



For Immediate Release:

FotoFest Announces Theme, Dates and Lead Curator for 2018 Biennial



Sunil Gupta, Lead Curator, FOTOFEST 2018 BIENNIAL

INDIA *Contemporary Photography and New Media Art*

FOTOFEST 2018 BIENNIAL
March 10 - April 22, 2018
Houston, Texas USA

HOUSTON, TEXAS - JANUARY 5, 2017 - FotoFest International announces the theme and dates for the **FOTOFEST 2018 BIENNIAL — the Seventeenth International Biennial of Photography and New Media Art.**

The FotoFest 2018 Biennial takes place **March 10 – April 22, 2018, in Houston, Texas**, and will focus on **contemporary photography and new media art from INDIA**, a nation of over 1.3 billion people, and the world's largest democracy. This is the second time in its 35-year history that the FotoFest Biennial will focus exclusively on photographic artwork from Asia. The Biennial draws over 275,000 visitors during the course of its six-week run. It attracts visitors and participants from over 35 countries, and is one of the world's longest-running, largest, and most respected international contemporary photographic art events.

India and its society are at the forefront of a changing world. The Indian subcontinent has been a center of culture for millennia, and is widely known for its relics and antiquities. Its history over the last seven decades, since independence from Great Britain, reflects India's complicated society and emergence as a world economic and cultural power. As one of the five BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), it is acknowledged as an advanced, growing economy - currently the seventh largest in the world.

The FotoFest 2018 Biennial will focus on this emerging powerhouse, and the artists that live and work there, as well as the Indian diaspora. **Lead Curator Sunil Gupta** is organizing the **INDIA: Contemporary Photography and New Media Art** exhibition program. Gupta, a Delhi-born artist and curator, splits his time between India and the U.K., and has curated over 30 exhibitions in four countries. **Steven Evans**, FotoFest Executive Director since 2014, is **Biennial Director and exhibition Co-Curator**. Together, Gupta and Evans bring nearly 60 years of curatorial experience with contemporary photography and art to the project.

The 2018 Biennial will present **artists and collectives that work in dialogue with the long history and emergent future of India and its people**. The exhibition will focus on the contemporary moment, and a mix of approaches will be included, including art photography, contemporary practices, installation, moving image, journalistic and documentary photography. Themes will include, but are not limited to, caste and class, the partitioning of the sub-continent, gender and sexuality, conflict, religion, nationalism, new technologies and developments, the environment, human settlement, and migration.

“As a large, multilingual subcontinent, India has always relied on images to maintain a cohesive whole across myriad subcultures, regions, castes and languages. The introduction of photomechanical imaging in the nineteenth century enabled the rapid reproduction and dissemination of both spiritual and scientific ideals,” states Lead Curator Sunil Gupta.

Gupta continues, “Photography for most of its history was too expensive and technical and was left in the hands of ‘experts’ — until the birth of digital technologies and the arrival of the mobile phone, which has given more than 800 million people in India the power to make their own photographs and moving images. **This exhibition will address the legacy of the last twenty years**, a period when photography and moving image media have been consistently included within critical exhibitions of fine art.”

INDIA: Contemporary Photography and New Media Art will include the central exhibition, on view across multiple venues; a conference on contemporary Indian Art; forums and panel discussions; commissioned projects; a film program; and a performing arts program. FotoFest will publish a hardcover book to accompany the program, with reproductions from Biennial artists, and essays from experts on the region and contemporary art.

“Exploring contemporary Indian art and putting it on a large international stage at FotoFest is a unique opportunity,” says Steven Evans, “not only for the artists, but for the viewers, many of whom will be encountering contemporary South Asian photographic art for the first time. We expect it to challenge many conventions and expectations they have for the region, and for its art and cultures.”

FotoFest has a long history of focusing international attention on emerging and under-known regions. At the FotoFest 1992 Biennial, FotoFest placed a spotlight on Latin American photography in one of the largest exhibition of its kind up to that point. In 1994, they did the same with a focus on Latino Photography in the U.S. In 2000, the FotoFest Biennial exhibition on Contemporary Korean Photography was the first to bring wide attention to that country’s photographers in the West, spawning successive generations of young and talented image-makers. FotoFest 2008’s CHINA Biennial focused on the evolution of photography in that country between 1934 and 2008. The 2012 Biennial was a groundbreaking exhibition of post-war Soviet and Russian photography. Recently, the 2014 Biennial focused on the Arab World, showcasing 49 artists in what was the largest program of its kind in over a decade.

ADDITIONAL BIENNIAL PROGRAMS

The **2018 International Meeting Place Portfolio Review for Artists** takes place during the FotoFest 2018 Biennial, **March 10 - 23, 2018**. The Meeting Place is a 12-day long event that brings provides an opportunity for 450 artists to meet, one-on-one with over 150 national and international curators, publishers, gallerists, and photography industry leaders. The Meeting Place remains the most international and largest portfolio review program of its kind in the world, leading to thousands of exhibitions, arts sales, and publications for participating artists. Registration for the 2018 Meeting Place begins in summer 2017.

