

Sunil Gupta: Life with a Camera, 1970 – Now

19 September 2026 –
31 January 2027

Press View: 18 September 2026,
10.45am – 1pm

'Two things happened simultaneously, learning about activism and learning to make a photograph.'
– Sunil Gupta

Kettle's Yard is delighted to present 'Sunil Gupta: Life with a Camera, 1970 – Now', a new exhibition chronicling five decades of Sunil Gupta's (b. 1953, India) pioneering contribution to photography and activism.

Intimate and subversive, Gupta's photography has been instrumental in raising awareness around the fight for queer rights internationally, particularly in India and the UK, laying bare the tensions between tradition and modernity, and public and private spheres. Featuring more than 140 works, this exhibition will reflect Gupta's migrations between Delhi, New York, Montreal and his longstanding home in London, celebrating his love for his family, friends and partners, and his belief that everyone has the right to lead full and joyful lives, in which identity and sexuality can be celebrated.

Arranged chronologically and grouped in series bound by theme, time and location, 'Life with a Camera' will span street photography, portraits and both commissioned and personal projects. The exhibition will open with highlights from Gupta's early career, including *Friends and Lovers* (early 1970s), *Christopher Street* (1976) – created while



Sunil Gupta, *Sonal #1* (2015) from *Dissent and Desire* (2015). Images courtesy the artists and Hales Gallery, Materià Gallery, SepiaEye, Stephen Bulger Gallery and Vadehra Art Gallery. © Sunil Gupta and Charan Singh. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2025.

the artist was studying at the New School, New York, in the period after the Stonewall uprising – and *Exiles* (1986-1987), a series of constructed images of anonymous men in iconic gay cruising locations across Delhi. Created in response to the criminalisation of gay sex in India and, effectively, the public expression of gay identity, the series represents an act of defiance against the suppression of queer love.

The power of photography to make visible and confront discrimination continues in the series *'Pretended' Family Relationships* (1985-1988), which expresses the principle underlying much of Gupta's work – that his activism is fundamental to the creation of compelling and unique images. The series is titled after Section 28, a controversial amendment to the UK's Local Government Act, passed in 1988 by Margaret Thatcher, which prohibited councils and schools from teaching about homosexuality as a 'pretended family relationship'. At this time, the mere act of depicting queer love became a defiant act of protest. Here, by juxtaposing portraits of couples with photographs of demonstrations against the legislation, Gupta gestures both to the power of representation and the problematic nature of representation without equivalent political action. This idea is further explored in *From Here to Eternity* (1999), where Gupta pairs images of his

body following his HIV diagnosis with photographs of gay nightclubs that have been shut down across south London. The series acts as an urgent call to action to protect spaces for the gay community in the fallout from the HIV pandemic.

As much as Gupta's work is intrinsically related to his activism, it is equally concerned with experiments in digital image making. In his series *Homelands* (2001-2003), Gupta draws connections between photographs of life in Delhi, London and the US through a series of diptychs created with meticulously constructed compositions and shifting perspectives. *Sun City* (2010), meanwhile, draws on Chris Marker's 1962 film *La Jetée* to create a series of stills from a fictionalised missing film, forming a cyclical storyline of romantic love.

'Life with a Camera' will conclude with Gupta's more recent works including *Mr Malhotra's Party* (2007-2012), which covers a period of intense lobbying to change anti-gay laws in India. These works depart from the furtive cruising pictured in *Exiles*, with the artist's subjects looking straight into the camera as they are photographed across the city. *Dissent and Desire* (2015), a collaboration between Gupta and Charan Singh, will also be on view, capturing the interior lives of queer people in Delhi. In charting Gupta's own experiences, the exhibition will more broadly track shifts across queer rights and activism from the 1970s, culminating in images from the Trans+ Pride marches in 2025.

'Sunil Gupta: Life with a Camera, 1970 – Now' is curated by Andrew Nairne and Guy Haywood with Susie Biller. It will be accompanied by a new publication chronicling Gupta's journey as both an artist and an activist, with new essays by Tausif Noor, Gregory Salter, Theo Gordon, Natasha Bissonauth, Gayatri Sinha and texts by Sunil Gupta.



Sunil Gupta, *Untitled #22 from Christopher Street* (1976). Images courtesy the artist and Hales Gallery, Materià Gallery, SepiaEye, Stephen Bulger Gallery and Vadehra Art Gallery. © Sunil Gupta. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2025.



