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Pablo and Richard Bartholomew's black and white photographs on the walls of art galleries in New York bring back memories of Delhi in the 1960s and 1970s

By **Aseem Chhabra**

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A party at Koko's in New Delhi in 1975, when men wore their hair long, shirts with flowery patterns and pants with embarrassingly wide flares

Two weeks ago, I stood in the middle of the Bodhi Art Gallery on 24th Street in Manhattan, staring at Pablo Bartholomew's stark pictures – from his Outside in: 70's & 80's, A Tale of 3 Cities show.

I had gone to the show, slightly out of guilt, since it was about to close. I knew Pablo over three decades ago in school in Delhi, before he was expelled for what would seem like a rather silly reason, given the stuff children — especially from rich families — do in India these days.

But I had no idea that I was going to be looking at photographs, which would have a personal meaning for me. It was not just that I knew some of the people Pablo had shot in the 1970s, in quiet, intimate, introspective moments — an image of Medha Gujral (now married to Anup Jalota) knitting in a very Amrita Shergil pose, or another friend Namita Sinha (now Unnikrishnan), smoking, perhaps posing and then dancing in a white sari at a party, or the now Bollywood character actor Alok Nath slouched on a couch ("zonked out" in Pablo's words), his face not seen by the camera's lens.

In the midst of the images of functional wooden furniture, books, other household objects, men with moustaches, long hair, strange shirts, with flowery patterns, long collars, and pants with embarrassingly wide flares, Pablo had captured a particular time period — his youth, that of others in the pictures and mine too.

Everyone remembers their youth, but Pablo's pictures brought it back alive, in black and white, on the walls of an art gallery in another continent, 10,000 miles away from the home where I had lived that life.

Pablo's pictures first rattled me, pulling me out of a very different existence in New York today. But eventually the pictures calmed me down. A lot of what I am today was because of the life that we all had lived in the 1970s. If I am at a good place today, then it was because of the blessing of that other time.

In the opening section of the show, the photographer introduced us to personal images — self-portraits, his brother Robin, and one very telling photograph of his parents Richard and Rati Bartholomew — both with cigarettes, but the mother holding her head in her hands, her face not seen by the camera.

A week later that picture stayed in my mind as I walked to the SEPIA International Gallery — also on 24th Street, to see A Critic's Eye, Richard Bartholomew's first solo show in North America. This was Pablo's tribute to his father — a writer, critic, painter, but whose photographs are rarely seen.

Pablo learnt the basics of photography from his father and in the process may have acquired Richard's eye. And now he put together an exhibition of his father's photos, somewhat connected with his own work, but mostly standing by itself — and often a lot taller.

In a note Pablo sent to me on Facebook, he said that there was a reason why he had tried to take over Manhattan's 24th Street. Works of a father and son displayed simultaneously at two different galleries just separated by a few blocks is a rare phenomenon that even a jaded city like New York rarely witnesses.

A Critic's Eye started with a series of personal family pictures — Richard capturing his children and wife in playful moods at home, on vacations, with friends. In another part of the gallery, I saw Richard's professional life — the painters and artists he wrote about and also befriended — names such as M F Husain, Krishen Khanna, Ram Kumar and F N Souza — some posing in front of their works.

And finally the show contained images from Richard's visits to the US, as well as to other Indian cities. A Critic's Eye remained limited to photographs from the 1960s and 1970s — a lot quieter and innocent era, but also one that could only be recalled through the magic of black and white images.