of this ever evolving city. Thus the genesis of this idea. I have a firm belief that photographic projects such as this, besides being significant in the present, have an even greater importance in the history of the places documented for posterity.

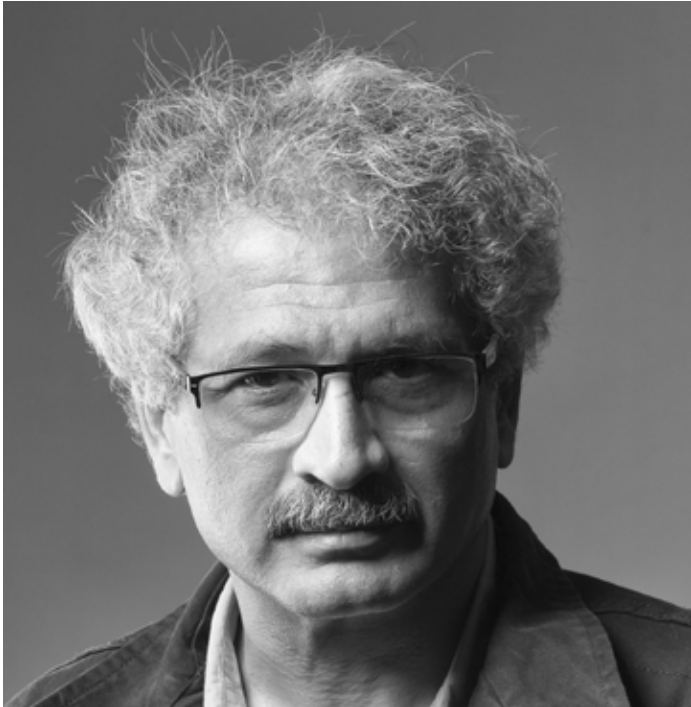
This photographic collection represents the physical and perceptual interpretation of spaces as seen by each photographer. It represents the contrasts and paradoxes of these times. The themes and genres of images cut across boundaries and have a deep cultural and social context. Gurgaon is not only about glass, brick, mortar and steel. It is an organic and constantly evolving entity.

This collaborative project will go down in the visual annals of the Indian Visual History as one of the earliest efforts to document and present a creative interpretation of urban geography through this multiple layered city. Collectively this body of work will remain an extremely significant documentation of these times and I hope many other photographers will get inspired and interested in doing more visual takes such as this in the years to come. This project also celebrates and endorses my views and thoughts on the need and the importance of photographs as a medium to record memories for posterity.

These artistic interpretations and fascinating documentary images are representatives of this ever evolving 'Millennium City' through the eyes of these photographers. I am deeply appreciative of the effort put in by them in the execution of the collaborative project.

The Neel Dongre Grants for excellence in photography have today carved out a very special niche for themselves by encouraging and showcasing the work of photographers from diversified genres and exploring new avenues in photography. These grants have made this exhibition possible.

Aditya Arya



About Aditya Arya

Photographer | PhotoHistorian

An eminent commercial and travel photographer, Aditya Arya began professional photography in 1980 after graduating in History from the St. Stephen's College, Delhi University. After a brief stint in the Mumbai Film Industry where he did the stills for some of the leading directors, he shifted back to Delhi.

In addition to his wide-ranging commercial and travel portfolio, his work has been published widely in travel magazines and books. He is known for his expertise in the field of advertising and corporate photography specialising in the field of Products, Interiors and Food.

Over the last few years, he has been completely immersed in the subject and practice of photographic conservation. He has honed his skills and knowledge on preservation, restoration and archiving particularly through the documentation of historic photographic works from the famous Kulwant Roy Collection. He has played a pivotal role in the formation of India Photo Archive Foundation.

At present, while also actively pursuing his professional advertising and commercial assignments, he divides his time between his photography archive and the only Photography and Camera Museum in India with more than 500 rare and iconic cameras and other equipment tracing the history of photography from the 1870s to the Digital Era.

He has also been on the Jury of the National Art Exhibition 2014 organized by Lalit Kala Akademi besides many other national shows. He has curated several shows of archival and contemporary visual works, both nationally and internationally. These include the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi and the National Museum, New Delhi.

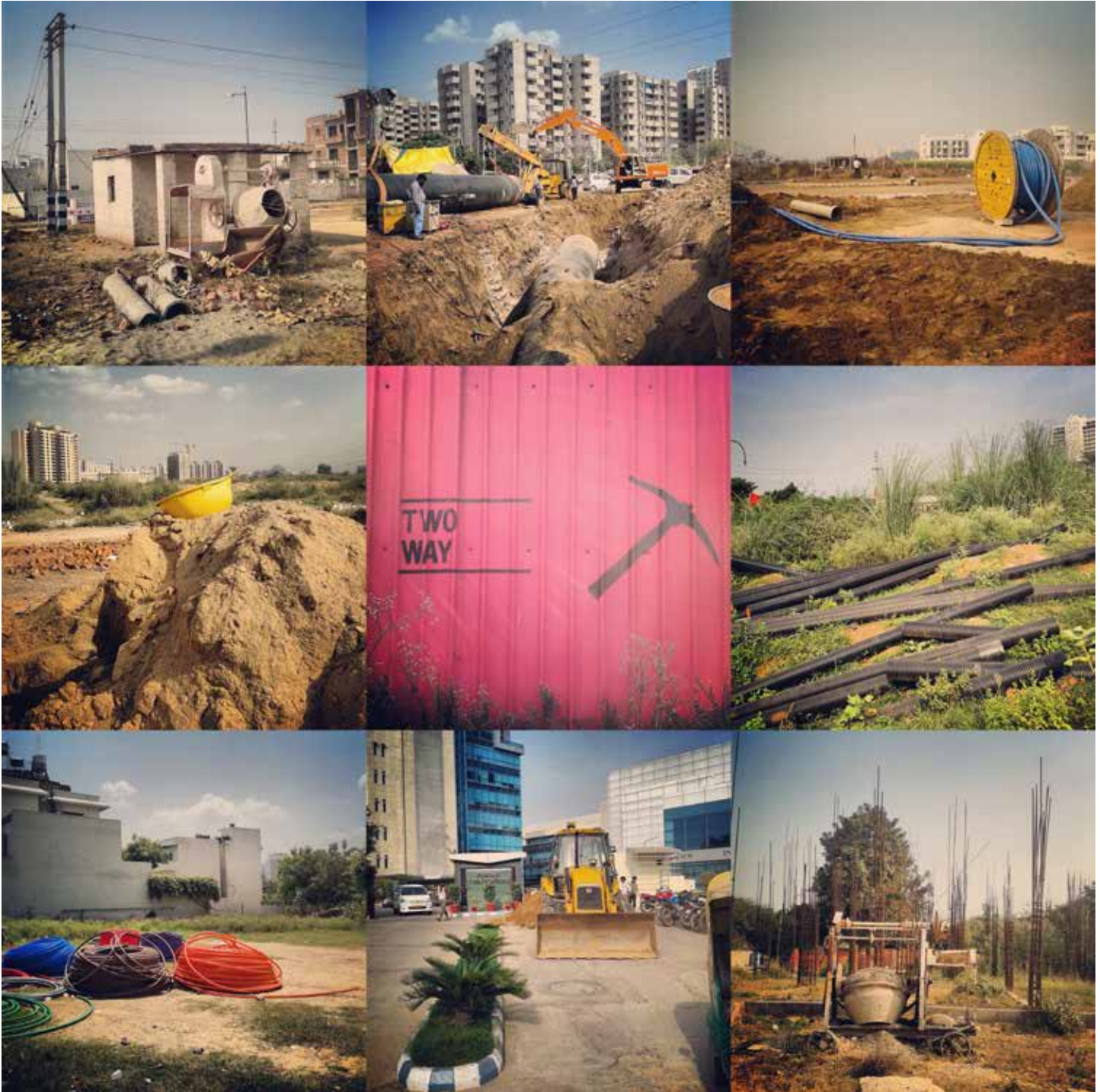
He is a Director at the Academy for Photographic Excellence (APEX), one of the India's leading photography academies based in New Delhi. He is also a guest faculty at the Jamia Milia University's Institute of Mass Communication and a Guest Fellow and Curator at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.



