VISUAL AND MEDIA HISTORIES

ROUTLEDGE

Documenting Industry

Photography, Aesthetics and Labor in India

Edited by Ranu Roychoudhuri and Rebecca M. Brown

SERIES EDITOR:
MONICA JUNEJA

An original and expertly edited contribution to the literature on photography in postcolonial India. Labour and aesthetics emerge as highly productive lenses and help us understand a wide spectrum of genres and practices more precisely. There is much to learn here about human and machinic labour, about new and old ways of seeing, and about the camera as both a revolutionary technology bringing new modes of perception and as a prosthetic extension of an enduring human body.

—Christopher Pinney, *author of Camera Indica and The Coming of Photography in India*

Most photo studies tend to follow an area studies model, especially western photo studies that don't usually identify as such. This book joins recent scholarship that aims to bring the local and the global into the same frame of analysis, but offers its own unique take through the lens of industrial photography. Exploring a surprising array of subjects, time periods, disciplines and methodologies, this collection of essays shows how ideas about photography, industry, documentary, and modernist aesthetics evolved in relation to each other in the postcolonial space of India. And despite the mechanized angular images that tend to dominate the industrial photo imaginary, this volume shows how the human figure, in its form as a labouring body or otherwise, has never been very distant. It is a welcome addition that foregrounds new ways to tell the story of photography.

—Deepali Dewan, *Dan Mishra Curator of South Asian Art & Culture at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada*

Extraordinary in its breadth, this volume stages riveting conversations between art historians and historians, between industry and photography and between bodies and machines in postcolonial India. It breathes fresh life into the very field of visual culture and its interdisciplinarity.

—Parul Dave Mukherji, *Professor in the School of Arts and Aesthetics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India*

Driven by the provocative argument that the era of industrial development in newly independent India had photography as its constitutive core, this volume of essays turns its critical lens sharply on the politics and aesthetics of industrial photography. It breaks new ground in positioning this genre of documentary photography, on the one hand, within a postcolonial conjuncture of national and global image-flows, and, on the other hand, within a contentious intersection of iconographies, where monumental visages of machines and industries vie for attention with sweat and toil of labouring bodies. The eclectic themes of the essays collected here throw open photography's many lives in this field as modernist art, ethnographic record, social activism and anti-developmental critique.

—Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Honorary Professor of History, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, India*

Documenting Industry

Whether a smoky portrait of a coal mine or a sweeping shot of workers building an immense dam, photographs of established and emerging industries fundamentally shaped the visual culture and politics of South Asia in the decades after independence. This volume engages with the image of the laboring body against monumental machines, dams, and infrastructure and the ways in which photography engages with strands of modernist aesthetics to support new modes of seeing the changing industrial landscape and the human body.

The multidisciplinary essays in the book embrace the porosity of "documentary" and "journalistic" photography and draw out questions of aesthetics in relation to both modernizing calls to industry and modernist framings of the visual in India. The book looks back at photographs from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and critically considers post-World War II industry—with its imagery of factories belching pollutants into the air and the reality of massive displacements of workers due to epidemics, floods, and drought. It analyzes these images in relation to contemporaneous understandings of aesthetics and in dialogue with recent understandings of the global climate crisis. The volume probes the co-constitution of industry and photography in postcolonial India by looking at selected sites of industrial and artistic practices and their interwoven histories.

Part of the Visual Media and Histories Series, this book will be of interest to students and researchers of the history of photography, visual media studies, Indian history, art history, cultural studies, and South Asian studies.

Ranu Roychoudhuri is Associate Professor in the Performing and Visual Arts division in the School of Arts and Sciences at Ahmedabad University. She works on modern and contemporary art in South Asia with an emphasis on photography, intellectual histories of art, and art historiography. She has published in peer-reviewed journals, edited volumes, and art magazines, curated shows for private and public institutions, and taught in the US and Indian higher education institutions.

Rebecca M. Brown is Professor of the History of Art at Johns Hopkins University. Her research engages in the history of art, architecture, and visual culture of South Asia and its diasporas from the late eighteenth century to the present. Her publications focus on the British colonial era, India's anti-colonial movement, art after India's independence, the politics of display in the long 1980s, K. C. S. Paniker's language of painting, and the work of Dayanita Singh, Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, and Rina Banerjee.

Visual and Media Histories
Series Editor: Monica Juneja, Heidelberg University

This Series takes as its starting point notions of the visual, and of vision, as central in producing meanings, maintaining aesthetic values and relations of power. Through individual studies, it hopes to chart the trajectories of the visual as an activating principle of history. An important premise here is the conviction that the making, theorising and historicising of images do not exist in exclusive distinction of one another. Opening up the field of vision as an arena in which meanings get constituted simultaneously anchors vision to other media such as audio, spatial and the dynamics of spectatorship. It calls for closer attention to inter-textual and inter-pictorial relationships through which ever-accruing layers of readings and responses are brought alive.

Through its regional focus on South Asia the Series locates itself within a prolific field of writing on non-Western cultures which have opened the way to pluralise iconographies, and to perceive temporalities as scrambled and palimpsestic. These studies, it is hoped, will continue to reframe debates and conceptual categories in visual histories. The importance attached here to investigating the historical dimensions of visual practice implies close attention to specific local contexts which intersect and negotiate with the global, and can re-constitute it. Examining the ways in which different media are to be read onto and through one another would extend the thematic range of the subjects to be addressed by the Series to include those which cross the boundaries that once separated the privileged subjects of art historical scholarship — sculpture, painting and monumental architecture — from other media: studies of film, photography and prints on the one hand, advertising, television, posters, calendars, comics, buildings, and cityscapes on the other.

