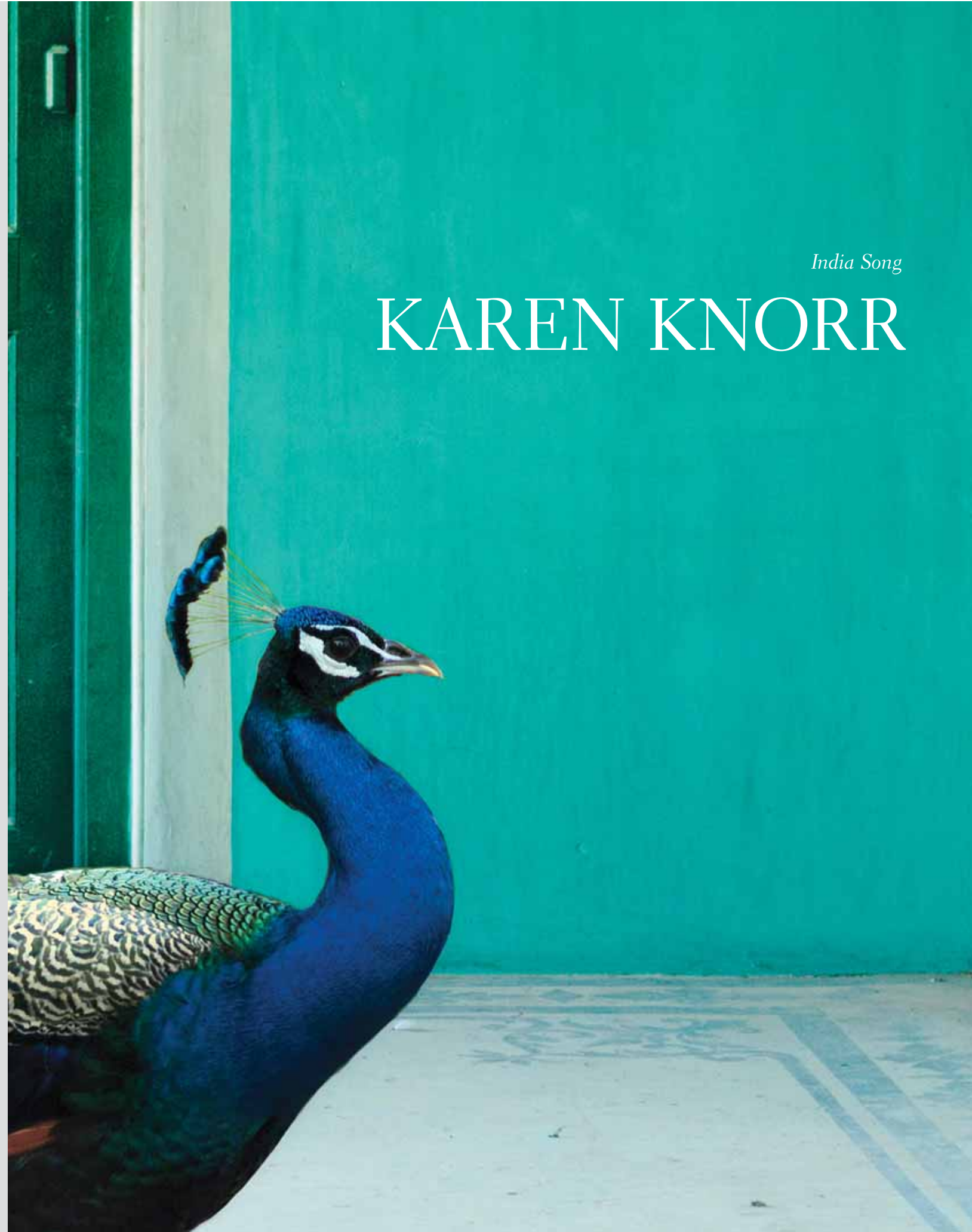


*India Song*

# KAREN KNORR



Karen Knorr

*India Song*

TASVEER

TASVEER



*India Song*

# KAREN KNORR

**SAFFRONART**

TASVEER



**VACHERON CONSTANTIN**

Manufacture Horlogère. Genève, depuis 1755.

Vacheron Constantin captures movement and the choreography of time with Tasveer.

In the world of time and precision, the craftsman's hand plays an essential role. Through gestures inherited from past centuries, it sets out to conquer matter, lingering over the smallest details, while finding the path to perfection armed with patience and concentration. Saluting this unwavering passion and skill of artists, Vacheron Constantin extends its ongoing support to the art of photography in India by partnering with Tasveer's eighth season of exhibitions across the country.

Vacheron Constantin celebrates uniting time, art and culture alongwith the values on which the company has been built since its founding in 1755: supporting creativity, openness to the world, sharing a passion, passing on knowledge and the search for excellence.

Photography arrived in India via the East India Trading Company in the late 1840s, which is the same time that Vacheron Constantin can trace its ties to the Indian market – selling its first watch in the country in 1849. Twenty years later, Jacques-Bathélemy Vacheron's grandson, John Roux, travelled to Mumbai for prospection. He returned to Geneva in 1872 with several orders in his briefcase. In the following years, many more fine watches were ordered by Maharajas and ruling elite. This was the golden age of travel, technical ingenuity and trade and therefore a time of great exchanges in the arts between Europe and the East. Indian clients were inspired by the precision and unmatched quality of Vacheron Constantin timepieces, and the enriched art and culture of India became an endless inspiration for the brand.

