

Matèria

Sunil Gupta  
Emerge into Light  
30.10.2021 -  
15.01.2022

Matèria is pleased to announce the opening of Sunil Gupta's first gallery solo show in Italy titled Emerge into Light. Showcased in the exhibition - accompanied by a curatorial contribution and text by Mark Sealy - are two of Gupta's key works, Christopher Street (1976) and From Here to Eternity (1999 - 2020).

Over the course of a career spanning more than four decades, Sunil Gupta has maintained a visionary approach to photography, producing pioneering works in their social and political commentary, in which the autobiographical and public element deeply blend. The artist's diasporic experience, made up of multiple cultures, informs a practice on racial themes, migration and queer identity - his lived experience is a starting point for photographic projects, born from the desire to see himself and others like him represented in the history of art.

Christopher Street is the first series produced by Gupta as an artist. Following a move from Montreal to New York, Gupta documents an unraveling social and cultural revolution: the city had profoundly changed following the 1969 Stonewall riots which led to a turning point in the affirmation of gay identity, the streets of the West Village and the people who inhabited them were the symbol of a new openness and unprecedented acceptance.

The photographs in Christopher Street merge the public with the personal. Moreover, if on the one hand the series reflects the heady atmosphere of the era of the liberation of the gay community, on the other it represents the "coming out" of Gupta as an artist. Rather than a nostalgic time capsule, the photographs reveal a community that has shaped the artist, cementing his dedication to portraying those who have been denied a space to be themselves.

From Here to Eternity represents a subsequent and fundamental chapter in the artist's life and practice. The body work, originally produced in 1999, was subsequently expanded and encapsulated in the homonymous book published by Autograph in 2020, becoming - through a composition of the book spreads - the subject matter for the immersive and site specific wall installation presented in the gallery's most intimate and circumscribed space. The six diptychs originally produced for the series in 1999, as a response to a period of illness caused by HIV, are a representational tool for reflection on the effects of the virus on the artist's life. As Gupta recounts: From Here to Eternity is an interpretation of HIV and its effects on the Third World body, a map of my local context, London as a location that is a focal point of attitudes towards survivors and their treatments. It feels that the background of sexual politics and their erosion in the onslaught of 'in your face' commercial sexuality have left people living with HIV to deal with the larger ethical questions involved in complete isolation. The body of work, from its conception to the darkroom printing process, provides a lens through which to see a way out of the virus and an instrument for self-healing; becoming generative of a new sense of purpose and hope.

Emerge into Light represents a unique opportunity to engage with two fundamental works; both key to the understanding of the process and formation of personal identity in a time of crisis.

Sunil Gupta is a British/Canadian citizen, (b. New Delhi 1953) MA (Royal College of Art) PhD (University of Westminster) who has been involved with independent photography as a critical practice for many years focusing on race, migration and queer issues. In the 1980s, Gupta constructed documentary images of gay men in architectural spaces in Delhi, his "Exiles" series. The images and texts describe the conditions for gay men in India at the times. Gupta's recent series "Mr. Malhotra's Party" updates this theme during a time in which queer identities are more open and also reside in virtual space on the internet and in private parties. His early documentary series "Christopher Street" was shot in the mid-1970s as Gupta studied under Lisette Model at the New School for Social Research and became interested in the idea of gay public space.

Gupta's published work includes the monographs: *Queer: Sunil Gupta* (Prestel/Vadehra Art Gallery, 2011), *Wish You Were Here: Memories of a Gay Life* (Yoda Press, New Delhi, 2008), and *Pictures From Here* (Chris Boot Ltd., New York, 2003). He exhibited (with Charan Singh), "Dissent and Desire" (catalogue) is at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston 2018 which was accompanied by the book, *Delhi: Communities of Belonging*, The New Press, New York 2016. His latest publications were *Lovers: Ten Years On*, Stanley Barker 2020 and *Sunil Gupta: From Here to Eternity*, Autograph 2020 (which won the Kraszna-Krausz Photobook Award 2021), his forthcoming publication is *London 1982*, Stanley Barker 2021. His work has been seen in many important group shows including "Paris, Bombay, Delhi..." at the Pompidou Centre, Paris 2011 and "Masculinities" at Barbican, London and Gropius Bau, Berlin 2020. His retrospective takes place at The Photographers' Gallery, London (2020) and Ryerson Image Center, Toronto 2021. He is a Professorial Fellow at UCA, Farnham, and a Visiting Lecturer at Kingston University. He was Lead Curator for the Houston Fotofest 2018. His work is in many private and public collections including George Eastman House (Rochester, USA), Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Royal Ontario Museum, Tate, Harvard University and the Museum of Modern Art.

His work is represented by Hales Gallery (New York, London), Stephen Bulger Gallery (Toronto) and Vadehra Art Gallery (New Delhi).

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Based in the neighbourhood of San Lorenzo in Rome, Matèria opened its doors to the public in 2015. The gallery proposes an exhibition programme that touches upon all aspects of Contemporary Art, with a particular focus on the role and use of the photographic medium. Since its founding, Matèria's purpose has been the furthering and development of the work of its selected group of Artists.

The gallery programme features four exhibitions per calendar year, conceived and produced directly with its artists and often in dialogue with the space through a site specific approach. Matèria's gallery shows strive to further the research and experimentation aspects of artistic practice, with the results of this approach often showcased in a growing list of Italian and international art fairs.

Matèria represents the work of Fabio Barile, Giulia Marchi, Mario Cresci, Xiaoyi Chen, Giuseppe De Mattia, Karen Knorr, Marta Mancini and Stefano Canto.

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Opening  
30.10.2021, 11am - 7pm  
From 30.10.2021 to 15.01.2022  
Matèria | Via dei Latini, 27 - Roma  
materialogallery.com

Matèria

Hours  
From Tuesday to Saturday  
from 11 am to 7 pm

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