



Self-portrait, New York, 1970s

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## A CRITIC'S EYE RICHARD BARTHOLOMEW

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**Sepia International** is honored to present **A Critic's Eye**, an exhibition of photographs by noted Indian art critic **Richard Bartholomew** (1926-1985). Widely acclaimed as a writer, painter, curator, and art critic, with solo shows of his paintings in Delhi and Bombay in the 1950s, Bartholomew rarely exhibited his photographic work during his lifetime. During the 1960s and 70s, he keenly photographed life as it revolved around him – his immediate family, his travels in India as well as the United States, and his intertwined relationships with fellow members of the art world. This will be the first solo exhibition of his photographs in North America.

Bartholomew was one of first art critics in India to start a true dialogue with the painters of the time. He created a community with them and engendered a sense of direction at a time when the public was not fully receptive to the bold artistic exploration of India's Progressive Art Movement. Bartholomew's incisive and sophisticated body of photographic work during that period of aesthetic and cultural ferment is equally illuminating and offers us a rare glimpse into the beginnings of Modernism in India.

*Today, we tend to separate the activities of creation and criticism. As a matter of fact, they are complementary. It is true that an artist is seldom the best judge of his own work; it is equally true that though the critic may feel that a particular painting or sculpture is deficient or excessive in some aspect of communication, he cannot usually prove the artist wrong by demonstration. Yet there is one premise on which both work. Nothing can be created without a functional principle of criticism; and all criticism, good criticism that is, is constructive and is intended to foster the growth of art.*

*Theories of art do not make a critic; he appreciates art the better if he understands, or tries to understand, the nature of the creative process. He must know that the artist's instinct, his capacity for exploration (or experiment) and his awareness of history, personal and contemporary, determine the quality of his vision. Every artist is great, significant or mediocre in proportion to how he manages to relate these factors in the understanding of reality. There is the reality of his imagination, the reality of his technique, and the reality of the world-picture. The critic must be able to distinguish the false from the organic.*

– Richard Bartholomew, excerpt from Cultural Forum journal, 1950s

Born in Tavoy, Burma, Richard Bartholomew fled to India during the Second World War to escape the Japanese capture of Burma. He received a Master's degree in English from St. Stephen's College, Delhi in 1950. His major literary works include articles on Indian and Tibetan art, contemporary Indian art and the Indian experience, as well as poems, monographs, short stories, a co-authored book on M.F. Husain, published in 1972 by Harry Abrams, New York, and a monograph on Krishna Reddy in 1974.

From 1960 to 1963 Bartholomew was the Gallery Director of Kunika-Chemould, the first commercial gallery for contemporary art in New Delhi. Subsequently he worked with the Tibet House, New Delhi, from 1966 to 1973 as their curator and development officer where he personally catalogued the Dalai Lama's collection of religious artifacts, traveling with them to the US and Japan. From 1977 to 1985 Bartholomew served as the Secretary of the Lalit Kala Akademi, India's prestigious national academy of art. Among his other many honors and achievements are a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship in 1970; Commissioner of the Silver Jubilee Indian Independence exhibition held in Washington DC, 1973; a British Council Visitor in 1982; and Commissioner of the Art Exhibition of the Festival of India, held in Britain in 1982.