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Documenting Industry
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Contributors

Rebecca M. Brown is Professor of the History of Art at Johns Hopkins University. Her research engages in the history of art, architecture, and visual culture of South Asia and its diasporas from the late eighteenth century to the present. Her publications focus on the British colonial era, India's anti-colonial movement, art after India's independence, the politics of display in the long 1980s, K. C. S. Paniker's language of painting, and the work of Dayanita Singh, Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, and Rina Banerjee.

Atreyee Gupta is Associate Professor of Global Modern Art in the History of Art Department at the University of California, Berkeley. Her books include *Postwar—Towards a Global Art History, 1945–1965* (co-edited with Okwui Enwezor, Duke University Press, 2024) and *Non-Aligned: Decolonization, Modernism, and the Third World Project in India, ca. 1930–1960* (under review, Yale University Press).

Stuart W. Leslie is Emeritus Professor in the Department of History of Science and Technology at Johns Hopkins University. His research has primarily focused on the global Cold War. Recent publications include studies of nuclear power and nuclear weapons in India and Pakistan, histories of new technical universities in India, Iran, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and the infrastructure of surveillance in Canada and Australia.

Suryanandini Narain is Assistant Professor of Visual Studies at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She has written on photography in India, and has co-edited a book on family photographs titled *Framing Portraits, Binding Albums: Family Photographs in India* (Zubaan Books, forthcoming). She teaches courses on Indian visual culture, photography, aesthetic theory, and critical writing.

Sophia Powers earned her PhD from UCLA focusing on Indian contemporary art and photography. Subsequently, she spent three years as the Marti Friedlander Lecturer in Photographic Practice and History at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, before moving back to the USA to be closer to her family. She currently teaches at East Jersey State prison and works as an independent scholar and art critic in New York City.

Mircea Raianu is Associate Professor of History at the University of Maryland, with primary research interests in modern South Asia and global capitalism. He is the author of *Tata: The Global Corporation that Built Indian Capitalism* (Harvard University Press, 2021), and several articles in journals such as *South Asia* and *Comparative Studies in Society and History*.

Ranu Roychoudhuri is Associate Professor in the Performing and Visual Arts division in the School of Arts and Sciences at Ahmedabad University. She works on modern and contemporary art in South Asia with an emphasis on photography, intellectual histories of art, and art historiography. She has published in peer-reviewed journals, edited volumes, and art magazines, curated shows for private and public institutions, and taught in the US and Indian higher education institutions.

Emilia Terracciano is Lecturer in Art History and Visual Studies at the University of Manchester. She is the author of *Art and Emergency: Modernism in Twentieth-Century India* (I.B. Tauris, 2018). In 2022 she edited the commissioned monograph *Nasreen Mohamedi* for Glenbarra Art Museum, Himeji. She is currently writing a book about artist Simryn Gill.

Series Editor's Preface

Documenting Industry, the pithy title of this inspiring collection of essays, sums up its ambitious agenda: to recuperate the fluid meanings embedded in the terms "document" and "industry," to then use them as a lens to study photography in relation to labor and machinery on the one hand, and to questions of art and aesthetics on the other. The contributions to this volume thus explore a complex set of intersecting issues that have long remained marginal to accounts of photography as well as to art historical narratives of South Asia. While the etymology of the English word "document" can be traced to the Latin *docere*, to teach, its usage has evolved in the modern sense of evidence or proof of truth. In their deconstruction of this category when applied to photography, the editors and authors of this book persuasively argue against the truth claims of a photograph-as-document. By eschewing the issue of authenticity frequently attributed to the medium, the investigations we encounter here signal to the act of documenting in its earlier sense; this allows them to unlock the term's potential to furnish an example or a lesson that can teach by remaining open to debate, interpretation, or alternative visions. As they frame their objects, the photographs studied here also create frameworks, which make these works a mode of producing knowledge that surpasses the representation of a specific object or event. Documenting then becomes a mapping of routes a photograph may travel, the connections it may enable to other photographs, or an engagement with the fresh claims it may generate. Industry, likewise, embraces multiple connotations, though often subsumed within a narrative of modernity that spells progress defined by technological advances. As a result, the concept is easily harnessed to ideologies of nation building, to the promise of autonomy and plenitude. The term, however, as the essays here show, can be productively disaggregated to highlight labor—manual as well as mechanical—or place—factory, workshop, plantation—and, importantly, to examine the relationships that unfold between the body, the machine, and the site of work. Connecting the terms "document" and "industry," the photograph, itself a product of one such relationship between human work, a technological apparatus, and a site, emerges as central to a narrative of development that depended on "the aesthetic for its accouchement."[1]

Photography today, it would seem, inhabits a terrain shaken by the disappearance of traditional models. Having exploded into a dynamic online environment that feeds on shared information, photographs continue to evolve after publication to operate more as a conversational tool for many thousand followers on social media. The uncertain provenance of most of the images we consume, together with the concern about manipulation and falsification, or the circumstance that scores of images are increasingly divorced from their contexts and thrown into unexpected environments, have all forced an even more radical reconsideration of the photograph as "evidence." Yet, in both the past and present, the purpose of the photograph was to narrate, to tell a story that made a claim. Both then and now, one key question has been to find a way to effectively respond

to the fact that events and places were constituted with, by, and within images whose avowed purpose was to document. By studying photographic works produced on the Indian subcontinent during the years immediately following independence and into the following decades, this collection goes beyond filling a research gap; it provides the necessary historical depth with which to make sense of the experiments of the present with new models of storytelling, and of the drive to push further into fresh spaces. The book, in addition, intervenes in ongoing discussions of artistic modernism as a global process, which however, in spite of the burgeoning number of recent studies in the field from a range of locations across the globe, treat photography only marginally. By bringing out the fluidity of the categories "documentary" and "art"—substantiated through the inclusion of contemporary artists together with photographers—the collection urges us to ponder critically over such labels, which are also hierarchies to keep apart visual practices that intersect and nurture each other.

