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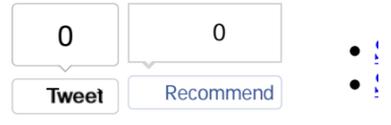
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IN-DEPTH COVERAGE

[Satyajit Ray](#)

Photographer Bartholomew recreates memories of another day

Prithvi Kini, TNN Dec 26, 2012, 05.58PM IST



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NEW DELHI: The most distinctive memories of one's life are those that are etched firmly onto a photographic plate and reproduced on a single sheet of paper.

Getting transported into a window of urban landscapes while bringing animation into the world of theatre is precisely what Pablo Bartholomew achieves through his chronicle titled, Calcutta Diaries, that was recently showcased at the Art Heritage Gallery.

A self-taught photographer who uses his camera as a lucrative tool to formulate culturally enriched ideas in a lucid manner, Bartholomew's photo [journey](#) focuses predominantly on the years that he spent in Calcutta during the mid-1970's in a quest to explore the crux of identity and society.

The exhibition displayed in four parts – Grandmother, Satyajit Ray, Everyday life, and Chinese community - was retrieved from Calcutta's beloved past and brings out the timelessness of every fragment. All photographs were shot in black and white, with clear tonal contrasts and crude textures.

The first section, The Grandmother Series, has a peculiarly striking image of Pablo's [aging](#) grandmother as she walks in her front yard. The snapshot contrasts the perspective of her innocence against the cold setting of the dilapidated framework.

A perfectly-placed vintage car in the vicinity, removes all forms of anonymity that the viewer may possess. Although Pablo's grandmother series may at first come across as in soothing lull, there is an underlying tone of energetic youthfulness that he captures in her enthusiastic actions.

As one trots further into the gallery, the bold and piercing eyes of [Satyajit Ray](#) which are intensely arrested in time and space catch one's attention.

Pablo is said to have spent many days on the sets of Ray's films in 1976, working in a close merging environment with young artistic minds.

One such image titled 'Satyajit Ray in his editing room' exudes a playful passion with which Ray, his son, and the crew members soak in the satisfaction of their work. Every image in this particular series holds motion and magnanimity to it.

A set of three cryptic photographs of Ray at his home brings out the simplicity that thrived in his life. Iconic in every sense, a beautiful interplay of light and dark along with the stark geographical imagery of Ray's windows is highlighted by Pablo.

Art house manager Varsha Jain, explains how Pablo tries to capture themes of daily life in Calcutta by contrasting enduring images with politically relevant topics. A half naked [peasant](#) sleeps blissfully against political graffiti on the [pavement](#) symbolizing the oblivion and harsh destiny that befalls him.

In a very Marxist explanation, she says, "He depicts how ironical the scenario poses to be. The peasant lies as a unchanging backdrop to the larger power struggle in the country." His stills on everyday life are tales of paper toy vendors, sweet shops, the trams across the street, hand drawn rickshaws, and the chaos and actuality of the locals. These photographs depict poverty yet marked by a sense of positive empowerment in his endeavours.

A visitor to the gallery remarks, "These images are incredibly outstanding. He manages to get the depth of field in his work. With great technique and creative flow he manages to capture simple day-to-day activities in such an impacting way."

Pablo's final series of the 'Calcutta diaries' on the second floor of the gallery displays the widespread Chinese community that was prevalent in Calcutta during the 1970's. They are relatively absent now, but he portrays them in their niche with breathtaking passivity.

Photographs include ordinary moments of everyday life: a father and daughter making food at home, a youngster getting his ear pierced, a little Chinese girl sitting pensively on a scooter, a man jumping from one roof to another. Freedom and uninhibited warmth is what we decipher so intensely.

Pablo says, "My engagement with the Haka Chinese community in the Tangra area, this group who lived, owned and ran leather tanneries was my first endeavor to document a community in transition, coming to terms with themselves, closed but proud, and friendly. A way to look into my mixed Indian and Burmese origins."

Art curator, Amal Allana said, "The show strives to recover Pablo's own past through the process of 'accumulation' - a gathering of memories in photographic form and a percolation of life's essential impulses via an assimilation of ones prior existence."

A collection of photographs that transports one into a fantastic period of Calcutta's history, Pablo has made it an impeccable display of raw art through modestly sized and viably entrusting frames. Within the parameters of his frame he manages to grasp all possible intricacies of the past.