

FC2 looks into the singular moments, the eloquence, the subtle strength, which build the exhibition, *The Critic's Eye: Photographs by Richard Bartholomew from the 50s, 60s and 70s*

CRITIC'S EYE

P rivate introspections - luminous, resonant, tender, quiet - pool into *The Critic's Eye*, an exhibition of photographs by writer, art critic, curator, painter and poet, Richard Bartholomew (1926-1985), who made India his home in 1942, leaving Burma during the Japanese Occupation, and initiated a critical dialogue on the new directions in art in a modern India, engaging the public in the explorations of the Progressive Arts Movement. Curator Devika Dault-Singh (Director, Photoink) and photographer Pablo Bartholomew, Richard's son, the two who culled from some 16,000 images, these 80 on view, share their thought-bubbles around this exhibition of his photographs.

pablo bartholomew:

"Relating to these works is like being amongst homegrown images. They were always around, so there was so much that was unsaid or not discussed. These things that we all took for granted became glaringly apparent when I unearthed, three years ago, my forgotten archive from 20 years ago, after which, a year later, I looked at my father's archive. So many of the dialogues that he started have continued in my work, and that was quite a frightening and, at the same time, pleasant revelation.

On a personal level, the making of this exhibition, or putting together the book, is a re-affirmation about a man who had multi-layered skills in the arts, who brought these

sensibilities to a way of seeing that is seemingly quite, yet complex. I think he was before his time with his eye, both in subject matter and the way he approached the photograph in thought and execution. Remember, in the 50s - 70s, it was mainly the salon pictorialist school of photography obsessed with light and form, seeped in romantic sentimentality, looking at landscapes and the nude in archaic manners. Or, you had some photojournalism happening in the 50s, which then mushroomed further in the 70s, but that too dealt with visual clichés. Richard Bartholomew looked and saw differently, traversed between the two schools, never getting stuck in their dogma."

devika dault-singh:

"One has to bear in mind that he was first, and foremost, a writer - an art critic - and he brought a lot of that to bear on his photographs. I think he understood the evidentiary and historical role of the photograph as a document. He looked at banal situations and found meaning and sometimes humour in them.

To understand Bartholomew, the photographer, the individual, one has to pay attention to the photographs of his family. It is when he photographs them that the shy Bartholomew reveals himself. He doesn't make pretty pictures, nor does he idealise them. He shows it as it is, without sentimentality. It is these images that reveal Bartholomew for me.

While sifting through old archives, the history of photography of that period certainly was an important consideration. Bartholomew's personal history came to bear a lot on the selections as well. Interestingly, there were no notes, dairies and dates left behind by Bartholomew. So, to arrange images in compartments with a strict chronology seemed anachronistic and, in many cases, impossible. The exhibition is sequenced with a certain chronology without titles and dates, which is available as a separate document, if a viewer wants to know. It is the seamless of his worlds, the layered and interconnected aspects, that one has tried to privilege. Perhaps his photographs were the unwritten dairies." ■



Self-portrait, New York, 1970-71

(The Critic's Eye, is on view at Photoink till February 28.)

FC2

• Dance, music, theatre, art, film, workshops,
• what's on every day of the month. Plus, new music
• album reviews. Interviews, regular columns. And
• detailed previews of events to watch out for

• INFORMATION YOU NEED 52 • CROSSWORD:
• GREATEST SEX SCENES 58 • ARTIST & ART: SHADI
• GHADIRIAN 111 • RICHARD BARTHOLOMEW 112 •
• DAYANITA SINGH 113 • SACRED ARTS FESTIVAL 114
• KEVAL ARORA ON HAROLD PINTER 118 • NEW MUSIC
• 120 • SOUTH ASIAN BANDS FESTIVAL 122 • YOGA 130

CHECK OUT FC2 DAILY EVENT LISTINGS. ALL MONTH. PAGE 133 TO 154



*Delhi's Most
Comprehensive Guide
to What's Happening
in February*