The Meeting Place, and the 2018 *INDIA* exhibitions will be accompanied by the non-thematic, biennial exhibition, the ***Discoveries of the Meeting Place***, an exhibition of works by 10 artists selected by multiple curators from the previous Meeting Place Portfolio Review in 2016. The exhibition has become an important imprimatur for emerging photographic artists.

FotoFest's **International Fine Print Auction** is scheduled for **Monday, March 19, 2018**, in conjunction with a special program for collectors. The FotoFest Fine Print Auction presents over 60 works, a curated selection of particularly high-quality, international contemporary artwork. It is FotoFest's principal fundraiser, occurring once every two years. The 2018 Auction will be conducted by Denise Bethel, the former Chair of Photographs, Americas, Sotheby's, Inc.

Over 100 independent museums, art galleries, non-profit art centers and corporate spaces will participate in the FotoFest 2018 Biennial by presenting photography and photography events during the festival's six weeks.

For further questions please contact:

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FOTOFEST 2018 BIENNIAL SPONSORS

Early supporters of the FotoFest 2018 Biennial include the FotoFest Board of Directors, Houston Endowment, Inc., City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance, The Wortham Foundation, and the Texas Commission on the Arts.

FOTOFEST INTERNATIONAL

Founded in 1983, FotoFest International was established to promote international awareness of museum-quality photo-based art from around the world. FotoFest is a non-profit photographic arts and education organization based in Houston, Texas. The first FotoFest Biennial was held in 1986. It is the first and longest running photographic arts festival in the United States. It is considered one of the leading international photography Biennials in the world.

As an international platform for serious photographic arts exhibitions, the FotoFest Biennial has become known as a showcase for the discovery and presentation of important new work and new talent from around the world. The Biennial takes place citywide in Houston with participation from the leading art museums, art galleries, non-profit art spaces, universities and civic spaces. The Biennial has an audience of 275,000 people from 34 countries. This audience includes a select group of 150 museum curators, gallerists, publishers, editors, photography collectors, directors of non-profit art spaces and international festivals from Asia, Europe, Latin America, Canada and the United States.

ABOUT THE CURATORS

SUNIL GUPTA, Lead Curator, is an artist, writer, activist and curator. His work has been shown internationally in over 90 solo exhibitions, most recently at Yale University, New Haven, CT (2015). Recent significant group exhibitions include *Paris – Delhi – Bombay...* at the Pompidou Centre (2011) and *Keywords: Art, Culture and Society in 1980s Britain* at the Tate Liverpool (2013). Gupta's curatorial efforts were paramount in the monumental exhibition, *Where Three Dreams Cross: 150 Years of Photography from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh* at The Whitechapel Gallery, London and Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland (2010).

Gupta's published work includes *Delhi: Communities of Belonging*, co-authored with Charan Singh (New York: The New Press, 2016); and the monographs *Queer: Sunil Gupta* (New Delhi: Prestel/Vadehra Art Gallery, 2011); *Wish You Were Here: Memories of a Gay Life* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2008); and *Pictures From Here* (New York: Chris Boot Ltd., 2003).

Sunil Gupta is currently Visiting Lecturer at the Royal College of Art, London and Visiting Professor at UCA, Farnham, UK. His work is included in numerous private and public collections including: George Eastman House (Rochester, NY), Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography (Tokyo), Royal Ontario Museum (Toronto), Tate Britain (London) and Harvard University (Cambridge, MA). Gupta is represented by sepia EYE, New York; Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto; and Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi.

STEVEN EVANS, Co-Curator and Biennial Director, is an artist, writer, and curator, and Executive Director of FotoFest International. Appointed in 2014, he is responsible for exhibitions, art programs, administration and Biennial organization.

With FotoFest co-founders Wendy Watriss and Fred Baldwin, Evans co-curated and organized the FotoFest 2016 Biennial central exhibition *CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES: Looking at the Future of the Planet*. With Watriss, he co-edited the hardcover book *CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES* (Amsterdam: Schilt Publishing, 2016). In 2014-2015 Evans curated the FotoFest inter-Biennial exhibition *I Am A Camera*, and co-curated *International Discoveries V*, and the upcoming *International Discoveries VI*, featuring new artists from around the world. He recently represented FotoFest at photography events and festivals in Argentina, Brazil, China, France, Korea, Lithuania, and Russia.

Evans has served as a panelist for the National Endowment of Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, and the Texas Commission on the Arts. Prior to FotoFest, Evans worked with a wide range of artists and collaborators as Managing Director of the Dia:Beacon Museum in New York State and as director of the Linda Pace Foundation in San Antonio, Texas. His own artwork incorporates a range of media including photography. He has participated in solo and group exhibitions in New York City, Los Angeles, Paris, Stockholm, Berlin, and elsewhere.