VAIBHAV BHARDWAJ

Vaibhav Bhardwaj, having finished his Bachelor's degree in Mathematics and Economics from University of Delhi, is pursuing a career in photography. Though he originally belongs to Jaipur, he finds himself equally connected to Delhi.

I see Gurgaon not as a place or an object, but as an organism that is trying to reconcile its plurality in a larger unity. The grammar of my photographs is woven around the relativistic, cyclical understanding of change, which can be seen both as a form of evolution and devolution.

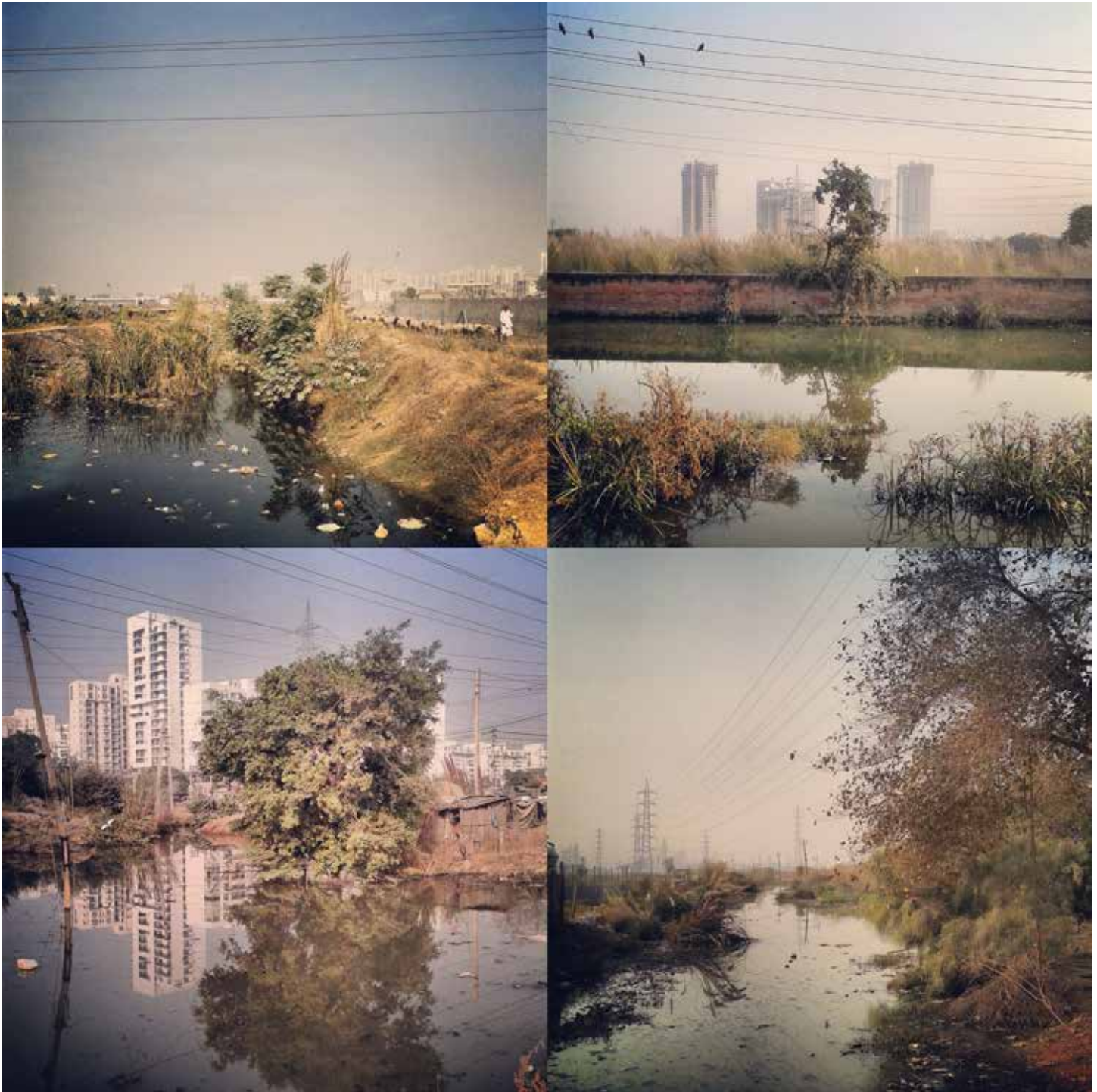


Gurgaon Cityscape 1



Gurgaon Cityscape 4





Gurgaon Cityscape 17



CHANDAN GOMES

Chandan Gomes makes photographs for a living. He is the youngest recipient of the India Habitat Centre Fellowship for Photography (2011-12). In 2013 he was awarded the Oslo University College Scholarship to participate & showcase work at Chobi Mela VII.

Chandan is currently pursuing a Masters in Philosophy from St. Stephen's College, Delhi.



“Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else.” – ITALO CALVINO



Cities & Memories I



Cities & Memories II



Cities & The Dead I



Invisible Cities II



Cities & The Dead II



Cities & The Sky I



Invisible Cities I



Cities & Eyes



Continuous Cities II



Cities & Desires II



Cities & Desires I



Cities & The Sky II



Thin Cities II

Cities & Names I



Cities & Names II

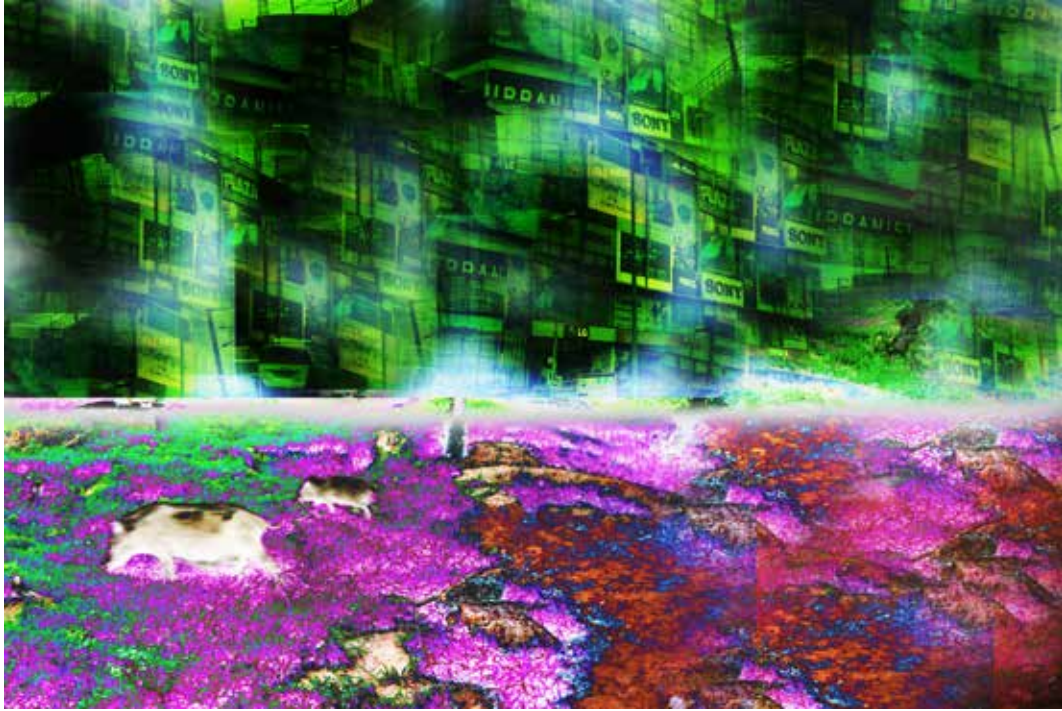


Cities & Names III

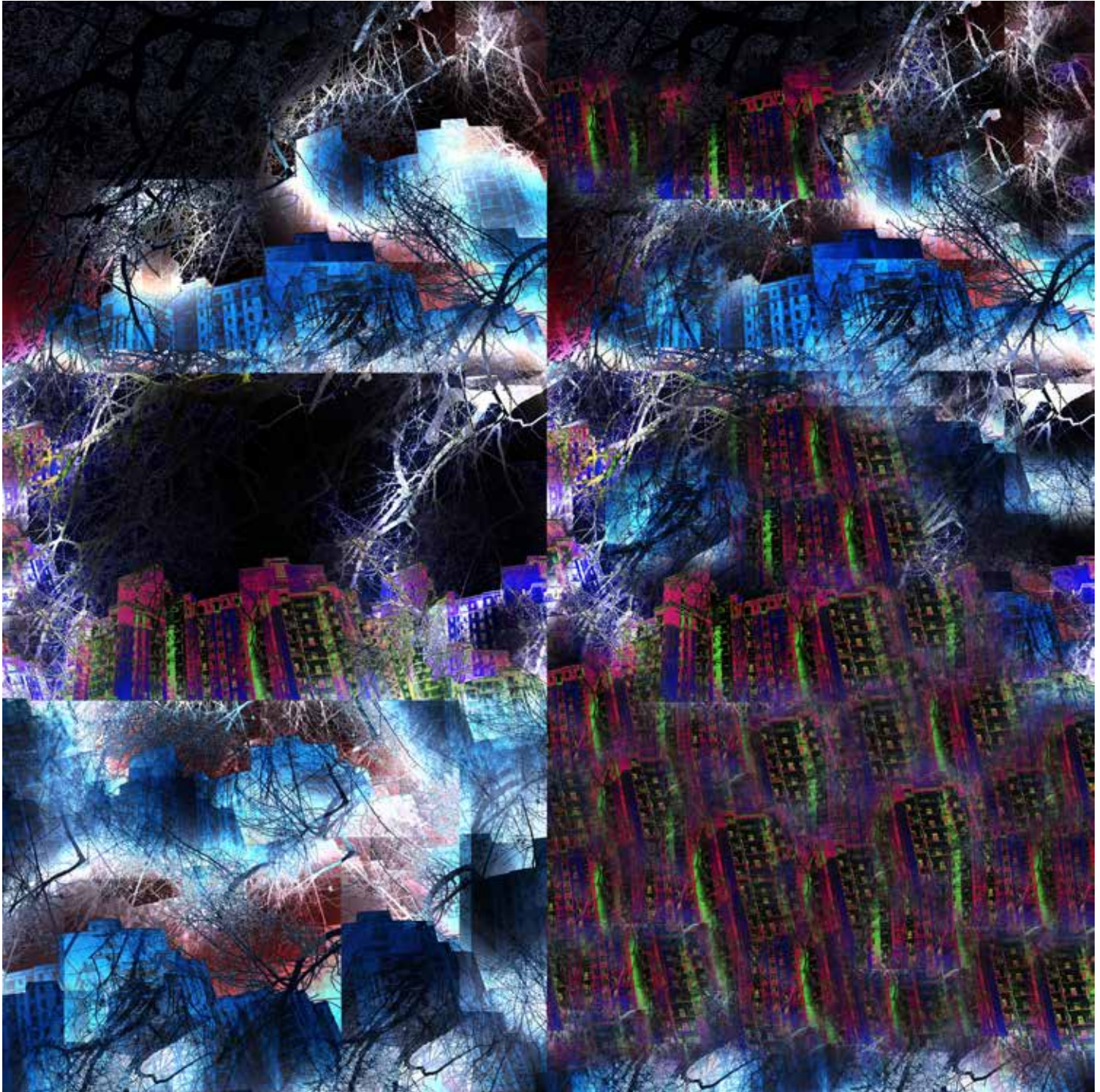


Thin Cities I

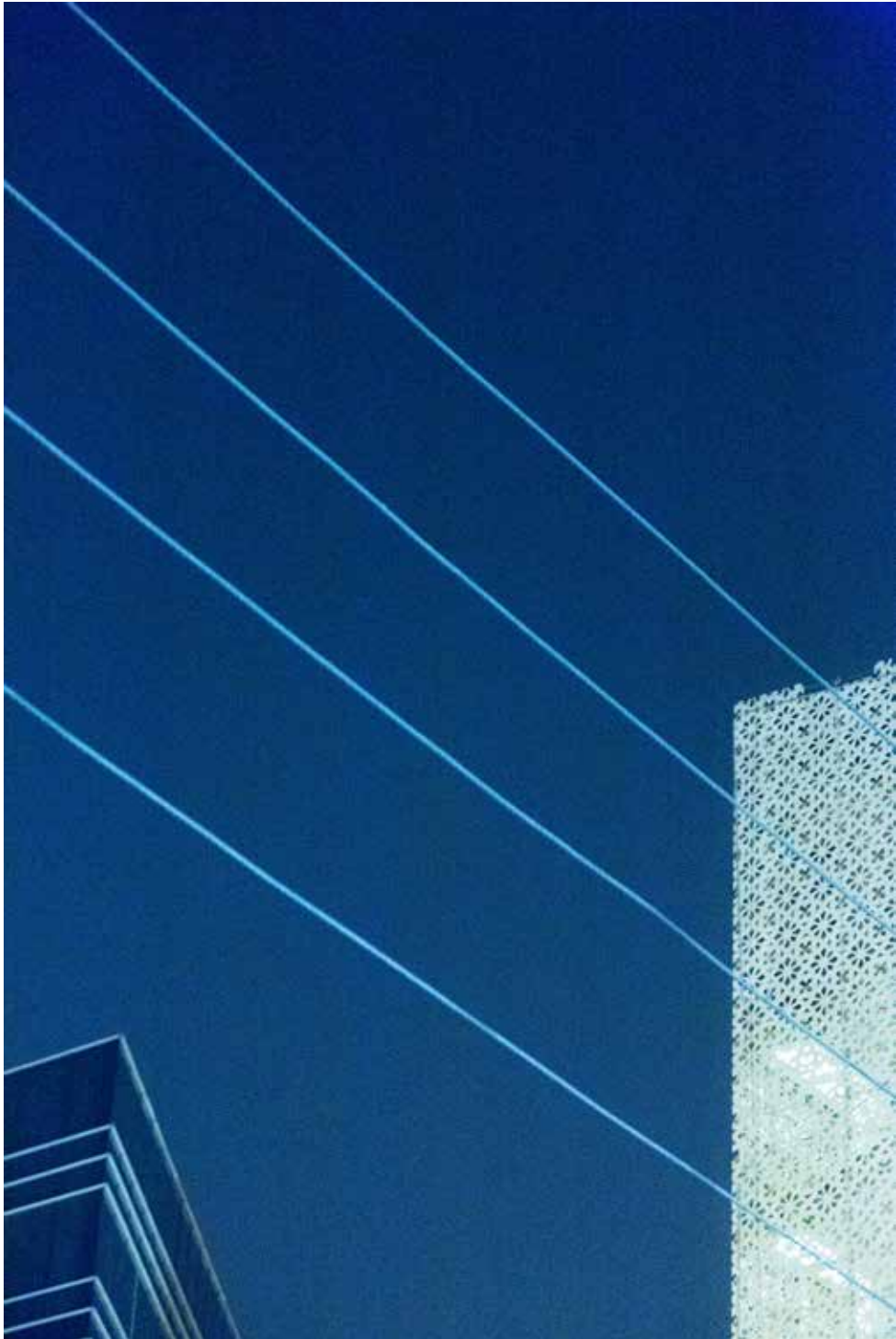
Cities & Signs I



Cities & Signs II



Continuous Cities I













VINIT GUPTA

Vinit Gupta is a Visual Ethnographer and Documentary Photographer based in Delhi. He received Master Degree in Economics from Kurukshetra University. And pursuing his Master in Social Anthropology from School of Social Sciences (SOSS), IGNOU, Delhi

His Work Published in Various National and International Publication like Asian Geography, Privatephotoreview Magazine ,HT Mint, Photojournale, Socialdocumentary.net, Sunday Guardian, Invisible Photographer Asia, Heritage India, Emaho Magazine, The Batter India, Batter Photography Magazine, GEN Initiative, Greenpeace India and Wall Art Magazine.

