

Public Programs

These events are free, open to the public, and take place at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. Seating is limited. Please check CAMH.ORG for the most current information.

OPENING RECEPTION Dissent and Desire

Friday, January 19, 2018
6:30–9PM
Celebrate the exhibition opening, featuring photographs by Sunil Gupta and Charan Singh that chronicle LGBTQ+ life in Delhi, India. CAMH Director Bill Arning and Assistant Curator Patricia Restrepo will introduce the exhibition at 7PM. DJ Gaura Karuna. Cash bar. Light bites generously provided by Pondicheri.

LECTURE In Praise of Blatant Images with Andy Campbell

Saturday, January 20, 2018
2–3PM
Join Andy Campbell, Assistant Professor of Critical Studies at the USC-Roski School of Art and Design to consider the series of photography workshops held on women's lands called ovulars (in contra to the "seminar"), alongside the publication of the *The Blatant Image*, as mutually constitutive social forms, offering an historic and geographically displaced parallel to the exhibition.

ART AT NOON Ashlyn Davis

Friday, March 2, 2018
12–1PM
Join Ashlyn Davis, Executive Director of Houston Center for Photography, for a discussion on the term documentary photography and the documentary aesthetic. Light lunch provided.

OPEN STUDIO

Saturday, March 3, 2018
2–4PM
Using prompts from CAMH's Teen Council, create a character and first-person narrative as you imagine the mundane (but interesting!) details of your character's daily life.

IN CONVERSATION Artists Sunil Gupta, Charan Singh, CAMH Director Bill Arning, and CAMH Assistant Curator Patricia Restrepo

Saturday, March 17, 2018
11AM–12PM
Join artists Sunil Gupta and Charan Singh as they discuss the photographs in the exhibition along with their past and current projects.

FAMILY DAY

Saturday, March 17, 2018
1–4PM
Come participate in hands-on activities inspired by current exhibitions.

OPEN STUDIO

Saturday, April 7, 2018
2–4PM
Build a power medallion to help harness your inner strength and face the world as your true self. Inspired by the subjects in the photographs by Sunil Gupta and Charan Singh.

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

5216 Montrose Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77006

@camhouston
CAMH.ORG
#atCAMH
#DissentandDesire

HOURS
Mon. Closed
Tue. 10AM–7PM
Wed. 10AM–7PM
Thu. 10AM–9PM
Fri. 10AM–7PM
Sat. 10AM–6PM
Sun. 12PM–6PM

IMAGES

All works courtesy the artists and sepiaEYE, New York, New York.

Cover: *Lily at Home* (detail), 2014. Archival inkjet print, edition of 2. Inside left: *Deepti #1*, 2015. Archival inkjet print, edition of 2. Inside center: *Jatin #1*, 2014. Archival inkjet print, edition of 2.

“Yet queer people survive and build communities across all levels of society despite discrimination.”

—Sunil Gupta and Charan Singh

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Texas Commission on the Arts

