

Exhibition Opening
Dissent and Desire
January 20–April 29, 2018



Sunil Gupta and Charan Singh, *Sonal #1*, 2015. Archival inkjet print, edition of 2, 10 x 15 inches.
Courtesy the artists and sepiaEYE, New York, New York.

#DissentandDesire
#atCAMH
@camhouston

HOUSTON, TX (November 22, 2017)—The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) proudly presents *Dissent and Desire*, an exhibition featuring a selection of photographs by renowned artists and collaborators Sunil Gupta and Charan Singh. The exhibition is comprised of a powerful series of 47 photographs and companion first-person texts depicting an unprecedented portrait of LGBTQ+ lives in India today. Through seventeen unique stories, the viewer is invited into the daily routines, work, homes, and intimate lives of their subjects from different backgrounds—from urban professionals to day laborers. *Dissent and Desire* opens the evening of January 19 and remains on view through April 29, 2018.

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Sunil Gupta and Charan Singh

Lily #2, 2015.

Archival inkjet print, edition of 2,
15 x 22.5 inches.

Courtesy the artists and sepiaEYE, New York,
New York.

Focusing on the city of Delhi, Gupta and Singh chronicle the halting emergence of networks of men and women living under the shadow of stigma and criminalized behavior. “A visible queer community has emerged in Delhi over the past two decades. What was silent and private has emerged into the public sphere,” said Indian historian and gay studies scholar, Saleem Kidwai. “Gupta’s and Singh’s work bears testimony to this.” The images reflect the photographers’ capacity for entering into lives rarely seen.

Gupta and Singh have created a rich and tender mosaic of the ways in which their subjects navigate life, work, and love in a country where anti-sodomy laws dating back to the British Empire were only recently struck down in 2009 and then were restored after the Supreme Court reversed the ruling in 2013 in a surging wave of homophobia. As of August 24, 2017, the Supreme Court of India gave the LGBTQ+ community freedom to safely express their sexual orientation under a right to privacy law, but they did not overturn any past laws.



Sunil Gupta and Charan Singh

Ponni and Indu #1, 2015.

Archival inkjet print, edition of 2,
10 x 15 inches.

Courtesy the artists and sepiaEYE, New York,
New York.

“As we became romantically involved, it became inevitable that our personal lives would overlap with our professional lives,” stated Gupta and Singh. “Immediately, our own relationship impressed upon us everything that was unique to being gay in India. Our situation was, in many respects, a reflection of the queer community in Delhi, which was almost completely divided by money. That world was divided by language, too: English was the modus operandi of the middle-class Indian gay male world, which felt entitled to dominate the city’s queer diversity. Yet queer people survive and build communities across all levels of society despite discrimination, and through this [project], we would like to share these lives as best we can.”

Dissent and Desire brings into focus a discernible difference between how India and other parts of the world define gender as it exists outside of male or female. In India non-binary genders have existed within communities that date back thousands of years. *Hijra*, a Hindu-Urdu word, defines this deeply rooted third gender in South Asia. The hijra of India are probably the most well known and populous third sex type in the modern world—Mumbai-based community health organization The Humsafar Trust estimates there are between 5 and 6 million hijras in India. On April 15, 2014, the Supreme Court of India recognized this third gender that is neither male nor female, and, as a class, entitled to reservation in education and employment, stating, recognition of a third gender is not a social or medical issue but a human rights issue. This verdict made India

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Sunil Gupta and Charan Singh
Kishan and Jatin #2, 2015.
Archival inkjet print, edition of 2,
15 x 22.5 inches.

Courtesy the artists and sepiaEYE, New York,
New York.

one of the few countries to give this landmark judgment.

In addition to the 48 photographs, CAMH will present a video documenting the narratives of some of the individuals recurring in the photographic work. Gupta has also been selected as the Lead Curator for the Houston-based FotoFest 2018 Biennial, *INDIA: Contemporary Photography and New Media Art*, which will take place concurrently during the run of this exhibition.

Gupta and Singh originated this project after being approached by The New Press to compile a book about the LGBTQ+ community in Delhi. This publication, *Delhi: Communities of Belonging*, depicting all 150 photographs in the series, along with an exhibition catalogue produced by the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, will be made available for purchase in the Museum Shop at CAMH.

Dissent and Desire is co-curated by CAMH's Director, Bill Arning, and Patricia Restrepo, Assistant Curator and Exhibition Manager.

