

THE NEPAL ISSUE

PIX

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scope



Purna Bahadur Shrestha Collection/
Nepal Picture Library

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NEW TERRAIN
NAYANTARA GURUNG KAKSHAPATI

For a decade now, Nepali politics and society have been navigating new terrain – the emergence of a brand new federal democratic republic. In 2006, we forged our very own ‘Nepali Spring’, which ended a 240-year-old Hindu monarchy, and once the euphoria of bringing down an adversary had subsided, the focus shifted to negotiating new political aspirations and possibilities, roles and responsibilities as citizens and practitioners. Communities that have lived on the margins for far too long are now voicing their concerns over civil rights issues for political inclusion. As a consequence, new brands of socio-political and economic clout have emerged at the very core of the nation, inspiring the need for a more secular approach. The process has been slow and clamorous, as is the case with most democratic processes. Many protests, conferences and manifestos later, small victories have been celebrated and many new challenges identified.

Meanwhile, men and women across lines of ethnicity, religion, and political loyalties have left the country. They have chosen not to wait for the dust to settle. They have families to provide for, and dreams to nurture. They build skyscrapers, nurse babies, drive cars, and guard compounds in cities that their families, back home, can barely recall. Many who stay back, wait. Others take the possibilities they are presented with, feed off the chaos and win battles every day.

Amidst the flux, a different kind of displacement took place recently – that of a tectonic nature. A 7.8 magnitude earthquake that hit Nepal in April 2015 resulted in the loss of over 9,000 lives and 800,000 homes. This has been an added, brutal blow for millions of Nepali families



who were already struggling to make positive changes in their daily life.

The image of Nepal that is now projected in the eyes of the world is that of a small idyllic Himalayan Shangri-la, mired in poverty and political strife, further destroyed by a natural calamity.

The Image and Image-making

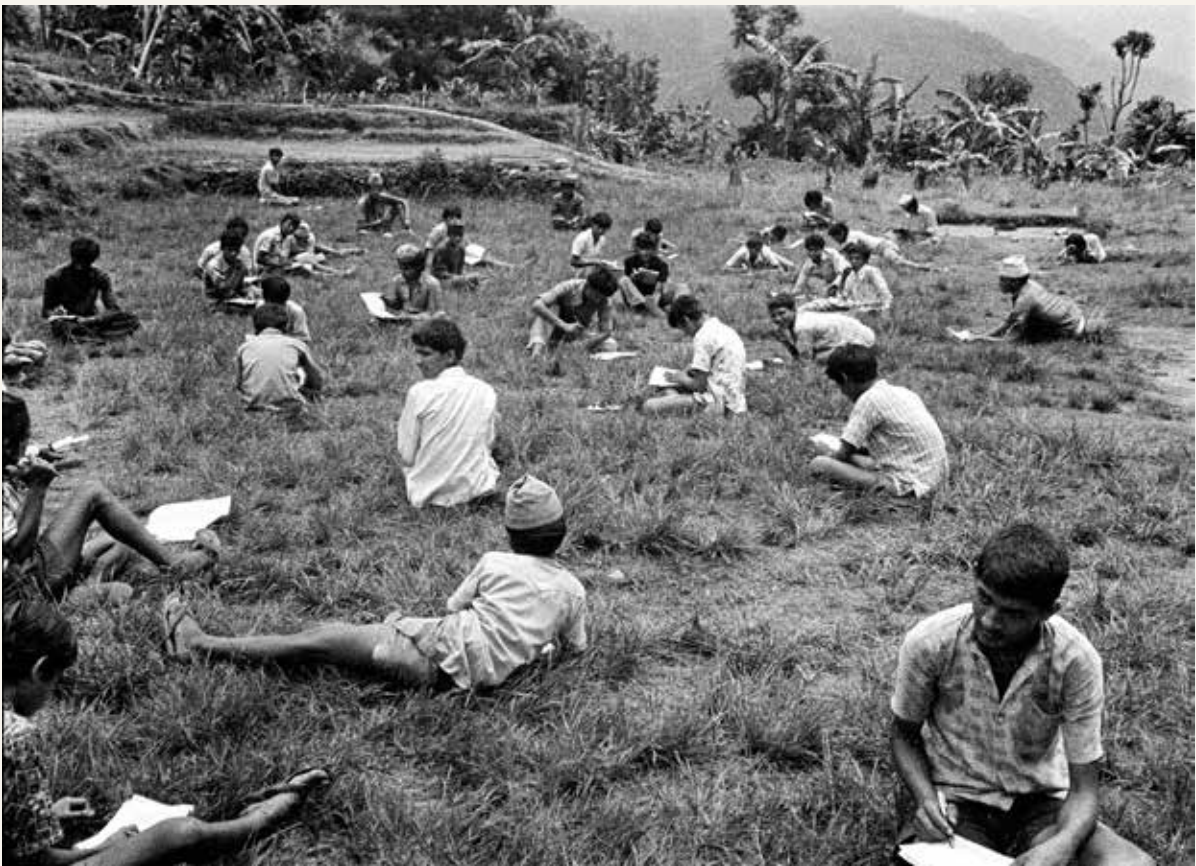
The early imaging of Nepal was by travelling photographers in the colonial period, who visited from or via neighbouring India to document hunts, weddings and to consolidate political prospects of the Empire. This growing tradition of image-making was quickly embraced by the Ranas, who trained their court painters (chitrakars) to become master photographers in the late 19th century. Stately portraits were taken to confirm and advance the power and influence of

Page 1: Shanta, a primary school teacher in Chiti Tilahar’s school.
35 mm film, Lamjung, 1975
Image contributed by: Sumitra Manandhar Gurung/
Nepal Picture Library

A self-portrait of Saubhagyawati Ranjit.
Modern print, 120 mm
Image contributed by: Saubhagyawati Ranjit/
Nepal Picture Library

Facing page: Image contributed by: Ashok Adhikari/
Nepal Picture Library





the aristocracy. In 1951, following the end of the autocratic Rana regime, Nepal officially opened up to the world and a new image-making prospect was introduced: capturing Nepal’s natural beauty and diverse cultures to promote state tourism. Images of this exotic Himalayan heaven were globally circulated to entice adventurers and travellers to the country. Simultaneously, Nepal began opening up to development projects through foreign aid and a parallel agenda was subsequently introduced – to project images of extreme poverty and need. Then came the news cameras that sought Maoist guerillas in the jungles in the 1990s; a massacred royal family in 2001; and then growing civil unrest and street protests in the following years. Most recently of course, the destruction of centuries-

old heritage sites and millions of homes has been widely documented since the 2015 earthquakes.

How does this history of photography in Nepal help to interpret a place and a people? Does it limit the imagination of the world and our own understanding of ourselves?

Fresh Scope

As Nepali society traverses new image-making scenarios, it is also confronted with a fresh scope. The emergence of a generation of image-makers has brought multiplicity in interest and paradigm. Voices independent of agenda-driven assignments have begun to emerge that gradually shift the scale towards more personal statements. Storytellers from ‘outside’ are pushed to dig deeper

Students writing their exams in the school’s playground in Chiti Tilahar. Lamjung, 35 mm film, 1975
Image contributed by: Sumitra Manandhar Gurung/ Nepal Picture Library

Facing page: Portrait of young boys after their *Bartabandha* (coming of age) ritual. Medium format. Image contributed by: Saraswati Shakya Collection/ Nepal Picture Library



into the fabric of their narratives. Representations from the ‘inside’ are challenged through debate and discussion.

As an exercise to understand a more nuanced version of our history, a group of young photographers began archiving family albums in 2010. This effort has grown into The Nepal Picture Library – a digital archive that now disseminates over 54,000 images which document a people’s history of Nepal through found or submitted images. Contributors to the archive have ranged from amateur photographers who documented their neighborhoods in family photos, professional Nepali photographers who were assigned to photograph its scenic beauty, and studio photographers who captured a citizenry that could not afford their own cameras, hence came to the commercial studio to frame their memories. This archiving initiative manifests a growing social documentation of the history of our present.

Inevitably, the question of an audience afflicts

every professional image-maker. The internet has made deep inroads into global but also local audiences. It is cost-effective and far-reaching, and tempting to rely on. But it does not guarantee real critical engagement. Nepali print media, for the most part, is steered by publishers and editors with a limited understanding and exposure to visual culture. Furthermore, with galleries being few and far between, limited in resources, the need for alternative platforms of engagement is more pressing than ever.

As an experiment, the inaugural edition of Photo Kathmandu, Nepal’s first international photography festival, attempted to present works – some of which are independently included in this issue – to the public in the alleyways, courtyards and other community spaces in Patan, itself a heritage site. Many of these works had been made in Nepal over the last 5 decades, published and exhibited around the world, but were being shown to the Nepali public for the first time. In the process of creating this moment for photography here, many questions were posed: How do audiences around the world engage with these works? Did the Nepali public engage differently? What does it take to captivate an audience apart from merely making works accessible? Who is behind the camera? Who is the audience? What are the choices we are making as image-makers, curators and gate-keepers of collections? How do these choices impact the image as well as image-making practices?

As Nepal moves forward to confront the changing terrain of a knowledge base, it is vital to pause and consider some of these fundamental questions. Hence, this issue of PIX explores a place and people through their struggles, aspirations and daily life. For instance, Nirman Shrestha attempts to render dead silence



Photo Kathmandu, Nepal's first international photography festival was held in Patan from Nov 3-9 2015. Installation of 'Hope for Tomorrow'; an Inside Out project that was led by residents of the Swotha community. The installation featured portraits of people who survived the April and May 2015 earthquakes.



amidst chaos after returning to Nepal following a period away; Philip Blenkinsop interacts with the Maoists showing us more than fighters in camouflage, often revisiting Nepal to make new work but also to teach; Karma Tshering decides to turn the lens on himself so as to scrutinise aspects of autobiography; Nepal Photo Project curates crowd-sourced images from social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook that facilitated the global circulation of images from the recent earthquakes as well as subsequent rehabilitation efforts, offering a broader picture as the hashtag gains popularity through collective storytelling.

But in the end, each of these stories comprise fragments of an idea of a country. They represent transient encounters and long standing bonds to a place that continues to evolve.

Kiran Man Chitrakar with modern prints from his 19th c. photographic archive at his home in Kathmandu, March 2016. Photos by Akshay Mahajan

COMPARATIVE TESTIMONIES

RAHAAB ALLANA

In a recent book by British correspondent, Thomas Bell titled *Kathmandu* (pub. Random House), the author's spirited prose is interspersed with snapshot images – a diary with photos – reporting on life before and after the civil war, then venturing deeper as a resident in the capital city. Examining it alongside another contemporary publication, *Battles of a New Republic* by Prashant Jha, the reader is taken through two very personal chronicles, with marked prose styles and points of view.

The first beguiles as a biography, speckled with provocative personal and historical anecdotes, and 'everyday epiphanies' (also the title of Frédéric Lecloux's work in this issue). Through a narrative that recounts the quirks of a different culture unravelling before an attentive foreigner coming to terms with the city, the experiences gradually become more immersive dealing with local politics and a people's history. Jha's account in contrast, is a studied investigation of post-independence countrywide transitions, and its broad connection with Nepal's position in S. Asian politics until the



recent constitutional amendments – something of a personal interest given his own Madhesi lineage.

As a port of entry, the current issue of PIX also forsters parallel histories. In dialogue with recent socio-political shifts, with the insurgencies that continue to unhinge the status quo, and a social milieu that is siphoned into a political moment through concerns over migration, reconstruction and inclusion – it drafts a very clear statement about how internal accounts can and should be read by those from the outside looking in, and how that is an important counterpoint to an ongoing dialogue about the region.

At the same time, the disclosure of photo essays from within Nepal unhinge outside perspectives, enriching this issue with a porous and hopefully, nondiscriminatory character. As in the case of





Kiran Man Chitrakar lifts up a glass plate negative of Juddha Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana (1875-1952) from his photo archive in Kathmandu. March, 2016. Photo by Akshay Mahajan

Unknown Photographer, Queen Laxmi Dibyeshwari Devi Shah also known as Mahila Bada Maharani [second among the four queens of King Prithvi Bir and mother of King Tribhuvan], c.1890-1910, 277 x 233mm, Albumen print, ACP:2000.14.0060

Bell’s images in his book, the mosaic constituted here ponders whether lives or situations are candidly pieced together through photographs – are they only footnotes or field notes? Is their purpose self-evident and overtly scripted, suggesting that we read between the lines in order to counterbalance the didacticism of fact? Inferring from images, through and with them, has hence been an important part of this editorial, in order to create a justifiable polemic within the issue – how to understand the nuances of cultural transformation through changes in media. Whether this is predetermined by the author/photographer or, whether it can be arrived at through debate and interpretation, is perhaps the larger concern.

Seeking the ‘event’ and moment of image-making as a trope in the issue, photography in Nepal, as noted by NayanTara Gurung Kakshapati in this section, has a chequered yet early history. Colonial iconography is as much about the staged,

studio portrait, as it is about surveying and documenting territory. As most erstwhile colonies, (though Nepal was never directly a British one), royal portrait photography kick-started a larger civil investigation, given practical and often societal constraints and protocols. There was an interest in the customs of the rulers, investiture ceremonies, hunts and effectively, lifestyles of those who would afford to be documented in lavish settings. An interview with Kiran Man Chitrakar yielded further information about the family’s 5-generations of photographers – akin to the hereditary line of court painters from which they descend. Over 2000 glass plates, A4 size transparencies, objects and accessories comprise only a fraction of the collection the practitioner himself has inherited, now being consistently (and daily) archived by his son and daughter.