Each Vacheron Constantin timepiece houses a fragment of history – that of horology in particular, as well as more broadly that of art, culture and society. Photography and horology share a common ground through their relationship with time. The advanced technical precision of both the camera and the watch are the result of techniques and procedures that have been passed down from generations and honed and adapted along the way. The levels of perfection now achieved in both these art forms are symbols of human ingenuity, achievement and refinement. It is, however, only when placed in the hands of those whose vision transcends their craft, that the most remarkable art works are produced, be these photographs or timepieces.

# The Cultural Documentor

## Nirati Agarwal

Having studied Western fables as well as Hindu avatars, Karen Knorr is a purveyor of cultural history. *India Song* (begun 2008) is an ongoing body of work which reinterprets Rajasthan's haveli and royal art in contemporary ways, asking evocative questions about identity and guardianship. Knorr's encounter with Abhishek Poddar, one of the founding partners of Tasveer, further helped her in her research across Rajasthan, culminating in a series that has captured the world's attention.

When Poddar first heard about American photographer Karen Knorr from Anna Fox, a critically acclaimed British photographer and friend, he was bowled over. Appealing to his penchant for both traditional and contemporary forms of art, Knorr was one of the few photographers who truly succeeded in juxtaposing the past with the present, raising evocative questions about history, myth and power in the viewer's mind. Poddar found himself researching Knorr's background and soon met her to discuss a showing of her previous project, *Fables* (a series of photographs taken in European heritage sites, which references epic tales of Ovid and La Fontaine against lighter, contemporary stories of Disney, using animals as principal characters in the frame), in India at Tasveer. In the various discussions that followed, the idea of another significant work emerged, and thus, *India Song* was born — a series that would prove groundbreaking for Rajasthani architectural history, socio-politics and feminine studies.

In 2008, Knorr travelled to India, where she visited a total of sixteen sites across Rajasthan, including Samode, Ramgarh, Nawalgarh, Mandawa, Phalodi, Udaipur and Jodhpur. She was fascinated by the art and the architectural history of the desert state and the change (in terms of women's rights and the

cultural modernity that led to the dilapidation of ancient structures) that globalisation brought with it. 'I discovered a complex and syncretic culture', she says. 'I saw that India was changing rapidly'. Apart from appreciating and learning about Rajasthan's rich culture, Knorr's purpose was to find architectural sites that represented the inherent hybridity of India.

Having read India's foundation epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, as well as reading the experiences of international authors including William Dalrymple in books such as 'White Mughals' and 'Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India', she was also influenced by her early readings of Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children' and Gabriel García Márquez's 'A Hundred Years of Solitude'.

Knorr wanted to portray visually, what these authors did in text — a culture in transition. Knorr's earlier works had been staged in places that represent cultural pinnacles — museums, palaces and royal houses; and as she travelled, she found Rajasthan's heritage sites — havelis, forts and palaces — similarly inspirational.

With Poddar's help, she was introduced to modern-day maharajas and princes, and sought permission to shoot at their ancestral houses, but that wasn't all. As a student of feminist studies and the politics of representation, she wanted to do more. By juxtaposing animals in these royal sites of beauty, she aims to highlight a dissonance, pitching the splendour of the past against the environmental and social decay of the present.

An understanding of Knorr's background and her previous work puts her visual quest into greater context. Having worked with the camera since the early 1970s, Knorr is an American born in Germany, brought up in Puerto Rico and educated in Paris and London. Armed

with this multicultural background, she is currently the professor of Photography at the University for the Creative Arts at Farnham, Surrey, and has travelled to institutions including Harvard, The Art Institute of Chicago and Goldsmiths, lecturing on and sharing her passion for photography. Heavily influenced by, and having participated in, the cultural movement that explored the politics of representation (how the ones in power define cultural representation, what they portray and how they portray it) in the West during the 1970s, she has found her calling in producing work in the documentary style of photography, simultaneously exploring issues concerning family, feminism and social constructs.

‘My educational background has made me consider photography as a way of inquiry. Having studied the history of art in the West, I have an acute awareness of the exclusions that distorted art culture to privilege Italian and Greek canons, with Renaissance and Hellenic eras as the high points’, she explains. These exclusions are primary to what Knorr aims to represent. What is even more exciting is that for her photography is a ‘visual methodology’ that she uses to personally understand the world around her. There is no one answer then that Knorr’s work aims to force her audience to accept; and unlike other Westerners who explore Eastern culture, Knorr avoids both condescension and obeisance.

In the past, Knorr has worked with film, video, installations and both colour and black and white photography with text captions and even audio aids that have represented subjects such as British classism in the Thatcher era, men with patriarchal values in English gentlemen’s clubs, the relationship between art and science, the epistemology of critical studies of art and more. ‘All my work considers fine art culture and its relationship to power. There are negative and positive effects to the way power intertwines and uses art’, she says. In a similar context, using royal Rajasthani spaces that celebrate architectural artisanry,

Knorr’s India Song challenges authority by inserting magnificent birds and mammals within these spaces. The viewer, however, can see Knorr’s spirit of reverence for the exquisite designs of these royal rooms, and this is part of the allure of her work. ‘Taking care of cultural history and its manifestations in poetry, music, art and architecture helps us define our identity as part of a community, which is increasingly important in a materialistic and consumerist world’, she explains.