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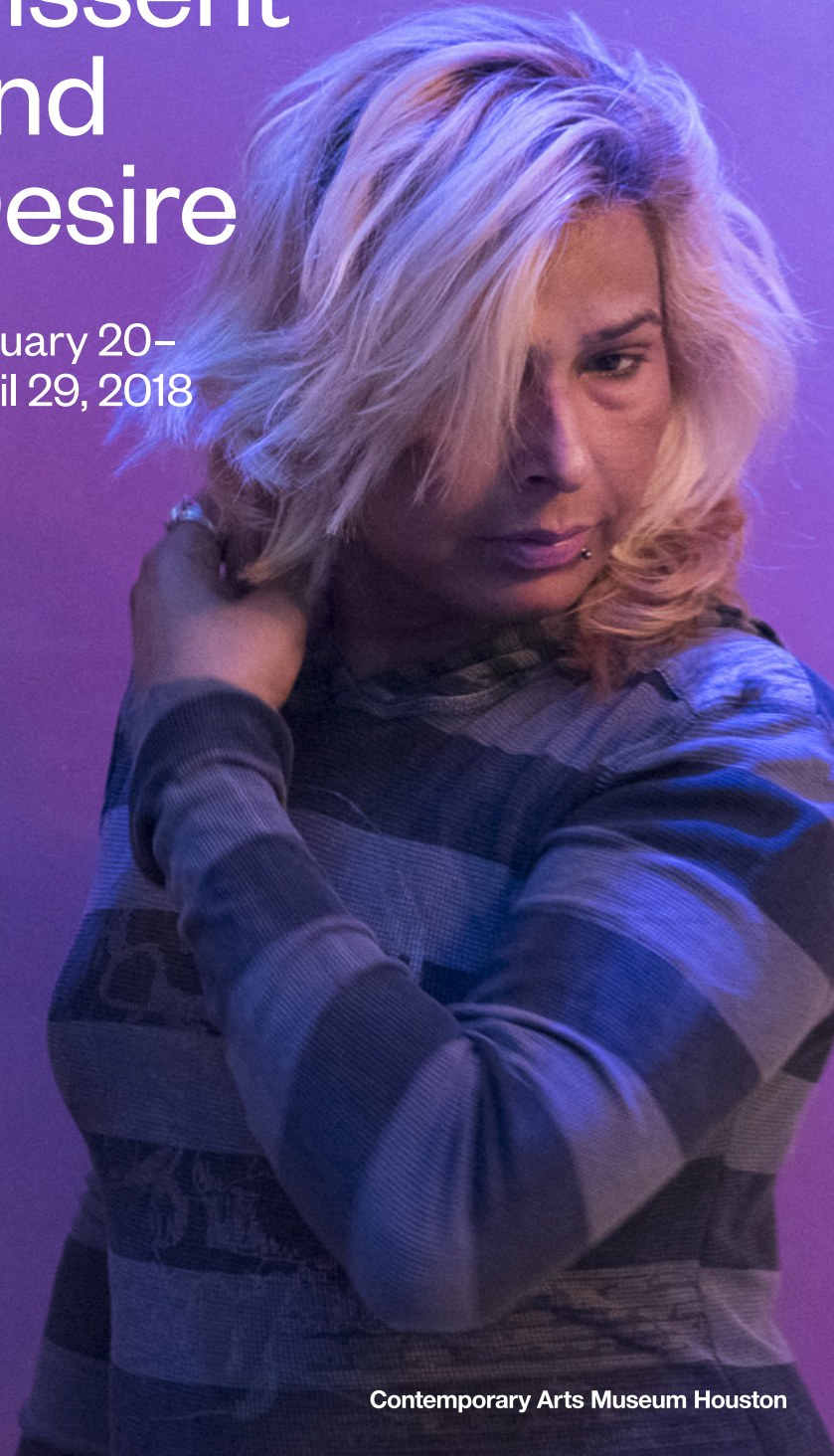
United is the Official Airline of the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

UNITED

Sunil Gupta and Charan Singh

Dissent and Desire

January 20–
April 29, 2018



The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) is pleased to present *Dissent and Desire*, an exhibition of photographs by Sunil Gupta and Charan Singh. The work chronicles contemporary LGBTQ+ life in Delhi, India and masterfully enables us to witness the intimate, ordinary, and daring moments of twenty diverse individuals. Gupta and Singh have created a rich and tender mosaic of the ways in which these subjects navigate life, work, and love.

