

RANDHIR SINGH WATER TOWERS

Artist Statement

My interest in photographing Delhi's water towers started in 2012 when I began to notice the sheer number of towers dotting the city's landscape. There seemed to be one in every neighbourhood and they were even marked on maps of the city along with tourist attractions, hotels and temples. I returned to the subject years later and have now travelled to all corners of Delhi looking for these water towers. Many of them are no longer being used, replaced by underground tanks, and others have been demolished as the Delhi Jal Board, which manages most of them, has belatedly realized that the city is spread across a seismic zone.

I am interested in the sculptural quality of the water towers and their relationship to the landscape around them. These landscapes vary from parks in upscale residential areas to government housing colonies and semi industrial zones. The towers themselves vary in design from simple utilitarian structures to more elaborate and intricate constructions implying aesthetic considerations well beyond basic functionality. I think of them as heroic symbols of a modernizing society. They enable the delivery of pressurized water even during power cuts and were able to provide water to the typically 3-4 storey high government housing projects. Without the towers, there was no water.

As these towers slowly disappear from the landscape, I'd like this series of photographs to be seen as a record of what was built and as an idiosyncratic portrait of a city.

ABOUT RANDHIR SINGH

Randhir Singh (b.1975) is an architectural photographer based in New Delhi, India. He studied architecture at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in upstate New York, graduating with a Bachelor of Architecture and a Bachelor of Science in 1999. He moved to New York City and over the next 15 years, worked with many well known, award winning design firms. It was during this time that Randhir began to photograph professionally building on his many years of design practice. His background in architecture and design has been invaluable in understanding buildings and space. Over the last few years, he has worked with a wide range of architects, developers and hotels and was recently awarded Best Interior Photography at the Trends Awards in Mumbai. He recently collaborated with Seher Shah on her exhibition, *The Lightness of Mass* currently on view at Green Art Gallery, Dubai.

RAJESH VORA

EVERYDAY BAROQUE

Artist Statement

Two years ago, while traveling in the villages of Punjab, I witnessed a unique scene – to obtain quick visas, devotees offered toy planes at a place of worship, popularly known as the *Airplane Gurudwara*. More fascinating were the rumours of successful wealthy immigrants, returning to their village and placing an airplane model on their newly built homes.

Intrigued, I made frequent trips to the *Doaba* region, popularly termed the NRI (Non Resident Indian) hub of Punjab. This fascination turned into excitement and soon a visual obsession. As I travelled over 100 villages, crisscrossing 6000 km through four districts, I had no map, guide, address nor any available research but only an intense desire to discover these places -- a hunch, a hint, a friendly nod, a passing glimpse, a silhouette or at times just aimless driving, I discovered on top of NRI homes, tea cups, battle tanks, weight-lifters, whisky bottles, pots, footballs, cars, lotuses, horses, airplane and many such strange objects. The artistic opportunities licenced by the NRI wealth in building these homes, adorned with fanciful objects serving as water storage tanks or even those placed on the water tanks, soon turned for me into a veritable feast.

Though most of these houses remained locked and deserted the extravagant objects on the rooftops infused life to the house. Not only did they enhance drama to the otherwise serene skyline but also became landmarks for the village. Often when the skyline came alive with more than one such imaginative object, a *jugalbandi*, unfolded.

I realised that besides having an aesthetic or function of their own these objects also raise the owner's status in the society and are often immortalised with stories about their struggles, successes and achievements; reflecting their faith, gratitude, profession and aspirations. Local artisans spread all over this region, work as collaborators with the house owner or are commissioned to create these imaginative concrete objects in their makeshift workshops, which are then transported, lifted, assembled, finished and painted on site.

Moreover this trend seems very much a part of the whole Punjabi culture, where celebration of life in all its diversity and pomp is always a done thing. *Shaukeen* is the word often used to refer to one who is extremely fond of something and therefore practicing it simply for the love of it.

Only a successful NRI Punjabi restaurant owner in Birmingham would think of a water tank in the shape of a pressure cooker over his house and seeing this, his fellow Punjabi NRI would emulate with a new form and give it a different twist and I guess this would go on and on. I remain *shaukeen* of this celebration.

ABOUT RAJESH VORA

Rajesh Vora (b.1954) began his career in Visual Communications and has been photographing for over 25 years. A deep-rooted interest in the environment and disappearing habitats has influenced his photographic practice. Vora worked as a photographer with COLORS magazine for over 15 years and often contributed as a researcher and writer. His concern with urban issues led to myriad

collaborations and projects with architects, environmentalists and filmmakers espousing critical views on the social, cultural and political situation in India.

Group exhibitions include *Public Places, Private Spaces: Contemporary Photography and Video Art in India*, Newark Museum, USA (2008) and Minneapolis Institute of Arts, USA (2009); *Bombay Maximum City* at Lille 3000 in France (2006); *Another Asia*, Noorderlic Photo Festival, The Netherlands (2006); *FOTONOVEMBRE 2005*, International Photography Biennale, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain; *Middleage Spread: Imaging India 1947-2004* (2004).

He lives and works in Mumbai.