

Images of solitude

PHOTOGRAPHY Pablo Bartholomew showcases rarely seen images taken by his father Richard Bartholomew, who was better known as an art critic.

SHAILAJA TRIPATHI

Legendary artist M.F. Husain sits casually, pulling at his hair and talking on his ericaphone; a view of Narinder Place on Parliament Street taken in 1965 in whose place swanky the DLF building stands tall now; a shot of apartments in New York remind us of America's pre-superpower days — Richard Bartholomew captured mundane moments of everyday life and rendered them, as his photographer son Pablo Bartholomew, calls it "Poetic resonance."

"He had a certain kind of eye because of the multi-layered personality that he was. His photography borrowed from his painting, poetry, art criticism and vice versa," says Pablo who while sifting through his own archives three years ago, came across 17,000 negatives that his father had left behind and decided to exhibit them.

Pablo first showcased these rarely seen images at Sepia International in New York in May 2008. "He was known more as an art critic. I have been wanting to do something that would revive him in

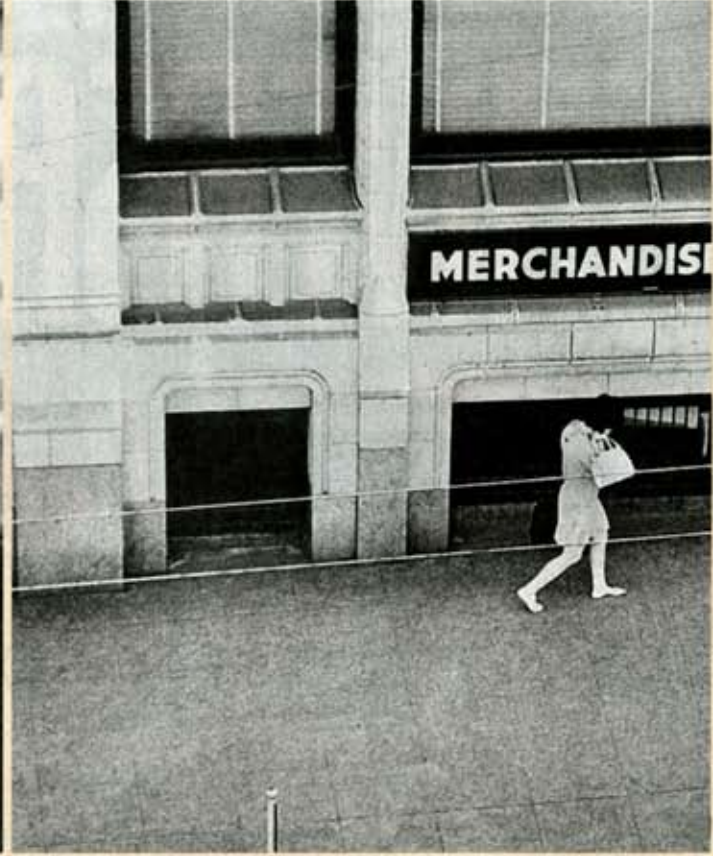
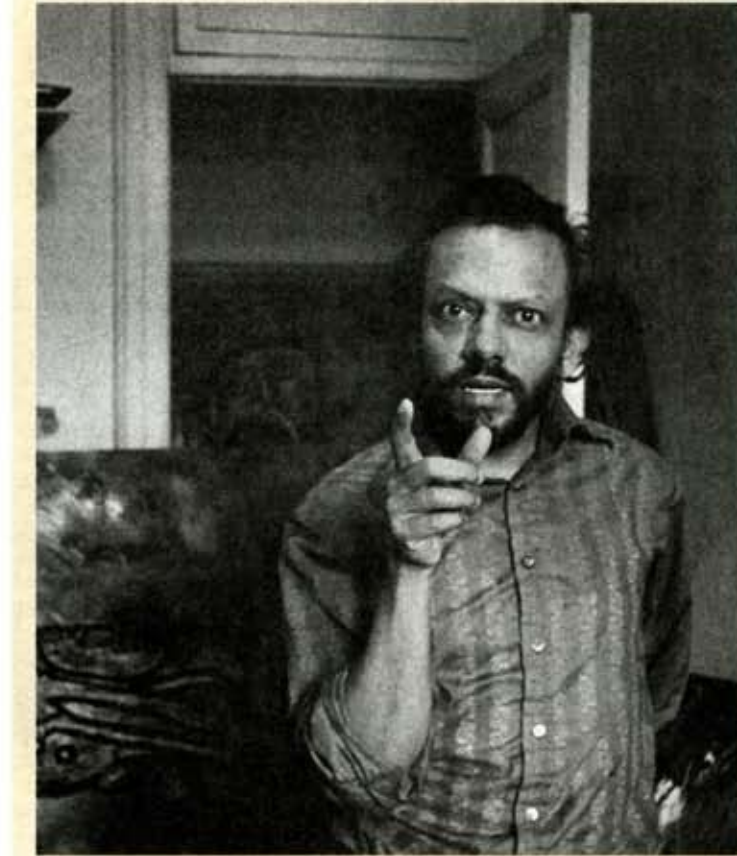
the art world and also show people many arts and crafts he followed. Nowadays people focus too much on the theory of why rather than how. I want to reflect on that through this show," says Pablo.

Personal images

The show, 'A Critic's Eye', can be divided into four sections — his family, artists' portraits, street scenes and travels. The family series contains casual photographs of his family — his wife Rati and two sons Pablo and Robin — shot within the confines of their home. The deeply personal images let the viewers peep inside the simple household where money was clearly not in abundance but books were. Richard has captured his theatre-activist wife reading in almost every picture. Young Pablo and Robin having a bath, sleeping or sitting with their backs to each other, appear quite unconscious of the lens capturing them.

Artists' portraits

In Richard's natural portrayal of artists who ushered in the era of modernism in In-



MYRIAD MOODS Artist F.N. Souza at his apartment; theatre personality and Richard's wife Rati PHOTO COURTESY: THE ESTATE OF RICHARD BARTHOLOMEW

dian art is evident his close bonding with them. Husain's image has an element of humour, whereas Souza appears animated in his New York apartment. There is a pensive Ram Kumar with a figurative work behind him — markedly different from what he does now — in his studio in Gole

Market, Bhupen Khakar posing with a mike against the backdrop of his work, and an artists' adda at Gallery Chankya. "I have seen Jeram Patel work with blowtorch at home," says Pablo.

Richard was an integral part of modern Indian art. Born in Burma, he fled to In-

dia during World War II. He wrote on Indian and Tibetan art, authored poems, monographs on artist Krishna Reddy and Husain. From 1960-63, he was the gallery director of Kunika-Chemould, the first commercial gallery of Indian contemporary art. He also worked for Tibet House as its

curator and from 1977-85 served as the Secretary of the Lalit Kala Akademi.

Nostalgia

His images of long gone hand-pulled rickshaws in Mussoorie, a graffiti-covered tree branch in Jantar Mantar, street scenes and landscapes

of India and New York evoke nostalgia. "There is freshness to his images even now. His portrayal of artists is not a dull documentation, he has recorded their lives. His expression was undiluted because he had no agenda. He clicked for himself," says Pablo who has also brought out a book with

Photoink gallery on his father. He also plans to take the show to Mumbai. A compilation of his writings on art is also on the cards.

(The exhibition is on at Photoink gallery, 1 Jhandewalan, Faiz Road till Feb 28. For details call 2875-5940)