Creating an available record and disseminating it, either from the vintage archive or from

the contemporary, intimates how cultural specificities change the terms of their transitioning, or become obsolete or endangered. With this pretext, though not included in this issue as a singular feature, I was eager to volunteer the nascent work of Narayan Tushar Kaudinya, who has documented a festival called Gadhimai, which may now be, in part, banned due to animal rights issues. As part of folklore, this particular intervention pays attention to a marriage ceremony, usually under-represented in any on-line or available documentation.

The frames jump from moment to moment creating an expectation as the photographer captures processions and later the bride, priest and mother associated with the ceremony with a heightened sense of connectivity transmuted through hyper real colour. Ceremonies are heady experiences, where the over-saturated moment delivers a hallucinatory experience of one being drawn towards light, towards a sanctum where objects are venerated.

The documented event, or in this case, the last one of its kind presents an important threshold in the contemporary as it positions the ‘moment’ at an apex, wherein the discord and distraction of a crowd participating in tradition, yet being ushered into the contemporary, give it an added intensity. I was drawn to its immediacy as an aesthetic – announcing its own imperatives that images are infact memory activators sliding across and through inter-linear linkages.

The issue, as a whole, then suggests the importance of juxtapositions as a trigger to magnify interconnections or contrasts – those ideas elected into the present collectively and individually, through a flood of promises, franchises and preferences.

A RIVER OF HEADS AND A WEDDING

Narayan Tushar Kaudinya

‘You Can’t Stop Faith from Performing’

Text by Nischal Oli

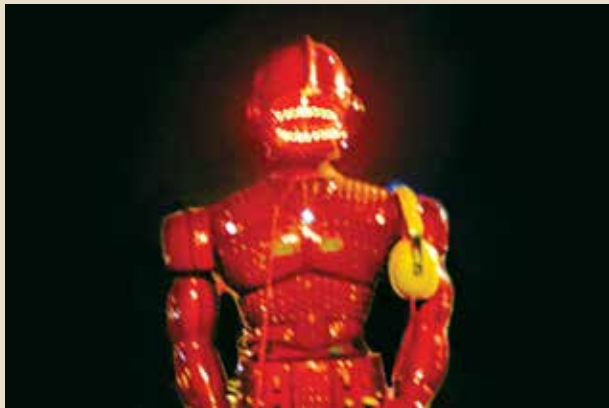
Once billed the ‘bloodiest event in the world,’ the Ghadimai Festival announced an official ban on animal sacrifices in 2015. The ritual killings, which see the participation of millions, has now undergone a revision of norms since 2009 due to mounting pressure from animal rights activists and organizations.

Serendipitously, photographer Narayan Tushar Kaudinya was offered unsolicited information at a wedding leading him to trace the Gadhimai Festival in Bariyarpur, Bara in Southern Nepal.

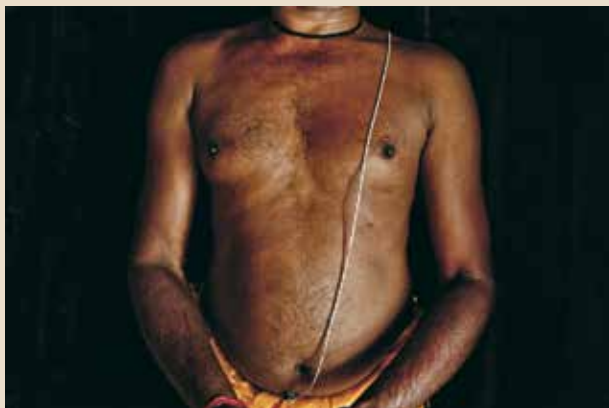
River of Heads and a Wedding centres around Kaudinya’s personal reflection on the festival examining a resignation to belief through two antagonistic events: one, a celebration of new beginnings and the other – a ritual mass slaughter.

The narrative is built on interspersed frames with the intimacy of the matrimony colliding with intensity of the festival; life and death locked in a cycle and not in isolation of each other. Kaudinya weaves the separate events through an emphasis on the shared atmosphere of culture and the ritual sacrifice that sustains it.

Although the story unfolds as a journey, Kaudinya intriguingly does not concern himself with the gory aftermath. Instead, he reserves the ultimate frame to introduce the cause of his journey – an old woman from the wedding from where he embarked for the surreal event.



All images from the series
A River of Heads and a Wedding
November 2014
Digital



Clockwise from top left:
A 'future-telling' robot at the
Gadhimai fair. Kalaiya,
Bara District

A girl was born even after the
family prayed for a boy from the
goddess five years ago. She was
left at the foot of a tree to cry
alone as the family once again,
prayed for a boy. Kalaiya,
Bara District

The priest at the Gadhimai
Temple is ready for the prayer
before the mass sacrifice.
Kalaiya, Bara District

An elderly woman from the
bride's side was the one who
told the photographer about
the Gadhimai fair. Outside
Birgunj, Parsa District

Facing page (clockwise from
top left): "You can't stop faith
from performing!" a Nepali
man shouted when the crowd
became restless.
Kalaiya, Bara District

Women believe in the power
of the Gadhimai goddess to
bestow them with the gift of a
boy child. Kalaiya, Bara District

The bride sits in front of a hand
painting on a wall in her home.
Birgunj, Parsa District



She enticed him with stories of young/new
brides hoping for sons, one of many needs of a
'prosperous' life often sought from the goddess
Gadhimai. Through the woman we are brought
back to the celebration of life, of beginnings
and reminded of the complexities of cultural
practices that are shaped by social needs more
than anything else.

If things change for the next festival in 2019,
it will be interesting to see what fills the vacuum
of the sacrifices. After all, as one of Kaudinya's
subject's puts it "you cannot stop faith from
performing."

NEW CONVERSATIONS, OLD PHOTOGRAPHS

PHILIPPE CALIA & ASMITA PARELKAR

October and November 2015 could be remembered as months in which photography took hold of the community in India and Nepal. As the Delhi Photo Festival’s engaging series of exhibitions and talks started to simmer down, many participants were already flying to Nepal, curious to discover the first edition of Photo Kathmandu. BIND, a recently-formed, 5-person photography collective was part of both initiatives, and was given the unique opportunity to inhabit a small room of the Patan Museum in Kathmandu, one of the original royal palaces which currently houses several sacred arts and traditional crafts objects. Here, we decided to engage with an array of old photographs collated and archived by the Nepal Picture Library, a public, virtual resource developed over the last five years by a dedicated team of practitioners.

BIND’s intervention was manifested in the form of an unconventional photo studio where selected archival photographs were projected as backdrops. We presented a pre-selected collection of images to visitors against which their portraits could be taken. The images were truly varied: an aerial shot of Kathmandu, the rooftop of an old house, Patan Durbar Square, Birgunj Ghantaghar (clock tower), a rural landscape, a monastery with monks, a tree at Lumbini, a boat on the Bagmati River, among many other vistas, events and situations.

We subsequently asked the visitors a series of biographical and interpretive questions: Why did you choose this image? What does this image remind you of? Does this image revive a personal memory?

It was intriguing to hear their responses. For some of them, it was not just about having their



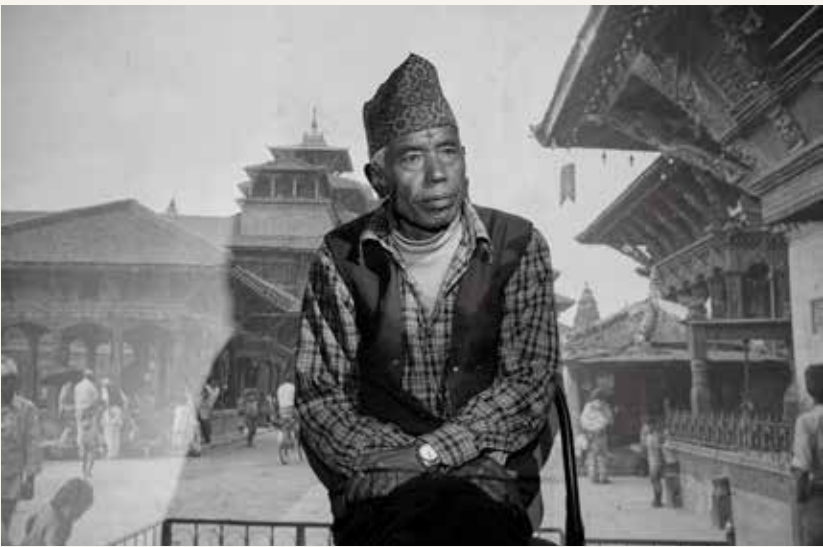
photograph taken but rather, an expression of their alignment to history addressing direct, tangential and parallel linkages. At times, the link was very personal – “Before my grandmother was wedded at the age of 7, her mother told her that if she doesn’t want to get married she should jump into the river!”

On the other hand, the contextualisation was sometimes anchored in a more immediate and social reality. The old image of the Birgunj Ghantaghar, for example, became a starting point to talk about the current crisis at the Indian border and the blockade by India, the shortage of medicine, fuel and food, and the inconvenience caused in daily activities.

Some visitors also expressed longing for a certain pastoral lifestyle, seeing the archival photograph as a projection of one of their school drawings, in which they could magically sit for a moment by the river, surrounded by the ‘perfect’ house and the ‘perfect’ tree. “If you get to stand in front of the picture, are you a part of it?” asked a young man.

All portraits made by BIND

Backdrop image: Mukunda Bahadur Shrestha Collection. Image taken from Dharahara also known as Bhimsen Tower, which was destroyed by the April Earthquake. The photograph shows the Kathmandu Durbar Square and surrounding. Estimated to be from the 1970’s



Later that afternoon, a young woman walked into the space. She paused briefly before picking up a photograph from the assembly placed on the table – of a little girl standing on a rooftop. “This is my mother!” she said, smiling. A photographer by the name of Juju Bhai Dhakwa who used to be their neighbour, had taken this image. Remarkably, she had never seen what her mother looked like as a child, as the oldest photo she could remember was taken just before her marriage. She explained that for her, having this photo used as a backdrop was like ‘entering’ her mother’s childhood. “I looked exactly like my mother when I was the same age.”

A slew of stories then began to form around our experiment in Patan Museum, where the unexpected became part of a curatorial exercise. Patan Square brought forth a lot of memories – spending time with friends, or passing through the square on the way to school. Some spoke about the cultural significance of the rituals or festivals that took place and expressed their sadness at passing through this place after the earthquake, given that a temple they used to visit before didn’t exist anymore.

Backdrop image: Amrit Bahadur Chitrakar Collection. Image of Patan Durbar Square facing South. The two *patis* (public spaces) of Mangahiti on the left of the photograph were brought down by the April Earthquake. Estimated to be from the 1990’s

Backdrop image: Juju Bhai Dhakwa Collection. Image from his home in Patan. Estimated to be from the 1960’s / 70’s



The studio thus provided a space of suspension – away from daily routine, a moment of self-reflection during which people found themselves surrounded by forgotten memories or manufactured new ones. For us, the process seemed similar to the act of browsing an old family album. In many ways, this exercise exposed its subjects to something bigger – a community as well as a temporality.

The studio acted as a powerful and generative metaphor for the intricacies of memory-making; one in which a subjective reading of the past blended with the supposedly objective nature of the photographic image. For BIND, one of the reasons to work with these archives rested on the mundane; because they were not referring directly to any *event*, they allowed any viewer to wander into a self-constructed maze through the residue of their consciousness, leading them to unexpected places, able to inhabit unpredictable idetities and forge alliances with faraway landscapes.



Stay Where You Are

Karan Shrestha

Stay, stay, all moving stay
To this gentle breeze, do not sway
Do not abandon on being betrayed
Or linger, or go astray

Do not fret. Yet. Beauty must fade. To innocence regret

Here, the winter sun teases
The summer sun burns
And like the sun, the heart too: choses its own
The mind is ever so feeble –
Stay

From the series *Stay Where You Are*
Humla, 2014
Digital



All images from the series
Everyday Epiphanies
Images are shot on film. Those from
2013 are digital



Frédéric Lecloux

Everyday Epiphanies

*“As if there still weren’t enough of reality,
of that awful reality...”*

– Henri Michaux

Photographer’s statement

It’s been about 20 years now. Why do I continue to return to Nepal? To answer my own rhetorical question, what pulls me back could be the emerging voice of a young and restless generation – a hopeful energy despite their

smiling resignation – a dilemma I have witnessed over time. But perhaps this response too is somewhat less credible and less convincing to the conscientious reader. Revisiting the country is perhaps more about my deep association with disorder – particularly an alignment of my own disorder, and that fleetingness which characterizes Nepal’s towns and villages. I feel as though I am approaching a void – those cities where auspicious stones have been erected, now

Bandana Sharma, a social worker
student, Kalanki, Kathmandu,
September 2001

Facing page: Prasiit Sthapit,
Kathmandu, December 2013

lie desolate, but remain untouched by the hustle – these are the territories which I feel most endeared to, and that speak to my sensibilities.

After years of engaging with the country, emerging from the airport every time I come back –surrounded by heady traffic, a non-stop racket, I am now soothed in the depths of its chaos as it is an aura which I now recognise and a place that I feel rooted in. The frames of life I see show a mesmeric state, a traffic of sites: a glance, a dog, a line of ragged walls, a butcher’s shop, the jostling in an overcrowded bus, the light burn of tea on the lips... these offer me a sense of kinship to the space that exists somewhere between order and disorder. These are the facts of life and the truths that lie, below, behind and underneath reality, and the inherent response to my elusive question, ‘Why Nepal?’