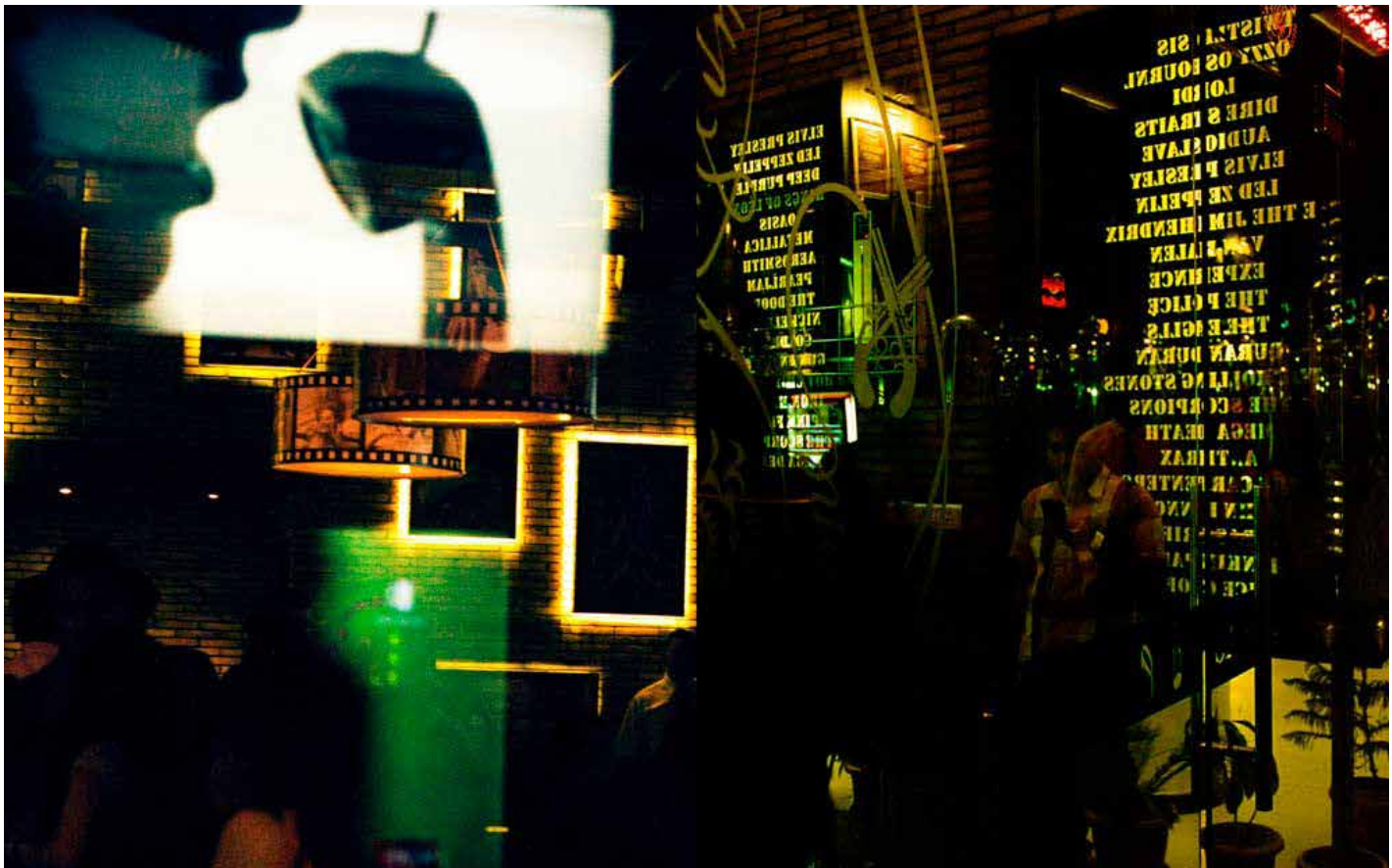
Growing Culture of Weekend Escape

Over the last decade, Gurgaon has transformed into major corporate destinations with an army of young professionals pouring in from the other states. These new residents work in a high pressure environment with erratic work hours and hectic schedules that leaves very little room for personal life. Consequently, a large number of recreational establishments have mushroomed in the city attracting scores of revellers looking for a weekend break. These establishments specifically cater medium /high income professionals who are willing to fork out any amount of money for relief from their stressful professional lives. This idea of “escape” is slowly giving rise to a whole new recreation industry that thrives on this hectic lifestyle and desire for a relaxed weekend. The rise in purchasing power, resulting in the trend of conspicuous consumerism, has given this industry a further boost.

In this series this actual case is approached and questioned in an indirect way. I am showing portraits of people in these Recreational establishments and try to examine this new compulsion for weekend escapes among people.













ARVIND HOON

Arvind Hoon, (b. 1962) lives and works as a commercial / fine art photographer in Gurgaon since 1995. As an early settler of 'New Gurgaon' he has seen the area transform from the promise it being a green suburb of Delhi to a glittering metropolis with mixed emotions.

Gurgaon 6

Choosing to look away from the dust and grime of a developing city by day these pictures instead capture a glittering Gurgaon by night, 'attempting' to hide in its shadows all that is undesirable. The camera captures the areas around the now nonexistent Gurgaon 6 milestone at Sikanderpur Village in the very heart of new Gurgaon following the Metro lines as they snake across the city visiting flash malls and office buildings.



Men At Work



Work In Progress



One Way

Infiniti



Spectator

Sangam









SAUMYA KHANDELWAL

Saumya Khandelwal is a documentary photographer based out of New Delhi. Her continuing projects include themes, 'Water' and 'Migrants'. Also, her photojournalistic work has been published in the Hindustan Times and Getty Images. Khandelwal has previously worked on Curation projects for International Planned Parenthood Federation and an independent artist. She is trained in photography from Jamia Millia Islamia and is mentored by documentary and commercial photographer, Amit Mehra.



Gurgaon is a demi modern city going through a painful transformation to adulthood. Signs of the struggle are evident in the existence of contrast: construction and wreckage, modern structures and mounds of dirt, and the obvious ones: the haves and the have nots. Photos of its overwhelming grandeur are underdone by those of its struggles. I found it inevitable to intersperse this documentation with what it made me feel : loneliness, pathos and irony.

Ruins of an auto lie near a construction site at Hanuman Chowk.



A watchguard (in the mirror) with his family near Sadar Bazaar in Old Gurgaon.



A garbage collection centre against the background of corporate buildings near IFFCO chowk.



A view of a corporate office by night from a metro station.

A family living at the Gaushala, Old Gurgaon.



A young child plays inside a plastic bubble in an artificial pool at a mall on MG Road.



A street vendor selling street food outside Cyber Hub.



A window of a store in a mall.

Aerial view of the Cyber City by night.



A car speeds by a corporate building.



Young professionals on board a private bus.



A mini truck drives out of a commercial building. In left is the barricading for a construction site.



NATISHA MALLICK

B.1988, Natisha is a software engineer by education and a strong believer in the visual medium. She took up photography as a profession back in 2011; she was awarded with Oslo University College Grant in 2012, which followed with a scholarship workshop at the 8th Angkor Photo Festival in Siem Reap, Cambodia. Her long-term project “living at the edge of life” has gained honorable mentions internationally at the Photocrati Fund in 2013.

Natisha wants to concentrate on the stories of social relevance and hopes that her images contribute to the enhancement of public awareness of unbalanced situations.

Maids of Gurgaon

Maids today are an integral part of the modern Indian household. With surging incomes and a crunch of time a daily routine, their services are a highly sought after.

Despite their ever-increasing demand the status of a maid has been reduced to be just a service provider in exchange of money. Their personal struggles and sacrifices get lost amidst the hustle bustle and the fast paced life of Gurgaon.

Through my photos I have tried to put a light on the lives of 5 maids working as domestic help in various pockets of the city, after migrating from villages to escape the poverty and make a better and secure future for themselves and their children.



Baby Halder enjoys her tea



Portrait of Baby Halder inside her quarter, DLF Ph-1



Baby reflected on a mirror inside her room

Lokhi Das, Chakkarpur Village



Common washing area, Chakkarpur Village

Juhi at work, Mahalaxmi Apartments



Juhi with her family, South City



Courtyard of the chawl in Chakkarpur village



Hasina at her workplace, Princeton Apartments

Common washing area for shanties Opp. Palladium Sect 51



Mani shouts at her son

Poonam Devi with her daughter, Sect. 31



Poonam inside her home in Sect. 31

APARNA MOHINDRA

Aparna completed her Diploma in Photography in August 2013 from Apex Academy for Photographic Excellence, and has since been mentored by Aditya Arya.

According to her, photography conveys something that often words can't, or can but with more of them- pictures truly can speak a thousand words, and are as skilled in eliciting feelings and emotions in people as any great song or novel.



Gurgaon is comprised of two very distinct yet highly contradicting spaces- the urban as well as the more backward areas.

I have explored these spaces of Gurgaon in the form of diptychs (and triptychs) because I believe that we react in a field of association with repetitions, analogies and duplicities towards these diptych visuals, which in turn helps me depict Gurgaon.