The photographs in the exhibition were all taken in 2014 and 2015, following a 2009 decision by the Delhi High Court to overturn an 1861 anti-sodomy law. This law, enacted during British colonial rule, served as a model for similar rulings in other former British colonies, thereby making same-sex relations punishable for ten years to life in prison. During the 1980s when Gupta was working on photographic projects and portraits, his subjects often wouldn't allow their face to be shown in the images or their names to be associated with the work. The 2009 decision changed the political dynamic, empowering many queer individuals to be more visible

and public regarding their sexuality. In 2013, the 2009 decision was reversed in the Indian Supreme Court, leaving the LGBTQ+ community feeling vulnerable, as what had once been private had emerged into the public sphere under a brief era of acceptance. As of August 24, 2017, the Supreme Court gave the LGBTQ+ community freedom to safely express their sexual orientation under a right to privacy law, but it did not overturn any past laws. This conversation feels especially relevant in Texas, where despite a 2003 ruling in the case *Lawrence v. Texas*, an anti-sodomy ban still remains on the books yet unenforced.



Gupta and Singh are both artists with individual practices, and this project represents their first formal collaboration. They are not only artistic collaborators but also romantic partners. Gupta and Singh met in 2009 in Delhi at an all-day HIV/AIDS (*panchayat*), a local community gathering. Within their own relationship, they are very aware of class differences and know that money is a divisive factor in the queer communities of Delhi. Language also plays a role in the divide. Indigenous Indian identities often do not have lingual terms that equate to contemporary, Western ideas of LGBTQ+. Consequently, the global movement for gender rights does not feel relevant to many people in India, as they do not associate with those words or specific categories. English has become the modus operandi of the middle-class Indian gay male world, which often dominates the city's queer diversity.

Additionally, the Indian Supreme Court does recognize a third gender, stating, "it is the right of every human being to choose their gender." In the West, we might equate the idea of a third gender, or *hijra*, with transgender, but these words are

not equivalent. The term *hijra* is used by those assigned the male gender at birth who do not identify as men. Many wear makeup and dress in clothing traditionally worn by women. Gender fluidity is an ancient idea in India dating back to Hindu gods who are genderless, change gender, manifest as different genders, or combine to form androgynous or hermaphroditic beings.

Each portrait in this exhibition allows both subject and viewer to pause, to take stock, and to feel the silences and textures of everyday queer life. These images display a sense of intimacy; they provide a window into homes, private gatherings, and everyday routines mirrored with texts sharing thoughts and moments of the photographic subjects. The work does not show one way of being queer, instead there is a variety of class, language, and experience—the multiplicity shows that there is no single narrative running throughout the work. The lives we see in these photographs remain difficult to classify. Gupta and Singh took years to build relationships and trust with these subjects, and the photographs lay no judgement on their lives.

Suggested Resources

These resources are recommended for further exploration into the artwork of Sunil Gupta and Charan Singh and the relevant themes they both explore.

Reading

- Bhan, Gautam and Arvind Narain
 – *Because I Have a Voice: Queer Politics in India*, 2005
- Gopinath, Gayatri
 – *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*, 2005
- Gupta, Sunil
 – *Queer: Sunil Gupta*, 2011
 – *Wish You Were Here: Memories of a Gay Life*, 2008
- Hajratwala, Minal
 – *Leaving India: My Family's Journey from Five Villages to Five Continents*, 2009
- Kidwai, Saleem and Ruth Vanita
 – *Same-Sex Love in India: Readings in Indian Literature*, 2000
- Laxmi, P.G. Joshi, and R. Raj Rao
 – *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi*, 2015
- Mehta, Rahul
 – *Quarantine: Stories*, 2011
- Mukherjee, Neel
 – *A Life Apart: A Novel*, 2016
- Reddi, Gayatri
 – *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India*, 2005
- Revathi, A.
 – *Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story*, 2011
- Sharma, Maya
 – *Loving Women: Being Lesbian in Unprivileged India*, 2006

Viewing

- Bombay Talkies*
 – Zoya Akhtar, Dibakar Banerjee, Karan Johar, and Anurag Kashyap, 2013
- Dostana*
 – Tarun Mansukhani, 2008
- Fire*
 – Deepa Mehta, 1996
- I Am*
 – Onir, 2010
- My Brother...Nikhil*
 – Onir, 2005
- Out & Around*
 – Lauren Fash and Ryan Suffern, 2015
- Pakeezah*
 – Kamal Amrohi, 1972