Restaurant helper, Jhochhen,
Kathmandu, September 2001

New Nanglo West Restaurant, Butwal,
Rupandehi district, April 2012

Santosh and Rakesh, Ilam, Ilam
District, March 2011

Facing page: Window
Thamel, Kathmandu,
April 2008







Page 20 (clockwise from top left): Sink, Arun Hotel, Tumlingtar, Sankuwasabha district, December 2007
Gatlang Monastery, Gatlang, Rasuwa district, February 2013
Indira Lacchimasu's dhymia, a ritual drum that she was the first woman to be allowed to play, at her parents home, Bhaktapur, April 2008
Trousers on a chair, in the room of a

former Maoist rebel, Dharma, Mugu district, July 2006
Page 22 clockwise: Sundhara, Kathmandu, December 2000
Makeshift hut, near the airport, Tinkune, Kathmandu, September 2001
Nepal Railway wagon, on the country's only line between Janakpur and Jaynagar (India), Janakpur,

Dhanusa District, March 2011
Above left to right: Collapsed chimney, Thamel, Kathmandu, December 2002 or January 2003
A painted temple on a wall, Mahakal Road, Kathmandu, September 2001

Facing page: Artificial flowers, Surkhet, Surkhet District, July 2006

Calm in the Chaos

Poem by Yukta Bajracharya

In case of chaos,
there won't always be an exit door,
perhaps
I won't be looking for one.

This chaos will be left
right
above
below.
This disorder will have ordered itself around me.
I won't feel out of place.

I will find myself feeling free
even inside walls that cage me.
My life might never touch the soil outside the
shores
of this murky, green lake
but I am at peace with floating
and this knowing that unfolds like petals:
freedom isn't about fleeing but about this feeling
of calm
where ever I am.



Sarita, student, Naya Bazar,
Kathmandu, 2001
Frédéric Lecloux, from the series
Everyday Epiphanies

RESILIENCE AND CYNICISM – AN EXCERPT

Kanak Dixit

From *The Kathmandu Post* (12 April, 2013)

In the worst of times, what we need most is resilience, not cynicism....The two terms are not antonyms, but they represent diametrically opposite responses to situations that challenge the human spirit.

What we are experiencing in Nepal today... the never-ending political disarray leading to an extra-constitutional running crisis, created by domestic and international incompetence and malfeasance. But life has to go on, and what is required is a spirited doggedness, based on sheer survival and the belief that Nepal as a country is capable of delivering better times to its citizens.

One could say, only half in jest, that resilience is an evolved Nepali genetic trait; of a people of a country so rich in resources, who have over centuries been forced to live in penury. The foremost response of the resilient peasantry has been to survive amidst adversity. So, as society was impoverished by imperialist ambition, family oligarchies, royal dictatorships and left-radical demagogues, the peasantry turned to subsistence migration. What started as mercenaries leaving to serve the court of Ranjit Singh of Lahore continues today as Nepal's poorest leave for India, the less poor to the Gulf and Malaysia....

District earth

In the political realm, one finds that resilience is the dominating trait among the lay public and intellectuals of the 75 districts...

The ultra-skeptical mindset tends to lack rigour in analysis, like the armchair cynics who got so shaken by the rise of Maoism in the mid-1990s that they rushed to proclaim armed

revolution as justified in response to extant poverty. The cynic may give the impression of being an independent thinker, but secretly he has his finger up to check the direction of the breeze...

Thus, the cynics of Kathmandu kept a 'judicious' silence during the tense debate over the model of federalism, even when the hallowed political consultants proposed non-territorial federalism for the Dalit community, or the idea was floated for a Madhes province that would be 500 miles long and 20 miles wide...

Process and systems

Resilience is the quality in the person who does not surrender to fatalism, that blood-brother of cynicism. But resilience does not imply airy romanticism, of the self-proclaimed idealist who does not have the intention or mental strength to convert goals into achievements. Perhaps the cynics around us are the romantics who lost the fight.

The cynic goes after cure-all solutions, that too presented on a platter, while the resilient citizen tends to believe in logic and cause-and-effect. Deep down, the cynic is a populist who can easily drum up a contrarian argument, while the resilient citizen is wise in the head and good with the hands.

The resilient person tends to believe in due process, systems and rule of law. The cynic is willing to take the 'Leninist' *chor-baato*, expressing the belief (after the fact) that short-circuits are sometimes good for society....



All images from the series
Maybe A New Body of Work
 January 2016
 Samsung 5 | Instagram filters

Red, Chiuri Bhanjyang

Wiper, Biratnagar

Nirman Shrestha

Maybe A New Body of Work

Photographer's statement

The country is in turmoil. But there is a dead silence, as if nobody is forceful enough to breathe a word against the numerous injustices around. Those who feel alive enough and dare to speak out against oppressive forces are instantly silenced as if any little sound will create chaos. People are simply becoming accustomed to the dead silence after a reign of chaos; and it feels like the calm before yet another storm.

The word 'friends' has lost its meaning. In this new world, familiar faces seem strange, and strange faces become familiar. The word 'duty' doesn't mean the same thing for everyone either; but there are still those who go above and beyond the call of their duty and put their lives on the line for their country. The whole country has become a strange paradise, and also an absurd hell. No one seems to care if this country is becoming poorer as long as they can become rich enough to afford a golden chariot.



A new country was promised to its citizens after thousands of lives were sacrificed. The pains of the plains are forgotten yet again, as if the happiness of the ‘high up’ was supposed to drip down and sweep away all the pain. The plains try with all their might to raise their voices, but they sound too foreign for the ultra patriotic characters at the steering wheel of the nation. It is as if the whole country has become a joke, and its people are trying to forget sorrow by laughing away at the chief jumping up and down on its chair.

Forgotten Field Notes

Text by Muna Gurung

I read somewhere that change inherently brings a sense of betrayal. I also know that change brings uncertainty and a state that is full of potential and kinetic forces

that may cancel each other out. What remains? The wait. - They ask me, *What do you know about the government? What do you know about the Terai? You don't live here.* Bragging rights in the capital are weighed by how well one speaks politics, and which parts of the country one has seen or can name by sitting in Kathmandu. The talking happens over bottles of Everest beer, after which the body goes promptly to sleep. The conversation happens on social media, after which it is hard to not take stock of the ‘Likes’ and the ‘Shares’. The talking happens over cups of organic coffee with morning papers spread on the table like cards faced down. If you live abroad like I do, *shut your mouth*, they say.

Businessman, Near Dhalkebar
Prayers, Biratnagar



Fake, Itahari



News, Itahari

Facing page (clockwise from top left):
Bus (Destroyed), Inaruwa
Illegal Bikes, Dharan
Bus stop, Koshi Tappu
Winter Jobs, Dharan

Yet why is it, Kathmandu, that I feel closer to you from my kitchen in New York, than either of us could ever be to live beyond the green fields of the Terai?

In the summer of 2014, a friend and I drive out west from Kathmandu on the Mahendra Rajmarg, the East-West highway, a bloodline that cuts across the country in the Terai. We want to see the Karnali and Dodhara-Chandni bridges, and walk across them.

Why do we want to exist suspended in the in-between spaces?

Maybe we feel most comfortable on the ground that isn't.

Maybe we are in awe of what we can do to metal and concrete, what we can do in water and air.

Maybe we just want to be witnesses for this moment in time.

The word *maybe* holds a looming sense of possibility, of chance, of luck even, but mostly an indefinite wait. An uncertainty bridges the two words – *may* and *be*, like a question over who is allowed to exist, like an anticipated permission waiting to be granted. *Maybe* is also accidental; there need not be a reason, a pattern. Just a state as is. As was. As becoming.

What if all the men in the world were replaced by household items such as mops, and lamps, and ladles. Would they lose their faces? When they lost their faces, would their bodies wander aimlessly banging against walls? What if when they became objects with eyes – say an electrical socket, a camera, or a potato – would their eyes find no use? The socket is hidden by a dresser. The camera, coated in dust, waits with an empty belly. The potato only has two fates: the knife shaves off its eyes, or it sits in a dark corner of the kitchen, slowly shriveling and softening to decay.

My favourite highway sight on our Farwest trip: women cycling in colourful kurtas with braided hair. Their shawls hang down both their shoulders and meet in a knot that bounces against their backs.

I want to live like that, I say to my friend.

He clicks his tongue at me, *For how long?*

Smoking boy, Itahari
Restaurant Helper, Dharan



Restaurant helper, Biratnagar
Security Guard, Biratnagar



Karan Shrestha

Waiting for Nepal

The Perpetual Wait

Text by Pranaya SJB Rana

The image of Nepal today in the global consciousness is one of resilience, a stoic defiance against the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. Whether it be a decade-long civil war, an equally-long political transition, rampant corruption and a wholesale loot of the country, a series of devastating earthquakes or a border blockade, Nepalis, so it is portrayed, will smile through their tears and persevere. It is a hard-won image, this caricature of a middle-aged woman

in a worn dhoti staring out from the rubble of her destroyed home or that of a young dirt-streaked child smiling out in a perfect postcard picture that screams ‘third world’.

This image is our boon and our bane. It brings aid and assistance from across the world, as everyone feels compassion for the poor mother with a baby on her hip who cannot help but laugh despite having lost her husband to toil under the hard sun of the

All images from the series
Waiting for Nepal
In and around Kathmandu, 2011-12
Digital

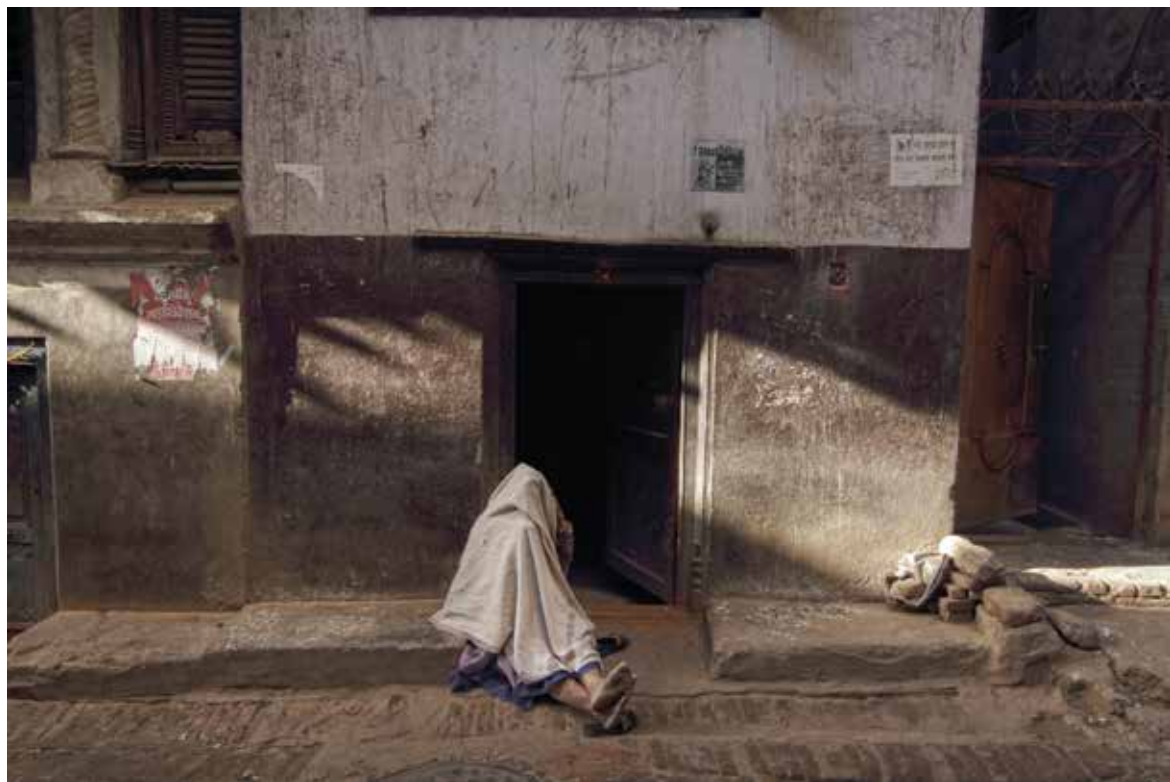


Middle East. But it also implies passivity, an indolence that seems to have crept into Nepal’s psyche and taken over, consigning us forever to a perpetual wait, for someone or something else.

