

Bhupendra Karia

SMALL BOX

sepiaEYE is honored to present *Bhupendra Karia: Small Box* with selected work from the Karia Estate. The majority of work within this exhibition is taken from one small box found in the archive, a box unusual in both subject matter and size. Printed by Karia in the mid 1970s, the fifty photographs within the exhibition cover eleven years, 1959-1970, and include work from his three major series, *Old India*, *New India* and *Bombay*. The photographs are steeped in both deep cultural awareness and unique personal vision, reflecting Karia's ethereal yet formally rigorous photographic eye.

Bhupendra Karia (1936-1994) was known not just as a photographer, but also as an artist, teacher, theorist and curator. Following his graduation in 1956 from Sir J.J. School of Art in Bombay, where he concentrated on painting, graphics, and history, he studied history and aesthetics at Tokyo University of Fine Arts. It was in Japan that Karia received his photographic education, along with a strong understanding of Ukiyo-e woodblock printmaking and Japanese architecture. He returned to India as a well-versed photographic image-maker. With a keen interest in traditional crafts and village culture, Karia spoke of "listening to India with one's eyes."

After teaching in and heading photography and graphic arts departments at the University of Southern California and the University of Baroda in the mid 1960s, Karia began to focus more and more exclusively on photography. Echoing earlier trips he had taken in rural India to make stone rubbings, Karia undertook extensive photographic journeys in the second half of the 1960s and early 1970s, traveling for weeks, sometimes months at a time, covering, by his accounts, some 80,000 miles across India's rural landscape.

Karia's early motivations for these trips seem to have been fueled by an anthropological impulse to explore and record rural India and its native creative traditions—textiles, pottery, and architectural decoration. As he spent more time in the villages and countryside, Karia began to broaden the context of his work, weaving together observations of rural and small town Indian life with larger concerns about social, political and environmental challenges facing contemporary India.

As he spent more time in the villages and countryside, Karia began to broaden the context of his work, weaving together observations of rural and small town Indian life with larger concerns about social, political and environmental challenges facing contemporary India. *12 Minutes on a Bombay Street Corner*, (November 1970) displays a sequence of 8 prints in which Karia uses the camera to tell the story of contained chaos and lively movement within a corner market. His use of multiples or sequences is seen again in his thoughtful portraits of his Auntie, *Bacchi Massi*, and in an early triptych, *Woman massaging clay for rolling large pots* (Junagadh, 1967).

Applying his curatorial eye to his own work in the mid 1970s, Karia painstakingly winnowed his oeuvre of a quarter million images to a selection of small groups of photographs that he called "the meager harvest of my first 20 years in photography." No longer were the photographs understood within the context of social analysis, nor were they intended to appeal to primarily photojournalistic narrative expectations as they had been earlier in his career. Instead, they were chosen and printed to meet aesthetic standards and to reveal what Karia felt was his unique understanding of India. The resulting portfolio (twenty of which are represented in this exhibition) reflects his struggle to reconcile the photograph's communicative role and its

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EXHIBITION LOCATION

547 West 27th Street, #608
New York, NY 10001

EXHIBITION DATES

December 6, 2018 – January 12, 2019

GALLERY HOURS

Tues–Sat, 11–6

PRESS CONTACT

info@sepiaeye.com



Bhupendra Karia, *Bombay Street Corner 6/8*,
November 1970

Courtesy Bhupendra Karia Estate and sepiaEYE



aesthetics; the reproducibility of the photograph and the singularity of the fine print; a truthful expression of India and his own unique, subjective vision.

Karia's photographic works have been collected by the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Fogg Museum, Harvard University, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi; Museum of Contemporary Art, Milan, Italy and private collections internationally.

ABOUT sepiaEYE

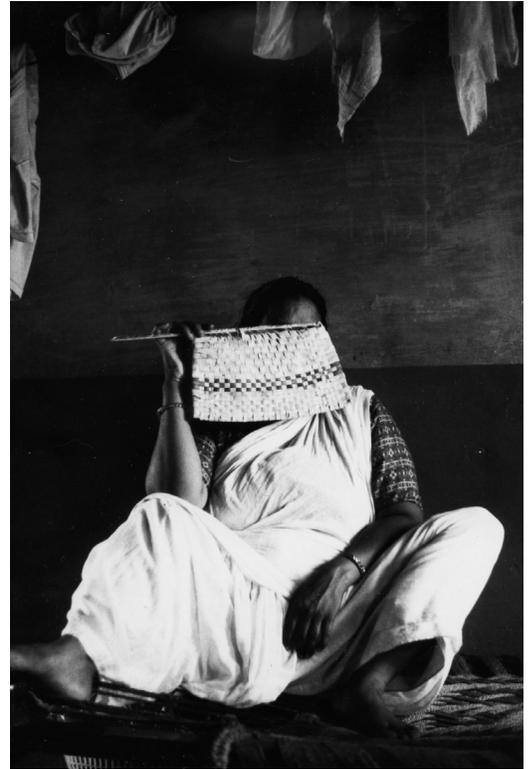
sepiaEYE is dedicated to showing a spectrum of modern and contemporary photography and video work from Asia. Established in September 2009 by Esa Epstein, sepiaEYE will continue to foster artist development through exhibitions, publications, trade fairs, and festivals.

We are honored to represent the Estates of Raghubir Singh and Bhupendra Karia. sepiaEYE is interested in the rediscovery of lesser known artists and significant periods within the history of photography and in the support of emerging artists.

During her tenure as the Executive Director and Curator of SEPIA International and The Alkazi Collection (1995-2009), Esa Epstein has published eight titles on modern and contemporary photography including: *Atul Bhalla: Yamuna Walk* (sepiaEYE & UW Press, 2011), *Jungjin Lee: Wind*, essays by Eugenia Parry and Vicki Goldberg (Aperture/SEPIA, 2009); *Ketaki Sheth: Bombay Mix*, preface by Suketu Mehta (Dewi Lewis/SEPIA, 2007); and *Vivan Sundaram: Re-take of Amrita*, essays by Vivan Sundaram and Wu Hung (SEPIA, 2006).

SEPIA exhibitions have been reviewed in numerous publications, most notably, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Sun*, *ARTnews*, and *Art in America*. Gallery artists have gained critical acclaim and international recognition, and their works are included in the collections of major European and US museums and private collectors.

In her former position, Esa Epstein has helped build an impressive collection of Indian photography and, along the way, has offered her expertise to both private and public collections. Esa Epstein continues to offer institutional planning and arts management through sepiaEYE.



Bhupendra Karia, *Woman with Fan*, 1959-1965
Courtesy Bhupendra Karia Estate and sepiaEYE