

Works in the Exhibition

Waswo X. Waswo

1. *Elephant Festival – Jaipur*, 1999
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

2. *Morning on the Ghat – Pushkar*, 2000
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

3. *Below the Sun Temple - Outside Jaipur*, 2000
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

4. *The Entrances to Homes – Pushkar*, 2000
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

5. *A Flight of Birds – Jaisalmer*, 2001
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
12 ¾ x 19 in.

6. *Gateway to the Lake and Beyond – Eklingji*, 2001
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

7. *Small Shiva Temple - Outside Udaipur*, 2001
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

8. *View from the Monkey Temple – Hampi*, 2001
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

9. *Field Worker with Ox Plow – Karnataka*, 2001
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
15 ½ x 15 ½ in.

10. *A Conversation in the Market Place – Jaisalmer*, 2001
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

11. *Cenotaph Under a Mottled Sky – Jaisalmer*, 2001
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

12. *Tea House – Kerala*, 2002
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

13. *Morning on the Estuary – Kerala*, 2002
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

14. *Pillar by the Sea – Cochin*, 2002
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

15. *Cross Before a Goan Home – Arambol*, 2002
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

16. *In the Rice Fields – Karnataka*, 2002
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

17. *A Grandmother with her Grandchildren – Kerala*, 2002
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

18. *Untitled Portrait – Karnataka*, 2002
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

19. *Untitled Portrait – Kerala*, 2002
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

20. *On the Banks of the Tungabhadra – Hampi*, 2002
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

21. *Untitled Portrait – Mattancherry, Cochin*, 2002
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

22. *Rickshaw - Wallah – Hospet*, 2002
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

23. *Man with a Cow – Kerala*, 2002
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

24. *Rice Field – Karnataka*, 2002
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
15 ½ x 15 ½ in.

25. *Ironing Man – Trivandrum*, 2002
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

26. *On a Mountain Path – Dharamsala*, 2003
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

27. *Woman with a Scarf - Himachal Pradesh*, 2003
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

28. *Untitled Portrait - Himachal Pradesh*, 2003
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

29. *The Way Home from School – Manali*, 2003
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

30. *Cricket Practice – Goa*, 2004
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

31. *Woman with a Basket – Goa*, 2004
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

32. *Winnowing – Goa*, 2004
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

Dr. K. L. Kothary

1. *The Brick Maker*
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
8 ⅝ x 11 ½ in.

2. *Brides Bangles*
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
9 ½ x 11 ¼ in.

3. *Tedious Task*
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 ⅜ x 9 ⅝ in.

4. *Helping Hand*
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 ¼ x 9 ½ in.

5. *Louse Finding*
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
10 ⅝ x 9 ⅞ in.

6. *Evening Shadows*
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
7 ⅞ x 11 ¼ in.

7. *Jain Monks of India*
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
10 x 8 ¼ in.

8. *Untitled*
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
9 ⅞ x 11 ⅞ in.

9. *Waiting for Mother*
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 ½ x 9 ¾ in.



A Flight of Birds – Jaisalmer, 2001
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
12 ¾ x 19 in.

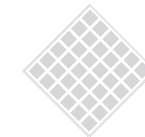
India Poems

The Photographs of Milwaukee Artist

Waswo X. Waswo

June 28 - September 23, 2007

Haggerty Museum of Art
Marquette University





Rickshaw - Wallah – Hospet, 2002
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

An Introduction to *India Poems*

The name “India Poems” was chosen for this exhibition precisely because it would help clue viewers into the idea that my photographs were meant as visual meditations that went beyond the literal. My photographs sought a more archetypal, eternal, form of reality.

As a anecdote, I was recently roused early in the morning by my rickshaw driver, Tara, who excitedly told me that His Royal Highness, The Maharana Arvind Singh of Udaipur, was being driven in his new Rolls Royce through the streets of our city. I stretched my arms, not yet fully awake, and told Tara to sit down with me and share a pot of chai. As best as I could (through the difficulties of our different languages) I explained to Tara that I had no interest in photographing the Maharana’s parade. On the other hand, if I were to find a pair of dusty old shoes, once worn by the Maharana, and now gathering cobwebs in a tiny Udaipur resale shop, I might be interested in photographing them. My search has always been for things evocative, and suggestive of long-standing realities, not for a record of supposedly significant or historical events.

Unfortunately this concept is not always understood. As the *India Poems* exhibition wound its way through India (and also Sri Lanka) my assistant Sreenu and I discovered that, despite my professed non-documentarian intentions, the photographs in the exhibition were often taken as a foreigner’s judgment upon a land and its people.

