



ART BRINGS TOGETHER CALCUTTA AND ITALY AT THE LALIT GREAT EASTERN KOLKATA

From Kolkata to Italy — Of Souls in Celebration, the second part of a wide photography exhibition, this time connecting the two places by focusing on its people, was inaugurated at The Bakery of The Lalit Great Eastern Kolkata on September 4. The first part of the exhibition that focused on places was held at the National Library earlier in the year and saw an extension in the form of the showcase shifting to “on wheels”.

“After the success of the first one, we wanted to do something very authentic and regional and we wanted to push the limits of how photographs were displayed. In the first one, we already did the diptych display system but here, we wanted to push even further. When we started conceptualising this one, I thought that for places, we go to places. We set up a date, we find an event and we visit places. Most people in our lives come to us as chance encounters and we meet them randomly. But due to the pandemic and what we were going through, these random meetings and chance encounters, coming together of people and of existing together were kind of threatened. The second one celebrates those moments, the encounters, the way people meet and that was a starting point of the concept. We settled on this venue because of

What: From Kolkata to Italy — Of Souls in Celebration
Where: The Bakery, The Lalit Great Eastern Kolkata
On till: September 18, 9am to 8pm

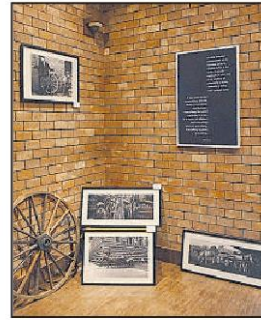


“This is a combined project like our first one. This exhibition, too, features photographs from a separate project I was working on. In the last 12-13 years, I am working on common people in the city. The working class people, ordinary people — who are surviving every day, struggling, trying to earn their living. I have interacted with such people. I know their life, and each and every life is very interesting. When I had sent the pictures, the exhibition organisers connected and curated these pictures with photographs of common people from Italy. This set features the photographs of the panoramic format titled ‘Endless City’, where I focused on people as well as the background, capturing in pairs the new and old landscapes of the city,” said photographer Rajib De, the Indian participant at the exhibition.

the heritage value and the memory it carries of the city and the people, and we wanted to celebrate the way people meet in a cafe or come together once again and that was the starting point of the exhibition design. It is very bespoke and the display can only be specific to this place — if the entire exhibition travels somewhere else it will be different. Every section was also derived by the nuances that was given by the space,”

said Sonia Guha, exhibition designer.

Capturing people engaged in their habitual activities, the exhibition displays pictures in groups with props around the bakery, cafe and the gazebo of the Edwardian block of The Lalit Great Eastern Kolkata, using the concept of space in a unique way for the display to shape the ideas of moments of connections, chance



This group of photographs displayed in a corner suggests connections. Contextualised with a quote from Umberto Eco, it uses the wheel as an object to suggest the same idea of connection. The group features streets of Calcutta and Italy. There are images of people caught in different actions in both places.

encounters and a sense of play with real-time space. The brick walls, the glass windows and the cafe space with people consumed in their daily activities add to the concept of the unique display of the exhibition. “We tried to arrange the pictures with some context and props. This was done to say that the people in the photographs are real people, as if the props make them alive. So every moment we feel that we are meeting real people in real time and this is the connection we wanted to forge and this is the reason to celebrate,” explained Sonia.

The second chapter of the exhibition curated by Francesca Rosani and presented by Sabiana Paoli, featured photographs by Rajib De from India and Alessandro Rosani, Giuseppe Laluna and Rossana Coslovi from Italy.

Speaking on organising the event and its purpose, Gianluca Rubagotti, consul general of Italy in Calcutta said: “The message of this exhibition is that although we are living in difficult times because of the pandemic, times of isolation, times of distancing and maybe just because we are living in these times, it is important that our lives are not stopped. So the whole idea was to put up a celebration of life and this is the second part of the exhibition... The photographs are put in little groups with objects or quotations from either Indian or Italian thinkers from Mahatma Gandhi and Italo Calvino to (Rabindranath) Tagore and Umberto Eco. We tried to give a sense to these groups of photographs.

Judging from the feedback, it is something that people have seemed to have liked. The place is also part of this idea that we also want to discover heritage parts of Calcutta and try to offer them to the general public with a different angle. So the whole idea was also to help Calcuttans rediscover their city too through art.”

A special menu was curated with Italian snacks for guests on the day of the inauguration. “When the Italian Consulate came up with this photography exhibition, we saw the concept and discussed it. I, personally, felt that this part of the building which is almost 185 years old and has witnessed so much of history and culture (was the perfect venue). Different guests from various countries have been catered to, over here... that is why we chose The Bakery as well as the gazebo area of our Edwardian part,” said Dilip Mishra, general manager, The Lalit Great Eastern Kolkata.

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