

PRESS RELEASE

Galerie 88 presents

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC EYE OF JYOTI BHATT Curated by Ram Rahman

JANUARY 19 – FEBRUARY 25, 2017

“What drew me to his work was the essentially photographic vision in his photography, unusual for an artist. It was no surprise, as I discovered. Two major photo talents were both not only close to Jyotibhai, but in many ways mentored him. The late Kishore Parekh and Bhupendra Karia were close friends and Bhatt travelled with them making photographs and watching them work. While Parekh’s work is being slowly resurrected, Bhupendra Karia is totally forgotten.

The photographs of Jyotibhai I have selected for the show expressing his utter understanding of the nature of the camera and the medium and its difference from his painting and printmaking. His document of the village murals (initiated by Bhupendra Karia) shows his delight in the art-making of village India, in the clothing and jewellery of our vibrant peasant culture.

His larger format square negative portraits of his fellow artists show an informal formality and are suffused with an intimate camaraderie. The 35mm photos have a sophisticated understanding of photographic seeing. The influence of Parekh and Karia is clear, but here Jyotibhai’s artistic eye picks up quotidian details with relish. The poetic image of the backs of these impoverished villagers could only be seen by an artist – he finds the lyricism of chola bronzes in this bazaar...

There are images of both Parekh and Karia at work, as well as his fellow artists and students at Baroda. All of these show his understanding of the informality of the frame of the 35mm camera. Unlike many artists who pick up the medium, he does not make images which are graphically easy. He uses the frame to make complex relationships which are essentially photographic.

His pictures also take delight in the ordinariness of clothing and street markets in a way preceding the focus on similar popular culture which became the subject of fellow artist Bhupen Khakhar’s oils and watercolours many years later.

It is this photographic eye of Jyoti Bhatt which this exhibition celebrates.”

- Ram Rahman, December 2016

Jyoti Bhatt was born in 1934 in Bhavnagar, Gujarat. He was trained in painting and printmaking at M.S.U. Baroda and was awarded scholarship and awards to study further: Printmaking at Pratt Institute and Pratt Graphic Center, New York under Fulbright and Rockefeller Grants; Academia Di Belle Arti, Naples, Italy. He was awarded Honorary Doctorate, Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata in 2004. Jyoti Bhatt has had numerous solo and group shows and his works are in the collection of Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington, The British Museum, The National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi and other institutions.

This show has been organised in association with The Guild Art Gallery, Mumbai.