The history of photography, as it unfolded on the subcontinent since the mid-nineteenth century, has been plotted in these studies on a global matrix, drawing attention to cross-regional conversations and resonances, intersections as well as frictions. Alongside the medium's claims to transparency, its advocates from the start were equally ardent in their conviction that the photograph, even as it allegedly reproduced an authentic image of the exterior world, was an expression of an individual photographer's interiority. Originality, subjectivity, imaginative power, and signature style were all virtues of a modernist aesthetic valorized in photographic criticism and history to impart prestige to photography through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Photography could thus stake its place as a particular art circumscribed by manufacturing processes, and succeed in upholding its aspirations, even as new technologies resulted in a quantum leap in the ubiquity and accessibility of photographs.[2]

The essays in this volume trace in fine-tuned accounts the multiple dynamics animating the relationship binding a modernist aesthetic encompassing the body and the machine to the ambitions of a photographic image that could effectively produce a poetics of development, but could also expose developmentalism's fault lines. The methodological frame that consciously brings the practice of photography in South Asia into conversation with its worldly histories is valuable for making the insights generated by this collection globally intelligible, without however undermining the situatedness of the subjects investigated. The stories we encounter here consciously eschew the "getting-there" mode that has for long characterized canonical narratives of modernity. The collection is thus a valuable repository for scholarship on the Nehruvian period for which it provides us a fresh lens: the visual inhabits a shared space with the economic and political while engaging in negotiations, conceptual tensions, and improvisations.

Art historical discussions, often bound by time, place, and canonical value, ask that we rethink our frames to arrive at a new reading practice. By taking the organic connection of photography as art and art as photography as a starting point, the authors of this volume offer a reflective critical framework, a shared matrix to place genres considered distinct, separate, even opposed, allowing us an insight into their inbuilt relationality. This historiographic move helps to activate the meaning-making potential of things, processes, or events when they are able to step beyond the conventional loci assigned to them. By transcending a West–non-West binary as well as taking care not to collapse into a parochialism or concomitant cultural relativism, these stories of industrial photography in post-colonial India show the way to making differences between and within worlds of art-making productive.

Monica Juneja

Notes

1 Atreyee Gupta, "Developmental Aesthetics: Modernism's Ocular Economies and Laconic Discontents in the Era of Nehruvian Technocracy", in Sugata Ray and Venugopal Maddipati (eds), *Water Histories of South Asia: The Materiality of Liquescence*, New Delhi/London: Routledge 2020: 185–208, here 199.

2 See Douglas Crimp, "Photographs at the End of Modernism", in *On the Museum's Ruins*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1993: 2–42; Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Winning the Game When the Rules Have Been Changed: Art Photography and Postmodernism", *Screen*, vol. 25 (6), 1984: 88–103.

While both these accounts underline the distinction between modernist photography as art and post-modernist appropriations of photographs by contemporary artists, often with a view to unmasking the codes of the medium, the two studies of contemporary artists included in the present volume draw our attention to the fluidity between different practices. In doing so, they underscore the generative potential of an aesthetic praxis where the artist, the machine, and the image engage in a continuing conceptual dialogue.

1 Industry, Documentary, Aesthetics

Postcolonial Indian Photography in a Global Frame

Ranu Roychoudhuri and Rebecca M. Brown

Whether a smoky portrait of a coal mine, a grandiose image of heavy machinery and molten steel, a sweeping shot of workers building an immense dam, or a photo essay on new agricultural technologies, photographs of established and emerging industries fundamentally shaped the visual culture and politics of South Asia in the decades after independence, in direct dialogue with international photography practices. These photographs and their photographers are often understood as instruments of the Indian state or as the voices of political groups, most prominently India's active and institutionalized Marxist parties of the period. As such, they are seen either as supporting and documenting a Nehruvian socialist politics of industrial modernization and economic development or as disseminating Marxist ideologies via party publications. These two interpretive options—the national state and Marxist political parties—occlude other historical and art historical narratives, and often blind us to the dynamism of this period and the complex relations between industry and photography. Some photographs, instead of operating as articulations of the Indian state or an Indian national identity, might support an industrialist's promotion of their business to Indian or international customers, or illustrate newspaper or magazine stories that focus on laboring bodies and changing rural and urban landscapes, for local and global audiences. Acknowledging the multivalence of these photographs, especially as we look back from the twenty-first century, enables us to critically consider post-World War II industry, with its imagery of factories belching pollutants into the air, in relation to contemporaneous understandings of uplift and aesthetics, and in dialogue with recent understandings of the global climate crisis. Likewise, a mid-century socialist-Marxist engagement with industry and the plight of the worker reasserts itself as we look at these images from our twenty-first-century perspective of massive worker displacement and movement due to epidemics, floods, and drought. In delving into the layered lives of industry in photographs, the chapters in this volume historicize the human experiences of labor, ideology, aesthetics, and economic growth that conditioned industrial modernization in India and its visualization. Together, these engagements probe the co-constitution of industry and photography in postcolonial India by looking at selected sites of industrial and artistic practices and their interwoven histories.

