

Vancouver Art Gallery to present
Moving Still: Performative Photography in India

Group exhibition will feature artists from India whose lens-based practices explore gender, religion and sexual identity



February 28, 2019, Vancouver, BC – The Vancouver Art Gallery proudly announces a major exhibition of works by thirteen artists based in India whose photographic practices focus on constructing and reconstructing realities. *Moving Still: Performative Photography in India* will be on view April 19 to September 2, 2019 and will showcase more than one hundred works, dating from the 1800s to the present. This exhibition examines themes of gender, religion and sexual identity using photography, an important medium in India since the mid-nineteenth century.

“*Moving Still* shifts the focus from India’s preeminent and historical traditions of sculpture and painting, to its rich and diverse history of photography,” says Kathleen S. Bartels, Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery. “While this exhibition examines contemporary practices, it tells a fascinating narrative of the artistic impact and influences across three generations of artists who turn the camera onto themselves in ground-breaking ways.”

Not long after the camera’s invention in France in the nineteenth century, photographers based in Bombay (Mumbai), Calcutta (Kolkata) and Madras organized lectures and exhibitions, and published journals, fostering an active culture of experimentation and exchange that continues today. *Moving Still* begins by examining key works from this early period, including prints from Sawai Ram Singh II, the Maharaja of Jaipur from 1835 to 1880, known as India’s first “Photographer Prince.” It also looks at work by Umrao Singh Sher-Gil, who in his self-portraits engaged in reading, writing, yoga or spiritual solitude constitute for many historians the beginnings of a modern self-fashioning in the country.

Framed through this historical context, *Moving Still* showcases contemporary works by Vivan Sundaram, the grandson of Umrao Singh Sher-Gil, who reconfigures his grandfather’s photo archive into digital photomontages, creating an alternative family story. The exhibition also prominently features work by Pushpamala N, one of India’s leading figures in conceptual photography, video and performance. Her photo series *Sunhere Sapne (Golden Dreams)* (1998) presents an ironic look at the Indian family post-independence by staging herself as both a stereotypical middle-class housewife and her fantasy alter-ego, a wealthy socialite.

Sunil Gupta explores experiences of gay life, often in terms of his own identity as an HIV-positive man and the differentiating social and personal implications he encounters living between England and India

as presented in *Sun City* (2011). Naveen Kishore revisits the life of Chapal Bhaduri, who was renowned for his portrayal of female goddesses in Bengali folk theatre. Recounting a nightly metamorphosis from man to goddess, Kishore's *Performing the Goddess: Chapal Bhaduri's Story* (1999) is a video documentary and selection of photos taken on set. Additional artists featured in *Moving Still* include Nikhil Chopra, Anita Dube, Gauri Gill, Ranbir Kaleka, Sonia Khurana, Tejal Shah, and Kiran Subbaiah.

Organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery, an initiative of the Institute of Asian Art and curated by Diana Freundl, Associate Curator of Asian Art and Gayatri Sinha, Independent Curator and founder of Critical Collective.



The catalogue for *Moving Still: Performative Photography in India* will be released and available for purchase at the Gallery Store in April 2019. The 160-page hardcover publication includes profiles on each participating artist and a timeline on the history of performative photography compiled by Critical Collective. It also features essays by Diana Freundl, Associate Curator, Asian Art at the Vancouver Art Gallery, and Gayatri Sinha, art critic and curator that together expand on the historical importance and relevance of photography as an artistic medium in India as well as the development of performative photography.

Public Programs for *Moving Still: Performative Photography in India*

April 20 | 3 PM

Curators in Conversation: Diana Freundl and Gayatri Sinha

A conversation between exhibition co-curators Diana Freundl, Associate Curator of Asian Art and Gayatri Sinha, Guest Curator.

Located in Room 4East of the Gallery. Free for members or with Gallery admission.

April 27 | 3 PM

Artist Talk by Pushpamala N

In partnership with Capture Photography Festival, this talk by artist Pushpamala N. discusses the Bangalore-born artist's clever work as a photo- and video-performance artist, sculptor, writer, curator and provocateur.

Located in Room 4East of the Gallery. Free for members or with Gallery admission; Registration recommended.

May 15 | 7 PM

The Heller Lecture: Vivek Shraya

Vivek Shraya discusses *Moving Still* as an artist whose body of work crosses the boundaries of music, literature, visual art, and film. Her best-selling book, *I'm Afraid of Men* (2018), was heralded by *Vanity Fair* as "cultural rocket fuel," and her album with Queer Songbook Orchestra, *Part Time Woman*, earned her a Polaris Music Prize nomination in 2018.

Located at Annex Theatre at 823 Seymour Street.

Tickets available as of April 2019 at vanartgallery.bc.ca

For more up-to-date information on Public Programs, visit vanartgallery.bc.ca

In partnership with **Capture Photography Festival**, a large photo mural from Naveen Kishore's work in *Moving Still* will be presented at the Canada Line Vancouver City Centre Station.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is grateful to its exhibition supporters:

Visionary Partners for the Institute of Asian Art:
Liu Bao, Wang Ying and Liu Manzhao

Visionary Partners for Photography Exhibitions:
Miles, Maureen and Larry Lunn

With additional support from:
The IAA Development Committee (Angela Bi, Gary Chen, Amelia Gao, Shawn He, Yin Qing)
The Dr. Hari Sharma Foundation

[Umrao Singh Sher-Gil *Sisters in bed*, c. 1932, modern silver gelatin print with selenium toning, Courtesy of PHOTOINK]

-30-

IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

MEDIA CONTACT

Hanah Van Borek, Communications Specialist
hvanborek@vanartgallery.bc.ca, ph: 604.662.4700 ext. 2403 or 778.322.8967

About the Vancouver Art Gallery (vanartgallery.bc.ca)

Founded in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of North America's most respected and innovative visual arts institutions. The Gallery's ground-breaking exhibitions, extensive public programs, and emphasis on advancing scholarship all focus on historical and contemporary art from British Columbia and around the world. Special attention is paid to the accomplishments of Indigenous artists, as well as to the arts of the Asia Pacific region—through the Institute of Asian Art that the Gallery founded in 2014. The Gallery's programs also explore the impacts of images in the larger sphere of visual culture, design and architecture.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is a not-for-profit organization supported by its members, individual donors, corporate funders, foundations, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is situated on traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səłilwətaʔɬ (Tseil-waututh) peoples, and is respectful of the Indigenous stewards of the land it occupies, whose rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Vancouver and to the work of the Gallery.

Facebook: [@VancouverArtGallery](https://www.facebook.com/VancouverArtGallery) **Twitter and Instagram:** [@VanArtGallery](https://www.instagram.com/VanArtGallery)