

PRESS RELEASE



&

TASVEER

Present

SIDHPUR: TIME PRESENT TIME PAST

By Sebastian Cortés

About the Exhibition

Sidhpur: Time Present Time Past by Sebastian Cortés is a new series of photographs exploring the traditional habitats and domestic spaces of the Bohra Islamic community in the small town of Sidhpur, Gujarat. This exhibition is the first in-depth photographic exploration of this community to date; and is accompanied by a new book published by Tasveer, *Sidhpur: Time Present Time Past*, with a text by Rosalyn D' Mello.

Building on his older work in *Pondicherry*, Cortés continues to focus on uncovering the unique inner landscape of societies and cultures, the evocative, simpler realities created within bubbles of imposed cultural stereotypes. Chancing upon Sidhpur while on an assignment, he discovered an abandoned, little-known town with a rich heritage and a distinctive vernacular architecture. Aesthetic curiosity led him to photograph the domestic spaces of an elusive and veiled Islamic community, the Bohras whose complex cultural make-up is reflected in their unique architecture, an amalgamation of Hindu, Islamic, Persian, European and Colonial styles.

Despite consciously distancing himself from what he sees, and recording objectively, without any pre-conceived notions of his subject, Cortés' images accentuate photography's ability to capture, visually interpret and expose the inherent nature contained within places, seemingly mundane domestic environments and architecture. Haunting and dreamlike these images often challenge the veracity of photographs, capturing the residual memories, history and fragments of life that linger in the facades of buildings, empty rooms, windows, stairways, and the other intricate, distinguishing architectural features of Bohra dwellings. Cortés creates an ambiguous reality where past and present blur and merge, and where the physical environment becomes a cultural artefact, that penetrates through the walls exposing the inner realm of this otherwise concealed community.

About the Artist

Sebastian Cortés, born in New York, took up photography while at New York University film school where he studied and collaborated with many of the best names in the industry, shooting several short films. In 1985 moved to Milan, Italy and started shooting fashion, travel and lifestyle photography assignments for many international magazines and

commercial clients, including, among others: American Express, Condè Nast, Ermenegildo Zegna and Publicis.

From the beginning, Cortés' career included a commitment to fine art photography, developing a very personal analysis of the use of the camera as an instrument for recording “the layering of time and the sense of place”- influenced by the American school: Walker Evans, Stephen Shore, William Eggleston and contemporaries like Robert Polidori and Alec Soth.

In 1996 Cortés produced, “Luoghi Poetici” Poetic Places, intimate atmospheric portraits of the major Italian poets in their homes, the key to discovering each poet is “the place” in both a literary and metaphorical sense – the space in which the poet recognises himself. The book and the exhibition drew great critical acclaim and travelled to major Italian cities.

In 2004 Cortés moved together with his family to India, where his award winning travel, lifestyle and fine art photography is greatly appreciated. Garnering applause from noted artists, intellectuals and press, Cortés developed several book projects, the most recent “Pondicherry”, published by Roli Books, further extended his very personal discourse with photography, initiating a productive period of fieldwork within a new cultural context. Cortés lectures at the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Arts and Communication. His images are exhibited and reviewed widely in Europe and in India.

About Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum

The Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum was established in 1872 as the erstwhile Victoria and Albert Museum, Bombay. As Mumbai's first Museum, it showcases the city's cultural heritage and history through a rare collection of Fine and Decorative Arts that highlight Early Modern Art practices as well as the craftsmanship of various communities of the Bombay Presidency. The permanent collection includes miniature clay models, dioramas, maps, lithographs, photographs, and rare books that document the life of the people of Mumbai and the history of the city from the late eighteenth to early-twentieth centuries.

The Museum, once in a derelict condition, underwent a comprehensive five-year restoration by INTACH supported by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai and the Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation. The project won UNESCO's international Award of Excellence for

cultural conservation in 2005. The Museum re-opened in 2008 with an extensive exhibition programme and is committed to promoting contemporary art and culture. The Museum hosts an extensive exhibitions programme which explores the importance of the collection and includes a strong focus on contemporary art. A series of curated exhibitions titled, 'Engaging Traditions,' invites artists to respond to the Museum's collection, history and archives, addressing issues that speak directly to the traditions and issues that underlie the founding of the Museum, yet evoke the present by challenging orthodoxies and questioning assumptions.

The Museum has partnered with international institutions to showcase artists and exhibitions including the Victoria and Albert Museum, British Council, British Library, Dresden State Art Collections, Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, Museum of Modern Art, ErmenegildoZegna Group and Guild of the Dome Association in an effort to facilitate international cultural exchange.

The Museum's education and outreach programme aims to build and diversify the Museum's audiences, encouraging repeat visits and engaged participation with its permanent collections, contemporary exhibitions and activities. On offer is a rich selection of programmes focused on providing stimulating, participatory experiences that respond to different age, interest and language groups, and recognize a diversity of backgrounds. These experiences are aimed at encouraging critical engagement with Mumbai's history, and artistic and cultural developments.

In December of 2012, the Museum introduced a dynamic cultural hub, the Museum Plaza, which offers the public a recreational space for performances, outdoor activities, and workshops. The Museum has restored and reappropriated abandoned spaces to accommodate a Special Projects Space, Museum Cafe, Museum Shop and an Education Centre.

About Tasveer

Established in 2006, Tasveer began as the first pan-Indian gallery dedicated exclusively to photography, conceptualised by Abhishek Poddar, Shalini Gupta and Naveen Kishore. The gallery is now the premiere photography venue in India with its primary space and head office in Bangalore, and additional spaces in Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Ahmedabad.

Tasveer represents photographers who have made significant contributions to the history of photography in South Asia, and promotes their work through an extensive exhibitions programme, publications, and collaborations with museums and arts organisations around the world.

Tasveer has participated in various national and international art fairs, and also organises several lectures and workshops as part of its outreach programmes.

FOR LISTINGS

Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum and Tasveer

Present

SIDHPUR: TIME PRESENT TIME PAST

An exhibition of photographs by **Sebastian Cortés**

At Special Project Space I & II

DR. BHOU DAJI LAD MUMBAI CITY MUSEUM

Veer Mata Jijabai Bhosale Udyan (Rani Baug)

91(A), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Road Byculla East, Mumbai – 400027

Exhibition: 22nd March – 30th April 2015

10am to 5:30pm (Wednesday closed)

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