Rather than attempt a nationally circumscribed history of photography particular to India, the authors in this volume acknowledge the porosity of national boundaries for the transmission of visual culture, artistic practice, and the physical photographs themselves. In addition to thinking about Indian photography as embedded within an international frame, the chapters here actively engage with these photographs not merely as illustrative but as themselves engaging in modernist aesthetics. Indeed, this engagement was shaped by images of smoke and steam billowing into the air, carefully framed in the reflection in nearby waterways, that evoked, for many mid-twentieth-century viewers, associations with strength, aesthetic beauty, and wished-for economic uplift in a postcolonial nation. Rather than focus solely on what is depicted, the authors in the volume engage with the stylistic choices photographers make, foregrounding elements of framing and composition, focus

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and blur, tonal contrasts, depth of field, film speed, lighting, and other aspects of their practice. The volume, thus, refuses a line between "high art" photography and documentary, or between modernist photographers and those often considered to be more instrumental. Likewise, we consider artists who might not be primarily "photographers," thereby taking seriously the photographic practice of sculptors and painters as part of the history of photography.[1] Questions of aesthetics emerge regardless of the positionality of the photographer or the genre of their images, and the question of what "modernist aesthetics" comprises includes a diversity of practitioners.

Simultaneously, this volume complicates the idea of industry itself. To evoke the spaces of major industry in India and elsewhere in the twentieth century is to imagine major hydroelectric projects, steel plants, mining operations, nuclear power facilities, and other large-scale sites that often dwarf individual human bodies and dominate landscapes and cityscapes. These constitute Nehru's "new temples of resurgent India": massive projects that showcase the modern strength of the country, presenting a nationally inflected image of building, commerce, self-sufficiency, and parity with other countries around the world. One can find this grand imaginary in the photographs discussed in this volume: visions of an industrial India presented to impress the nation's citizens and the world. And yet, those photographs, as many in this volume point out, incorporate another layer of meaning: work. Human laborers build these massive structures, operate the machinery, ensure the machines work as they should, direct digging and building and crafting. Industry as work, then, marks industry as machine, as factory, as infrastructural project, as agricultural transformation. As such, this volume also takes seriously the way "industry" extends to "industrious" and suggests an association with working bodies that supports a valorization and glorification of the working body, as well as an engagement with the toll work takes on the human body and the body's limitations. And the work of the factory here extends to the work of the photographer: the camera too is a machine, requiring infrastructures of film, developing, reproduction, and dissemination alongside a human laborer behind the camera. Industry also describes the institutional spaces in which the photographers themselves work: in journalism, for political organizations, for the companies who build these factories and dams, and for the art world.

In interrogating ideas of industry, labor, and making, the chapters in this volume reconsider many dominant discourses on documentary photography circulating in South Asia as photographers took part in international conversations. Photographs of crises and disasters circulated widely through both Indian newspapers and international picture magazines like *Life* and influenced how photographers, critics, and historians interpreted India and its histories. While images of Nehru at the inaugurations of dams did circulate, the broader imaging of India as an industrializing nation could not overcome the emphasis on humanitarian crisis, poverty, and exoticization. The photographs of political figures were seen as straightforwardly illustrative, and as such, critical discussions of photography related to human labor and machines in post-independence India slipped past the attention of historians and art historians.[2] Beginning in the 1940s, the works of major photojournalists and documentary photographers including Sunil Janah, Margaret Bourke-White, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Werner Bischof focused on humanitarian crises in India and their political potentialities. These photographs shaped the visualization of postcolonial conditions for news outlets in the subcontinent and around the world. Consequently, a wide-ranging artist like Janah was seen primarily as a photographer of the Bengal Famine of 1943 and of "exotic" tribal India at the expense of his extensive work on Indian industry. Likewise, Bischof's photographs of the Bihar Famine of 1951 circulated widely through the press, while his photographs of the Indian dams and factories remained unpublished until much later. Janah and Bischof represent some of the most well-known names from this period; others, too, photographed industrial sites and working bodies. Our project here is to raise new questions related to industry and documentary photography that have implications for India and for global photography histories.

Documentary, like industry, resists a singular definition. In both the Indian context and in the broader historiography around photography, the boundaries and characteristics of "documentary photography" and its related categories of journalistic, commercial, propagandistic, or artistic photography remain an open question, both for those making, editing, and circulating these photographs at the time of their production and for those thinking through the histories of photography today. A document implies transparency: an unmediated view of the world, ready to serve as a piece of evidence. This rather mythic documentary quality holds particular sway for the photograph: the medium of photography has long been subject to the presumption that it has a more evidentiary claim than other representational media, whether textual or visual. But as generations of photography theorists and scholars have shown, the medium steadfastly refuses to conform to any idea of straightforward evidence.