Nepal has been promised many things by many people – from home-grown politicians to donors in sharp suits and unplaceable accents. They’ve sold us dreams and we Nepalis, quiet and patient, await them like manna from heaven. Resilience, thus, has become about waiting, for the next day and the day after that. Waiting for a republic, for identity, for progress, and for an uncertain tomorrow that may or may not arrive. For, in April 2015, when the ground roiled underneath us, we waited – huddled under tents and

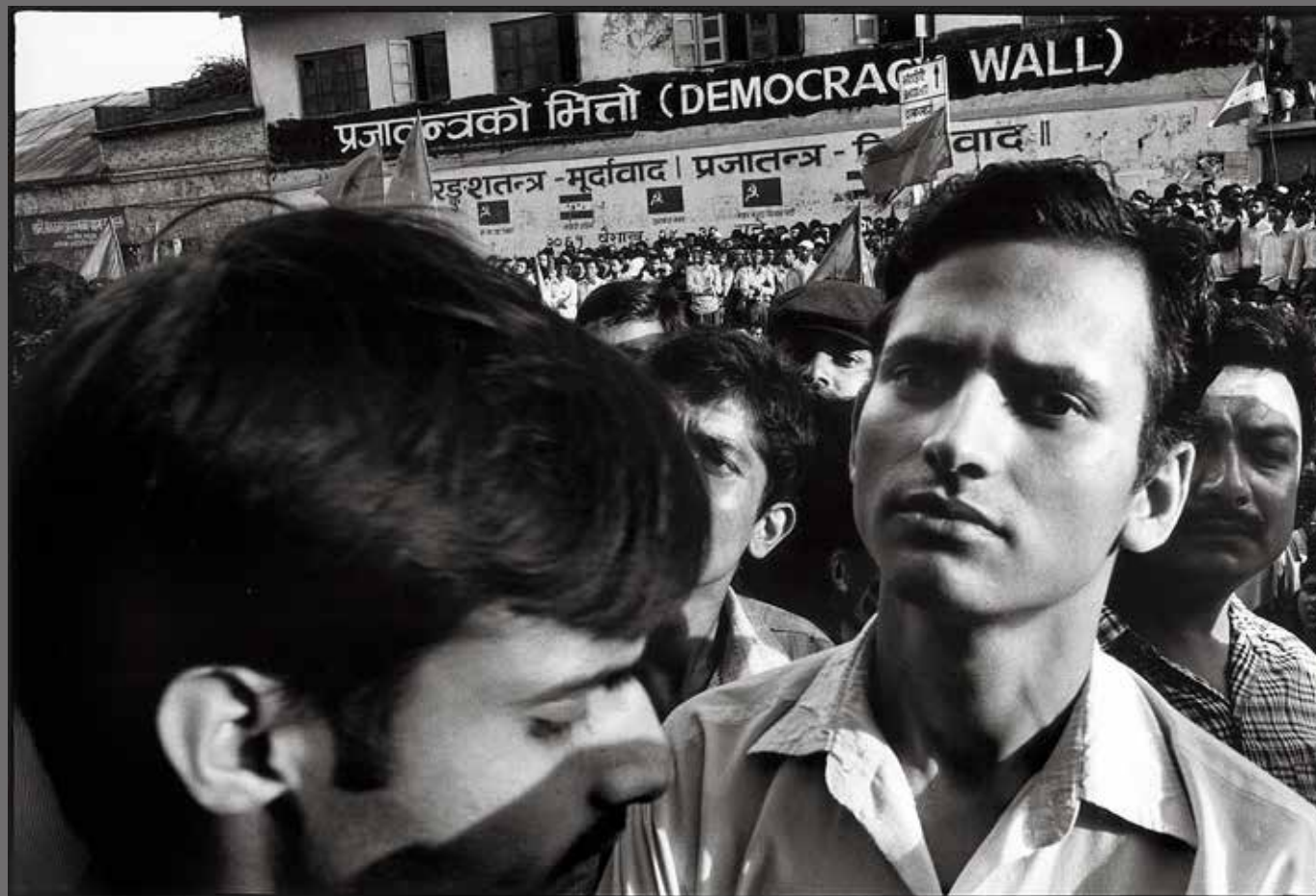
tarpaulin, seeking warmth in the press of our bodies – for an uncertain ignominious death. For many of us, that death never came.

And so, we continued to wait, by the side of a road pockmarked with potholes, in wooden doorways bent under the weight of history, at ramshackle bus depots where the buses never seem to stop and under shelters made of tin, where the pouring monsoon rains sound like the staccato firing of a Kalashnikov. Through it all, we force a smile for the camera, because what other alternative is there? In the unending limbo that is New Nepal, we wait not because we want to; we wait because we have to.









Facing page: Anti-monarchy demonstrations in Kathmandu, April 2004, 35 mm

A demonstrator climbs a flag pole and hangs over police lines at a mass rally aimed at pressuring King Gyanendra to step down in Chabahil on the ring-road. Kathmandu, April 2006, Medium format

Demonstrators hang an effigy of the then Nepali Prime Minister G.P. Koirala, embroiled in corruption allegations. Kathmandu, 2001, 35 mm



Philip Blenkinsop

Nepal Archives

Photographer's statement

It was a search for the elusive Maoist guerrillas that first brought me to Nepal in 2001, a period after the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN, Maoist) launched the 'People's War' in 1996. Only weeks after landing in Kathmandu, I received a phone call asking me to be at my hotel in half an hour.

Upon returning to Durbar Square in front of the old Royal Palace of the former Kathmandu Kingdom, I found a young boy, all of 12 years old, waiting for me. He spoke no English but gestured for me to go with him. We bought bus tickets and alighted 27 hours

later in Surkhet, where, after showing me a hotel, he simply walked off.

The following morning, a cadre arrived. With my gear slung, we walked down the main street under inquisitive eyes until buildings gave way to sloping contours and the hills swallowed us.

We continued our walk the following day after a night in a hill station, turning a bend after some hours to be greeted by a dozen Maoist guerrillas with garlands and *tika*, rifles held high to create a tunnel through which we walked. From the roof of a dilapidated building I addressed the assembled group as requested before marching together for Dailekh, a mid-western district in Nepal that also



formed the earlier Maoist headquarters.

A week or so later, on 2 June 2001, my first morning back in Kathmandu, I awoke to chaotic scenes. Outside my window, unruly crowds mobbed newspaper vendors. I rushed down and, after a brief and futile attempt to queue as my English upbringing demanded, I fought hand and fist for a paper.

“What does it say?” I asked my hotel manager.

“It appears the Royal Family has been massacred!”

The mediaeval scenes that I was privileged to

witness in the days that followed, imbued me with a deep-rooted sense of responsibility to the Nepali people – to capture and tell their story. The Crown Prince Dipendra Bir Bikram Shah (1971-2001) was indicted for the murder of 9 family members at a monthly reunion dinner before taking his own life, leading to an intensification of the civil war in the country, following the collapse of a cease-fire between the Maoists and Royal Nepalese Army. I was determined that I would return whenever I could to document their unfolding struggle.

Facing page (clockwise from top left): Maoist guerrillas exchange ‘red salutes’ upon arrival in Dailekh village, Western Nepal, 2001

Riot police, Kathmandu, 2001

Prime Minister G.P. Koirala.

Slain King Birendra is carried through the streets of Kathmandu by his bodyguards. June 2001

All images: 35 mm

Police charge stone-throwing pro-democracy demonstrators on the Kalanki section of the Ring Road. Kathmandu, April 2006, 35 mm

Comrade Vivek, 25 years old, with
a grenade in his hand. Near Lamki
town, Western Nepal. 2004
Medium format film



Maoist guerrilla, 18 year old
Sisya, Surkhet district,
Western Nepal. 2001
Medium format film





Facing page (above): The scene at a polling booth during elections in Kathmandu, February 2006

Female Maoist guerrillas and their male counterparts sing revolutionary songs and dance around a gas-lantern north of the Rajapur Delta, 2004
Reconstituted panorama, 35 mm



Demonstrators calling for the resignation of PM Koirala and with a focus on allegations of corruption, take to the streets with flaming torches. Kathmandu, 2001

The newly crowned King Gyanendra leaves Durbar Square under a military escort for the royal palace following the massacre of King Birendra and other members of the royal family. Kathmandu, June 2001

Police opened fire with rubber bullets and tear gas on a crowd of anti-monarchy demonstrators in Asan Tole going after them with canes, cracking heads as they attempt to flee. Kathmandu, 2006

Format for all images on this page: 35 mm film



Facing page: Pro-democracy demonstrators clash with police on the Ring Road in Chabhil district of Kathmandu, April 2006



Royal Nepali Army soldier on guard
duty at the RNA barracks in
Pokhara. 2003, Medium format



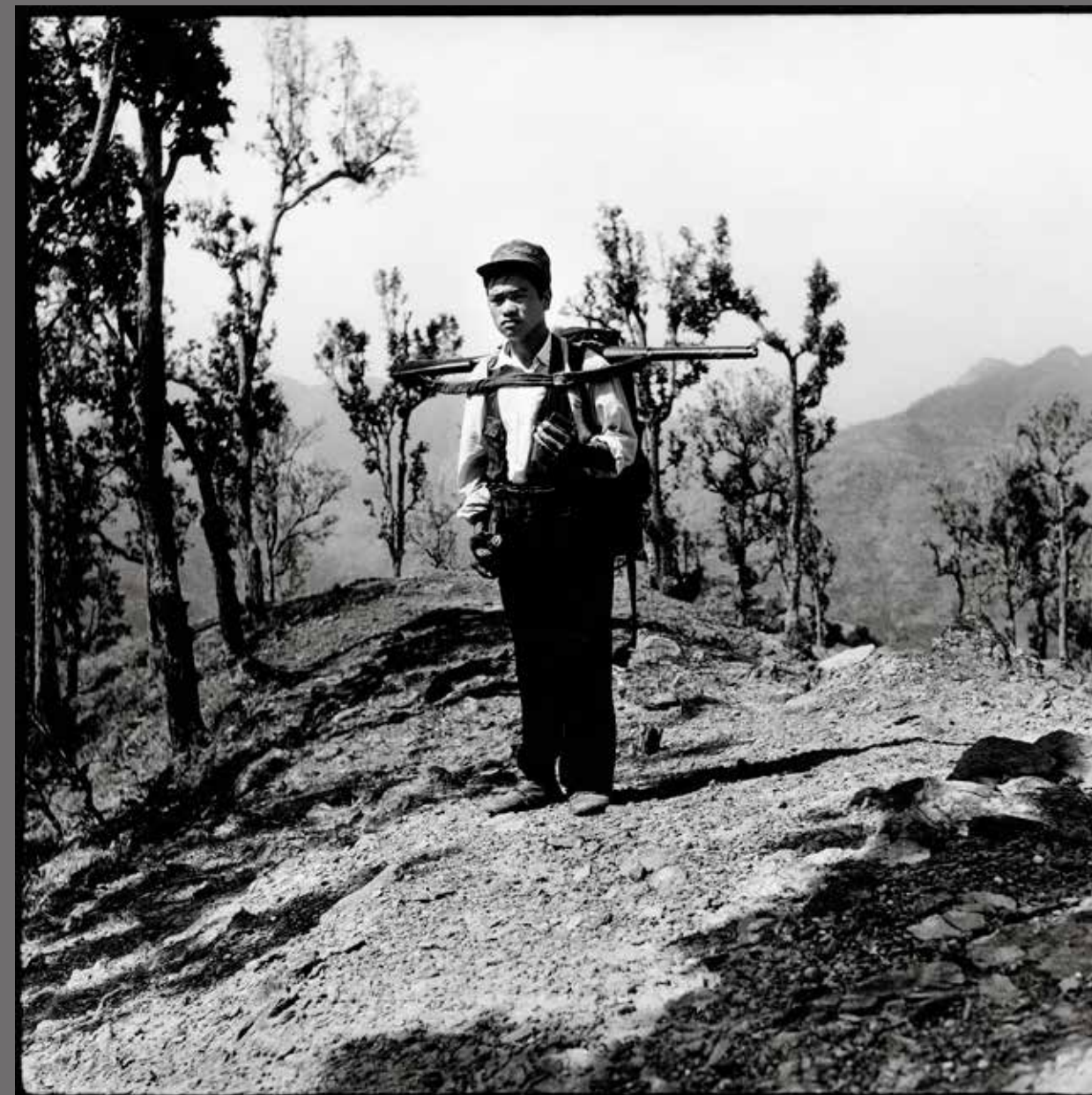
Maoist guerrilla, north of the
Rajapur Delta, 2004
Medium format





A Maoist 'cultural' team in the mountains of Dailekh village. The cultural teams' responsibility is to convey the Maoist message through song, dance and theatre. Western Nepal, Surkhet district, 2001
Polaroid film

Facing page: A Maoist guerrilla pauses on the climb to Dailekh village, pictured here holding a portable radio. Western Nepal, Surkhet district, 2001
Medium format





Surendra Lawoti

This Country is Yours

Photographer’s statement

My ongoing work, *This Country is Yours* (2012 - present) takes Kathmandu as the geographic setting during the historic process of writing Nepal’s new constitution. The charter was recently promulgated amidst objections from historically marginalised groups. During the drafting of this document, the focus of my images was and continues to be on activists from six social and political movements: indigenous nationalities, women, Dalits, Madhes, religious minorities, and the LGBT community. I want to embed the faces of the activists in Nepal’s history by integrating art with activism so as to intervene in the tremendous representational deficit faced by the aforementioned groups.

Above: Junu Pun Magar, Vice Chair, Youth Federation of Indigenous Nationalities at a protest rally against the regressive and discriminatory draft constitution organized by Tamsaling Joint Struggle Committee, 2015. One of the unfortunate consequences of the declaration of Nepal’s constitution has been the use of the twin earthquakes that hit Nepal in April and May (2015) as an excuse to expedite the draft, thereby ignoring the rights of a large section of the population. After the earthquake, major political parties banded together to draft a regressive ‘fast-track constitution’ during the monsoon season, when Nepalis from the rural regions were working the land, while urban residents were picking through the rubble of their broken homes.

Street rally in demand of reinstatement of Buddha’s statue in Kakhre Bihar, 2013. A coalition of Buddhist organizations, partnered with the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, and took to the streets on August 23, 2013, declaring their opposition to the government’s decision to remove the Buddha statue from Kakre Bihar in Western Nepal.





Prajwal Bajracharya, Board Member, Mitini Nepal, and Manju Lamichhane, 2014. Mitini Nepal is an organisation working for the welfare of lesbians. Prajwal, a schoolteacher, and her partner, Manju, are a young lesbian couple. One of the challenges of photographing members of the LGBT community is that many of them do not want to disclose their identities. Many of the members of Mitini Nepal moved to Kathmandu from different parts of the country and freely express their sexuality. But many of them have not disclosed their sexualities to their socially-conservative families. Prajwal and Manju were open to being photographed as long as this image was not exhibited or publicised in Nepal.



Prem Kumar Sunuwar, International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples Celebration, 2013



Ang Kazi Sherpa, General Secretary, Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, 2012. According to Nepal's last census, 37.5% of the Nepali population is made of indigenous nationalities. The indigenous people have been historically marginalised by 'high caste' Hindus, who dominate Nepal's legislature, judiciary, bureaucracy, politics, media, security sectors, intelligentsia, and civil society. The marginalisation was a result of Nepal being a constitutionally Hindu state until 2006, which favored the high castes.



