

For Immediate Release**ILLUSTRATION OF LIFE and FLATLAND, A LANDSCAPE OF PUNJAB 2003-2006****Photographs by Max Kandhola****Opening 19th September**On view till 20th November 2009

It is with great pleasure we begin Fall 2009 with two exhibitions, *Illustration Of Life* and *Flatland, A Landscape Of Punjab 2003-2006*, photographs by British photographer, Max Kandhola. Kandhola is a second generation Indian immigrant living in the UK. He combines his practice as a photographer with his position as Head of Photography at Nottingham Trent University. His approach is philosophical – photography used within a cultural discourse, critically observing and questioning the complexity and relationship of the human condition, death and dying, identity and memory and mapping ancestral narratives through history and heritage.

In the mid-1990s Max Kandhola embarked upon a personal odyssey to map his family heritage. *Illustration of Life*, the first part of the trilogy that began in 1996, is a poignant and painful document of his father's struggle with cancer that led to his death. In our unpredictable world there is one certainty upon which we can always rely; yet death, when it comes, is never easy. In this extraordinary body of work, Kandhola photographed his father in the final stages of a terminal illness. His intensely personal and honest images confront us with the intimate and often painful reality of death. Following his father's diagnosis with cancer, Kandhola spent two years meticulously collecting and photographing fragments and debris from his chemotherapy treatment: samples of blood, urine, hair and ultimately even the ash from his cremation. These serenely beautiful abstract images form a counterpoint to the haunting final photographs made at his father's bedside. Whilst photographing over a period of six hours, Kandhola captured the brief moment just before and after his father's death.

In Mark Sealy's essay for the book (*Illustration of Life*) he writes, "Kandhola invites us to contemplate life, through his experience of death in much the same way as Bill Viola does in his celebrated work, *Nantes Triptych*. Such work asks a very simple question: Can we reconcile the fact that death is indeed part of life? These photographs, therefore, have a key role to play in the act of reconciliation and the process of change. In such an intensive emotional situation it's actually a profound and insightful act to photograph".

Some will see *Illustration of Life* as a macabre and even sensationalist attempt to shock. Kandhola sees it another way: as a memorial to a much-loved father, and an attempt to understand that loss. The result is a profoundly moving narrative that challenges our ideas of death and questions the way in which it is represented.

The tradition of scattering of ashes in running water symbolises a physical reintroduction of the body back into the land. Kandhola uses this metaphor in his exploration of land as resurrection of the body in *Flatland, A Landscape of Punjab*, which forms the second part of the trilogy.

Against the backdrop of Punjab's landscapes of rivers, cities and uncharted villages, the works metaphorically explore themes of memory, migration and aspects of the Sikh diaspora. Kandhola's photographs avoid the usual iconographic pictorial references to culture and ethnicity associated with representations of India. He reframes the Punjabi terrain in the idiom of traditional European landscapes, and through his experience of the particular investment of the English in suburban gardens that overlap with the diasporic Punjabi's relation to his homeland and displacement from it. The absence of figures is a metaphor for that diasporic Punjabi, whose memory and presence is visibly etched through the legacy of farming and agriculture on the surface of the land. The work constitutes a photographic discourse on isolation and arcadia, a fantasy of sacred, rugged terrain surrounded by meadows and pastoral land rather than the reality of urban city life.

BIOGRAPHY

Max Kandhola is a second generation Indian immigrant living in the UK. He combines his practice as a photographer with his position as Head of Photography at Nottingham Trent University. His photographic work and essays have been widely exhibited and published. His approach is philosophical – photography used within a cultural discourse, critically observing and questioning the complexity and relationship of the human condition, death and dying, identity and memory and mapping ancestral narratives through history and heritage. He is on the board of Directors at Rhubarb Rhubarb, International Photography Festival, Birmingham UK, and for Pavilion, Leeds, UK. Max has worked with numerous agencies as a mentor and advisor to emerging and mid career artists for over 10 years.

Publications

Flatland A Landscape of Punjab (2007 Dewi Lewis Publishing)
Illustration of Life (Dewi Lewis Publishing & Light Work New York 2003)
Autograph Monograph, Peter Max Kandhola (1996 Autograph & Arts Council England)

Collections

Deutsche Bank collection
Autograph ABP Research Archive, London, UK
Government Art Collection, UK
Light Work Syracuse, New York, USA
Wolverhampton Art Gallery, UK
Virgin Records, UK
Birmingham Library photographic collections, UK
Bradford Museum of Photography Film & Television, UK
UB40 and various private individual collections.

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Selected published Journals & Reviews

The Guardian, Independent Magazine, Portfolio Magazine, Nextlevel Magazine, British Journal of Photography, AG Magazine, The Big Issue, JADE, Journal of Art Design Education, Source Magazine, Contact Sheet New York, Different, Phaidon.

Selected solo exhibitions

2009 Photoink, New Delhi
2009 Bratislava, Slovakia, House of Photography 2009 & Month of Photography 2005
2008 Pingyao Festival, China
2007 Djanogly Art Gallery, Nottingham, UK
2004 Focal Point Gallery, UK
2003 Impressions Gallery, UK
2002 Robert B Menschel Photography Gallery, Light Work, Syracuse, New York, USA
1999 Barbara Greene Fine Art, New York, USA
1998 Photofusion, London, UK
1997 Street Level Glasgow, Scotland

Group Shows

2007 Third Lianzhou Photo Festival, China
2007 Rhubarb Rhubarb, Birmingham, UK
2006 *Living is Easy*, Flowers East London, UK
2006 *Luminous*, Les Rencontres D'Arles, France
2004 *Black British Style*, V&A, London, UK
2001 *Representation of Christ*, Fotographic Forum, Frankfurt, Germany
2001 Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Wolverhampton, UK
1995 *The Dead*, Bradford Museum of Photography Film & Television, UK