



Pablo Bartholomew, from the *Indian Emigré* series. A Gujarati couple poses in front of their motel at Fresno, California.

you trying to explore your identity from a different angle?

I'm not sure if you read more into things or you actually realize more when you grow older. In all three sets of my personal work, there's a definite desire to explore my state-of-mind and my notion of identity at that point in time. Funded by the Asian Cultural Council—formerly known as the John D. Rockefeller III Fund—in New York, I was able to pursue this project. While exploring my identity, I decided to take the process

outside of India—to look at the Indian migrants in America and to examine what they kept or discarded when they migrated. With the project, I'm dealing with the feeling of being and belonging. I'm looking at the two worlds that we all live in—the one that we bring with us and the world that we assimilate into. Moreover, I was working then for a New York-based photo agency but I knew little about America. The project allowed me to approach the country differently. For the first six months, I sat through the archives just to research

on the subject. In total, I spent nearly two years on *The Indian Emigré*.

In another interview, you spoke at length about your father as an influence to your life. Was he your first teacher in photography?

As a photographer, he would take pictures of his artist friends. When we went to our summerhouse, I would be with him in the darkroom, looking at the images emerging in the developing tray. That was pure magic.



Pablo Bartholomew, from the *Indian Emigré* series. Members of the Chitresh Das Dance Company enjoy the view of the Golden Gate Bridge. Pandit Chitresh Das is one of the many dancers and musicians working in and around the Bay area. The Ali Akbar School of music is also located in the area.



Pablo Bartholomew, from the *Indian Emigré* series. Indian migrants hold a wedding in the backyard of a church in New Jersey. Often, the Indian Emigré communities have to make do with available space for their ceremonies and rituals.

He didn't teach me anything specific about photography. What I took from him was the need to be a more sophisticated man—a Renaissance man, like him—whom I'm not. I think that showed in his images. His pictures were more complex and had more layers than my work.

What prompted you to revisit *Early Work* in 2006?

When I passed 50 two years back, I felt vulnerable. Perhaps this is psychological. Even though I have reached a certain high point, I feel I can go down very quickly. Physically and mentally, I'm slowing down. How then do I use my experiences to a better effect?

About ten percent of the images that my assistant has scanned are too private to be seen. In any case, all of them told my coming-of-age story. Some of the people in my pictures have become incredibly famous. Some didn't survive the drugs. I'm still finding a way to piece everything together.

In recent years, there are many young photographers who like to hang out with me, perhaps hoping to get some words of wisdom or bullshit from me. But I'd like them to know that you don't have definite answers all the time.

When I left agency work in 1999, it took many years to find my balance. I put aside my photography and went to develop a technology for photographers and agencies to store and distribute their image resources. It is complete with tracking tools, so that photographers and agencies can see where the client search has fallen through. We have been offering a pricing and e-commerce platform to our clients before the more popular Digital Railroad followed suit in recent months.

From 2001 to 2004, I could only spend 30 percent of my time on photography. The rest had to go into developing the technology. Now, the time spent on photography has gone back up to 70 percent. It's good but the fear of failure is never far behind. It keeps you at the edge.

Is this desire to revisit *Early Work* related to how photojournalism has changed in the past 15 years with the mergers and acquisitions of photo agencies?

I guess there is a sense of nostalgia as well.



Pablo Bartholomew, from the *Indian Emigré* series. During the annual Diwali Mela on South Street Seaport, New York, an Indian man sells Krishna posters and caps made in the design of the Statue of Liberty.



Pablo Bartholomew, from the *Indian Emigré* series. A girl prepares for a Kathak performance during the August 15 Independence Day celebrations on Madison Avenue, New York.

In 1987, I was commissioned by *LIFE* to do a book on South Chinese cuisine. I was flown to London to see the art director and a food specialist. The assignment was to last for six weeks. Eventually, it was extended by another three weeks. Then the editor called to say that the project was off, having paid for everything. Those were the days.

Nowadays, there are too many photographers in the market. At the same time, there's a lot more fluff now even in magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek*. You have to be based in a country where the media is interested to be able to survive as a photographer. That's why so many photographers go to Afghanistan and Iraq. Now and then, I meet foreign photographers in Delhi and they will tell me that they are doing some NGO work and a bit of editorial stuff. Two years later, they will pack their bags and disappear.

Today, I see *Early Work* as the most important project that I have done. Photography can be done in a personal way. You may earn your money elsewhere and keep photography as a passion. And you shoot the shit out of everything around you. Don't be afraid to take a long-term view of the work.

With the "rediscovery" of *Early Work*, you have also become more productive in promoting your work. Why so?

I'm growing older. If I don't do it, who else will? So much of history is now dependent on marketing. In Australia or America, when they discover a talent, they will push for their work. This doesn't happen in India. It's up to you to do it. Take a look at my father. He was one of the most important art critics but he's already forgotten. What I will do in the coming months is to bring out a book of my father's photographs of Indian artists. At the same time, while my three sets of personal work are traveling to different shows, I'm also using the opportunity to visit the photo-festivals and to see what's happening in the photographic world before deciding my next move. Δ

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