In Roland Barthes's famous phrasing, the photograph evokes a sense of "that-was-there" while simultaneously creating dizzying, multiplying sets of references and connections across time and space. Barthes's writings on photography often center on portraits and photographs of people, remarking on the astounding qualities of the person's life and history mapped into their eyes, clothes, or a small gesture. These moments of recognition are, in Barthes's terms, moments in which the photograph "pricks" the viewer, pokes at us, pushes us out of our complacency, and ever so slightly wounds or bruises us. The photograph can also throw viewers into a vertiginous cascade of related moments: the moment of the photograph's taking, the point directly thereafter, the placement of the photograph in an album, its travel to our hands, our own relation to that past in our present, and the future return to the photograph. Barthes also saw the vertigo of the photograph even in a simple landscape devoid of people:

> In 1850, August Salzmann photographed, near Jerusalem, the road to Beith-Lehem (as it was spelled at the time): nothing but stony ground, olive trees; but three tenses dizzy my consciousness: my present, the time of Jesus, and that of the photographer, all this under the instance of "reality"—and no longer through the elaborations of the text, whether fictional or poetic, which itself is never credible down to the root.[3]

These dizzying layers of history and time at the core of photography encourage us to think expansively about the photograph: to move beyond the evidentiary. The photographs in this volume might "document," but what and when they document, how they prick us, how their layered temporality sets in motion multiple relations across temporality and history, and how they themselves evoke alternate images—all of these elements remain contingent, open, and porous. The multiple potentialities of photography drives the authors in this volume to continue to question and probe these pictures.

Susan Sontag, Allan Sekula, Martha Rosler, and Abigail Solomon-Godeau have shown us how attempts to carve out a particular space for photography that "documents"—that is, the search for a "straight" photography that presents an unmediated view of the world—stumble rather quickly. Rosler's scathing essay, "in, around, and afterthoughts (on documentary photography)," traces the mutually reinforcing discourses of reformist politics in the early twentieth century and the modes through which documentary photography made digestible a propagandistic narrative of social uplift for immigrants and the poor.[4] Rosler reminds us of the utterly constructed quality of all photographic representation and its tendency to romanticize and aestheticize its subjects. She also points to the leveling effect of photography, a quality that overly equalizes and defangs suffering, placing at a safe distance scenes of ruin, destruction, war, and degradation. How, then, might one pursue documentary photography, when its subsumption into discourses of erasure and propaganda comes so readily? Rosler's attempt to provide an answer, her multi-format artwork *The*

Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems (1974–75),[5] puts pressure on both photograph and text as "documents," refusing the cloying progressivism and aestheticizing evident in the history of "documentary" photography to provide instead a demand that viewers engage directly with their own assumptions about urban space, alcoholism, and poverty through spare, frontal photographs devoid of people paired with lists of words and phrases used to describe those absent bodies.

Likewise, photography scholars focusing on India have addressed the problematic presumption of "straight" or documentary photography, noting the ways in which photography has been deployed for ideological ends since its beginnings. Early uses of photography to document Indian archaeological sites were lauded as accurate and detailed substitutes for drawings, but they often were used in ways similar to earlier modes of image collection, and in the service of colonial archaeologists' own analyses. Alexander Cunningham, for example, often collaged photographs together to enable one to see the railing of a stupa in its entirety, or to compare decorative detail, in ways that both artificially reassemble and simultaneously enhance the fragmentation of archaeological sites for the nineteenth-century viewer. James Fergusson, as Tapati Guha-Thakurta has shown, often used photographs of relief sculpture to support ethnographic analyses of ancient people.[6] Christopher Pinney has detailed the ways in which photography throughout its history often used pastiche and multiple exposure to position people in places they may never have visited, research that has allowed us to see that photography of people, too, has never been "straight."[7]

That an emerging global photography practice coincided with India's Uprising in 1857–58 meant that the medium was used to support a range of narratives about the Uprising and its aftermath, most famously in Felice Beato's photograph of Secundra Bagh in the aftermath of a massacre of Indian insurgents in November 1857 in Lucknow, taken in March of the following year, when Beato asked for the remains of the bodies to be disinterred for the photograph. Sean Willcock characterizes this as colonial "photographic intimidation," noting that not only was the Uprising still in progress in March 1858, but also that it is likely that the Indians standing in the background of the image were tasked with the disinterment.[8] Despite Beato's reconstruction of the massacre scene, the photograph was received as "authentic" reportage, foregrounding the fluidity and historically contingent nature of authenticity in relation to documentation.

The production of *The People of India* volumes, begun after the 1857 Uprising and very much in dialogue with it, offers one example of an ostensibly coherent collection of images of India's "types" of people, from named princes to generic representative couples to craftspeople practicing their trade.[9] These volumes, whose images were drawn from professional studios, amateur photographs sent to the government, and photography by military officers, always fell short of their goal to present a coherent picture of India's "people," while also attempting to map those same groups in relation to their potential threat to the British Empire and its colonial power.[10] Likewise, evidence of photography's unfulfilled promise of comprehensiveness and authenticity can be seen in colonial photographs of landscape and architecture, which often favored an Orientalist picturesque mode, avoiding the imaging of European presence or modern technology in favor of once great monuments in ruins or mist-shrouded Himalayan valleys.[11] Samuel Bourne's *oeuvre*, for example, used the picturesque to simultaneously exoticize India and visually domesticate the land and its people while ignoring colonial interventions in the landscape that characterized late nineteenth-century India.[12] For both portraits and landscapes, retouching of the negatives was not only common but something deployed and developed in the production of images in colonial regions.[13] And Indian portrait photographers moved immediately to add opaque and translucent color to their portraits, whether through subtle tinting or whole-scale painting, indicating the felt need for amendments to the photographic process and surface to achieve goals of realism, accuracy, and/or aesthetics.[14] Staged, posed, and constructed photographs continued to be produced into the twentieth century. Photography-savvy politicians interacted with the press corps and with their

own in-house photographers to present particular images of anti-colonial actions and their leadership. Gandhi, for example, saw the value in the uniformity of undyed *khadi* in photographs of anti-colonial marches and gatherings, where the black-and-white press images would meld the group into a singular mass.[15]