Rudimentary

Mimic



Network



Witness

Compliance



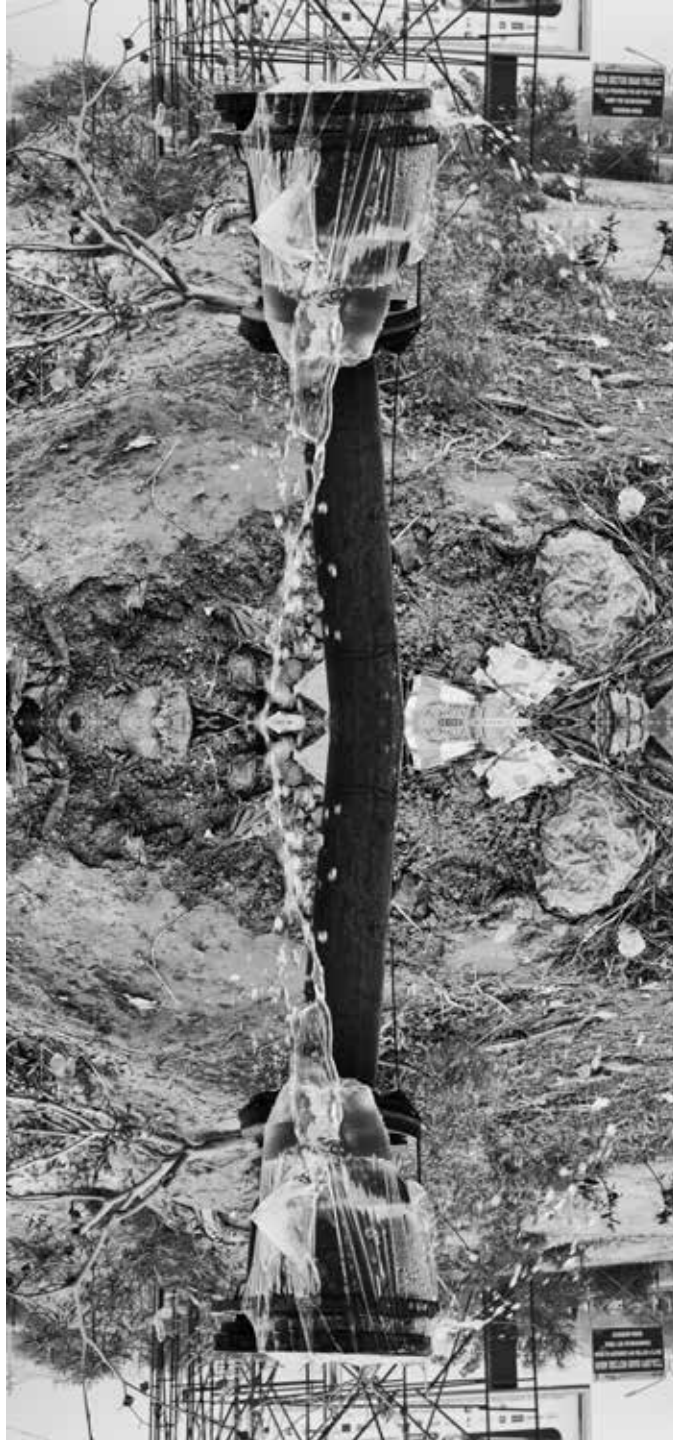
Reflection



Fabrication



Consequence



Karma



VICKY ROY

Originally from Purulia West Bengal, Vicky was rehabilitated by the Salaam Baalak Trust, Delhi. In 2008 he was selected by the US based Maybach Foundation to photo document the reconstruction of the World Trade Center in New York. His first monograph 'Home Street Home' published by the Nazar Foundation released at the second edition of the Delhi Photo Festival (2013).

Wedding

Massive financial commitments and the sheer magnitude of wedding celebrations has escalated the demands for grand venues. Gurgaon is fast emerging as the ostentatious center of these jamborees. The whole city is pockmarked by wedding venues complete with rudimentary pillars and soapbox stages waiting to be transformed into a dreamland. This photo series examines the ossification of these temporary skeletal structures into a permanent feature of the landscape signifying the emergence of burgeoning wedding industry and also a change in social trends.



Utsav Garden, Old Gurgaon (I)



Shubh Vatika, Old Gurgaon (I)



Utsav Garden, Old Gurgaon (II)



Shubh Vatika, Old Gurgaon (II)

Utsav Garden, Old Gurgaon (VI)



Utsav Garden, Old Gurgaon (III)



Harnarain Palace, Old Gurgaon Road (I)



Utsav Garden, Old Gurgaon (V)



Utsav Garden, Old Gurgaon (IV)

Harnarain Palace, Old Gurgaon Road (II)



Harnarain Palace, Old Gurgaon Road (III)

AJAY SOOD

Travel Photographer/ Travelogue-writer/ Photo-tour Leader

He has a passion for capturing the sights, sounds and stories of places he visits. He has travelled across India extensively, and to over 20 countries across the globe.

His 27 years in communication industry has been his training ground, leading to his deep understanding of visual medium, reflected in his unique compositions.

Ajay is a travel photographer and a travelogue writer. He's been covered as a mastercraftsman in Smart Photography (May 2012) and in Asian Photography (February 2012). He was on the jury of Canon Photomarathon 2012. He is also an assignment photographer for National Geographic Traveller.

He leads photo-tours, and contributes travelogues, images and photo-features to various publications, including Smart Photography, Asian Photography, Travel Plus, etc.



Happiness, not so humble

One's circumstances may be humble, but the emotion of happiness and celebration isn't. This body of work attempts to illustrate this.

The images shared here have been captured in Ghata Gaon, an immigrant settlement in Gurgaon. It may rightly be termed an urban village.

The body of work comprises moments – of happiness and celebrations – both, big and small – of residents of Ghata Gaon.



Ghata Gaon Namaaz-2

Ghata Gaon - The Urban Village - 7



Ghata Gaon - The Urban Village - 8

Ghata Gaon - The Urban Village - 5



Ghata Gaon - The Urban Village - 6



Ghata Gaon - The Urban Village - 17



Ghata Gaon - The Urban Village - 20



Ghata Gaon - The Urban Village - 21



Ghata Gaon - The Urban Village - 21



MONICA TIWARI

Monica Tiwari is a documentary photographer based in New Delhi. Currently working at 'The Hindu' as a News Photographer, she has received formal training in Photography and Visual Arts from MCRC, Jamia Millia Islamia and is mentored by documentary and commercial photographer, Mr. Amit Mehra.

Gurgaon comes across to me as a city which as yet has not developed her flavour, not fully realised her identity. The incessant construction works render the smooth roads dusty. The labourers build solid palaces and live in fragile shanties around them. The endless traffic is often impolite, inconsiderate; the pedestrian without personal conveyance is left at the mercy of the concrete roads and a fleeting auto rickshaw.

The city is impersonal, formal... cold even. She is suspicious. The security guards at every step will vouch for that.

I wonder if anyone really feels at home in Gurgaon. In my photos I have tried to depict the innate loneliness I felt in the city. It is either too much of a big city or too much of a crumbling town for my taste.

The Gateway Tower is seen through an auto decorated with tattoos of Indian Gods.



Scene at a barber shop in Nathupur village.



A couple seen sunbathing against a garbage dump in Nathupur village.



Workers at an IL&FS construction site near Cyber City.

A worker is reflected at a construction site of a new mall coming up near Sikanderpur metro station.



