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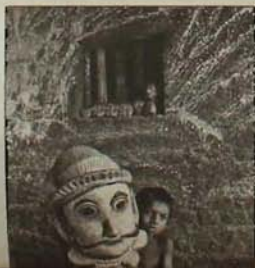
CATCH THE ACTION

Scan the HTDO! logo to view a list of events you can attend over the weekend. To download the app, see the back of Page One Plus



THE MAGIC OF SILVER GELATIN

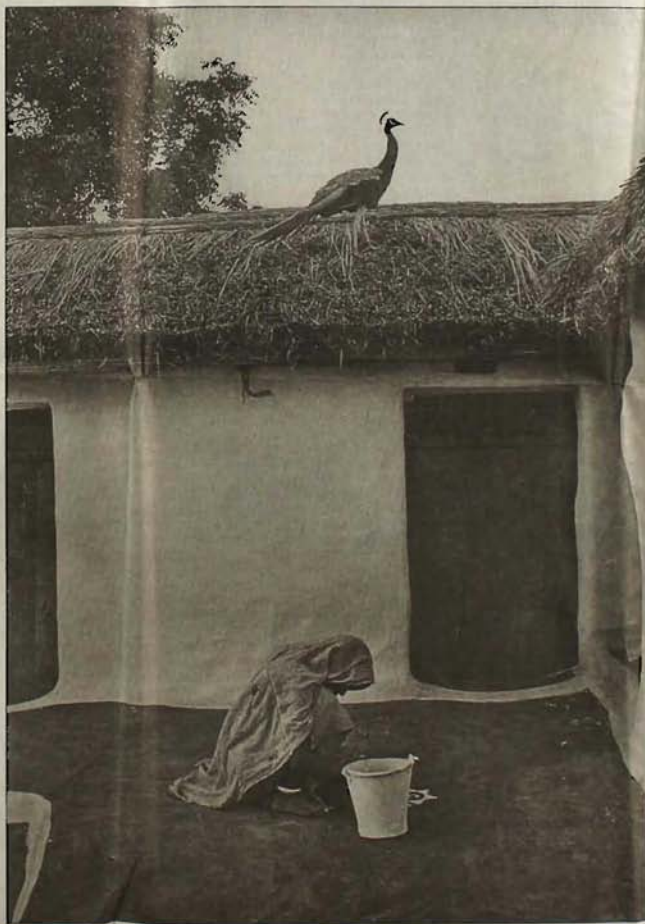
Jyoti Bhatt's images that archive tribal life between the Sixties and Nineties prompt viewers to think about ephemera that can't be framed



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Three little girls, dressed in the bright prints of the desert, their arms laden with bangles lean against a smooth mud wall and stare at something to the left of the photographer; their eyes always are raised to the sunlit



FIND YOUR

WEEKEND FIX



FILM FIX



ANUPAMA CHOPRA

EMOTIONAL VOLTAGE

A director with two small art house releases on his resume. A celebrated theatre actress. A penniless nine-year old shoeshine boy who had never seen a film before. This unlikely threesome created a film that created waves around the world, winning two Oscar nominations, a Golden Globe award for best foreign language film, a BAFTA award and the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival, where *Central Station* premiered in 1998.

Central Station is the story of a retired school teacher who writes letters for illiterate people at Rio de Janeiro's central railroad station. *Dora*, played by Fernanda Montenegro,

against a smooth metal wall and stare at something to the left of the photographer; their eyes almost as round as the ventilation holes above their heads; a group of children poses in front of a wall decorated with peacocks and hypnotic geometric designs; a woman prepares the family bullock to look its best for the Gordan festival; another makes a pattern on the courtyard while a peacock perches on the roof of her home.

Some of these images have a surreal dream-like quality others present alternative ways of doing the mundanely interesting things that obsess everyone, the villager and the urbanite alike — ideas for beautifying the home and one's own person. One, of a group of men enjoying themselves as they decorate a wall together, could even inspire a savvy event planner to promote 'new' wall painting parties.

All of these spectacular vignettes of tribal life (48 in all) shot by artist and print maker Jyoti Bhatt between 1967 and 1995 are part of the exhibition, Jyoti Bhatt — Photographs from Rural India, at the Vadehra Art Gallery. Eleven-year-old Bhatt who lives and works in Vadodra and studied painting at the city's Faculty of Fine Arts under NS Bendre, KG Subramanyam and Sankho Choudhuri began documenting tribal culture in 1967 after participating in a Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan seminar on the folk arts of Gujarat. His deep interest in tribal people and scenes from their lives prompted him to travel through the state and beyond, visiting areas he had never ventured to before. In the process, he created a remarkable body of work.

His pictures leave the viewer at once elated and saddened, wonder-struck and despondent. Elated because they are a window into a world that has disappeared, saddened because some of the children in the pictures have spindly legs, bloated bellies, and hair streaked by malnutrition. Like all the best pictures, these black and whites, coax the viewer to think about a wide range of subjects: everything from the value of decoration, the culture of poverty and the

■(Top right) Rural courtyard, Banasthali, Rajasthan 1972; (above) A tribal boy with a ceremonial mask, South Gujarat, 1967

idea of high and low art, to the fragility of traditional ways of living and also, conversely, the need for modernity. They make her question the idea of progress while also being grateful for the things that the middle class city-bred take for granted — running water and access to good healthcare.

