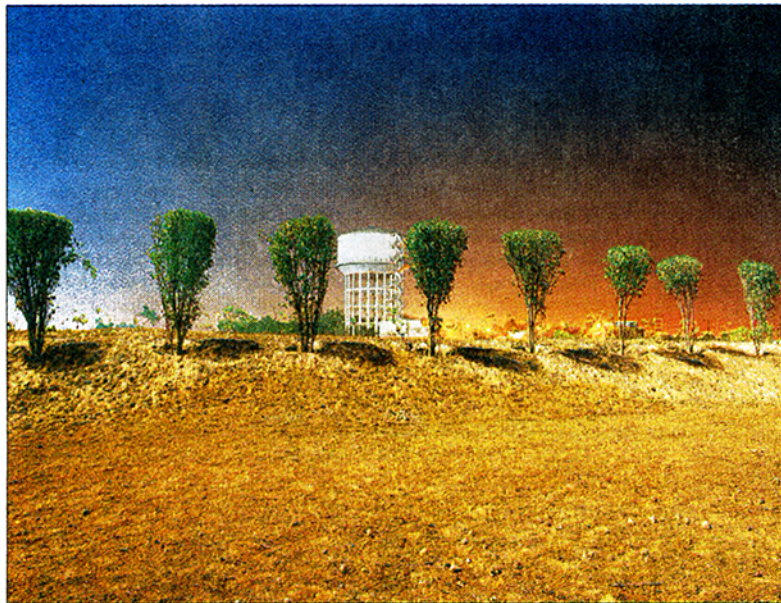


Noida by Night

The suburb turns into a surreal fantasy
in this photo exhibition



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NOIDA — an acronym that is a suburb. A place that seems like an annexe of Delhi but is Uttar Pradesh's own city. A place where the middle class feel they can belong to the Capital without paying the price for it. Now Noida gets its own photographer: Dhruv Malhotra, a 24-year-old who is debuting with the exhibition "Noida Soliloquy" at the Photoink Gallery.

Construction of buildings may be the dusty theme by day in Noida, but the 51 images of "Noida Soliloquy" — all shot at night — turn the place into a suburban fantasy. Malhotra has stripped the

place of its people and urban frenzy. His late-night offerings are filled with wastelands and tilled fields, far removed from inhabited places, exploding in jarring reds, yellows and blues. "For me, what's striking is the way Noida transforms itself at night," says Malhotra, who trawled its sectors by autorickshaw. "Often, I would come back at night to a place I spotted in the morning." A self-taught photographer, he began his nocturnal wanderings in the summer of 2007 when he shifted to Noida's Sector 30 from Mumbai.

One of the most striking photos is of a group of statues — Chief Minister Mayawati's — in electric-



CITY LIGHTS UP: Mayawati's statues covered in blue; (left) a patch of Noida at night

blue shrouds while a looming pylon marks the landscape and star trails dance overhead. In another, the city's yellow light illuminates a patch of land where a white water tank stands, while a row of pruned plants looks like stymied urban poplars. In yet another, an electric tower rises from green earth to ochre-red sky. Malhotra calls it the place where "Noida looks at Delhi". "Behind the tower is Delhi", he points out. Trees turn into sentinels in lyrical green, at times hoary in the mist. Even Nithari village in the middle of the city, is stripped of all its nightmarish associations.

Ask whether he's happy with the changing cityscape, Malhotra says, "It is inevitable. There's no other alternative to this urbanity".

Photographs from the present exhibition will travel to the Hyères Festival in France, while images from his undisputed body of work, titled "Sleepers", are travelling to the Brighton photo biennial in London in October.

*The exhibition is on till June 12.
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