Knorr’s previous work encouraged her to extend the methodology developed in her European work to India. India Song, then, is a series that tips its hat to Rajasthani and Mughal art, while questioning feminine subjectivity and animality. ‘The birds and mammals inserted in the photographs link the Ramayana culture of Northern India to allegorical representatives of femininity and masculinity, which aim to disturb the spectators’ expectations’, explains Knorr. Both women and animals, she tells us, as seen in Christian heritage, have been considered subalterns, to be owned and abused by power. ‘This is not so different from the way Hindu and Muslim castes in India treat women and tribals’, she adds. A political commentary as well as a contemporary documentary, the series also presents the fragility of these architectural sites, linking them to the fragility of animal life.

While there are similarities, there are also contradictions that Knorr’s work captures. The presence of both Bollywood and the Vedas in contemporary India and the fluidity of past and present fascinate her. Another example of this interweaving is women’s roles: ‘More women are being educated and even forming their own businesses; yet, the pull of traditional values may be difficult to negotiate’, says Knorr. The name of her photographic series is taken from Marguerite Duras’ identically titled movie, which released in 1975. ‘Her film highlighted a subjective, feminine voice considering the end of British colonial presence in Kolkata, just as I am attempting to develop a new poetics considering the presence of the feminine and animal

life in Indian heritage’, she says. Her photographs also highlight the bright colours of Rajasthani architectural design, and this too, was a conscious decision by the photographer, who had studied the intensity of colour in miniature painting produced during the Mughal and Rajput era and saw them reflected in the bright saris worn even today in Rajasthan.

An artist’s work, according to theories of metafiction and representation, first reflects the artist and then the subject. Both Knorr’s scientific, analytical bent of mind and her more romantic persuasions are apparent in her work. ‘I see my photographs as developing a new documentary poetics that can make an appeal about particular social issues affecting India using aesthetics’, she says, on one hand. And on the other: ‘When there are good rains, the Thar desert blooms!’ See the precision of light and angle in her photographs, the fine lines of the tiger, for example, in ‘The Peacemaker, Chandra Mahal, Jaipur City Palace’ (*p.* 51), and the romanticism of the photograph on the whole, and this alluring dichotomy is apparent.

To make this body of work Knorr used a large format Sinar camera, choosing it for its high technical resolution and detail, and then used separately taken photographs of animals at high shutter speeds (to freeze their movements), inserting them into the interiors using Photoshop, spending months at a time to get a single image right.

It often takes an outsider like Knorr, who, armed with a different perspective, can reveal aspects of our own culture, in this case Rajasthani havelis, in a new light. Poddar concurs when he says, ‘Knorr makes us re-look at the splendours that are all around us, but reinvigorates these scenes with playful devices such as the inclusion of animals within the human sphere — a juxtaposition we ourselves would perhaps not have dreamt of, or dared to realise’. It is no surprise then, that Knorr has been awarded the Pilar Citoler Prize, one of the most prestigious photography awards in the world,

for India Song, and has also been longlisted for the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize. ‘She continues to be eagerly collected by museums, royals and private individuals, but I think her latest work holds an even more special place in the hearts of people like me — those from Rajasthan’, says Poddar. Knorr’s interest in the guardianship of North Indian sites of architecture is praiseworthy indeed, providing exciting new avenues of study, bringing culture into perspective alongside art.

