THE PEACOCK JUNCTION

MARCELO SCHELLINI
Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore, Tamil Nadu 632014, Índia
dean.vsign@vit.ac.in

ORCID
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0350-5381

The followers of Âryabhata say:

"It is sufficient for us to know the space which
is reached by the solar rays."

The Book of India, Abu Rayhan Al-Biruni (c. 973 - 1050)

THE PEACOCK JUNCTION

Attention passengers of Flight EK544, please collect your luggage at baggage carousel number 19. Passengers of Flight EK544, please collect your luggage at baggage carousel number 19.

In numerical terms, I should announce the hyperbolic scale of India right from the outset. With more than one billion three hundred and seventy-eight million inhabitants, the first visible sign of the country's size is the long arrival corridor at Chennai airport and the myriad of welcome signs displaying a huge diversity of names, languages and characters. A few metres from the end, I recognized my name, responding shyly and relieved. The arrival doors always make me anxious. We pushed the trolley to the concourse outside where we were inundated by the dense hazy air. In the parking lot, always the same confusion on entering a car with right-hand drive.

Arriving on January the first, towards the end of the winter holiday period, we avoided the colossal traffic of this southern metropolis. Previously called Madras, Chennai is one of the four largest cities on the Indian subcontinent, situated in the state of Tamil Nadu on the shores of the Bay of Bengal. But still, this was not our destination. With the car packed with luggage and my small family, we left along the national highway towards the city of Vellore, the location of one of the campuses of the Vellore Institute of Technology, the academic institution where I had recently been hired to teach photography.

During the short trip of one hundred and seven kilometres, the friendly driver Jagadeesh cordially announced the names of the places with the calm for which inhabitants of the south are known. Travelling at speed on the highway, the dizzying landscape that my eyes could take in resolved into suburbs, advertising images on immense billboards, industrial areas installed in rural surroundings and innumerable works under construction. Through this impermanent landscape, I thought of the countless challenges that had already announced themselves to me. I meditated on the frontiers to be transposed in the quest to understand and enter the new landscape in all its variations of light, contrast, tonal scale and combinations of colours. It was clear that for me to connect more closely with this landscape, I would also have to ponder the geographic, cultural, aesthetic and educational differences.

The today's Republic of India obtained its independence in 1947 and possesses an important chapter in the History of Photography. Since the

introduction of photography in what was then British India in 1840 – registered at the time by the *Calcutta Courier* – probably no other colonial territory was so extensively depicted and documented. During the nineteenth century, British India was the setting for a considerable flow of production and circulation of photographs, as well as the place of photographic studios and societies.[1] Consequently, there are innumerable cases where photography was instrumentalized by the colonial apparatus of propaganda and territorial control.

Many photographers left important visual documents that reflect not only technical and aesthetic concerns but also colonial interests. Photography was used extensively in an undertaking of spatial and human 'mapping.' Just as Reverend Joseph Mullens, in 1856, encouraged photographers to expand their photographic themes and motifs towards documenting the "perfect specimen of all the minute varieties of Oriental Life; of Oriental Scenery, Oriental nations and Oriental manners."[2] Indeed, the relationship between photographers and the colonial administration was not based solely on the aesthetic inclinations of photographic genres: it was centred above all on a concrete connection established through commissions and contracts to realize specific projects. In many cases, Photography was a military specialization, and the photographer was an officer tasked with a specific "mission,' as the documentation of the buildings damaged during the anticolonial battles led by Tipu Sultan, photographed by the officer of the East India Company Army, Linnaeus Tripe, in Tamil Nadu in 1858.
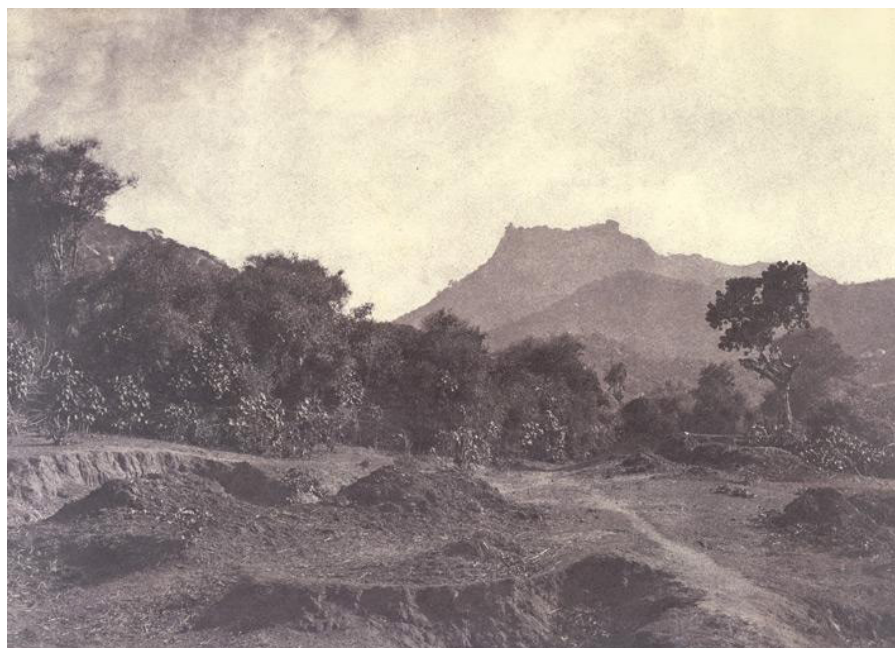
1 Pinney, Christopher. 2008. *The Coming of Photography in India*. London: The British Library.
2 Idem.