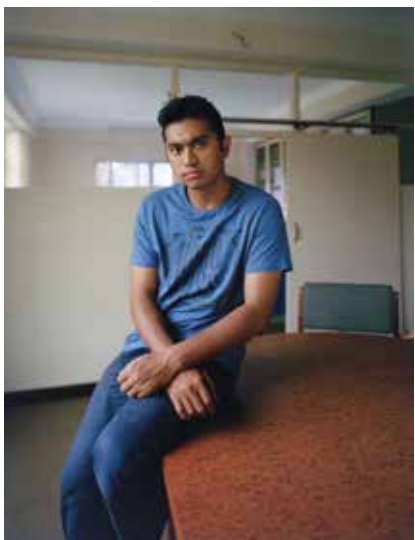
Clockwise from top left:

Rajesh Kumar Chorwar, Madhesi People's Rights Forum, Nepal's New Members Induction Program, 2013. The Madhesi people from the southern plains of Nepal bordering Bihar and Uttar Pradesh of India have distinctly different languages and physical features from the majority Nepali hill people. However, the Madhesis share strong cultural ties with people across the border. The hill rulers of Nepal, therefore, have historically distrusted the Madhesi people and have not included them in governance plans, policy making and security sectors, citing their loyalty to India. Hence, an anti-India sentiment runs among sections of the Nepali hill people.

Suraj Majhi, International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples Celebrations, August 9, 2013

Dr. Shamim Ahmed, Country Director, World Assembly of Muslim Youth Nepal, 2015





Facing page (clockwise from top left):
Shreejana Pradhan, Vice President, National Indigenous Women's Federation, 2013. Shreejana Pradhan teaches Newari at a University in Kathmandu. Newari is the language of the Newars, who are indigenous to the Kathmandu Valley. Language rights have been one of the core issues for the indigenous people of Nepal. NIWF advocates for the rights of indigenous women against ethnic and gender discrimination.

Krishna Bhattachan, Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tribhuvan University, 2012

Subin Mulmi, Citizenship in the Name of Mother Campaign, 2015. Nepal's constitution of 2015 treats women as second-class citizens because citizenship cannot be acquired through the father 'or' mother, but only through the father 'and' mother. Children of single mothers or children birthed through rape, for example, cannot acquire Nepali citizenship, resulting in millions of stateless children. Similarly, children of a Nepali woman married to a foreigner can only acquire 'naturalized' citizenship as opposed to via 'descent'.

Pramod Bhagat, Nepal Policy Center, 2015
Dipendra Jha, Advocate, Supreme Court, 2014. Dipendra Jha has been one of the champions of the Madhes movement. As a lawyer, he has single-handedly fought many cases on discrimination in the Supreme Court. He is also constantly educating activists, lawmakers, and members of the public about the obtuse language used in the constitution.

Above: *Hat Vendor, Ratna Park, 2012.* *Topi* is the hat that is part of the national dress for men called *daura suruwal*. The hill men of the upper castes traditionally wear *daura suruwal*. The national dress is well suited for the lower hills, but not for the mountains or plains. For example, the Sherpas, who are native to the high mountains, prefer to wear headgear that resembles cowboy hats to protect themselves from the high altitude sun. Similarly the *topi* or *daura surwal* is not suitable for the hot climate of the plains, as people prefer to wear the traditional *dhoti*. However, when applying for citizenship, all Nepali males must provide passport-sized photos wearing this *topi*.



Clockwise from top left:
Pankaj Kumar Mishra, Member, Central Committee, Sadhbhavana Youth Front, 2015. One of the contentious debates in the drafting process of Nepal's constitution has been about state restructuring – demarcation of the state into federal units. It was the Madhesi people who brought this issue to the central political debate after two Madhes uprisings in 2007 and 2008. The Madhesi people have understood that the autonomy of their own federal unit is the only way out of the historic discrimination within the Nepali state. Pankaj was a child when the two Madhes uprisings took place, and his impressions compelled him to join politics. The youth force behind ongoing demonstrations, some of which have lasted over 115 days indicates that a younger generation is keen to join active politics.

Mohna Ansari, Commissioner, National Women Commission, 2013
 Mohna Ansari is considered to be the first female lawyer from Nepal's Muslim community. Nepal's Muslims make up around 6% of the country's population. One of the demands of the community, along with other religious minorities mentioned in Nepal's new constitution, is to have a secular state. However, in the constitution there is a contradiction: a reference to 'secularism' while also desiring "the preservation of ancient religious culture, including religious and cultural freedom" – alluding to Nepal as a predominantly Hindu state.

Hira Viskwakarma, Chairperson, Dalit Studies and Development Center, 2013
 The Dalits, make up 13% of the Nepali population of approximately 28 million.

Gopal Baraili, Editor/Publisher, Lakshyadeep Weekly, 2015.

International Convention Center, where the Constituent Assembly met for four years and got dissolved in May 2012 after it failed its mandate to write Nepal's constitution, 2012. This image was made after the first Constituent Assembly (CA) was dissolved in May 2012. In the first CA, the Maoists, who waged the 'People's War' for 10 years and joined mainstream politics, formed the largest party. A second CA was elected in 2013. This time, the Maoists came third. The second CA promulgated Nepal's Constitution in 2015 amidst objections by Madhesis (minorities from the southern plains), indigenous nationalities, women, and Dalits. There has been unrest in the southern plains that has continued for over 115 days, demanding amendments to the constitution.



An overview of the devastated hilly village of Barpak that was at the epicentre of the massive earthquake.

All images from the series
Ground Reality
April 2015
Digital

Zishaan Akbar Latif

Ground Reality

Photographer’s statement
On the 25th of April 2015 at 11:56 Nepal Standard Time, a massive earthquake (7.8 magnitude) struck Nepal. Subsequently nature’s fury unleashed many landslides that caused a three-metre shift in the plates at key regional fault lines, and dropped the earth by 1.4 metres in other places. On 12th May, another 7.3 magnitude earthquake hit the Himalayan valley causing widespread pandemonium – the constant after shocks left people psychologically shattered, driving families into tents in parks and streets – anywhere they felt safe from the deadly collapse.
Both the earthquakes caused immense destruction with over 8,800 dead, more than 20,000 injured and almost 4,50,000 displaced. Over 6,00,000 houses, including many important world heritage sites and cultural relics of ancient cities like Bhaktapur and Patan, were destroyed in a matter of 2 weeks leaving Nepal



shaken. I arrived in Kathmandu on April 28th. Entering the city, I was immediately struck by the smell of corpses, an overwhelming sense of grief, desperation and disturbed wailing at the Pashupathinath Temple cremation ghats where hundreds of bodies were being prepared for their last rights. The pyres had not stopped burning since the 25th. I had never witnessed a mass cremation and this harsh awakening set the tone for what was to come while I took photographs for the next 10 days in Nepal.

The only way I knew I could help was by visualising untold stories and talking about the situation through unreported aspects. I went to Nepal not knowing what I was meant to do there beyond taking photos. This situation was solved in the form of an assignment for SOS Children's Village Int., an NGO for child rehabilitation. I was assigned to photograph and film their relief work and interventions focussing on mothers who were affected by the devastation around the Kathmandu valley. Stories of hope and courage



Clockwise from top left:
A new car is badly destroyed under heavy rubble at Sankhu, an ancient heritage town in the Kathmandu valley.
A boy is intrigued to find an abandoned open bank locker of what remains of the Jaleshwori Savings & Credit Co-operative Bank Ltd. in Balaju in Kathmandu valley.
Villagers react to an Indian Air Force helicopter taking off after having dropped off food supplies and plastic



tarps to remote villages affected by the massive earthquake in Gorkha district.
An elderly lady along with her family are airlifted by the Indian Air Force from the devastated village of Barpak for better medical care at a government hospital in Pokhara.
Facing page: A toddler looks at the extent of destruction as the father rebuilds their home atop the devastated hilly village of Barpak.



emerged amongst this deluge of sadness that made me wonder about the Nepali psyche and their fortitude. Their silent courage came to the fore and is continuing till date as they still wait for relief and restoration.

After I was relieved of my duties for SOS Children’s Village, I went to Pokhara the very next day. Upon my arrival, I was greeted by a local photographer, Kishor Sharma who was assisting the great American photojournalist and war photographer, James Nachtwey, as he was covering a story for *Time* magazine. They were waiting to hitch a ride to Barpak in an Indian Air Force chopper – as luck would have it, I too got

the opportunity to go with them to where it all began, the epicentre.

This is the first time I have covered a disaster so closely. At Barpak, I walked through an entire village perched on a hill devastated beyond recognition – the whole village was reduced to rubble. Every few meters, people were excavating valuables they could salvage from what used to be their home. To be witness to and document these moments was overwhelming – and yet, foremost was the urgency to be a responsible storyteller so people everywhere could know and see the truth, even though it was from my own perspective.

A South Korean rescue team member takes a breather after long spells of a meticulous ‘Drill and search’ operation for a body that was buried under thick rubble of a local restaurant in Gongabu Naya Buspark in the Kathmandu valley.

Facing page: The main bus stand at Kathmandu opposite Pashupathinath temple where hundreds of residents boarded buses to cross over into India.

Local bystanders wait and watch a South Korean rescue team during a rescue operation for a body buried under thick rubble.





The Indian army provided battery operated charging stations to the villagers of Barpak as they were completely cut off from the rest of the country due to a complete blackout.

Facing page: A villager from Barpak takes a breather from the chaos surrounding him and his picturesque village, Barpak.





Groom, Arun Raut and bride, Sabina Karki got married on the 8th of May 2015 in Kathmandu. Their wedding date fell exactly on the 13th day after the devastating earthquake struck Nepal.



A young couple finds a quiet moment amidst the temporary shelters surrounding them at Durbar Square in Kathmandu.

BREAKING THE STATISTIC

NEPAL PHOTO PROJECT TEAM

At noon on April 25, 2015, Nepal was hit by a devastating earthquake. As is the case with Zishaan Latif’s images before this article, shocking visuals that emerged from the event depicted the scale of destruction. As social media interventions began to run their course through the nation, people who had functioning 3G internet access in Kathmandu were sharing what they saw unfolding around them.

Though images were distressing and immensely powerful, the lack of supporting information began to trigger panic in viewers and victims, or those who may have lost relatives and loved ones in the debacle. The limited reach of the posts created another filtering barrier, as viewers could access information only if the people posting them were in their immediate and concentric social media networks.

As a means to resolve the issue of access, a group of 6 photographers started a Facebook messaging group to discuss how to tackle this for the larger public. We felt it was an appropriate moment to bring everyone together and create a common platform so as to document what was happening on the ground, and share essential information that could expedite rescue and relief efforts. We agreed that an Instagram feed would be the best way to move forward. NepalPhotoProject went live on April 26.

Within the first couple of weeks alone, the initiative grew exponentially – both in terms of followers as well as contributors. A group of 6 contributors quickly became 70 and even more within a very short duration. Many used #nepalphotoproject, which allowed us access to a wide range of visuals about and around the



incident from people all over Nepal. Photographers, journalists, volunteers, health workers, educators, and citizens of Nepal picked up their smartphones and began documenting what they were seeing around them, creating accessibility and communication from the field level upwards.

One of the comments we received that gave us thought for introspection was – “thank you for putting such a personal face on this tragedy”. It made us consider the importance of visuals as



Kishor Sharma
“A photograph found in the debris of houses in the village of Barpak, Gorkha. Once a picturesque village in Manaslu trekking route, it has now turned into a pile of rubble. Barpak was the epicentre of April 25 earthquake with more than 1200 houses destroyed.”

Archan Basu
“Nepal was struck with another earthquake in May. Hearing the news, I sat down with the memories I had when I visited Nepal after the first earthquake in April and ended up with this doodle.”



a means of communication, and hence often a therapeutic tool. With the images and captions that we posted, we were trying to give either a personal account of what our contributors experienced, or distinct stories about what they were photographing. Ensuring captions were as specific and thorough as possible – outlining the ‘who,’ ‘what,’ ‘where,’ and the ‘when’ – helped viewers locate people and stories they were investigating or following, giving the earthquake a ‘face’ and humanizing it. Rather than trying to give a macro view on the aftermath of the earthquake, we wanted to look inwards, and through these stories, volunteer information that was also functional.

This functionality became evident with the way in which viewers engaged with the feed. Instagram proved to be a viable resource for open and immediate interaction between the creator of the content and its consumer. Questions, requests for updates or further information, links to online



donation campaigns, GPS coordinates to send relief material, links to missing people, links to other resources – all these and more populated the comments under our posts.

Active interaction was instrumental in prompting action. Within 3 hours of posting a photo of Ishwari Sahi from Sindhupalchowk, who lost his home, and had a daughter and wife in hospital, offers for over Rs. 30,000 in donations came for his family through posts and emails. Another post by Dolma, who was evacuated from Langtang, and had a severely fractured leg, helped facilitate a speedy surgery and post surgical support. Another woman also asked for the GPS coordinates of a destroyed village in Sankhu and amazingly, a few days later, tents, tarps and critical relief material was delivered to the site!

Images of the aftermath in terms of destruction have dominated the headlines in most of the international coverage of the earthquake with some justification. While villages have indeed



been razed to the ground and ancient monuments reduced to rubble, there is however, a lot left standing. Many volunteers have come forth from all over the world, and surviving families have helped relief and rehabilitation efforts while they themselves struggle to rehabilitate. The initiative of locals towards the rescue effort has been tremendous and Nepal's story of rebuilding itself will be a long one that will unfurl slowly, over the coming years.

For many of us who are photographers, NepalPhotoProject has been a unique effort where we have worked together to share photos and stories in real time so as to bring attention to and incite action in an emergency situation.

Instagram co-founder Mike Krieger took note of this effort in a recent WIRED Business Conference: *You can read about the earthquake in Nepal on Twitter, but if you want to see it – to try to understand what the people of Nepal are going through – Krieger wants you to head to Instagram (#nepalphotoproject). “Storytelling is evolving, and*

we want to be the real-time view into the world.” After almost 1 year since the earthquake, we are faced with the concomitant magnitude of failure of a political system that struggles to rebuild the lives of 2.5 million survivors. The National Reconstruction Authority, which was tasked with the over hauling process, has been sidetracked internally and with external delays causing severe setbacks in finalizing its procedures, guidelines and workforce. It has not been able to adequately disseminate the \$860 million dollars that was pledged for alleviating Nepal by various international donors, though the need is dire.