The genre of documentary photography matured in the late 1930s and the early 1940s, especially in connection with the Bengal Famine of 1943 and its subsequent effects across the subcontinent. Indian and international photojournalists such as Janah, Bourke-White, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Homai Vyarawalla captured India's famine, communal violence, independence, and Partition for an international audience, focusing simultaneously on the heroization of its central figures, including Nehru, Jinnah, and Mountbatten, and the depredations of hunger, violence, and mass migration. The latter thread continued after 1947 with photography focused on the continued refugee crisis in major cities across India and spaces of poverty that congealed in the imaginary of the subcontinent thereafter, imaged by international photographers including Sebastião Salgado, Cartier-Bresson, and Bischof. Indian photographers, including Raghubir Singh, Raghu Rai, and Pablo Bartholomew, made photographs of both major events and everyday life and engaged in long-term documentary projects narrating postcolonial India. Simultaneously, modernist art practitioners in India also took part in documentary projects, often focused on local visual culture, as two of the chapters in this volume demonstrate. A parallel journalistic thread celebrated an exoticized, colorful India, particularly as color photography and its reproduction in magazines became more widespread later in the century; these include photographs of life in major cities as well as scenes of rural festivals, weddings, and cremations. Throughout, critical voices jostled against these mainstream imaginaries, providing counter-narratives via images of political protests, the precarity of the underprivileged, intimate individual portraits, artistic and ritual performances, and deconstructive visions of institutional and governmental spaces. Thus, the history of photography in India parallels that of the world in dialogue with the demands of colonial power and postcolonial conditions. Echoing Martha Rosler, we note the impossibility of photography operating as an unmediated document in any of these moments, an impossibility particularly salient for colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Documenting Industry embraces the porousness and slippages embedded within both terms in our title, with an eye to expanding the parameters of a history of photography for twentieth-century India beyond the nation's borders, and while enabling a recognition of the industry depicted and performed on both sides of the camera. Throughout, we keep a keen eye on another partner in our journey, the question of modernity and its companion, aesthetic modernism. With the myth of straight, unmediated photography in our sights, the authors of this volume examine these images not merely as reportage or data but as themselves producing an aesthetic of labor, industry, and modernization. Rosler's call to recognize and challenge the aestheticization of the documentary image finds its counterpart in the chapters here: how might taking these photographs seriously in their modernist aesthetics reshape both our understanding of documentary and our understanding of modernism?

Modernism and its aesthetics are bound to the history of the Industrial Revolution and reactions to it, whether in the countervailing embrace of hand labor and localized vernacular aesthetics in the Arts and Crafts movement or in the glorification of industry, speed, and war found in Italian futurism or in the functionality and design cues of the Bauhaus.[16] In India, aesthetic modernism's simultaneous disdain for and embrace of the industrial modern coincided with the imperatives of the nation under colonial domination; these tensions continued after independence. One sees this, in the first case, in the early twentieth-century show of the Bauhaus artists and India's aesthetic nationalists and, in the second case, in independent India's invitation to modernist architects, including Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn, and Otto Königsberger to craft a postcolonial modernist identity for the nation.[17] Global photography developed alongside and in dialogue with these histories of global

modernism, framing and producing the clean lines and modernist aesthetics of twentieth-century industry and design in direct exchange (and sometimes with photographs taken by architects, sculptors, and designers). The chapters in this volume thus refuse a simple separation of traditional plastic arts from photography, recognizing that impossibility as well, and instead probe the interconnectedness of these threads and the ways in which various forms of modernist aesthetics shape the imaging of industry in twentieth-century India.

Our focus on India, with key comparative nodes in the USA, Germany, and the USSR, allows us to center the conversation on photographic history and industry in a late colonial and postcolonial frame in which India after independence echoes earlier moments of industrial modernization elsewhere but replays them in its own key. Consequently, the photographs discussed in this volume have formal and ideological affinities with industrial photographs from other parts of the globe despite differences in their historical conditions. In foregrounding these overlaps and disjunctures as an analytical frame to approach the history of photography in India, this volume proposes a global history of photography where cultural specificities are as important as transcultural connections. To achieve this, the contributing authors have used both historical and art historical methods that address the complex relationship between photography, labor, and industry. Indeed, this agnostic disciplinary positioning allows this volume to grapple with the layered question of documenting industry via an array of diverse approaches.

Atreyee Gupta unfolds the heretofore-overlooked imbrication of development discourse with aesthetic modernism in the photography of Sunil Janah. Rather than see his photographs of famine, tribal communities, and laboring bodies as somehow distinct from his imaging of industry in the form of the Damodar Valley project and other works, Gupta reads this entire *oeuvre* through what she terms "developmental ocularity," bringing photographic abstraction—often defined in a Greenbergian manner as a separate and autonomous realm—into its rightful place as intimately in dialogue with economic and political development. Intertwining a Nehruvian call for imagination in relation to development in a decolonizing context with Janah's own self-reflection on his relation to his subjects, the converging lines in his photographs of industrialization in independent India become formal analogues for the converging lines of economics, international and local politics, laboring and starving bodies, and decolonizing aspirations.