About the Artists

Charan Singh (b. 1978, India) is currently a PhD candidate at the Royal College of Art, London. HIV/AIDS work and community activism in India informs his practice. He was an artist resident at the FIAR, New York, New York in July 2017. His most recent published work is *Delhi: Communities of Belonging* with Sunil Gupta, which was shown at SepiaEye, New York, New York in 2017. Both authors presented their findings at a panel on Global Queer Art at College Arts Association in 2017. The work was featured at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London in 2017. He earned a Magnum/Photo London award in 2016 for his portrait series *Kothis, Hijras, Giryas and Others*, that was also shown in *I am a Camera* at FotoFest Houston and The Photographer's Gallery, London, United Kingdom in 2015. This series is featured in the *Photoworks Annual*, United Kingdom in 2017. Charan also presented his work at the Society for Photographic Education, New Orleans, Louisiana in March 2015.

Sunil Gupta (b. 1953, India/United Kingdom) is a Canadian photographer, artist, educator, and curator. Educated at the Royal College of Art, he has been involved with independent photography as a critical practice for many years focusing on race, migration, and queer issues. His next show, an autobiographical coming-out story from the 1970s, will open at Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto, Canada in April 2018. His work has been seen at major museums including the Pompidou Centre, Paris, France in

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2011, Tate, Liverpool, United Kingdom in 2014, and Tate, Britain, United Kingdom in 2017. He currently serves as Visiting Tutor at the Royal College of Art, London, United Kingdom. His work is found in many private and public collections including George Eastman House, Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Royal Ontario Museum, Tate Britain, Harvard University, and the Museum of Modern Art.

Opening Reception

Dissent and Desire

Friday, January 19, 2018 | 6:30–9PM

Celebrate the opening of *Dissent and Desire*, featuring documentary color photographs by Sunil Gupta and Charan Singh that chronicle contemporary LGBTQ+ life in Delhi, India. CAMH Director Bill Arning and Assistant Curator Patricia Restrepo will introduce the exhibition at 7PM. Cash bar, with light bites generously provided by Pondicheri.



Select Public Programs

These events are free, open to the public, and take place at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. Seating is limited. Please check CAMH.ORG for the most current information.

Art at Noon: Ashlyn Davis

Friday, March 2, 2018 | 12–1PM

Join Ashlyn Davis, the Executive Director of Houston Center for Photography for a lively discussion on the term “documentary photography” in conjunction with the exhibition *Dissent and Desire*. Light lunch provided.

Open Studio

Saturday, March 3, 2018 | 2–4PM

Using prompts from CAMH’s Teen Council, create a character and first-person narrative as you imagine the mundane (but interesting!) details of your character’s daily life. Inspired by the documentary photographs and text in the exhibition *Dissent and Desire*.

Family Day

Saturday, March 17, 2018 | 1–4PM

Come participate in hands-on activities inspired by current exhibitions.

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Open Studio

Saturday, April 7, 2018 | 2-4PM

Build a power medallion to help you harness your inner strength and face the world as your true self. Inspired by the subjects in the photographs by Sunil Gupta and Charan Singh.

General Support

Support for CAMH is generously provided by the Museum's Board of Trustees and their families: Allison and David Ayers, Candace Baggett and Ron Restrepo, Vera and Andy Baker, James M. Bell, Jr., Jereann Chaney, Estela and David A. Cockrell, Ruth Dreessen and Tom Van Laan, Barbara and Michael Gamson, Dan and Eleanor Gilbane, Blakely and Trey Griggs, Melissa and Albert J. Grobmyer IV, Catherine Baen Hennessy and Matt Hennessy, Leslie and Mark Hull, Louise Jamail, Dillon Kyle and Sam Lasseter, Erica and Benjy Levit, Lucinda and Javier Loya, Catherine and George Masterson, Libbie Masterson, Greg McCord, Mac and Karen McManus, Jack and Anne Moriniere, Cabrina and Steven Owsley, Howard and Beverly Robinson, Andrew and Robin Schirrmeister, Nicholas and Kelly Silvers, Margaret Vaughan Cox and Jonathan Cox, David P. and Marion Young, and Elizabeth and Barry Young.

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United is the Official Airline of the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

CAMH Mission

The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is a leading destination to experience innovative art. CAMH actively encourages public engagement with its exhibitions through its educational programs, publications, and online presence.

General Information

The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is located at 5216 Montrose Boulevard, at the corner of Montrose and Bissonnet, in the heart of Houston's Museum District. Hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 10AM-7PM, Thursday 10AM-9PM, Saturday 10AM-6PM, and Sunday 12PM-6PM. Admission is always free. For more information, visit CAMH.ORG or call 713.284.8250.