As a continuing effort, NepalPhotoProject has recently announced small grants that will enable photographers to travel to earthquake-affected areas to document the situation of survivors one year after the earthquakes. Material produced through these grants will be shared with the public through various NepalPhotoProject social media platforms and other networks accessible to NepalPhotoProject. It will also be developed

Samantha Reinders
“...The Dream Doctors – a group of red-nosed Israeli clowns founded in 2001 – have been travelling around the Kathmandu valley, from field hospitals to orphanages and to tented camps, cheering up children (and adults!) since the devastating earthquake here that has shattered the country and its people... They're helping heal the wounds you can't see.”

Sumit Dayal
“Dutch search and rescue dog - Geira is searching through the rubble for Saulin. After an hour of sniffing around in vain, Geira was exhausted and taken away by the Dutch team to hydrate and rest. Two other Search and Rescue teams had covered the area earlier in the day. The search for Saulin is to be continued...I'll be going back in a few days to see Sapna and find out about her son.”



Posts on the NepalPhotoProject Instagram news feed.



platform to share stories and information. The first impression may be that it is an earthquake-only forum, and while it is primarily that, our hope is that the hashtag and the feed are a blank canvas for any story from Nepal – political, humanitarian, or just the everyday.



All images from the series
Between Grief and Nothing
Kathmandu, April-May 2015
Digital
Model as Lakhey: Sujan Bajracharya
Creative & Production Assistant:
Sushant Shrestha



Sharbendu De

Between Grief and Nothing

'To grasp that we exist, silence is necessary. And that silence involves a certain kind of fear.'

— Rinko Kawauchi, *In the Wake*

Photographer's statement

This series began following the recent earthquakes in Nepal that killed nearly 9,000 people and affected another 2.8 million. Over 300 strong aftershocks within a month drove fear into people's minds, a psychological trauma, instilling doubt, uncertainty and the anxiety that another one could abruptly cut short their lives. Continuous aftershocks challenged their resoluteness while the media continued selling tales of 'resilience' to the world on primetime television. Spending one month in the middle of this unfolding disaster, I watched people caught in a state of suspension between two unpredictable worlds: one secure and the other obscure and indeterminate. Drifting from one space to another, it was evident that the agony was setting in.

I was eager to further explore the concept of trauma, to begin with, in a clinical manner. In a recent research exercise conducted at the Sleep and Circadian Neuroscience Institute at Oxford University, the team found that 'Sleeping after a traumatic event or going to bed angry could make bad memories and flashbacks worse.'¹ In other words, sleeping after a sudden high-stress event could substantially augment the possibility of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

In order to animate such a condition, this current series was construed as an artistic response to the aftermath of the earthquake, attempting to depict a dystopian state of mind. Fear made a home in the hearts of so many people in Nepal and they began sleeping outdoors, anticipating what may happen to them in an unconscious state. The streets filled up after sundown; but sleep still evaded them – Nepal stayed awake night after night as trauma centres in hospitals ran out of beds.

As I began to think through my photographic

series, I met Professor Suresh Dhakal, a cultural anthropologist (and Professor of Sociology at Tribhuvan University) in Kathmandu for advise. He mentioned that masks constitute an intrinsic part of Nepal’s mythological past and active present. And so, *Lakhey*, a demon god from Newari mythology surfaced as an anthropomorphic form, giving shape and form to the narrative within the series, and I eventually set out to enquire from the local population about the significance of *Lakhey* as a mythological character in current religious or cultural scenarios.

In a fictional documentary mode, I have tried to create a hyper-real imaginary space using *Lakhey* as a code. *Lakhey*, a Demon-God (deeply feared even today in Nepal?) in the narrative is seen emerging in the frame, or watchfully lurking around people as they sleep. In written references, ‘He wears a huge red, terrifying mask with prominent eyes, protruding fangs, serrated teeth; a dark red wig and disheveled red tresses complete the awe-inspiring countenance of the man-eating demon as he dances and thrashes his limbs. It is believed that the spirit of the *Lakhey* resides in the demonic mask. As the performer puts the mask on, the spirit takes over’.³

In my depicted version, once he travels from his home in the forests to the cities, he goes about recklessly destroying everything in his path. The red hue from *Lakhey*’s mask and clothes seeps into the people’s psyche, permeating their surroundings, casting a fierce colour around and even on them.

The series rests on the juxtaposition of

elements situated, often in the affected regions. This incongruous, yet significant contextualisation was necessary to convey a sense of actual destruction. Psychotherapist Carl G. Jung in ‘Psychology of the Unconscious’ speaks of symbolism and mythology as ‘the natural languages of the unconscious’.⁴ To me, this narrative series constitutes intersections between mythology, symbolism and performativity – a documentary fiction. My idea was to find an alternative approach to dominant Western iconographic systems emerging out of Christian art, by seeking aid from codes resting in a specific spatial context, in order to root the tragedy in the reality, not only of place, but of Nepal’s folklore and cultural imagination.

References:

1 Porcheret K, Holmes EA, Goodwin GM, Foster RG, Wulff K. ‘Psychological effect of an analogue traumatic event reduced by sleep deprivation’. SLEEP 2015;38(7):1017–1025. Also published in <http://www.journalsleep.org/ViewAbstract.aspx?pid=30068>. Accessed: 03/03/2016 11:08 and <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/11708625/Sleep-deprivation-could-prevent-traumatic-memories-and-flashbacks.html>. Accessed: 15/11/2015 19:30

2 Personal interviews with community members and members of the religious order who were well versed with *Lakhey* and its historical significance

3 <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/nepal/demon-among-deities>. Accessed on 16 May’ 2015

4 Jung, C. G., *The Red Book: Liber Novus*, ed. Shamdasani, Sonu, tr. Peck, John, Kyburz, Mark, and Shamdasani, Sonu (WW Norton & Co., 2009)











All images from the series *We*
Kathmandu, 1995
Colour negative film

Judha Barun Antra Fire Brigade

Page 92: Lazimpat Fitness Center,
Kathmandu 1995

Page 93 (clockwise from top left):
Milan Hair Dressers
Nepal Stock Exchange
NTV News Staff
Mercantile Communications

Page 94: Little Angels Boarding
School

Page 95: Pashupati School Scouts

Page 96: Leprosy Aid Project
Kindergarten

Page 97: Street sweepers

Tuomo Manninen

We

*We** Text by Pranaya SJB Rana

In photographs like Finnish photographer Tuomo Manninen’s group portraits, the tension between the real and the virtual becomes a deliberate quality of the work. The photographs are of groups of professionals, from accountants to bodybuilders, in their spaces of work, surrounded by the implements of their profession. They are real people, who work their very real jobs in those very real spaces. The photographs do not lie about that. But the manner in which the people are present in the frames, artfully arranged like set-pieces on a stage, lends artificiality to these images. In the striking mise-en-scene of the photographs, there is painstaking deliberation. The photographs, therefore, are not straight-forward images of people in their natural element but rather, are constructed images of people placed in certain positions, made to look the way they do.

This isn’t by any means a fault of the photographs. In fact, it is what makes these photographs unique and interesting. The relations

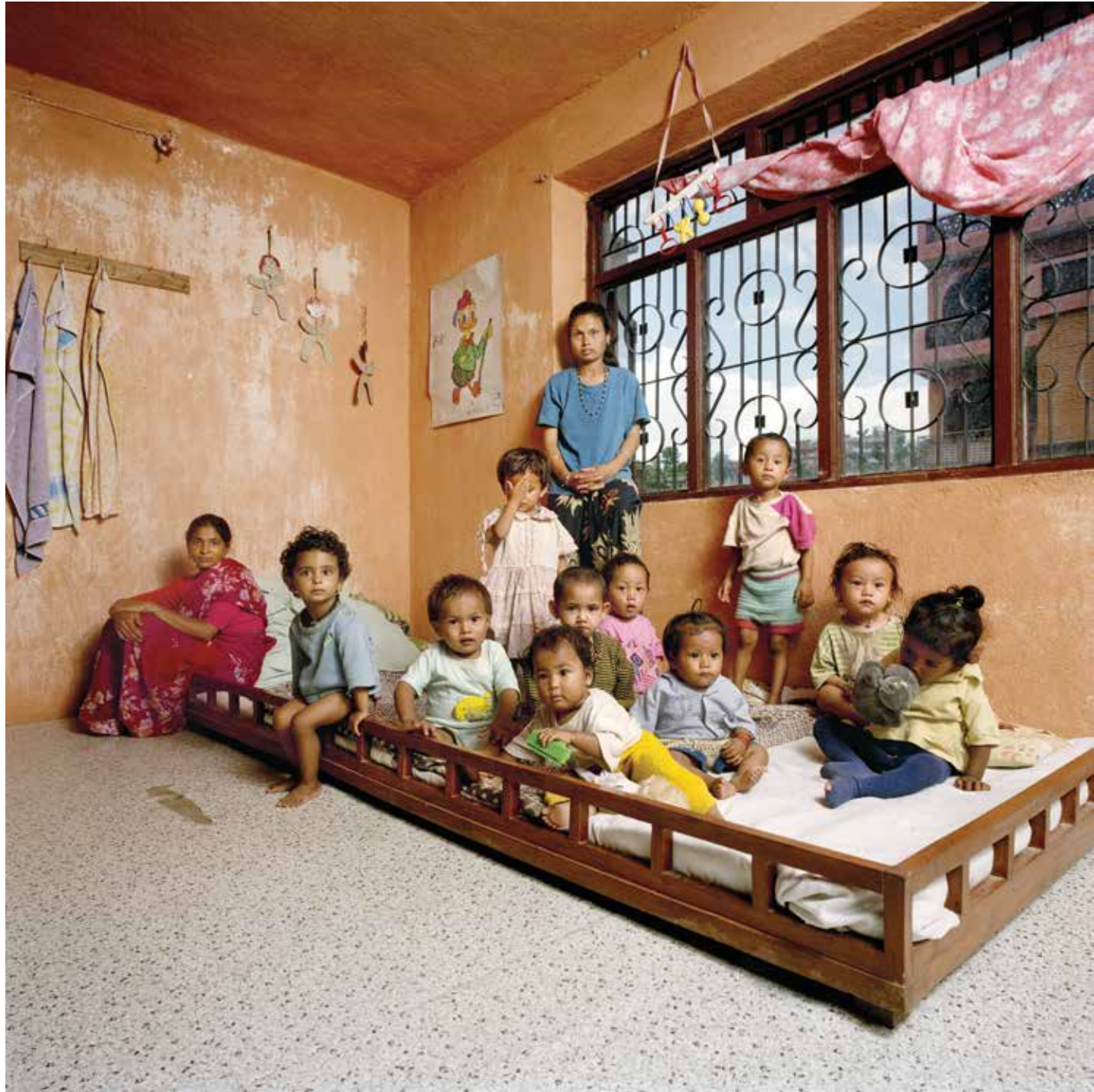
between the real and the artificial are there for all to see. By bringing out this tension, Manninen’s photographs are elevated beyond the ordinary and into something that serves a decisive purpose. These are not mere group portraits but active recreations of group dynamics. The tension evident here is not just between what is natural and what is constructed but between the subjects in the photos too. The manner in which the subjects are arranged speak to the tension inherent in any group, between the individual and the collective.

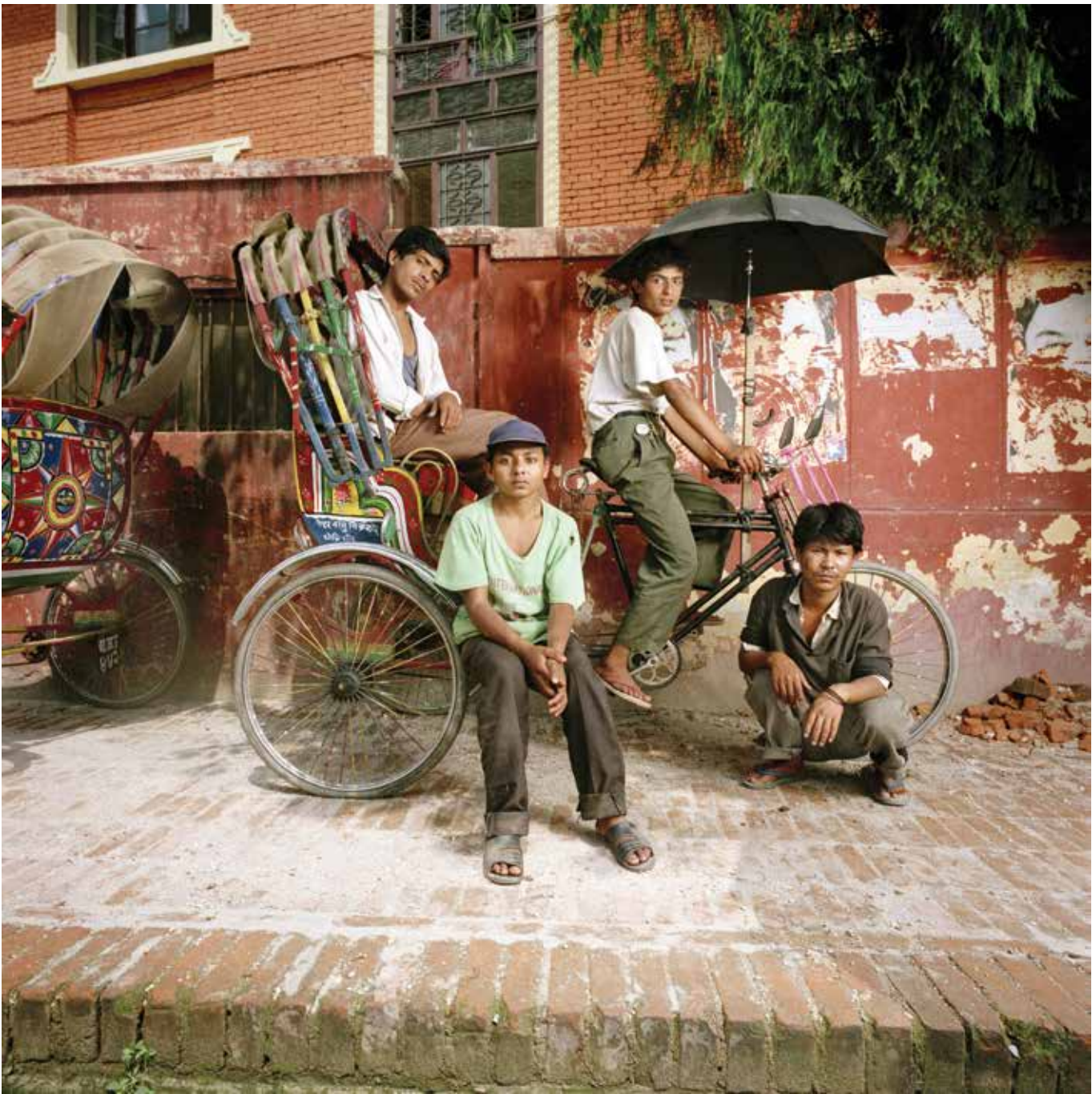
Since starting the *We* series in Kathmandu in 1995, Manninen has photographed groups in Riga, Helsinki, St. Petersburg, Lisbon, Hamburg, Odense, Ho Chi Minh City, Tønder, Paris, Havana, Recklinghausen, Johannesburg, Ramallah, Phnom Penh and Longyearbyen.