2008 - 2013

# India Song



*The Queen's Room, Zanana, Udaipur City Palace, Udaipur*

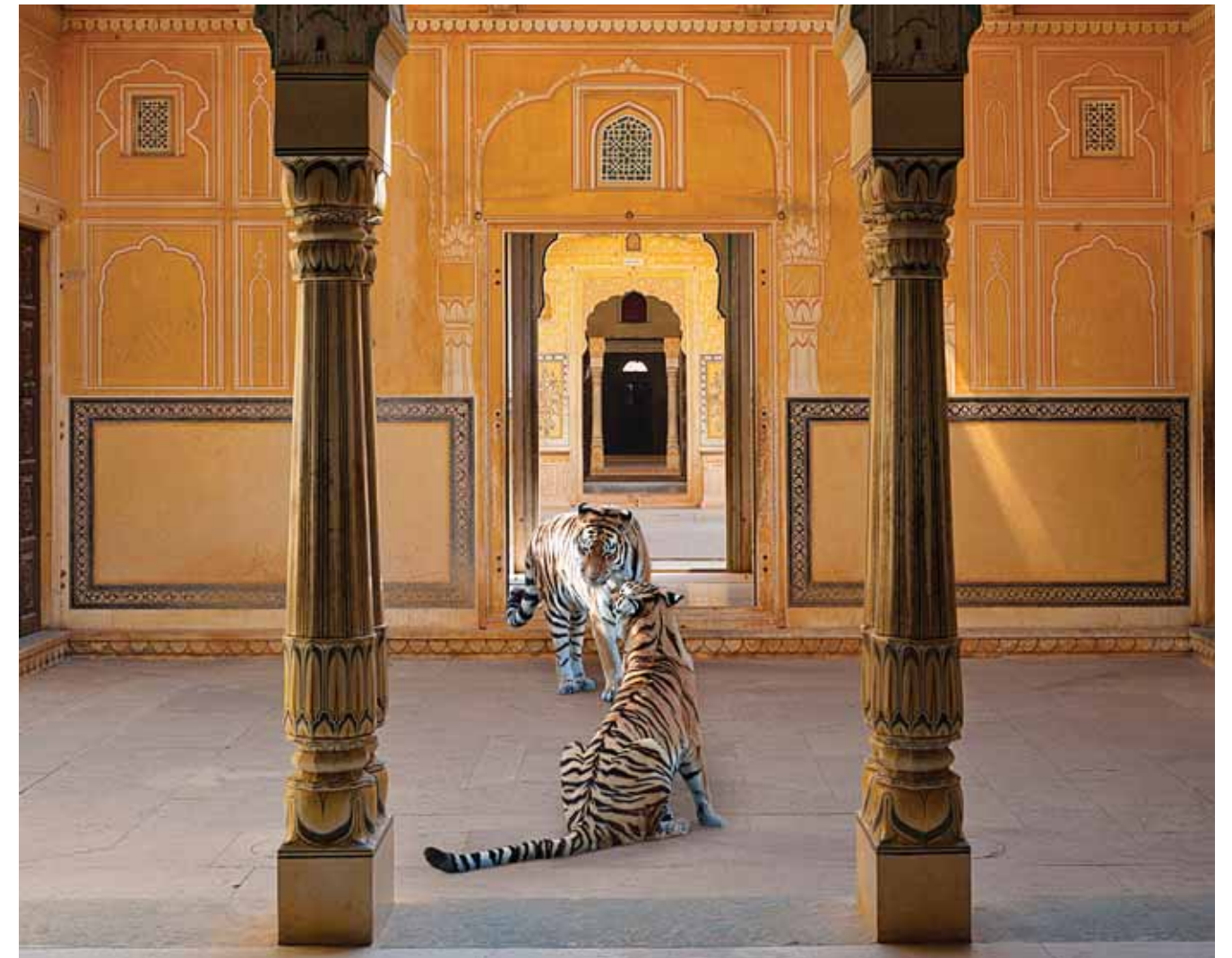




*The Lifting of Purdah, Moti Mahal, Mehrangarh Fort, Jodhpur*



*The Exodus, Paradesi Synagogue, Kochi*



*The Arrow of Kama, Nahargarh Fort, Jaipur*



*The Survivors, Sheesh Mahal, Deogarh Palace, Deogarh*



*The Private Audience, Aam Khas, Junha Mahal, Dungarpur Palace, Dungarpur*



*The Lovesick Prince, Aam Khas, Junha Mahal, Dungarpur Palace, Dungarpur*



