

The Americans

By Sangeeta Kumar

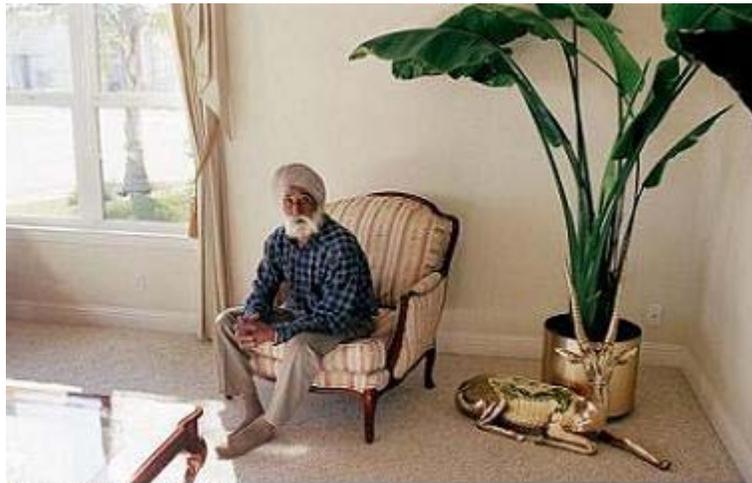


Woman worker at Sunsweet prune packing factory. Yuba City 2002

With the geographic breadth of the country serving as a metaphor, Delhi based photographer Gauri Gill's 'The Americans', possesses the elements of a documentary, capturing the despair, grittiness and alienation as also the gratification of the Indian American experience. From Queens to Yuba City, the evocative images compellingly appropriate from our fleeting encounters within the Diaspora - thread ceremonies and wedding ceremonies, Christies' auctions and upscale homes of art collectors, Taco Bells and Dunkin Donuts',

motels and suburban dwellings, weddings and funerals, Arangetrams and Bhangra homeboys, drag queens and young beauty queens, the vibrant and the frail and tentative.

The paired photographs in particular often offer haunting juxtapositions as in the image of the elderly father, of motel owner Dhansukh Patel, filled with trepidation in light of life's unseemly changes, sitting on a bed in his son's mansion paired with the photograph of an empty gleaming room with only a garlanded photo of Dhansukh's dead mother.



Kundan Singh. Yuba City 2001

For Gauri the shooting of family photographs morphed over a period of seven years, five of which were spent on both coasts, to include the broader community, from the hinterlands to larger desi enclaves. Gauri acknowledges the influence of Robert Frank's seminal book of the same name but her powerful use of symbolism, silhouettes and reflections is a visual journey rooted in 'creating a space for immigrants'.

'The Americans' will be showing at the Bose Pacia Gallery till February 7th.

All images are from the series The Americans. Copyright Gauri Gill

Published February 01, 2009