* An excerpt from “The time image”, which first appeared in *The Kathmandu Post* on October 31, 2015.











Page 98 (clockwise from top left):
Lorry crew; Motorcycle repair shop
Waste collectors; Swastika Aerated
Products

Page 99: Rickshaw drivers

Above: Sherpa Carpet Industries

Facing page: Miss Nepal Finalists





Karma Tshering Gurung

(Im)Perfect Me

Fat in Space

Text by Pranab Man Singh

Insecurity is a powerful social motivator. It occupies the boundary between the personal and public. It shapes the interaction between individuals and the world. Our insecurities, in this sense, are constantly changing and adapting to the world around us. In the series titled *Im(Perfect) Me*, Karma Tshering Gurung delves into the signs and symbols that shape the insecurities and anxieties that individuals feel about themselves. The personal is used as a metaphor for how the body is sometimes extraneous to the inner workings of the mind. Photography is used to visualize the

shadows and reflections of transient judgements and dreams.

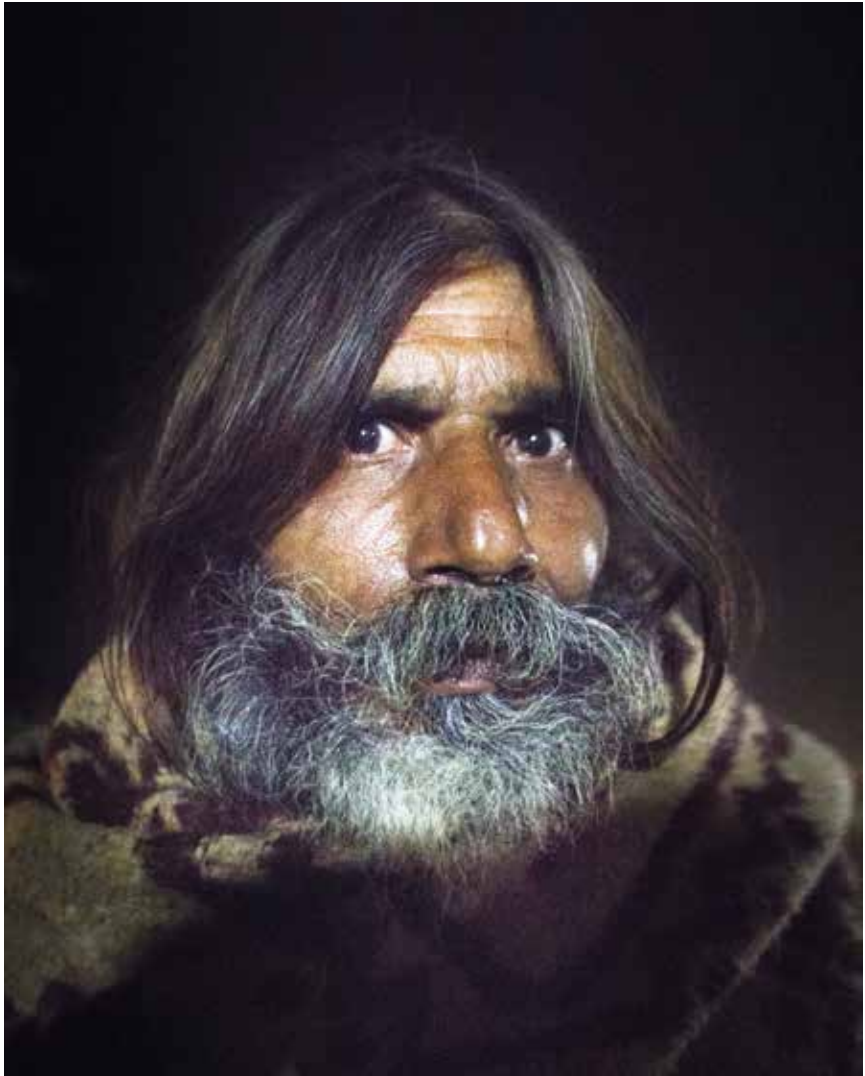
Gurung explores the layers of discontentment he has with his own body starting from an external observation of his body moving towards an inward exploration of his state of being. The potato that he takes on as a symbol appears to embody the negativity that comes with being identified as ‘fat’ but its ubiquitous use in all our meals allows it to shed this image to be a provider that is average, normal and mundane.

All images from the series
Im(Perfect) Me
Kathmandu, August 2015
Digital



Gurung's photos delve into the life of objects too and how the photographer/subject begins to represent a larger concern or predicament. In some settings, the same fatness can represent prosperity, wealth and contentment. In others, it may fizzle away into nothingness or be a metaphor of dead weight. The photos and his body are public displays of his comfort within a given space. As Gurung enters into the private space of his room and then his mind, he allows us to explore how these insecurities can take on forms of compliance and resistance.

Personalities and emotions are never binary, they are stretched across a wide canvas of multiple possibilities. Our insecurities are both gender specific and of gender itself, they are extended between public definitions and private desires. They form a malleable and permeable personal landscape that is in constant flux, in reaction to both the external spaces and internal thoughts that preside over us. Gurung's photo set depicts this range through diffusive, jittery and surreal images, in contrast to moments of clarity in others. It therefore also suggests the innate ability for images to make meaning beyond biography and pedantic definitions.



All images from the series *Eclipse*
Birgunj, 2015 - ongoing
Digital

Sagar Chhetri

Eclipse

Photographer’s statement
I grew up hearing folktales about how Nepal was a ‘yam trapped between two boulders.’ I never understood what was wrong with being in a landlocked nation that shares borders with two economically booming countries of the world. Being born and raised in a small village, Jhapa Bazaar, bordering India, I have beautiful memories of going across the border countless times to attend fairs or simply to shop for objects that were otherwise hard to come by.
I landed in Birgunj on a cold December morning. Shivering on that not-so-comfortable *tanga*, I held out a microphone to record the lulling *tuk-tuk* of the horse. At that moment, I felt it was the only sound in the whole universe and I kept my camera ready to capture my first impressions of the place. But the euphoria didn’t last long – soon, a group of Madhesi protesters blocked our way and tried to vandalise the *tanga*, threatening us to go back to where we came from. It was 4 am. We turned around and moved into the dark, dead silence, as another passenger beside me uttered sarcastically, “Welcome to Birgunj!”
Birgunj is one of the larger Nepali cities and the biggest trading gateway between Nepal and India, an access point for important and basic resources such as fuel. Almost all daily amenities the country needs come in from this customs point.

Here, I was witness to a very unique situation wherein, a sizeable portion of the marginalised Madhesi community were staging a protest in the streets against the government, demanding fair treatment by the state to safeguard equal constitutional rights, as well as larger sanctioned territory as the current division of federal states cut through ancestral land. Their agitation led to a confrontation with the police-force which eventually forced them to stage their protest in no man’s land, disrupting the customs gateway between both countries. As India and Nepal share more than a 1,700 km open border, which touches Bihar and UP, cross boundary problems in the Terai seem to escalate. The blockade from India continued for more than 4 months leaving the entire nation in a state of crisis.
This is my visual documentation and expression of Birgunj, being at the centre of the whole movement and the Madhesi people who are still in state of limbo. They believe that the new constitution is against Madhesi sentiments and does not include enough provisions for the minorities. Hence they want the ruling leadership to take a stand for the disenfranchised. Somewhere between the state and the law, a community lives in the hope of a more egalitarian and secure future.











All images from
The Other Side of Annapurna
Marpha (Mustang District),
September 2013
Digital



Shikhar Bhattarai

The Other Side of Annapurna

A Life Beyond...

Text by Nandita Jaishankar

The Annapurna mountain range – the majestic abode of Annapoorna Devi, an incarnation of Shiva’s consort Parvati – is suffused with ideas relating to mysticism. However, it is better known for the Annapurna Circuit, one of the more popular trekking routes in Nepal. Ranked as one of the most dangerous mountain treks, this mountain range has been drawing avid trekkers for decades. The photographer, Shikhar Bhattarai, has walked this route a few times. His project stemmed from a curiosity about the life beyond the window of the trekking season, and the small villages that travellers have but a fleeting glimpse of on their journey to the top.

The village of Marpha, in Mustang district, was largely unaffected by the civil war which lasted from 1996-2006. This village is the setting of his series as it is one of the many villages that one

comes across on the Annapurna Circuit. The work represents an attempt to understand the people, their coexistence with the landscape, and is a reflection on the quietude and subtlety of the rhythm of life on the other side of the mountains. Surrounded by beauty, perhaps what is most striking is a deep sense of emptiness and isolation that permeates the images. Despite being hugely supported by the Tourism Department, in recent years, many of the young and able-bodied have left the village to live and work in more urbanised parts of the country affecting the demography of the region. In his initial interviews with many of the locals, it came to light that most of the high ranking jobs of running the village had historically been in the hands of the Thakali community, whereas menial or agricultural activities were largely

performed by those from the Dalit community as well as seasonal migrants from other rural parts of the country. However, this has slowly changed with many villagers migrating abroad, increasingly to countries in the Gulf. Those who are left behind survive from one trekking season to the next, with Dalits being much more vulnerable to the seasonal fluctuations. In between these seasons, there is a sense of stillness and desolation within this striking landscape, where those remaining live a life in limbo, uncertain of what the future holds.









Rajan Shrestha

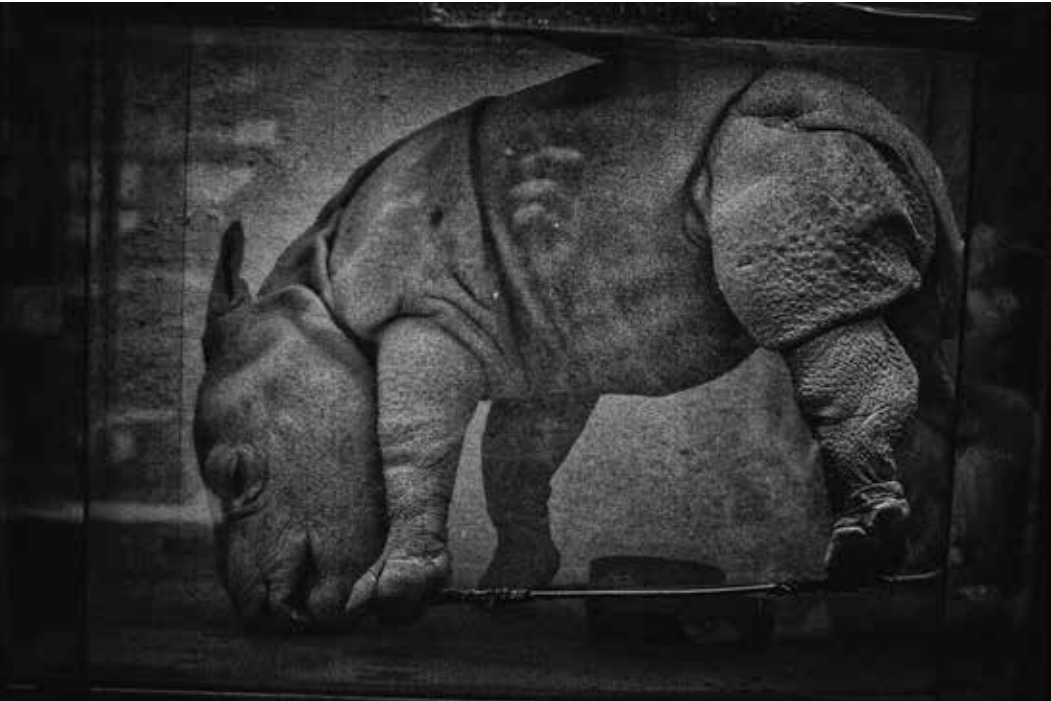
Life It Was

Lifelike, Just Like Life

Text by Prawin Adhikari

Membranes separate as much as they join; they are borders and are also like bags; they hold a world within and keep another without. They are the frontiers of vitality. The body, when it conforms, is the real and the illusory. The body, when it deceives, is both reality and illusion. And, from the very moment of its inception, the body begins its journey away from this world; it coils as it unravels, a bright dance dappled with the shadow of its own light.