*Flight to Freedom, Durbar Hall, Junha Mahal, Dungarpur Palace, Dungarpur*



*A Place Like Amravati, Udaipur City Palace (Nilgai), Udaipur*

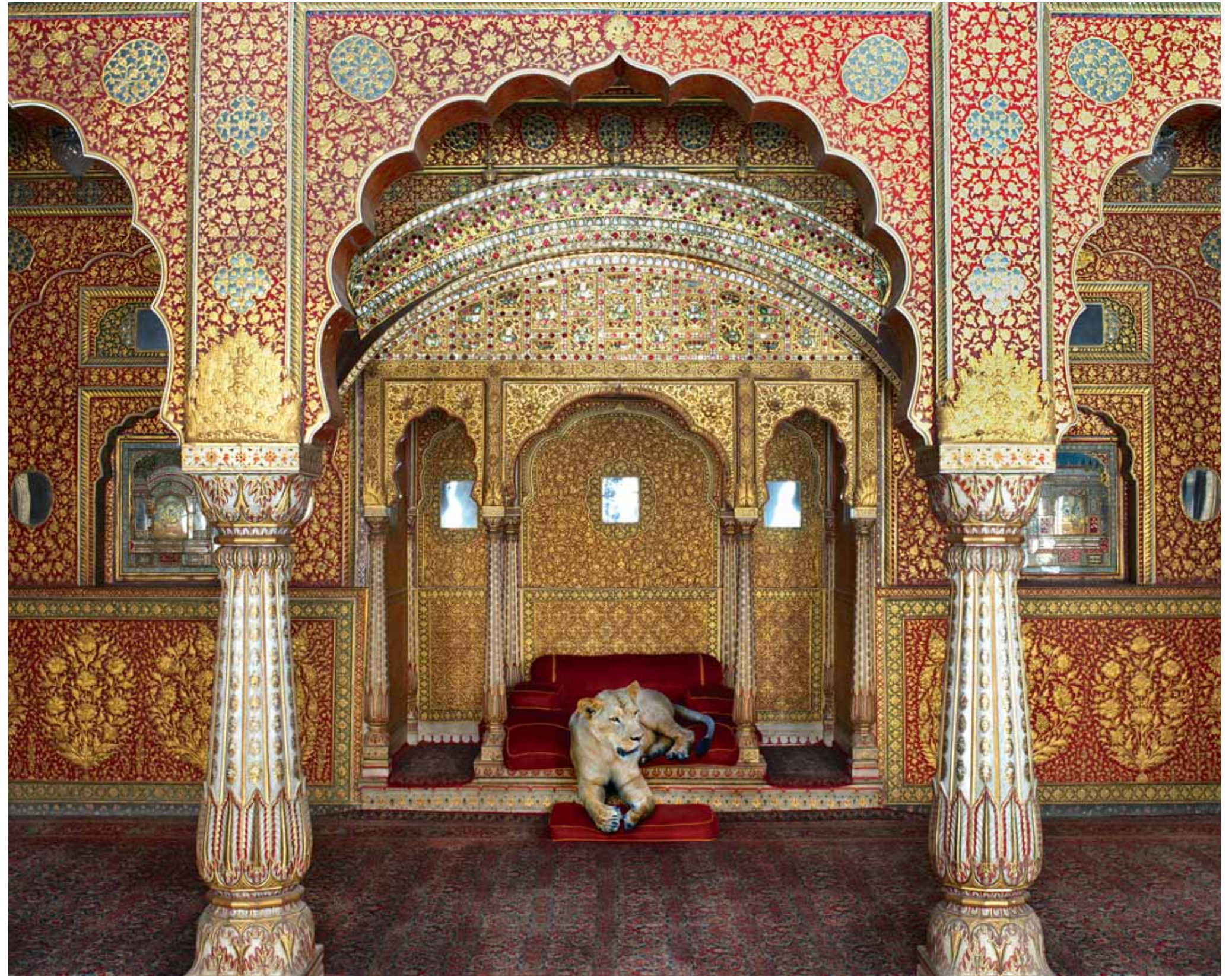


*A Place Like Amravati, Udaipur City Palace (Sarus Crane), Udaipur*





*The Last Lion, Diwan-i-Khas, Jaipur City Palace, Jaipur*



*Waiting for Atman, Junagarh Fort, Bikaner*



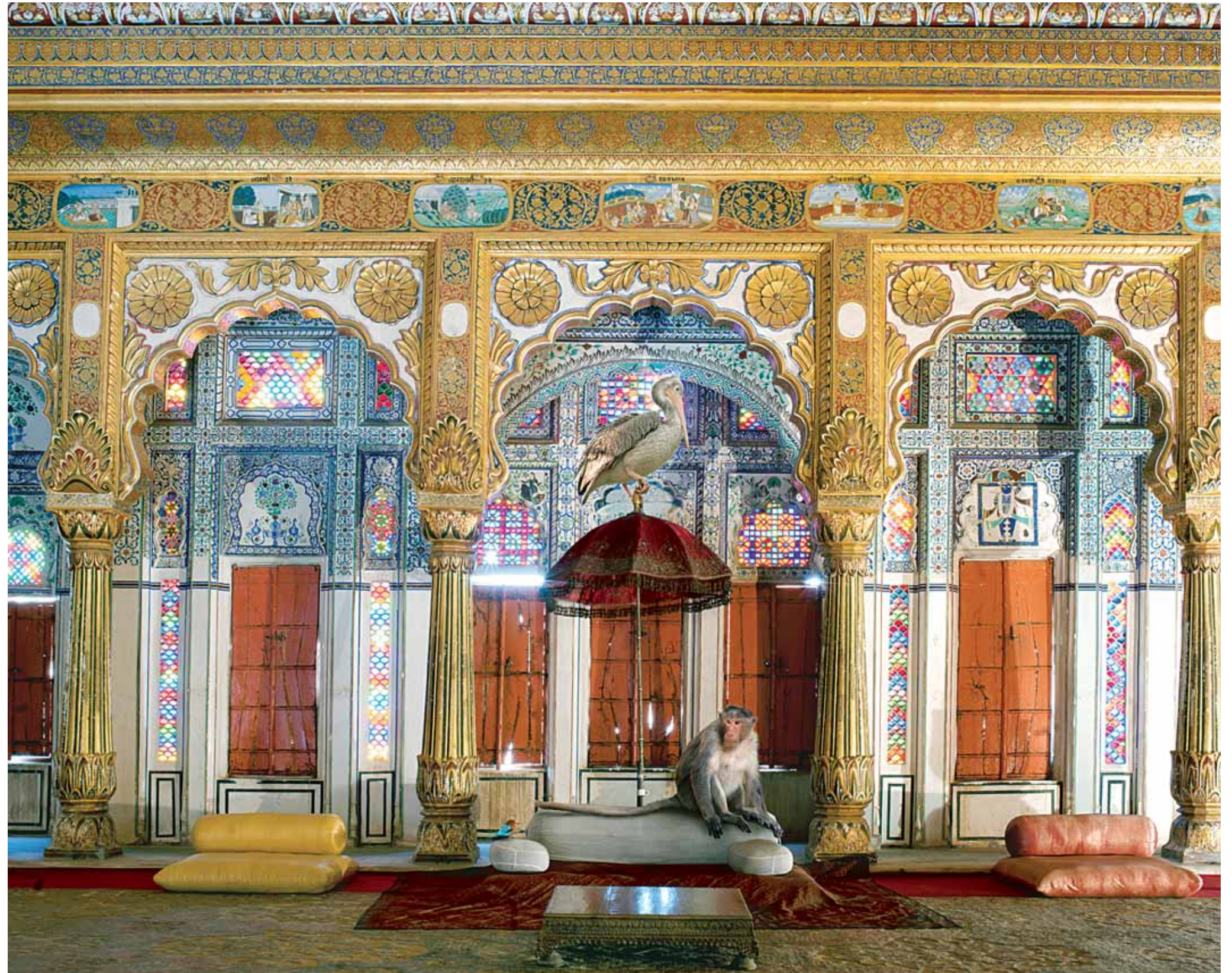
*The Sound of Rain, The Cloud Room, Junagarh Fort, Bikaner*



