

ART COLUMN



Neil Meyerhoff's "Festival on the Ganges, Varanasi" depicts worshipers who have gathered to bathe in the river in India.

Rich snapshots of Indian life

Meyerhoff exhibit at C. Grimaldis Gallery is an intimate close-up of humanity

BY GLENN MCNATT
(SUN ART CRITIC)

Baltimore photographer Neil Meyerhoff's recent pictures from India, on view at C. Grimaldis Gallery, easily rank among the most compelling images this globe-trotting artist has made.

During previous excursions abroad, Meyerhoff has photographed in Mexico, Cuba, Laos and China. In each case, he used a miniature panoramic camera that produces eye-popping images with an extreme wide-angle view.

In the Indian pictures, however, Meyerhoff seems to have achieved a breakthrough of sorts, both technically and in

an enlarged vision of humanity.

The panoramic format usually associated with landscape photography is put to use recording portraits characterized by great emotional sensitivity and technical finesse.

By turning the camera on its side — transforming its wide, skinny horizontal frame into a slender, elongated vertical — Meyerhoff was able to make individual portraits of people that are as visually spacious as a panoramic shot of earth and sky, yet feel as intimately connected to their subjects as a close-up.

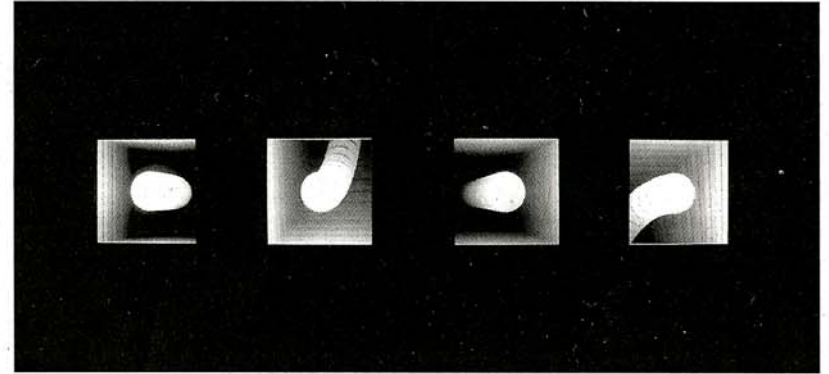
The pictures, which were taken in various Indian cities, are also notable for the startling color harmonies Meyerhoff was able to capture, which remind one of

scenes by the great Indian photographer Raghubir Singh. Singh believed that color was integral to the Indian world view, and that Western photographers who confined themselves to the conventions of black-and-white invariably missed what was most essential about the Indian character.

"India is a river of color," Singh wrote before his death in 1999. "The true Indian artist [cannot] ignore the blessing of color that is written into the Indian idea of *darshan* — sacred sight — which we know from childhood."

Meyerhoff seems to have taken his cue from the master in pictures like *Festival on the Ganges, Varanasi*, a crowded scene [Please see ART, 4C]

CRITIC'S CORNER // ART



Chul-Hyun Ahn's exhibit of light-box sculptures is on display at C. Grimaldis Gallery.

Illuminating colorful reflections

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depicting hundreds of worshipers who have gathered to bathe in the sacred river.

The picture, one of the show's relatively few horizontal images, is a riot of vivid reds, blues, pinks, greens and yellows.

Yet the colors, arrayed across scores of figures on the river bank and in the water, never compete for attention. Rather, they manage to balance each other with the aplomb of a Venetian banquet scene by Veronese.

In these pictures, Meyerhoff has brought a new level of technical and emotional maturity to his art. They are wonderful travel photographs that also transcend their genre and suggest the deeper truths of the lives they record.

A companion exhibition presents the minimalist light-box sculptures of Chul-Hyun Ahn, which have steadily evolved since the artist's gallery debut in 2003.

Ahn's pieces are based on the same principle as a set of facing barbershop mirrors, in which the reflections of people and things located between the mirrors reflect an endless series of duplicate images that seem to recede into space.

In an Ahn sculpture, however, one of the mir-

rors is a two-way mirror like the ones set into the walls of police interrogation rooms — a setup that allows officers in an adjoining room to view suspects brought in for questioning without being observed themselves.

When one looks through the two-way mirror of an Ahn sculpture, the reflected image of a light bulb mounted between the two mirrors seems to repeat itself endlessly as it recedes into an infinite space.

Most of Ahn's sculptures take the form of rectangular boxes mounted on the wall, where the images of the bulb appear to flow away from the viewer on a horizontal plane. A couple of the pieces, however, sit on the floor, where they resemble the rim of a well or vertical mine shaft. Gazing into their apparent depths can produce a momentary sense of vertigo, similar to what one might feel standing on the edge of a cliff; the mind may know it's all a clever illusion, but the body remains stubbornly unconvinced.

Both shows run through Feb. 24 at C. Grimaldis Gallery, 523 N. Charles St. Call 410-539-1080 or visit cgrimaldisgallery.com.

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