Formaldehyde is a poison that preserves. It keeps intact the eyelid, but loses its sweeping fold. A drape that doesn't rise becomes merely a shroud. The limbs are ever there, but no gesture survives. What is kept, then, if the suck of lips and breath is gone? If there be no dreams behind closed eyes, what does it mean to nod, sloshed about by liquid and gravity? Even a flower carved in alabaster has



more light to it, has more breath in it – but what if a body is forever denied its decaying even after the final breath has already left?

In our palms are lifeless specimens of thoughts and actions that are stalled soon after birth. We sift through them at leisure, searching for nicks and hurts, for brands of failure or outgrown flaws. Some are perfect.

Others are tortured, wrung around a mast of pain, a cry that twists into the mind, begs repeatedly for the gentle tap of a forge that will move the moment towards reprieve from what the mind knows and seeks to understand. Both keep the outward shape – the bag and sift for the real and the illusory – and both also wear the lie that they signify: the perfect, and the tortured. And they remain just like each of us: lifelike, and therefore, just like life.

From the series *Life It Was*
“Rhinocerotidae”,
Natural History Museum,
Kathmandu, June 2015
Digital

Photographers
FRÉDÉRIC LECLOUX is a self-taught Belgian photographer, a workshop teacher at the Rencontres Internationales de la Photographies in Arles, at Photo.circle in Kathmandu and at the Maison du Geste et de l'Image in Paris. Lecloux's work is distributed by Vu' agency.
KARAN SHRESTHA lives and works out of Mumbai, India and Kathmandu (Nepal) as an independent filmmaker, illustrator and artist. He has exhibited his works in UK, Australia, Switzerland, India and Nepal.
KARMA TSHERING GURUNG is a visual artist and photographer based in Kathmandu. He is associated with Artudio, a platform for the visual arts. He has worked as a freelance photographer for the past year.
NARAYAN TUSHAR KAUDINYA is a documentary photographer and filmmaker living in Mumbai.
NIRMAN SHRESTHA is deeply interested in the mundane and everyday aspect of life. He enjoys talking about random things with everyone he meets – if he finds someone interesting, he takes their deadpan portrait. Sometimes frames define him, and at other times he defines the frame. He is currently a Post Doctoral Researcher working at KU Leuven, Belgium.
PHILIP BLENKINSOP'S visceral black-and-white imagery has been published in the world's leading media and has been exhibited in museums and galleries internationally. His work has been the catalyst for political discourse and debate, including within the US Congress where he lobbied personally for the United States to intervene in the ongoing genocide by the Lao Government against the Hmong militias who fought for the USA during the American War in Indochina. Awarded the prestigious Visa d'Or Award three times, he has also been awarded Amnesty International's Photojournalism Prize for Excellence in Human Rights Journalism. In 2012 Blenkinsop was made an Honorary Fellow of Falmouth University in recognition of his services to photojournalism.
RAJAN SHRESTHA is a Kathmandu based freelance multimedia producer. An ethnomusicology graduate from Kathmandu

University, he works with computer based music as his primary medium with photography and film following closely.
SAGAR CHHETRI is a photographer based in Kathmandu, Nepal. In 2015, he graduated in International Photography Semester from Pathshala South Asian Media Institute, Dhaka, Bangladesh. He is particularly interested in documentary photography. He is currently associated with photo.circle, a vibrant platform for Nepali photographers. He was recently nominated for the Joop Swart Masterclass 2016.
SHARBENDU DE situates his work within meta-narratives and tells stories largely through portraiture. After an MA in Photojournalism from the UK's University of Westminster, De started out as a documentary photographer and writer. He currently teaches photojournalism at Delhi's AJK Mass Communication Research Centre, Jamia Milia Islamia, alongside his personal practice. He has exhibited in London and across India, and has been published in various national and international publications.
No stranger to disasters, De has worked in several affected areas, starting when his island hometown (Andaman & Nicobar Islands, India), and family was affected in the Asian Tsunami (2004). His work on the Uttarakhand flash floods (2013 & 2014) led to Oxfam India doing a series of solo exhibitions by raising funds and awareness on the issue.
SHIKHAR BHATTARAI is a freelance photographer based in Kathmandu. His love for photography developed when he started to understand the power of the visual medium as a way to share stories. With a particular focus on travel and documentary photography, he has set foot across many parts of his diverse country and is interested in its geographical and anthropological narratives. His work has been shown in Nepal, Bangladesh, Japan and Finland.
SURENDRA LAWOTI is a Nepali photographer based in Toronto, where he teaches as an Adjunct Faculty at the OCAD University. He is interested in human circumstances and their recognition. His current project *This Country is Yours* focuses on activists of six social and political

movements including women, indigenous nationalities and Dalits during the writing of Nepal's new constitution.
TUOMO MANNINEN'S group portrait series *We* started in Kathmandu 1995. Ever since then he has photographed in 13 different countries, from Spitzbergen to Soweto, Havana to Ho Chi Minh City. Various installations of *We* have been seen in over 90 exhibitions around the world, including Biennale di Venezia and Rencontres d'Arles festival.
ZISHAAN AKBAR LATIF has been an independent photographer since 2005. His style is intuitive, passionate, personal and sometimes eclectic. Without any formal training, he works in many genres in the field. Latif loves working with different textures, formats and art forms, even using the art of motion picture in his personal and professional bodies of work. His work has been featured in both commercial and non-commercial collections, exhibitions and publications worldwide.

Writers
ASMITA PARELKAR is a freelance photographer and one of the members of BIND Collective. She studied Documentary photography & Photojournalism at International Center of Photography in 2011. She received BFA in Applied arts from Sir J. J. School of Arts, Mumbai in 2006. Her work explores the relationship between animals and humans and subjects that allow her to be close to nature.
KANAK DIXIT is a Nepali publisher, editor, journalist and writer. He is the founder of the news magazine *Himal Southasian* which is published in Nepal. He taught law briefly at Tribhuvan University, and worked at the United Nations in New York between 1982 and 1990. Since then, he has pioneered the field of South Asian journalism while immersing himself in Nepali-language media. He was awarded the first Prince Claus Award to Nepal for his outstanding contributions to public debate, for creating platforms that enable South Asians to connect, interact and network transcending national and cultural boundaries, and for his socially engaged,

multi-disciplinary approach to creativity and development.
MUNA GURUNG splits her time between Kathmandu and NYC. Her fiction, non-fiction and translated works have appeared in *Words Without Borders*, *The Margins*, *Himal Southasian*, *No Tokens*, *LaLit* and *VelaMag*. She received her MFA from Columbia University, where she was a Teaching Fellow. A 2015 Margins Fellow and founder of KathaSatha, Muna currently directs a writing center in NYC.
NEPALPHOTOPROJECT is an aggregated, crowd-sourced Instagram feed documenting the aftermath of the earthquakes that devastated Nepal in 2015. Using social media, it works outside mainstream media structures with a focus on making imagery functional through informative captions, and personal through contributors' own accounts. Through these posts, the intention was to give viewers concurrent yet parallel perspectives on this event, and piece together a very crucial moment in the narrative of Nepal.
NISCHAL OLI is an art producer based in Kathmandu, Nepal, where he has worked with multiple collectives, platforms, festivals and events. He currently leads a project that creates capacity building programs for art professionals.
PRANAB MAN SINGH is a writer and an Assistant Editor at *LaLit* (www.lalitmag.com), a literary magazine. He is one of the founders and directors of Quixote's Cove (www.qcbookshop.com), a bookshop that specializes in literary and art project management.
PRANAYA SJB RANA is a writer and editor based in Kathmandu. He is the author of the short story collection, *City of Dreams* (2015, Rupa Publications India).
PAWIN ADHIKARI is a writer and translator. He is an assistant editor at *LaLit*, the literary magazine. *The Vanishing Act*, a collection of short stories, was published by Rupa in 2014, and was shortlisted for the Shakti Bhatt Prize.
YUKTA BAJRACHARYA is a member of Word Warriors, a Kathmandu based spoken word collective. She loves conversations and tea at Patan Durbar Square.

Advisory for this issue:



NAYANTARA GURUNG KAKSHAPATI is a photographer and curator based in Kathmandu, Nepal. She is the co-founder of photo.circle, a photography platform that has facilitated learning, networking, publishing, marketing and other opportunities for Nepali photographers; Nepal Picture Library, a digital photo archive that strives to document a ground-up history of the Nepali people and Photo Kathmandu, an international photography festival that recently completed its first edition in November 2015.

photo.circle was established in 2007 as a platform for new photography in Nepal. Through workshops, publications, exhibitions and commissioned assignment work, photo.circle strives to create opportunities for photographers to learn, exhibit, publish and market their work. Through its various activities and by bringing photographers and other visual storytellers together, photo.circle aspires to nurture unique voices that document and engage with social change in Nepal. In 2010, photo.circle set up Nepal Picture Library, a digital photo archive that hopes to contribute to the study of Nepali photography, generate knowledge and raise questions about how we can explore issues of memory, identity, and history through images.

PIX TEAM FOR CURRENT ISSUE



RAHAAB ALLANA completed his MA in Art History/ Archaeology from the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University. He has published works in journals/catalogues and has edited/authored publications on photography. He has also curated exhibitions on photography as an art form and documentary practice.



NANDITA JAISHANKAR studied Anthropology at McGill University (Montreal) and Asia Pacific Studies at the University of British Columbia (Vancouver). She has been living in New Delhi since 2003, where she works as a freelance editor.



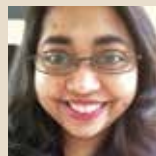
TANVI MISHRA is a freelance documentary photographer based in New Delhi, India. Trained as an economist, her background in the social sciences impacts her choices as a visual storyteller. Her publications include *Der Spiegel*, *Le Figaro*, *The Sunday Guardian* and *Tehelka* to name a few. She curated 'Postcards from the Interior' (2012), a group show of six photographers from India and Singapore, and was also part of the team for the Delhi Photo Festival (2013 & 2015).



PHILIPPE CALIA is an artist-photographer based in Mumbai. After completing a Research Master's programme in Comparative Politics (Asian Studies) at Sciences-Po Paris, he subsequently graduated with an MA in Photographic Studies from University of Westminster, London. He has executed several workshops and commissions for Cochenko, a collective based out of Paris and is involved in photography through teaching, curating and writing.



AKSHAY MAHAJAN is a photographic practitioner based in New Delhi. He restricts his practice to his immediate experience. His work has been published in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, *Bloomberg Business Week* & *The Paris Review*. He is also the co-publisher of blindboys.org, a community-driven space which uses simple yet effective ways to reach out to photographers and audiences alike. blindboys.org



ARATI DEVASHER studied design in New Delhi, India. An avid reader and self-confessed bookworm, she has designed books and publications for over a decade. She reviews books at Book Weyr, and creates original art on paper and textiles. She lives and works in London, UK. www.aratidevasher.com | aratidevasher.etsy.com

Forthcoming: Special Issue on Myanmar



“TV Pride”
Image courtesy Lukas Birk
Myanmar Photo Archive

LAST DATE FOR SUBMISSIONS: TO BE ANNOUNCED
For more information visit
www.pixquarterly.in or email pixels2011@gmail.com

Myanmar has recently embraced a democratically elected government in the last, historic election held on November 8, 2015. Following the National League for Democracy's (NLD) landslide victory in the country's first national vote since a nominally adopted civilian government in 2011, 50 years of military rule has now come to an end.

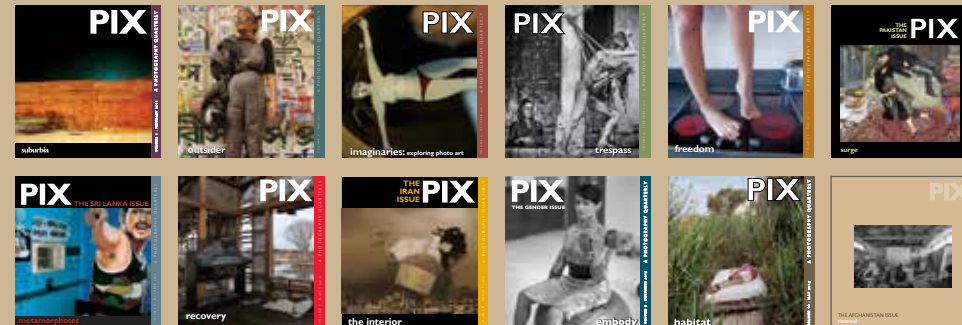
Cultural shifts and social transformation soon follow political mobilisation. National transitions of this scale further project the voice of the common folk and reorient the outlook of the country as a whole. At this extremely exhilarating yet challenging time, the forthcoming issue of PIX hopes to locate new ethnographies and frontiers of photography that will mark the heady debates, social milieu, personal histories and country-wide possibilities which will further punctuate this moment in Myanmar.

Once the jubilation of this victory has eased, how will Myanmar further sustain its democratic stance through media

driven practices and what will be the contemporary, expanded image-oriented language of its secular culture? As with all South and South East Asian countries, Myanmar too has an established history of photography starting with photographers such as Linnaeus Tripe, Felice Beato, Philp Klier, Watts and Skein among several others. By documenting Rangoon (Yangon today) Mandalay and the Royal Court, elaborate sartorial conventions, stately portraits, Buddhist ceremonies at the Shwe Dagon etc., these practitioners also fed the idea of travel and trade, facilitated through the harbour and shipping docks.

The Myanmar of today is embracing a renewed ethics and system, in terms of its ideology as well as urban sprawl. Hence the country is now at the cusp of an intellectual and cultural shift, and we hope to showcase some of the instances that may highlight a conversation between its past and future.

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