India is, after all, much more than the people and scenes that constitute *India Poems*. Today’s India is also the India of Delhi’s new, and immaculately clean, high speed Metro system. It is also the India that maintains state-of-the-art hospitals, attracting patients from Europe and even America. It has the world’s largest and fastest growing middle class, throbbing dance clubs in Bangalore and Bombay, glamorous fashion designers, world-renowned scientists, film stars, a booming art scene, wide new expressways and ever taller and taller buildings. India is a nuclear power, a competitor in space exploration, and perhaps the world’s largest educator of software engineers. In this context, a foreigner such as myself, exhibiting images of what many perceive as “the old India,” is not likely to be viewed with a welcoming, uncritical eye.

As Indian cultural theorist Ranjit Hoskote so perfectly explains in the foreword to the book that accompanies this exhibition:

Artists like Waswo, when they step into the Indian situation – choosing to live and work in India and taking Indian subjects as the focus of their work – are either idolized or stigmatized: there is no middle ground of response for them to occupy. They are either viewed as neocolonial figures perpetuating the conquistador agenda of the Victorian travelers, scholar gypsies and anthropologists, and thus contravening the sacred right of the postcolonial native to speak for itself. Or then they are worshipped as demigods whose naturally superior eye can encompass a reality that is too fragmentary and fugitive for the native gaze to represent.¹

Admittedly, I prepared for my traveling exhibition with an incredible degree of cultural naiveté. The minefield of post-colonial thought through which I soon found myself tiptoeing was nerve-racking. I am, in fact, an admirer of the late Edward Said. His views on how those of us from the West have often, whether maliciously or unwittingly, distorted and stereotyped the cultures of the East, are ideas to be reckoned with. Yet, as an artist, there is a part of my soul that protests any dictates of “political correctness” arising from either the left or the right. An artist, after all, is supposed to be digging deeper than current politics, laboring to reveal truths about humanity and the human environment, truths that transcend the disputes

of political arguments. As noted by Hoskote:

The chief negative effect of the postcolonial insistence that the (typically white, First World) outsider is radically incapable of representing the former colony (or the formerly colonized) is that it negates the possibility of empathy. This negation also rests on the belief that artists such as Waswo are necessarily representing a national reality. Waswo improvises within a particular social formation without reference to any schema of national representation; and yet ironically, unlike the ideologues who would turn individuals into illustrations of historical pathologies, he exercises both a responsibility and responsiveness towards his subjects.²

While working on, and selecting the photographs that would eventually become the *India Poems* series, I was guided by several factors. One was my admiration for the long out of fashion style of Pictorialist photography. Another was my desire to slow down time, forcing a viewer to step aside from their fast-paced world and remember the simple and quiet things which our current age seems to be forgetting. But above all, I wished to find images that seemed to be purely Indian. At all costs I wanted to avoid the globalized culture that is rapidly transforming our world into homogenized and bland uniformity. While assembling a body of work using the aforementioned criteria, have I inadvertently wallowed in nostalgia? Or have I rediscovered shards of poetry...old shoes...fading from our contemporary consciousness? Have I done a disservice to a country valiantly struggling to assert its relevance and modernity in our current world? Or have I revealed a few of the things that keep India unique, alluring, and ageless?

To try to answer these questions, or to at least acknowledge the need for greater dialogue, the Haggerty Museum of Art decided to include photographs by the Indian Pictorialist, Dr. K. L. Kothary, in this exhibition. Kothary shows undeniable respect for India and Indians. In the same way, and as India becomes more modern, I hope that people will see my work as “a loving mediation on a beautiful land and its people.”

Waswo X. Waswo
Udaipur, 2007

¹ *The Paths of Travelling Desire*, essay by Ranjit Hoskote, from the book *India Poems: The Photographs*, Gallerie Publishers, 2006.

² *Ibid.*



In the Rice Fields – Karnataka, 2002
Sepia toned silver gelatin print
11 x 14 in.

Acknowledgments

India Poems: The Photographs of Milwaukee Artist Waswo X Waswo is the most recent in an on-going series of exhibitions at the Haggerty featuring the works of contemporary local photographers. Born and raised in Milwaukee, after several trips to the subcontinent, Waswo decided to pack up his belongings, camera in tow, and immerse himself in the life and culture of India.

With images that recall the nineteenth-century Pictorialist tradition, Waswo’s photographs capture what the artist describes as the timeless quality of life in rural India. Waswo is aware of the aesthetic and political minefield he walks through as a contemporary Western artist creating images that “seek to keep India unique, alluring and ageless.” His photographs are, subsequently, extraordinarily thoughtful and genuine.

The Haggerty is pleased to provide the opportunity to view Waswo’s beautiful and provocative images of India. We would like to thank the artist for his full participation in the planning and organization of the exhibition which is made possible, in part, with the support of the Mary Martha Doerr Endowment Fund and the Wisconsin Arts Board.

Lee Coppernoll
Acting Director