The collection of works by the photographer is now held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Depicting above all landscapes, fortifications and temples – photographed using the calotype and wet collodion processes – the photos comprise a valuable image archive. The bucolic view of the mountains of Virabadra Droog suggests that the image belongs to an unattainable time. The landscape stretches out over a rugged terrain: above, dark clouds enhance the natural beauty while simultaneously framing the edges of the picture. The perspective is highlighted by the effect of atmospheric shading, captured in the gradation of grey tones that lend depth and grandeur to the scene. An idyllic landscape that, analysed outside the military context in which it was taken, might suggest only a deep appraisement of nature. Does observing only the landscape falsify its meaning? In asking this question, I have no wish to insinuate that the photographer lacked any genuine interest in transcribing the landscape or in preserving architectural antiquities. Rather, my point is that, in his photographs, it is difficult to dissociate his artistic interest from his commitment to the colonial protocol. Moreover, to what extent are these not two sides of the same coin? At first glance, it is difficult to recognize the paradox of the photographs that were taken to record the aftermath of the ferocious siege of Tipu Sultan's final bastion: the picturesque vistas and the legitimization of colonial conquest.

A Bengal village

In 1867, some years later, the renowned British photographer Samuel Bourne photographed the rural surroundings of the state of Bengal. In his photographic work *Village life in Bengal*, once again it is possible to see the

delight of this genre of calm and peaceful scenic views. On the other side of the road, the observer remaining at a distance, we can see the ox cart at the entry to the village with houses sheltering amid the palm trees. Probably the same year, this was also the setting for numerous conflicts between the colonial enterprise linked to indigo production and the local population.[3] This type of idealized image of nature reveals no trace of the other elements of the colonial landscape and the semi-industrial surroundings of the Bengalese rural world.

Samuel Bourne was one of the central figures in the photography of British India. Winner of various prizes awarded by the Bengal Photographic Society, his best-known work was made during a series of explorations of the Himalayas in a quest to photograph the sources of the Rio Ganges. As well as the precious series of views photographed on wet collodium, which show the omnipresent view of the uncontaminated and glacial nature of the mountains, he published his travel accounts in the *British Journal of Photography* between 1863 and 1870 – reports that can be read as an antithesis to the transcendence of his photographs. His travel accounts describe the *off-camera* of a photographic practice allied to the colonial

3 Pinney, Christopher. 2008. *The Coming of Photography in India*. London: The British Library. The "Indigo Rebellion" is one of the most significant chapters in the resistance to British colonization in India and comprised a series of popular uprisings against the forced cultivation of indigo, which had the objective of exporting the product to supply primarily the European textile industry in dyeing clothes and fabrics, a trade that declined after the invention of artificial dyes. Likewise, the historical event emphasizes the complexity of the meaning of colour in Indian society.

apparatus, relating the government contracts, the outposts, the logistics, the thirty 'coolies' carrying the photographic equipment and occasionally the disagreeable encounters with "barbarous Hindostani."[4] Samuel Bourne was also a partner of the company and photographic studio *Bourne & Shepherd*, an establishment that curiously – even after the sale of his share of the company and his return to the United Kingdom – remained in business until 2016 and is believed to have been the longest-running photographic studio in the history of photography.[5]