*The Joy of Ahimsa, Takhat Vilas, Mehrangarh Fort Palace, Jodhpur*



*The Rout of the Rathore, Moti Mahal, Jaisalmer Fort*





*The Inheritor, Moti Mahal, Mehrangarh Fort, Jodhpur*



*Solitude of the Soul, Udaipur City Palace, Udaipur*





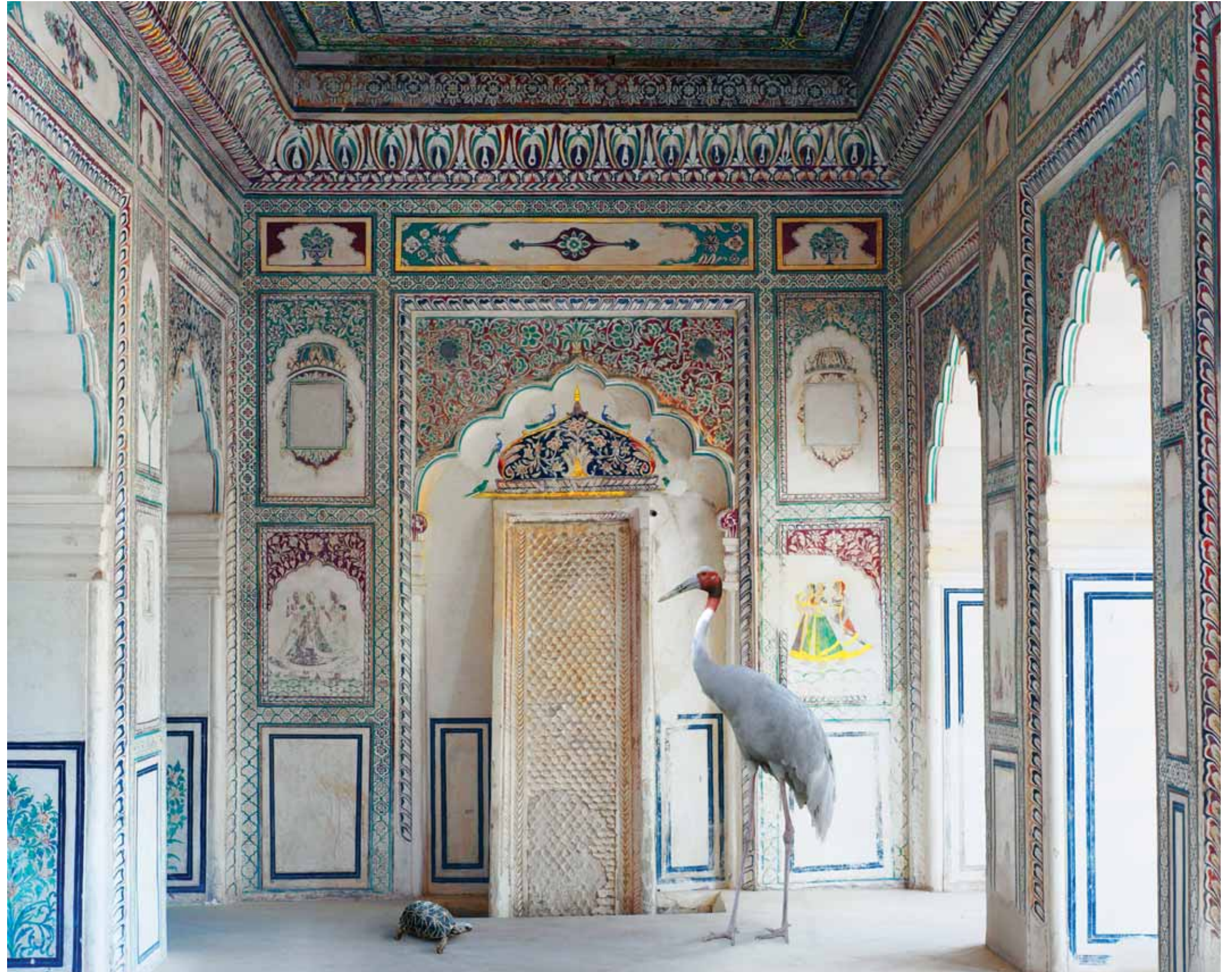
*The End of the Hunt, Bara Mahal, Udaipur*