A girl moves past a poster of the movie 'Barfi' which is used as a cover for a house in Nathupur village.



A boy seen on a tractor during Dussehra mela celebrations in Old Gurgaon.



A security guard looks from within his workplace ('Valmet') placed inside Cyber-Hub.

Work in progress at an IL&FS construction site for DLF underpass. The Gateway tower can be seen in the background.



A young girl is seen amid clothes put to dry in a building near Gurgaon railway station which houses several migrant families.



A man walks past an advertisement inside Cyber-Hub.



Workers' gumboots seen at an empty IL&FS construction site for the DLF underpass.

Inside the Cyber-Hub.



Construction material seen at a site behind cyber city, near rapid metro station.



A faded garland is seen beneath the stairs of Vodafone Belvedere Towers metro station.



A DLF building is reflected on a car in the Cyber-Hub parking space.

An androgynous person dances on a tractor during Dussehra mela celebrations in Old Gurgaon.



A cow seen from inside a parked bus in Chakkarpur village.



Children playin volleyball at a park near Gurgaon railway station.



Scene near Gurgaon railway station.

Eleven photographers. One city.

“Arriving at each new city, the traveler finds again a past of his that he did not know he had: the foreignness of what you no longer are or no longer possess lies in wait for you in foreign, unpossessed places.” –Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities

Being a Hericlitian at heart, I firmly believe that like the river, we never step into the same city twice. And our collective expression of Gurgaon expounds this thought. Eleven photographers seek the millennium city in their photographs and build distinct narratives around it.

Vaibhav Bhardwaj feels the same alienation towards Gurgaon as he did when he started work on his photo essay that investigates the agency of change. He believes that the city is hell bent on concealing something. However unlike Vaibhav, Ajay Sood’s perception about Gurgaon altered in the course of his documentation – prior to starting work, he considered Gurgaon’s development as haphazard, but now having spent time in understanding the city, he is re-evaluating his earlier position.

Alienation collapses into Chaos in Arvind Hoon’s photo essay where he explores the spaces around ‘New Gurgaon’ in the form of nightscapes. The perils of photographing at night did worry the photographer when he started work on his series, but in due course he realized that fear is just a state of mind. This begs the question: where do contradictions and fear reside – in the foreign land or in the mind of the traveller?

Aparna Mohindra has explored the dichotomous nature of the city in the form of diptychs and triptychs. She recounts that when she started working on her story, she was unable to decide on how she should portray her feelings towards Gurgaon – on one hand she couldn’t stand the place it had become, while on the other hand it was and still is home. This conflict finds expression in her photographs.

Dichotomy gives way to isolation in Monica Tiwari’s photo essay - The final outcome she says is more or less coherent with her first impressions of the city. The evolution has been in terms of knowing more about the city vis-à-vis the places and the people there. For Manoj Bharti Gupta too, the final outcome is in line with the vision with which he embarked on his journey. His essay serves as a critique of the ‘development’ that Gurgaon has witnessed in the last decade and has a strong political undertone to it. However, for Saumya Khandelwal, her project took a different shape from what she had planned. She started by documenting the migratory nature of the city. But as she proceeded she found it hard to stick to a predefined narrative.

But in Natisha Mallick's photo essay 'Maids of Gurgaon', where she sheds light on the life of migrant women workers who work as domestic help in a bid to make their ends meet, it is the predefined narrative that holds the work together. The predefined narrative also finds a voice in Vinit Gupta's series where he essay investigates the culture of weekend escape and how this idea of "escape" is slowly giving rise to a whole new recreation industry that thrives on this hectic lifestyle and the desire for a relaxed weekend.

Vicky Roy build's on Gupta's line of inquiry and widens the context. In his essay he examines the ossification of baraat ghars into a permanent feature of the landscape signifying the emergence of burgeoning wedding industry and a marked change in social trends.

As for me, I explore the notion of Alexithymia in context of this city – the difficulty in experiencing and expressing emotional responses. My work tows the fragile line between context and the lack of it, between deliberation and spontaneity and between memory and fact.

Let me conclude this essay by a word that I came across recently in a short story. A word that I feel is apt for any form of expression that revels in questions instead of seeking definitive answers – Tacenda – things that are better left unsaid...

Listen carefully to the sound of these photographs and you will hear eleven voices murmuring. You might not understand the echo of their words, but you will certainly feel it.

To Gurgaon and its many manifestations,
To the Photograph and its unspoken truths and lies.

Chandan Gomes

Millennium Dreams

Gurgaon is at once a dream and a nightmare. A city that's jostling for space among the swankiest in the world appears to have been caught in the cross-fire of urban planner from different schools. Glittery buildings contain the top global business icons yet outside these the world seems to be controlled by mafias of taxi owners, auto drivers and car lifters. Women occupy many of the corner offices but fear the walk to their parking slots, leave alone parks. Aston Martins abound in a flashy show of wealth but crawl on the potholed roads for which they weren't built.

Carved out of arid and largely barren farmlands, Gurgaon has sponged up Delhi's growth in the last two decades, rivalling Mumbai as a corporate capital and Bangalore as an IT hub. That's spawned leisure centres like in no other place, pubs quenching the thirst of exhausted corporates and visiting tourists. Star hotels have mushroomed, offering the softest beds and satisfying the most discerning palates. Top bands of the world travel to Gurgaon for packed performances and some of the best art is displayed in its galleries.

But shift the lens slightly and what do you see: The arcs of bright lights eclipsing the squalor and corruption of everyday life that lies in the penumbra. Exclusive clubhouses with manicured lawns and blue pools hide the labour shanties where there is no water or sanitation. Roads leading up to the city lights are pock-marked by corruption of politicians, administrators and contractors. Residents live by arrangement; where taps are dry water tankers are plentiful, where power is erratic gensets roar, where streets are unsafe guardhouses mushroom.

The more you see of Gurgaon the more is hidden from the eye. Where wide stretches are dug up, promising imposing boulevards, bulldozers and cranes make their permanent home. Parks are promised but no flowers bloom there.

Then there are the class and cultural faultlines that too are hidden by the tight lycras and designer jeans. Rashly driven SUVs advertising castes and names have become the norm where residents seek safe lane driving and a cooperative police force. The trappings of urbanity conceal deeply feudal mindsets where patriarchs still want the women draped from head to toe and exist as virtual slaves.

Yet, people seem to have made peace with all this. The smiling faces and jaunty steps of Gurgaonites tell the story of survival against tough odds. NGOs bravely stand up to the builders and administrators to protect their greens and corporates give them a hand by helping them reclaim streets on Sunday morning so that children can cycle safely and there is music and joy all around.

So when the dust of construction settle will we see a kingdom of dreams or is the mosaic of transition Gurgaon's overarching artwork? The features, we all agree, are sexy. Will the portrait be the same?