Obviously, throughout all these years of photographic production on the Indian subcontinent, there had always been Indian photographers. Even so, Raghubir Singh is the only photographer from the country cited in the volume *On the Art of Fixing a Shadow: One Hundred and Fifty Years of Photography*, a book on the history of photography published in 1989 in commemoration of 150 years of the announcement of the invention of photography. Colin Westerbeck cites Singh in the chapter 'New Colour," where he discusses the commercial reasons why the production of colour photos was attributed a minor status among art critics. The text also reflects on the aesthetic strategies of US photographers seeking recognition of colour photography as fine art and its eventual assimilation in museums and galleries. In this context, Westerbeck (1989) remarks on the Indian photographer:

> When a native photographer works in an exotic land with a more colourful culture than our own, as Raghubir Singh has in India, we accept the lushly picturesque results with a readiness that we would not have for such imagery made here.

Although the small citation partially recognizes the relevance of India's photographic culture, it does not consider that the photographer from another country must also deal with problems and solutions to the representation of the colours present in his environment – after all, innumerable technical choices and decisions (the type of camera, film, processing, enlargement, printing, colour space, and so on) will contribute to the final result of his colour palette. The colours we observe are the direct result of light conditions, situations that vary with the change of geographic coordinates. On the other hand, the use of colours by a culture is a universe that is not determined by climatic questions alone, but also by the symbolic and the subjective. In the case of India, due to its large climatic and cultural diversity, I cannot assert that there exists a unified chromatic identity that corroborates the image of an *exotic land with a more colorful culture.*

---

4 Banerjee, Sandeep. 2014. *"Not Altogether Unpicturesque": Samuel Bourne and the Landscaping of the Victorian Himalaya*. Cambridge: University Press Cambridge.
5 Nagar, Kshitj. 2016. *World's Oldest Working Photo Studio Shuts Down After Long Legal Battle*. Petapixel. 18/06/2018. https://petapixel.com/2016/06/18/worlds-oldest-working-photo-studio-shuts-long-legal-battle/

However, we can find texts by Raghubir Singh himself that extol chromatic symbolism and colour an element as every day as it is essential to life in India.[6] In Tamil Nadu, I observe a popular predilection for using colours to paint houses and buildings. The arrangement and repetition of these colours end up creating a pattern in the urban landscape and its surroundings. The observation of a chromatic quotidian with its variations and combinations encountered in the landscape and other local visual manifestations lead me to think of the presence of a chromatic identity. However, I cannot assert that the use of colour is a distinctive element that differentiates the colonial photographic representations from the postcolonial.

6 Singh, Raghubir. 2006. *River of Colour: The India of Raghubir Singh* (2nd ed.). London: Phaidon Press.

Happily, the contact with photography students appeared to be the shortest path and nonetheless also the most relevant source for me to explore the paradoxes of the photographic image in India. Arriving in Vellore, we were given accommodation in the professors' residence located close to the west gate of the campus. The Vellore Institute of Technology is one of the largest academic institutions in southern India. Today, the institution has 51 undergraduate courses, 34 postgraduate courses, and more than 36,000 enrolled students. Among the students, 62.12% are Indian from other states, 26.63% are Tamil students living in the state itself, 2% are students with Indian nationality but who completed their secondary education abroad, and 1.48% are foreign students, the majority from African and Asian countries.[7]

After some institutional procedures, I presented myself to the class of the first year of Multimedia for the Basic Photography course. In a huge class with almost seventy students sat in an orderly fashion at benches equipped with computers, the first encounter was marked by mutual empathy and curiosity. The enthusiasm generated by the new experience is especially enriched by the demographic diversity of the students, a shared curiosity, since I am at present the department's only foreign professor.

The local movie industry, Tamil Cinema, which produced an average of two hundred films per year up to the beginning of 2020,[8] is an important factor stimulating the interest of young Tamils in the Multimedia course and consequently the practice of photography. At the beginning of my experience with the students, I observed that Photography was seen more as an intermediary practice between the audio-visual and the graphic arts. Seeking to enlarge the understanding of Photography, as well as asserting its importance as a tool in contemporary modes of image production, it has been fundamental to show that learning photographic practices also involves decoding ways of seeing, thinking and representing the world.