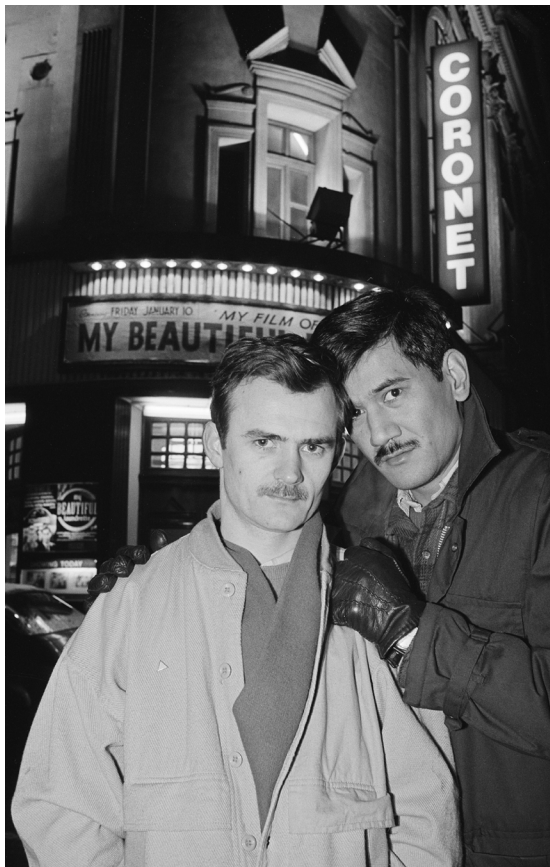
Sunil Gupta, *Red Fort – 4* (2004) from *Tales of a City: Delhi* (2004). Images courtesy the artist and Hales Gallery, Materià Gallery, SepiaEye, Stephen Bulger Gallery and Vadehra Art Gallery. © Sunil Gupta. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2025.



Sunil Gupta, *Bikram* (2007) from *Mr Malhotra's Party* (2007-2012). Images courtesy the artist and Hales Gallery, Materià Gallery, SepiaEye, Stephen Bulger Gallery and Vadehra Art Gallery. © Sunil Gupta. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2025.



Sunil Gupta, *5* (2010) from *Sun City* (2010). Images courtesy the artist and Hales Gallery, Materià Gallery, SepiaEye, Stephen Bulger Gallery and Vadehra Art Gallery. © Sunil Gupta. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2025.



Sunil Gupta, *Gay* (1986) from *Reflections of the Black Experience* (1986). Images courtesy the artist and Hales Gallery, Materià Gallery, SepiaEye, Stephen Bulger Gallery and Vadehra Art Gallery. © Sunil Gupta. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2025.

Notes to Editors

For all PRESS enquiries please contact Rees & Co:
 Zab Oliver | zab.oliver@reesandco.com |
 +44 (0)7475 418956
 Megan Miller | megan.miller@reesandco.com |
 +44 (0)7743 036449

About Sunil Gupta

Sunil Gupta (b. 1953 New Delhi, India) lives and works in London. Over a career spanning five decades, Gupta has maintained a visionary approach to photography, producing bodies of work that are pioneering in their social and political commentary. The artist's diasporic experience of multiple cultures informs a practice dedicated to themes of race, migration and queer identity – his own lived experience a point of departure for photographic projects, born from a desire to see himself and others like him represented.

Gupta's work is held in the collections of major museums worldwide, including: Tate, London; the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, NY; the National Gallery of Art, Washington; the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, IL; Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, MA; Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi; the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; and the Tokyo Museum of Photography. He continues to exhibit internationally and has published and edited several publications. In 1989, he co-founded Autograph – the association of black photographers. In 2020/21 Gupta's work was the subject of a retrospective at The Photographer's Gallery, London, curated by Mark Sealy and organised in collaboration with the Ryerson Image Centre, Toronto and Autograph ABP, London.

About Kettle's Yard

Kettle's Yard, part of the University of Cambridge, is a leading gallery and unique house with a remarkable collection of 20th-century art. Its founders Jim and Helen Ede believed in art's ability to transform lives, a vision upheld today through critically acclaimed exhibitions, pioneering community and learning programmes, and research of the highest quality. Our aim is to offer an inspiring and enriching experience for everyone who visits. Find out more and get involved at: www.kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk

For further information and images

Please contact Helen Davies
press@kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk

Kettle's Yard

T. +44 (0)1223 748 100
 F. +44 (0)1223 324 377
kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk