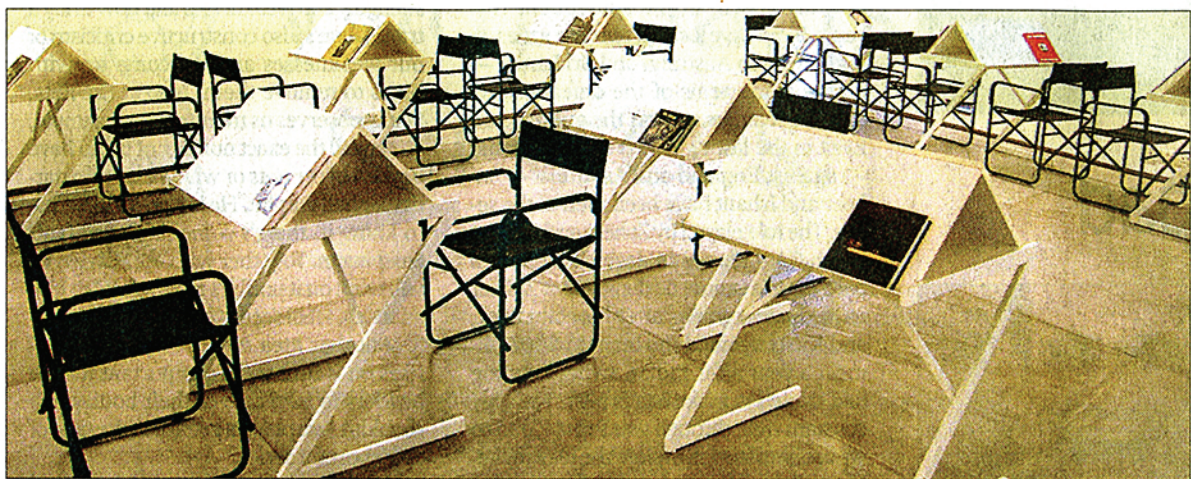


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Photoink gallery opens a bookstore exclusively for the famous Steidl books



ANUSHREE MAJUMDAR

IS there anything I can get you?" inquired Devika Daulet-Singh as we entered her Photoink gallery at Jhandewalan. One look around and we shook our heads, a room full of Steidl books leaves you asking for little else. For those of you not in the know, Steidl is an independent publishing house and book-production facility based in Germany and publishes the work of some of the world's most renowned photographers. Steidlville New Delhi is a bookstore that has opened in the gallery, allowing you to experience the magic of 70 Steidl titles that have brought the art of photography within your grasp. The gallery is ready to celebrate the event with an unusual exhibition of Steidl titles.

The otherwise stark gallery is lined with rows of desks and chairs. Every desk slides down on both sides and contains a book each. There are 34 books in all, ranging from Robert Frank's iconic collection *The Americans* (with a tub-thumping forward

by Jack Kerouac) and *Portraits of Power* by Richard Avedon, to *This is War! Robert Capa at Work* edited by Richard Whelan, *Recreation: American Photographs 1973-1988* by Mitch Epstein, *Moksha* by Fazal Sheikh and *Sent a Letter* by Dayanita Singh. There are other, possibly lesser known gems such as *Least Wanted* by Mark Michaelson and Steven Kasher, which is a "poetic encyclopedia of discarded portraits set free from the steel file-drawers of police departments and prisons", and *The Roma Journeys* by Joakim Eskildsen and Cia Rinne, which traces the global minority tribe of gypsies, spread across seven countries.

The only sound you probably hear is of the careful turning of a page and Daulet-Singh's quiet steps as she walks around straightening the books, aligning them to the side of the desk. "It's an absolute honour to open Steidlville in Delhi. It is the 13th in the world and we at Photoink wanted to make the books accessible to photographers, students, curators, collectors and lovers of the

image," says Daulet-Singh who first thought of opening an exclusive Steidl bookstore in November when she met Michael Mack, editor of Steidl books, in London. It has been nine months since but the wait has been worth it.

The month-long exhibition, *Steidl: The Published Image*, starts this weekend. The Delhi store will be updating their catalogue with every new Steidl publication and reprint. All books are available at a 20 per cent discount, all year through. "We're currently working on an online store as well so that buyers outside Delhi can browse and shop for the latest Steidl books. We'll be putting up the catalogue soon," says Daulet-Singh.

Devour with your eyes every photograph printed in high-quality paper, but handle with care lest the fingers smudge the pages.

The exhibition" is on till September 5 at PhotoInk, MGF Hyundai Building, Jhandewalan . For details log on to www.photoink.net or call 28755940