

Works in the Exhibition

Waswo X. Waswo

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

   Sepia toned silver gelatin print
   11 x 14 in.

   Sepia toned silver gelatin print
   11 x 14 in.

4. The Entrance to Homes – Pushkar, 2001
   Sepia toned silver gelatin print
   11 x 14 in.

   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.

    Sepia toned silver gelatin print
    11 x 14 in.

    Sepia toned silver gelatin print
    11 x 14 in.

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

    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.

    Sepia toned silver gelatin print
    11 x 14 in.

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

    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.

    Sepia toned silver gelatin print
    11 x 14 in.

    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.

    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.

    Sepia toned silver gelatin print
    11 x 14 in.

    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 ½ 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
    10 ½ x 9 ¾ in.

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

5. Louise Finding
    Sepia toned silver gelatin print
    9 ½ x 11 ½ in.

6. Evening Shadows
    Sepia toned silver gelatin print
    7 ½ x 11 in.

7. Jain Monks of India
    Sepia toned silver gelatin print
    9 ½ x 11 ½ in.

8. Untitled Portrait
    Sepia toned silver gelatin print
    9 ½ x 9 ¼ in.

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

India Poems

The Photographs of Milwaukee Artist

Waswo X. Waswo

June 28 - September 23, 2007

Haggerty Museum of Art
Marquette University
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 myrickshaw 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 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.

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 sense, 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 idealized 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 naive gaze to represent.

Admittedly, I prepared for my traveling exhibition with several factors. One was my admiration for the British photographer John Altoft and how he stages photographs as an attempt to create theatrical scenes, often with a mythic, almost religious quality. 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 walledow 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.”


India Poems: The Photographs of Milwaukee Artist Waswo

*India Poems* 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 Coppersnill
Acting Director

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