

Serena Chopra

THE TALE OF TIME: Survivors of the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan

Serena Chopra was commissioned by the Partition Museum in Amritsar, Punjab to capture the reality of the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan which displaced over 14 million people. Chopra's mother was born in Pakistan and her familial connection to the history and trauma of this event is echoed in the survivors' stories and faces. In August 2017, the Partition Museum opened on the 70th Anniversary of Partition, and serves to uphold the memory of this monumental and complicated event.

As in her earlier series, *Majnu Ka Tilla* (2009-2012), Chopra dove into the project by interviewing individuals and families, gathering their stories around the event. Her recording of their words was done in a diary format with an image of the sitter on one side and written dialogue on the other. The participants recount their memories, the atrocities, and the mayhem of the time — either written down by Chopra or by relatives of the sitters. The captions for the work note the sitter, their place of origin, and where they live now. Although the distance was not far for some, the road traveled was filled with hostility and violence resulting in approximately 2 million deaths.

I continue this body of work in memory of my ancestral heritage and with a great amount of respect and admiration for the courage and resilience of the human spirit. My photo project includes the diaries where I have requested the Survivors to share and write of their own experiences of 1947 and their feelings today. Most Survivors escaped with nothing but their lives.

— Serena Chopra

The 15 portraits that compile this series begin with a tribute to the artist's mother in the form of a family photograph taken in Pakistan in 1945. The portrait shows a formal occasion, well-staged on a carpet in the garden. The women and children are either seated on chairs or on a rug in the foreground, the turbaned men appear dapper in their suits and ties. The family matriarch, dressed in white, anchors the image with dignity and grace.

There are nine large photographs from this series permanently installed in the façade of the museum. The Partition Museum is the world's first museum dedicated to the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947. It is housed in the historic Town Hall building in Amritsar, which was constructed in 1870 by architect John Gordon.

Chopra was born in Secunderabad, India. Her first body of work from Bhutan was exhibited in solo shows in New Delhi, Bhutan and New York. A publication of this work, *Bhutan, A Certain Modernity* was released in 2007 with a foreword by Her Majesty Queen Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wanchuk. Chopra's work has been included in group shows and published extensively in India.

Chopra's recent exhibitions include: FotoFest Biennial (Houston), Harvard Art Museums (Boston), Partition Museum (Amritsar). Serena Chopra's book, *The Ancients: Bhutan Diaries* has been featured in Outlook India and The New Indian Express.

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EXHIBITION ONLINE

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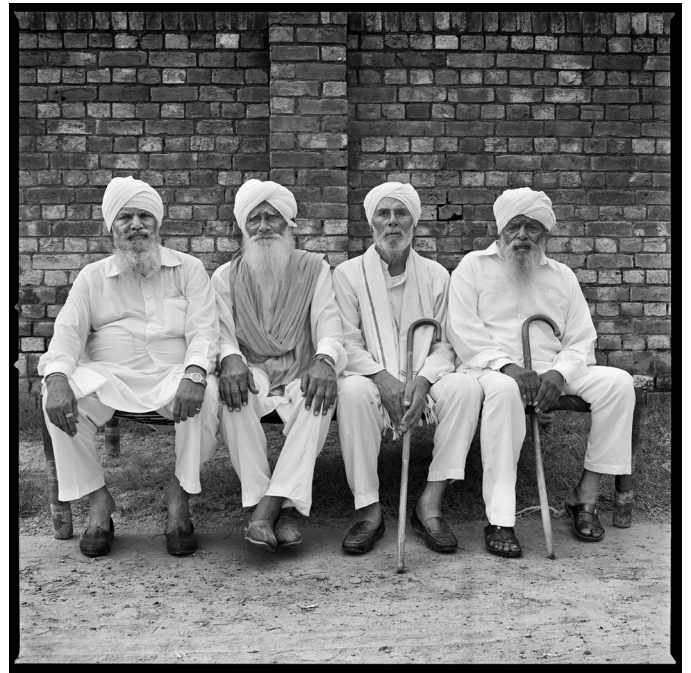
EXHIBITION DATES

December 5, 2020 –

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CONTACT

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L to R, Om Rakash, Banta Singh, Narli, 2017