The intervening decades since Bhatt travelled through Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, Bihar and Haryana documenting tribal communities have perhaps made some of these folk prosperous enough to build homes with concrete walls, or displaced them and destroyed their idyllic lives entirely. Maybe their cattle now roam down highways untended and those little girls, if they didn't die in childbirth, are women old before their time after years of labouring on a construction site.

Bhatt's pictures function at various levels: they archive indigenous domestic and decorative arts; they dazzle with their perfect framing and symmetry of composition; they are surcharged with the mood of the subject — by turns contemplative, wondering, celebratory and coy; they invite the viewer to contemplate all that and to ruminate also on larger issues, on the abstract and the philosophical, on things that cannot be framed, on the ephemeral nature of life.

Jyoti Bhatt — Photographs from Rural India, has been organised by Tasveer in collaboration with Vacheron Constant

FIND YOUR WAY HERE

11am to 7pm, till May 14

Vadehra Art Gallery, D-53 Defence Colony. Call: 9481886913

PHOTOS: JYOTI BHATT / TASVEER & VACHERON CONSTANTIN



■(Above) Tribal painters, Gujarat, 1978; (left) Tattoo marks on a Rajwar woman, Madhya Pradesh, 1983; (below) A mother and child outside a rural house, South Gujarat, 1994



retired school teacher who writes letters for illiterate people at Rto de Janeiro's central railroad station. Dora, played by Fernanda Montenegro, is hard-edged, joyless and deeply cynical. She spends the day listening to people's innermost fears and fantasies but she doesn't bother to mail the letters. Instead, in the evening she sits with a friend and ridicules the strangers who have opened their hearts to her, often just tossing the letters into a drawer. Against her instincts, Dora gets entangled with Josué, an orphan whose mother had Dora write two letters to Josué's father, minutes before she is killed in a bus accident. Dora embarks on a difficult journey to reunite Josué with his father and in the process, discovers her own humanity.

This material could have easily become a sunny sentimental road movie but in the hands of director Walter Salles, it remains true, tough and deeply moving. Salles locates the beauty in ordinary lives. When the film finished, I wept with Dora and Josué. But Salles also left me with hope and faith. At the heart of Central Station is the staggering performance by Montenegro. Dora evolves imperceptibly into a woman whose tragedy sears our hearts. What's remarkable is that Vinícius de Oliveira, the non-actor who plays Josué, matches her brilliance. His face brims with intensity and a remarkable honesty.

Central Station, has, what Salles described as, 'emotional voltage.' Like all great art, it shifts something inside you. Find it.

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PICK OF THE WEEK

REVOLUTIONARY ROAD

Exactly 157 years after that tumultuous date of May 10, 1857, when Delhi was up in arms against the British forces, Delhi by Fort offers to take Dilliwallas on an exploration of the significant spots related to the Mutiny in Delhi. The tour gives a chance to relive the experience of the Revolt of 1857 and learn why Delhi was so important during India's First War of Independence.

7am, May 11, Kashmere Gate Metro Station. Charges: ₹400 per person. Call: 987181775



BEYOND HATE SPEECH

During this election season, Akshara theatre brings back Gopal Sharmar's famous political satire Let's Laugh Again in a fresh avatar. Let's Laugh Again takes potshots at every party and politician without ever losing its cool quotient, and mixes political satire, slapstick, catchy songs and rib-tickling punch lines.

7.30pm, till May 11, Akshara Theatre, 11-B, Baba Khark Singh Marg. Call: 23361075

BEST OF INDIAN CINEMA

The ninth edition of the Habitat Film Festival returned with the best of Indian cinema, starting with a retrospective of actor-director Aparna Sen. Screenings include films made in regional languages such as Assamese, Bengali, Mizo, Malayalam, Konkani and Marathi, among others, apart from mainstream films like Shahid and Queen. Till May 18, Habitat World, Indian Habitat Centre, Lodi Road. Call: 43663080



THE ORGANIC WAY



Go organic this summer: Oxford Bookstore will be hosting a 10-day-long Organic Bazaar that will bring together manufacturers and retailers of organic and natural food, bakery products and candles.

10am to 6pm, till May 16, Oxford Bookstore, N-81, Connaught Place. Call: 997566776

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The tenth issue of FDX: A Photography Quarterly features a group of talented photographers showcasing their work on the theme of 'habitat.' This issue explores the idea of the habitat in a time of globalisation and instant information. It examines

questions of how we define our 'natural' environment. The photographers featured include Valentino Bellini, Rasel Chowdhury, Srinivas Kuruganti, Antonio Martinelli and Tuhin Subhra Mondal, among others.

10am to 6pm, till May 16, Max Mueller Bhawan, KG Mars. Call: 23329504. Call: 93136170