Ranjan Roy
Journalist

Jury

The opportunity that India Photo Archive Foundation gives to these 11 young photographers is telling of our times in many ways. The history of modern India that is seldom documented let alone archived by institutions is known. By curating these photographers around the theme of the millennium city one not only draws an insight into Gurgaon which is an astounding project in itself but also lends its self to an anthropology of sorts.

The multiplicity one sees in the works are revealing of the dichotomies and contrasts inherent in the subject, from industrial grids to psychedelic hallucinations, from the gravity of labour to the decibels of closed rooms, from the mundane to the extradayly.

The images move between being single frame narratives and sequential narratives depending on the method of storytelling chosen by the photographer, they move between being voyeurs to sympathizers to commentators to bystander even participants at times. This exploration is not limited to the thematic but is also extended to playfulness with the medium specifically enhanced by the accessibility of technology. The medium of the photograph is now available to all via simple phone cameras to complex DSLRs. This has given rise to a phenomenon that inverts the process of art making to a great extent – ‘I click therefore I think’.

The leitmotif of this collection is certainly the characteristics of glass, reflecting, refracting, multiplying, isolating very similar to that of the young photographer negotiating an endless internal dialectic of the insider vs. the outsider

The experience of selecting these images has been overwhelming, tiring and exhilarating giving me an insight into what these 22 eyes have been getting excited by. I do wish that their work finds an exactitude in the years to come that not only explores their objects of interest with justice but also helps them evolve a relationship with the medium that is critical, generous and spiritual.

Parthiv Shah
March 1, 2014, New Delhi



About Parthiv Shah

An alumnus of the National Institute of Design, India, was invited as visiting scholar at the SOAS, London University and at the University of California, Davis. Parthiv is a photographer, film maker and a graphic designer. He has made several documentary films, curated exhibitions and has several photo-books to his credit. Growing up in a family of artists and through his own professional training, he brings an interesting intersection of art, photography and design to his work. He has been awarded senior fellowship in Photography by Ministry of Culture, Government of India, Charles Wallace fellowship, UK and Fulbright Lectureship Award to teach Photography at the UCLA, USA.

He is founder-Director of Centre for Media and Alternative Communication (CMAC). Lately Parthiv has been particularly interested and engaged in working on the issue of image perception and representation. His visual journeys have lead him into working with communities which are finding a mainstream voice.

Photographs exhibited at
India, Australia, Bangladesh, Germany, South Africa, Thailand, Netherlands, Japan, Spain, Russia, U.K., U.S.A.

Photographs in the collection of
National Gallery of Modern Art, India, Lalit Kala Akademi, India, Minge Kan, Japan, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA, University of California, USA, Australian Arts Council, Australia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, USA, including some private collation such as Christo, New York, and Issye Miyake, Japan

Books:

Figures, Facts, Feelings:A Direct Diasporic Dialogue
Published by CMAC, 2000

Working in the Mill No More
Jan Breman and Parthiv Shah
Published by the Oxford University Press and Amsterdam University Press, 2004

Kaaya-Beyond Gender
Published by CMAC, 2005

My Body is not Mine, Voices from the Kothi community
Vidya Shah, Aditya Bandhopadhyay, Parthiv Shah
Published by Naz Foundation International, DFID, CMAC, 2007

Narmada
Parthiv Shah and Vidya Shah
Published by Pratham Books, 2010

Art as Witness
Parthiv Shah and Sana Das
Published by Tulika Books, 2010

About Neel Dongre Awards

NEEL DONGRE AWARDS/GRANTS FOR EXCELLENCE IN PHOTOGRAPHY INDIA PHOTO ARCHIVE FOUNDATION

India Photo Archive Foundation

In an age when digital information is all around, it's easy to forget that great volumes of historical images of India—journalistic, political, personal, developmental and social—languish in neglect in institutions and homes. These photographic archives form an essential part of our cultural heritage and The India Photo Archive Foundation has been established with a view to identify, preserve and document such photographic legacies, highlighting the historical value of photographic archives and collections and to encourage their dissemination, access and use for academic, institutional and cultural purposes.

The Foundation also aims at encouraging a visual dialogue in the field of photography through various initiatives and to aid the development of a platform for amateur and professional photographers, over the ages.

With the coming of the digital age, we have witnessed the rise of a visual culture where photography as a profession and art has evolved giving rise to a plethora of genres, attracting talented minds. However, many of these budding visual artists go unnoticed due to the lack of support in the form of institutes with adequate equipment, funds, scholarships, and relevant platforms to display and publish their work. The Neel Dongre Awards/Grants for Excellence in Photography is an initiative aimed at bridging this gap.

Neel Dongre Awards for Excellence in Photography

Year of establishment: 1st January 2012

Neel Dongre (1944-2009) was one of the most successful entrepreneurs in the country who took a keen interest in mentoring young people, encouraged them to dream, and helped them fulfill their ambitions. These awards are aimed at recognizing young and emerging and active photo practitioners who demonstrate talent and the passion to communicate with visuals.

A Corpus Fund, Rs. 50 Lacs.

These Awards/Grants are meant for professional/non-professional photographers who have produced an ongoing/finished body of work in any genre of photography; Social Documentary, Photojournalism, Fine Art etc. The applicants are required to submit a written proposal for their project, accompanied by images that demonstrate their skill and visually translates the project.

Managing Committee for the Awards/Grants

The awards will be administered by a Managing Committee consisting of Mrs. Dongre, Aditya Arya (Trustee), Premola Ghosh, Asha Rani Mathur, Gopika Chowfla, and artists and designers invited to be on the committee for a period of two years.

The rules for submission are as follows:

1. The submission form (CV/Bio Data) to be filled should include a written proposal attached with any supporting visual material of low-resolution.
2. Awards/Grants are strictly for a body of work and not for individual images/photographs. More than one body of work can be submitted. A body of work is constituted by at least 20 images/photographs.
3. Photographer must hold the copyright and all required legal rights to submit, publish and exhibit the same.
4. The managing committee reserves the right to choose from the submissions or invite submissions for the Awards/Grants.
5. The India Photo Archive Foundation reserves the right to five sets of such works and the usage rights in publications including the web with all due credits to the photographer.
6. The copyright of this work shall remain with the photographer.
7. The prints for the above-mentioned exhibits will be paid for by the India Photo Archive Foundation.
8. The decision of the managing committee is irrevocable and final in all matters pertaining to the awards/grants.
9. The submissions are open to all Indian Nationals above 18 years of age.
10. The Submissions will not be returned so please do not send original material.

Acknowledgements

Suresh Neotia

Urmila Dongre

AshaRani Mathur

Parthiv Shah

Gopika Chowfla

Premola Ghosh

Pratyax Rathi

Karuna Somadula

Sujata Mehra

Ishaan Arya

Meenakshi Sachdev Verma

Zakir Khan

Tuhina Chopra

Aparna Mohindra