



EXHIBITS

## BHUPENDRA KARIA: 'LISTENING TO INDIA WITH ONE'S EYES'

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**NEW YORK** — India, with its complex history, mix of cultures and massive population, represents a world unto itself that is at once a force to be reckoned with on the global stage and an unknowable land to outsiders. It is this veil that artist, teacher, theorist, curator and photographer Bhupendra Karia sought to pierce, and in the process humanizes the nation with a unique, visual synecdoche that reflects his cultural awareness and personal vision.

Among the most striking images in the exhibit: A vertical B&W print of a turban, a shawl and a rifle hanging on peg embedded in a terra cotta wall. The deceptively simple image evokes India's cultural identity (or one segment of it), its struggle for independence, and [the violence of Partition](#) in 1947 — when lands occupied by the British Empire were carved into Hindu and Muslim nations to form what is current-day India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Estimates of the death toll vary between 500,000 and 1.5 million, marking one of the most tragic periods in modern history.

Karia's *Population Crisis* project produced views of urban life in Bombay (Mumbai), from the manual labor of men lugging cloth, tied in bundles, on their backs, to the quotidian hustle and bustle of commerce and transportation clogging the city's streets in every direction, with such richness in its subjects to provide the viewer an immersion, however brief, into life in India; from food vendors preparing to distribute lunch orders in stacked tins from crudely constructed wooden carts, to residents making their way around tenement-style, colonial-era housing.

In the second half of the 1960s and the early 1970s, Karia undertook extensive photographic journeys that would last weeks, sometimes months, at a time, logging some 80,000 miles across India's rural landscape – likely fueled by an anthropological impulse to explore and record rural India and its native creative traditions—textiles, pottery, and architectural decoration. The resulting project comprises a quarter-million images, which Karia edited down to a portfolio of 74 photographs that he called "the meager harvest of my first 20 years in photography." Twenty of those images are included in the current exhibition, [Bhupendra Karia / India 1968-1974](#), through March 19 at [sepiaEYE](#), with selected work from the Karia Estate, comprises two projects, *Selections from the Portfolio* and *Population Crisis*.

[Bhupendra Karia / India 1968-1974](#) at [sepiaEYE](#), 547 W. 27th Street, #608, New York, NY, Feb. 4, 2016, through March 19, 2016.

Lecture: "[An Evolving Archive: The Photographs of Bhupendra Karia with Paul Sternberger](#)," at [International Center of Photography](#), 7 p.m., Wednesday, March 16.

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