Suryanandini Narain's exploration of the laboring family in Nehruvian India is inflected with contemporaneous Soviet imagery and with India's economic and political connections to the USSR. Simultaneously, by focusing on the images of laboring families since independence, Narain inquires into the visual politics of representing kinship in documentary photography and how that complicates the dominant individualism of modernist discourses on labor. She foregrounds the iconographic similarities between photographs of urban informal laborers during the COVID-19 pandemic, as they traveled from urban areas to rural homes en masse, and photographs of historical examples of mass migration, including Partition. In doing so, Narain locates labor within the broader discussions regarding the precarity of human experience and human life under capitalism and how photographs of the precariat are produced, reproduced, circulated, and viewed. In her narrative, the idea of industry encompasses its undersides, or indeed its foundations, where laboring bodies find solace in familial bonds. A focus on family allows Narain to think about both family photographs and documentary photographs in their broadest possible scope, underscoring the porous boundary between these supposedly distinct genres. Industry, in this case, remains the conceptual backdrop as well as the material spaces where displaced laborers find home, and encompasses the labor of walking and movement as well.

Where Gupta reasserts the fundamental linkages between development and modernist aesthetics, Sophia Powers unpacks the connection between the technological, mechanical intervention of photography and "folk art" in the hands of painter, printmaker, and photographer Jyoti Bhatt.

Here, Bhatt's provocative resignification of India's "living traditions" uses photography both to "document" folk culture and to mount an argument for the inclusion of photography within the idiom of the "folk." Powers situates Bhatt's aesthetic commitments well within the documentary frame—he seeks out sites of vernacular and domestic art that might soon disappear, in a modernist narrative of history—and yet Bhatt's project moves well beyond any kind of unmediated documentation. Simultaneously, Powers unfolds Bhatt's photography as a way of bringing folk art practices—of repetition with slight difference each time, of the use of mechanical tools, of the engagement of the human and the hand—as directly akin to the mechanics and technologies of photography, thus placing both in the framework of artistic engagement, and perhaps providing an exemplar for Rosler's proposition that any true documentary photography might only emerge in relation to a robust recognition of these deep-seated aesthetic concerns. The industriousness evident in the decorative flourishes on domestic interiors, and the technology and mechanics of the photograph, come together here to revivify the "living traditions" of India.

Stuart Leslie's engagement with Nehru's "temples of modern India" acknowledges that the 1930s Tennessee Valley Authority projects in the USA represented key precedents for India's own dam building, and the imaging of those dams shaped the imaging of later twentieth-century projects halfway around the world. India learned from the US model and depended on US expertise to execute its dams and hydroelectric projects. Yet, its historical location could not possibly allow India's Damodar Valley Corporation's multipurpose river valley project and other big dams to either technologically or socially replicate what the Tennessee Valley Authority and the US Bureau of Reclamation had previously done. Leslie compellingly demonstrates how the Indian conditions of labor, work, building sites, and their representation in "dam documentaries" foreground the fissures and fault lines of Nehruvian science, technology, and modernization programs in a society deeply rooted in premodern work cultures and value systems. Be it the making of the big dams or the nuclear power plants, manual laborers carrying baskets on their heads were a familiar sight in India and were immortalized in documentary films, still photographs, and postage stamps. Leslie, in examining these images, foregrounds how India's modernization narrative embodies heterotemporal ways of being modern.

Emilia Terracciano explores the way photography shapes the industry of making art itself in the imaging of Mrinalini Mukherjee's sculptures and her body as a site of artistic labor. At the same time, the monumentality of Mukherjee's sculptures mimics the monumental character of industry and the modernist architectures of the period, while her choice of fiber as the material to create scale brings handcrafting and ephemerality into the conversation about creating works of art of industrial size. Mukherjee's own presence in the photographs of her fiber sculptures foregrounds the artistic labor that goes into the making of modernist monuments. In Terracciano's narrative, photography miniaturizes these works (and the artist's body) in the process of documenting sculptural monumentality, thereby complicating the problem of authenticity and transparency in representing industry. Thus, Mukherjee's sculptural and photographic practice subverts the ideas of straight documentary in favor of reasserting the porosity of terms like monumental, miniature, document, work, and body.

Photography enables imagery to travel quickly around the world, and that imagery is transformed each time it is presented anew, whether in the pages of László Moholy-Nagy's major photography collections or in a corporate pamphlet promoting the Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) in Jamshedpur, Bihar, the central site of the images discussed in Mircea Raianu's chapter. Focusing on press advertisements of TISCO by the agency J. Walter Thompson and Bischof's engagement with the steel plant and township at Jamshedpur, Raianu critically narrates how the photographic medium located Tata's and the postcolonial nation's discourse of industrial progress in the Adivasi female laboring body. Indeed, the sociological understanding of labor and progress

emerged in direct dialogue with the photography produced of the Tata factory and its workers. Working within the tension between a promise of "skilling" tribal bodies and a vision of mining and industrial projects catapulting the nation forward, these advertisements and photographs brought their distinct visions to the unresolved, contradictory, and open-ended questions of development. The laboring body of industry here expands to include the photographer and the artist-as-photographer.