*Durga's Mount, Zanana, Junha Mahal, Dungarpur*



*Maharani's Attendant, Queens Palace, Thanjavur Palace, Tanjore*



*Amrita's Message, Nagaur Fort, Nagaur*



*Sita's Wish, Zanana, Junha Mahal, Dungarpur*



*The Return of the Hunter, Sheesh Mahal, Jaipur City Palace, Jaipur*



*Sikanders Entrance, Chandra Mahal, Jaipur City Palace, Jaipur*



*The Peacemaker, Chandra Mahal, Jaipur City Palace, Jaipur*





*The Witness, Humayun's Tomb, New Delhi*



*Attaining Moksha, Ajanta Caves, Ajanta*



*Palaiyakkaras, Hazararama Temple, Hampi*





*Shelter of the World, Jama Masjid Mosque, Fatehpur Sikri*



*Bhakti, Path of Sants, Shiva Temple, Hampi*

## KAREN KNORR

Karen Knorr was born in Frankfurt am Main, Germany in 1954. She was raised in San Juan, Puerto Rico in the 1960s and then studied photography and film at the University of Westminster in the mid 1970s. In addition to her photographic practice, Knorr has lectured internationally at institutions including The University of Westminster, Goldsmiths College, Harvard University and The Art Institute of Chicago. She is currently Professor of Photography at the University for the Creative Arts in Farnham, Surrey.

Knorr has lived in England since the 1970s and her early career was spent looking at the British class system and other cultural traditions in Europe. Her exploration of political, economic, and gendered representation developed through a number of major series including Belgravia, Connoisseurs, Academies and Fables. Her most recent work, India Song, is a further investigation into these ideas, albeit in a new cultural context.

In 2012, India Song was nominated for the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize, Europe's most prestigious award 'for a living photographer who has made the most significant contribution to the medium of photography over the past year'. In 2011, Knorr won the Pilar Citoler International Photography Prize for her work 'Flight to Freedom', also from the India Song series.

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED)

2013

India Song, Tasveer Arts, Art Dubai, Dubai  
A Contemporary Bestiary, Musee d'Oise, Beauvais, France

2012

Sala Puerta Nueva, University of Cordoba, Cordoba, Spain  
Adamson Gallery, Washington DC, USA

2011

Transmigrations, Tasveer, NID, Ahmedabad  
Transmigrations, Tasveer, Art Motif, Delhi  
Transmigrations, Tasveer, Seagull Foundation for the Arts, Kolkata  
Transmigrations, Tasveer, Hermes, Mumbai  
Transmigrations, Filles du Calvaire, Paris  
India Song, James Danziger, New York

2010

Musée Carnavalet, Paris, France  
Maison de la Photographie de Toulon

2009

Musee Municipale d'Art Roche sur Yon

2008

Fables, Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, Paris  
Fables, Centrale Electrique, Brussels  
Fables, Chateau D'Eau, Toulouse, France

2007

Les Peintres de la vie moderne, Donation - Collection photographique de la Caisse des Dépôts, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France

2006

Castello Migli Photobiennale, Brescia, Italy

2005

Fables, Photo & Co, Turin

2004

Menagerie, Centre d'Art Quevilly, France  
Histoires Naturelles, Musée de la Crèche, Chaumont, France  
Menagerie, Galerie Blancpain Stepczynski, Geneva

2003

Genii Loci, Les Filles du Calvaire, Brussels  
Les Filles du Calvaire, Paris

2002

Sanctuary, Miart, Milano  
The Venerly, Cheverny Castle, Cheverny, France

2001

Spirits, Palazzo Tafini, Savigliano, Italy  
Art Lovers, Geukens De Vil, Knokke Zoute, Belgium  
Sanctuary, The Wallace Collection, London  
Interim Art, London

## COLLECTIVE EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED)

2013

Tasveer Gallery, India Art Fair, Delhi  
Filles du Calvaire Gallery, Art Geneve 2013  
Seduced by Art, National Gallery, London  
Ladies at Focus Mumbai International Photography Festival, Mumbai  
James Danziger Gallery, Aipad, New York  
A Contemporary Bestiary, Departmental Museum of the Oise, Beauvais  
Paris Photo LA, Danziger Gallery, Los Angeles

2012

Tout s'écoule, Rien ne Reste Tel. L'Espal, Le Mans, France  
Hors Pistes  
Un Autre Mouvement des Images, Georges Pompidou Museum, Paris  
Betes Off, La Conciergerie, Paris  
James Danziger Gallery, Aipad, March New York, USA  
Capital, George and Jorgen, London, UK  
Another London: 1930 - 1980, Tate Britain, London  
The World in London portrait commission, Photographer's Gallery  
37 Indian Still Lives, Tasveer Arts, Bangalore, India

2011

Pilar Citoler International Photography Prize Exhibition, Cordoba, Spain  
The Birds and the Bees, Oakville Galleries, Gairloch Gardens, Ontario  
Chobi Mela VI International Photography Festival, Dhaka Bangladesh  
AIPAD New York, Eric Frank Gallery and James Hyman Gallery  
Brussels Art Fair, Filles Du Calvaire, Brussels, Belgium  
Paris Photo, Filles du Calvaire, James Danziger, Eric Franck  
Betes Off, La Conciergerie, Paris  
Miami Pulse James Danziger

2010

London Art Fair, James Hyman Gallery  
Exhibitionism, Courtauld Institute, London  
Photographs, Daniel Azoulay Gallery, Miami  
Elles, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France  
Brussels Art Fair, James Hyman Gallery and Photo And Co., Brussels  
70s Photography and the Everyday, CAAC, Seville, Spain  
IACDA Digital Print Award Exhibition, Los Angeles, California  
Masterpiece, Eric Franck, Chelsea Barracks, London

