


ART MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

## Raghubir Singh: Modernism on the Ganges

In April of 1999, a month before he died unexpectedly, of a heart attack, at the age of fifty-six, Singh gave his last lecture, at the International Center of Photography, in New York. By way of introduction, his friend and fellow-photographer Thomas Roma told the audience, “To call Raghubir Singh a photographer of India is to call Robert Frost a poet of New York, which is to say, it is a grossly inadequate description.” As evidenced by this quietly magnificent show, Singh had an eye for the complex visual rhythms of life on the streets of his native country, which rivalled that of Henri Cartier-Bresson. Above all, though, Singh was a master of color, as the eighty-five small images on view make startlingly clear. Consider “Villagers Visiting Jodhpur Enjoying Ice Sweets, Rajasthan,” from 1978. Five men hunker down in the dirt, staring straight at Singh’s lens while holding orange popsicles—eruptions of color in the mostly white, brown, and gray scene, amplified by a yellow turban and a turquoise shirt, which is echoed by a faded blue bench in the background. It’s a succinct epic, a dual portrait of ancient ways and modernization.

Through Jan. 2.

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