Rebecca M. Brown unfolds the interlinked machines of camera and book that together comprise the work of art in Dayanita Singh's multifaceted projects. To do so, Brown explores the history of German critical artistic engagement with machines, manufacturing, and the modern factory during the 1920s, which finds its echo in photographs of steel plants in Bihar in the 1950s and 1960s. The photography of the Neue Sachlichkeit movement is, in the hands of Singh, remade in the face of a postcolonial, late twentieth-century moment.[18] Singh's postcolonial view of machines and factory spaces makes room for a critical formal and conceptual dialogue not only with Neue Sachlichkeit but also with other moments in global photography's focus on industrial spaces. Significantly, Singh occasionally inserts her camera in her photographs to underscore her own presence as a photographer and how a machine and the labor of photography are central for creating the images, thereby adding yet another layer to the relationship between machinery, industry, and human labor. Singh's infusion of the machinescapes with human attributes foregrounds the constructedness of her images, expanding the scope of both documentary and machines.

By putting canonical modern and contemporary artists in dialogue with photographers who are often considered journalistic or political, the volume seeks to create a mutual spark: art as documentary, documentary as art, both dynamically making meaning. The arguments presented here share an attentiveness to the modes of dissemination and circulation of photography, whether through company-sponsored publications, major national journals, or artists' works and archives. "Documentary" photography thus serves as a signal locus from which to understand the interwoven narratives of aesthetic modernism and industrial modernization in South Asia as it sits embedded in a global frame. The image of the laboring body in changing industrial landscapes and against often monumental machines, dams, and infrastructure remains at the center, while simultaneously keeping in view the ways photography is deeply intertwined with strands of modernist aesthetics. By examining the photography of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries through the lenses of documentary, industry and labor, and aesthetics, the chapters here engage in new modes of seeing the industrial, the human body, and the non-human.

Notes

1 The consideration of the photographs of painters and sculptors has been an exciting strand in photography history. See Diva Gujral, "Painters with a Camera (1968/69): In Search of an Indian Photography Exhibition," *Object* 20 (2019), online, https://student-journals.ucl.ac.uk/obj/article/id/551/, accessed 21 September 2023. See also Sarah Hamill, *David Smith in Two Dimensions: Photography and the Matter of Sculpture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015).

2 Some scholarship on these photographers and their industrial imagery is beginning to emerge, much of it authored by the scholars in this volume or in relation to exhibitions and retrospectives of these artists' works. See Rebecca M. Brown, *Art for a Modern India, 1947–1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 127–30; Ranu Roychoudhuri, "Documentary Photography, Decolonization, and the Making of 'Secular Icons': Reading Sunil Janah's Photographs from the 1940s through the 1950s," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1 (June 2017): 46–80; Emilia Terracciano, *Art and Emergency: Modernism in Twentieth-Century India* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2018), 118–19; Atreyee Gupta, "Developmental Aesthetics: Modernism's Ocular Economies and Laconic Discontents in the Era of Nehruvian Technocracy," in *Water Histories of South Asia: The Materiality of Liquescence*, edited by Sugata Ray and Venugopal Maddipatti (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2019), 185–208;

Mircea Raianu, *Tata: The Global Corporation that Built Indian Capitalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021); Ram Rahman, *Sunil Janah (Photographs 1940–1960): Vintage Prints from the Swaraj Art Archive* (New Delhi: Vijay Kumar Aggarwal, 2014).

3 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*: *Reflections on Photography*, Richard Howard, trans. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 97.

4 Martha Rosler, "in, around, and afterthoughts (on documentary photography)," in her *3 works* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1981), 76 (59–89).

5 Forty-five gelatin silver prints of text and image mounted on 24 backing boards, edition of five. Edition 2 in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, https://whitney.org/collection/works/8304.

6 Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

7 Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

8 Sean Willcock, "Aesthetic Bodies: Posing on Sites of Violence in India, 1857–1900," *History of Photography*, vol. 39, no. 2 (2015): 142–59.

9 J. Forbes Watson, John William Kaye, and Meadows Taylor, *The People of India: A Series of Photographic Illustrations, with Descriptive Letterpress, of the Races and Tribes of Hindustan, Originally Prepared Under the Authority of the Government of India, and Reproduced by Order of the Secretary of State for India in Council*, 8 vols. (London: India Museum, 1868–75).

10 See Pinney, *Camera Indica*; John Falconer, "'A Pure Labor of Love': A Publishing History of the People of India," in Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson, eds. *Colonialist Photography* (London: Routledge, 2004), 51–83.

11 See Linda Nochlin's essay for an overview of the relation between Orientalism and the erasures of colonial representation: "The Imaginary Orient," in her *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 33–59; Maria Antonella Pelizzari, ed. *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture and the Politics of Representation, 1850–1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Vidya Dehejia et al., *India Through the Lens: Photography 1840–1911* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2000).

12 See James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

13 See, for example, discussions of Linnaeus Tripe's processing of and experimentation with his film and its development in Roger Taylor and Crispin Branfoot, *Captain Linnaeus Tripe, Photographer of India and Burma, 1852–1860* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2014).

14 Deepali Dewan and Olga Zotova, *Embellished Reality: Indian Painted Photographs—Towards a Transcultural History of Photography* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum Press, 2012).

15 See Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

16 See Rosalind P. Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Phaidon, 2006); Katia Pizzi, *Italian Futurism and the Machine* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).

17 See Regina Bittner et al., *The Bauhaus in Calcutta: An Encounter of Cosmopolitan Avant-gardes* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2013).

18 Pepper Stetler, *Stop Reading! Look!: Modern Vision and the Weimar Photographic Book* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015).

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