2009

Opera, Art Projx at Loop Festival, Video Art, Barcelona, Spain  
Fatal Attraction: Diana and Acteon, Forbidden Gaze, Compton Verney  
Elles, centrepompidou, Pompidou Centre, Paris  
1970s Photography and the Everyday, Photo Espana, Madrid Spain  
Visions in the Nunnery, Bow Arts Trust, London  
Artsep, Auction Christies, Paris  
Parrworld, Jeu de Paume, Paris

2008

Filles du Calvaire, Art Brussels, Brussels  
Real Photography Award Exhibit. LP2 Art Centre, Rotterdam  
Opera, Artprojx, Tate Britain, Prince Charles Cinema, London  
Furstliches Halali, Burg, Forchtenstein, Austria  
Fables, Art Futures, Bloomberg Space, London  
Parrworld, Haus der Kunst, Munich  
Continuum, Collection Frac Basse – Normande, Saint Lo, France  
Art Futures, London  
Parcours Saint Germain, Paris  
Diana and Acteon, The Forbidden Glimpse of the Naked Body, Kunst  
Palast, Dusseldorf  
Centerfold, Zoo Art Fair, London  
Paris Photo, Urbanites, Galerie Filles du Calvaire, Paris  
Nature Fragile, Le Cabinet Deyrolle

Christies at Musee de la Chasse et de la Nature, Paris  
The Parking Lot, Eric Franck, London

2007

Eric Franck, London Photo, London  
Generations, Filles du Calvaire, Brussels  
Painters of Modern Life, Centre Pompidou, Paris  
Karen Knorr, Fables, Art Futures, The Bloomberg Space, London  
Sotheby's Contemporary Art Exhibit, Olympia, London  
Generations, Filles du Calvaire, Brussels  
Portraits-Souvenirs, Collection Neuflyze Vie, Salon du Collectionneur,  
Grand Palais, Paris  
Bloody Beautiful, Romandos Gallery, Rotterdam Netherlands  
Filles du Calvaire, Eric Franck and Photo & Co, France  
Brussels Artfair, Brussels

2006

Tiefenschärfe (Depth of Field), Kunsthalle Baden Baden, Germany  
If it didn't exist you would have to invent it . . . a partial history of the  
Showroom, The Showroom, London  
Zoo, Centrale Electrique, Brussels, Belgium  
Brescia International Photobiennale, Brescia, Italy  
The Painters of Modern Life, Centre Pompidou, Paris  
Plug, White Space, County Hall, London  
Filles du Calvaire and Photo & Co, Paris Photo, Paris  
Painters of Modern Life, Centre Georges Pompidou, France  
Artexis, Brussels Art Fair, Filles du Calvaire, Belgium  
Paris Photo, Filles du Calvaire, Paris  
Other Rooms, Other Voices, Art from the FRAC, Museum of Israel

## COLLECTIONS

The Arts Council of Great Britain  
The Government Art Collection of England  
Bradford National Museum of Film and Photography  
British Council Collection  
Centre Georges Pompidou  
Cabinet des Estampes, Geneva  
The Chase Manhattan Bank, London  
The Cartier Foundation, Paris  
Folkwang Museum, Essen  
FNAC, France  
FRAC Aquitaine, France  
FRAC Bretagne, France  
FRAC Lorraine, France  
FRAC Rhone et Alpes  
FRAC Haute Normandie  
FRAC Basse Normandie  
Heiting Collection, Germany  
L'Hoiste Collection, Belgium  
Hokin Collection, Chicago  
Moderna Museet, Stockholm  
Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris  
Musee de la Chasse et de la Nature, Paris  
National Museum of Modern Art, Kyo, Japan

Norton Collection, Los Angeles  
NSMD Bank Collection, Paris  
Palomon Collection, London  
The State of Geneva Collection, Switzerland  
San Francisco Museum of Art  
The Tate Collection, London  
Texaco Corporation, London  
Towner Art Gallery Collection  
Uppsala Museum of Modern Art  
The Victoria & Albert Museum, London  
Vigo Council Art Collection, Spain  
Warburg Bank, London  
Winnipeg Art Gallery, Canada

## MONOGRAPHS

El Ojo Que Ves, La Fabrica, University of Cordoba, Spain 2012  
Transmigrations, Tasveer Gallery, Bangalore, India 2010  
Fables, Filigranes publishers, Paris 2008  
Genii Loci, Black Dog Publishing, London 2002  
Karen Knorr par Antonio Guzman Frac Basse Normandie, France 2001  
Signes de Distinction, Thames and Hudson, France, 1991  
Marks of Distinction, Thames and Hudson, England 1991



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**Audi Delhi Central**

# TASVEER

Tasveer is an organisation committed to the art of photography and photography as art. Dedicated to promoting and showcasing contemporary photography, Tasveer has created a network of galleries between Bangalore, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Ahmedabad.

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Kolkata 700 025

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Kala Ghoda Next to MC Ghia Hall  
Mumbai 400 023

## AHMEDABAD

National Institute of Design  
Paldi  
Ahmedabad 380 007

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Vacheron Constantin works in partnership with Tasveer to promote the art of photography in India.



