

Vivan Sundaram

TERRAOPTICS

sepiaEYE is pleased to present **Terraoptics**, a pioneering conceptual multi-media exhibition by one of India's most prolific artists, Vivan Sundaram, that pairs two important bodies of work. *Terraoptics* includes installation-based video and photography that reference Sundaram's ground-breaking work *Black Gold* (2012), a large-scale installation that debuted in the 2012 Kochi-Muziris Biennale. Sundaram is considered one of the few conceptualist artists of his generation in India, having gravitated from his accomplished practice as a painter in the early 1990s towards working with assemblage, photography, video, and installation.

Sundaram explains: "the material genesis of *Terraoptics* is the large site-specific installation made up of discarded potshards from Pattanam, Kerala. The potshards were from archaeological remains attributed to the ruins of the disappeared port-town of Muziris (100 B.C.-100 A.D.) The (50' x15') installation consisted of a hundred thousand terracotta pieces. The terrain of a denuded landscape, an urban ruin, was then flooded with black peppercorns and performatively shot." The video, *Black Gold* (2012), was a three-channel floor projection shown separately.

"For *Terraoptics* the same potshards now become a series of miniature sets. Placed in trays and shot with a still camera positioned above, the terracotta assemblage becomes a relief, a flat-bed, picture-plane-it is also a riverine landscape with pre-historic formations and emblazoned habitation." Sundaram continues: "The model in the darkroom is laid with light-wires into luminous planes, intricate patterns. One-millimeter-wide fiber-topics crisscross the terracotta forms. Optimal geometry, linear velocity, 'light as speed'. The earth-body is made incandescent: it produces a terrestrial-optical consciousness. Artists play with temporal transpositions, seeking counter-equilibrium for human (un)settlement."

Sundaram brings together *Black Gold's* powerful and poetic floor projection with a selection of the *Terraoptics* installation-based photograph series, first shown at a collateral exhibition to the 2016 Kochi Biennale. One of our curatorial goals at sepiaEYE is to retain and even enhance the individual power of *Black Gold* (2012) and *Terraoptics* (2016) by integrating them thoughtfully through a side-by-side and site-specific approach.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in India in 1943, Vivan Sundaram is one of India's most prolific artists. Sundaram's work refers to perception, memory, history and their intersection with social problems and popular culture. Several of his recent collaborative projects, although very different in aesthetics, involve the use of photographs, found objects, video, and three-dimensional constructs. In these collaborations, Sundaram assumes the role of conductor and curator.

"[*Re-Take of Amrita*]... is basically an archival family album, a photographic souvenir of the distant past. Thanks to digital technology, however, the pictures are simultaneously old and new. They embody the past the way it survives in the mind: edited, layered, compressed, as if in a dream." (Holland Cotter, *The New York Times*, 2008).

Trash explores the social implications and aesthetics of urban waste and second-hand goods. Constructing a huge and fantastical cityscape in his New Delhi studio entirely with garbage, the resulting composite photographs re-imagine the dreams and aspirations of the architect as grand city planner while simultaneously poking fun at the folly of such utopian misadventures. The color and texture of industrial waste,

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EXHIBITION LOCATION

547 West 27th Street, #608
New York, NY 10001

EXHIBITION DATES

May 10 – June 24, 2017

RECEPTION

Tuesday, May 9, 2017

6–8pm

Artist will be present

PRESS CONTACT

info@sepiaeye.com
sepiaeye.com



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dirty toothbrushes, plastic toys, tin cans, and a sea of empty yogurt containers create panoramas both astonishing and absurd.

Sundaram's work has been included in countless solo and group exhibitions and international biennials including Shanghai, Johannesburg, Kwangju, as well as in institutions such as; Herning Kunstmuseum; The Queens Museum of Art, New York; Fukuoka Asian Art Museum; National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi; and Tate Modern, London. In 2008 his work was shown in "Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art," at the International Center of Photography, New York. The artist has published over ten books, most recently, *Trash* (2008), *Amrita Sher Gil: An Indian Artist Family of the 20th Century* (2007) and *Re-take of Amrita* (2006).



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ABOUT sepiaEYE

sepiaEYE is dedicated to showing a spectrum of modern and contemporary photography and video work from Asia. Established in September 2009 by Esa Epstein, sepiaEYE will continue to foster artist development through exhibitions, publications, trade fairs, and festivals. We are honored to represent the Estates of Raghubir Singh and Bhupendra Karia. sepiaEYE is interested in the rediscovery of lesser known artists and significant periods within the history of photography and in the support of emerging artists. During her tenure as the Executive Director and Curator of SEPIA International and The Alkazi Collection (1995-2009), Esa Epstein has published eight titles on modern and contemporary photography including: *Atul Bhalla: Yamuna Walk* (sepiaEYE & UW Press, 2011), *Jungjin Lee: Wind*, essays by Eugenia Parry and Vicki Goldberg (Aperture/SEPIA, 2009); *Ketaki Sheth: Bombay Mix*, preface by Suketu Mehta (Dewi Lewis/SEPIA, 2007); and *Vivan Sundaram: Re-take of Amrita*, essays by Vivan Sundaram and Wu Hung (SEPIA, 2006). SEPIA exhibitions have been reviewed in numerous publications, most notably, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Sun*, *ARTnews*, and *Art in America*. Gallery artists have gained critical acclaim and international recognition, and their works are included in the collections of major European and US museums and private collectors.

In her former position, Esa Epstein has helped build an impressive collection of Indian photography and, along the way, has offered her expertise to both private and public collections. Esa Epstein continues to offer institutional planning and arts management through sepiaEYE.