This decodification between the world and its representations is made evident in the digression at the start of this narrative. By overlapping the contemporary landscape with the landscapes produced by traveller photographers of British India, I seek to reflect on how far the

7 Vellore Institute of Technology. 2020. *Self Study Report for 4*th *Cycle of Accreditation*. Submitted to the National Assessment and Accreditation Council. Bangalore.
8 Sreedhar Pillai. 2019. *As Tamil releases for 2019 fall below norm of 200-mark*, *a look at factors that led to declining numbers*, *Firstpost*. 25/11/2019. https://www.firstpost.com/entertainment/as-tamil-releases-for-2019-fall-below-norm-of-200-mark-a-look-at-factors-that-led-to-declining-numbers-7693251.html The Tamil Cinema movie industry is international in reach and diffusion considering that Tamil is one of the official languages of countries like India, Sri Lanka and Singapore. Equally it is a representative language in Tamil communities in countries like Malaysia and other countries of the Tamil diaspora.

representations produced by nineteenth-century travellers have shaped how we see and represent the landscape and some of the countries of the world. At what moments have I been seduced by the visual effect of this idyllic and picturesque image? Undoubtedly, the construction of this idealized image precedes Photography with its representations already rooted in Orientalism.[9] On the other hand, I observe that countries extensively photographed during the colonial era – also the initial period of photography's development – are more prone to the crystallization of this idealized image. From a personal viewpoint, this problem of representation renders my own photographic practice reserved and introspective.

Consequently, the overlapping of the contemporary landscape with the landscapes produced by traveller photographers of the nineteenth century also serves as a way for us to think about the ways in which colonial imagery influenced how Indian photographers represent their own country. Put otherwise, how much is an individual's self-image influenced by their image created by others? Clearly, a large archive of colonial imagery can also generate a larger critical reaction, reflected in the creation of an antithetical image. Among the photography students, I perceive their awareness of the importance of creating an authentic representation of India.

In this sense, contemporary Indian photography comprises a stimulating source for research. In Chennai, in 2016 the Chennai Photo Biennale was founded, promoting many different events like exhibitions, portfolio readings, workshops, lectures and other educational activities linked to Photography. Other festivals take place regularly throughout the country and numerous Indian photographers publish and show their work internationally, like Sohrab Hura, Kapil Das and Dayanita Singh. Among the texts to best show off contemporary production is *On Finitude. Life and Death under Neoliberalism*[10] where the researcher Zahid R. Chaudhary analyses the works of young Indian photographers.

9 Orientalism is generally understood as a discipline of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that concentrated on the study of the arts, languages, religions, literature and philosophical works of Asian societies and cultures. Since postcolonial theories, Orientalism has been critiqued especially for having contributed to the creation of exoticist and essentialist notions of these same societies and cultures. As an artistic aesthetic, Orientalism presented an ambiguous character insofar as it constituted an important medium of visual representation of otherness; the images created by European Orientalist artists – very often produced during voyages – circulated widely in European and American social environments.

10 Chaudhary, Zahid R. 2018. *On Finitude: Life and Death under Neoliberalism*. Amsterdam: Schilt Publishing. http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/pbkt-1s70

Recognizing from the outset the difficulties of producing a photographic essay of such a complex scenario, I began my visual research as a study of the landscape of the Indian subcontinent, specifically the Tamil Nadu region. Initially, it was interesting to ascertain how the chromatic variation of this landscape would be represented in the photographic medium. But the practice of representing the landscape should also be a critical reflection of space, where the landscape transformed by human action emerges in opposition to the idealized landscape. As this practice developed, the ubiquity of the photographic image (poster, billboard, etc.) as an element of the landscape also emerged.

The natural landscape of the region has experienced an accelerated process of urbanization. This phenomenon has contributed to a new configuration of the landscape and one of the aspects of this transformation has been the widespread construction of two-storey houses and small buildings. Notably, the free design, or the absence of a normative pattern to these new constructions, allows a combination of geometric inventiveness and unexpected chromatic elements. Considerable freedom exists in terms of mixing colours and a predilection exists for secondary and tertiary colours (green, orange and violet) and saturated hues. The presence of these constructions creates a profuse chromatic variation and establishes the recurrence of a vibrant pattern in the landscape.
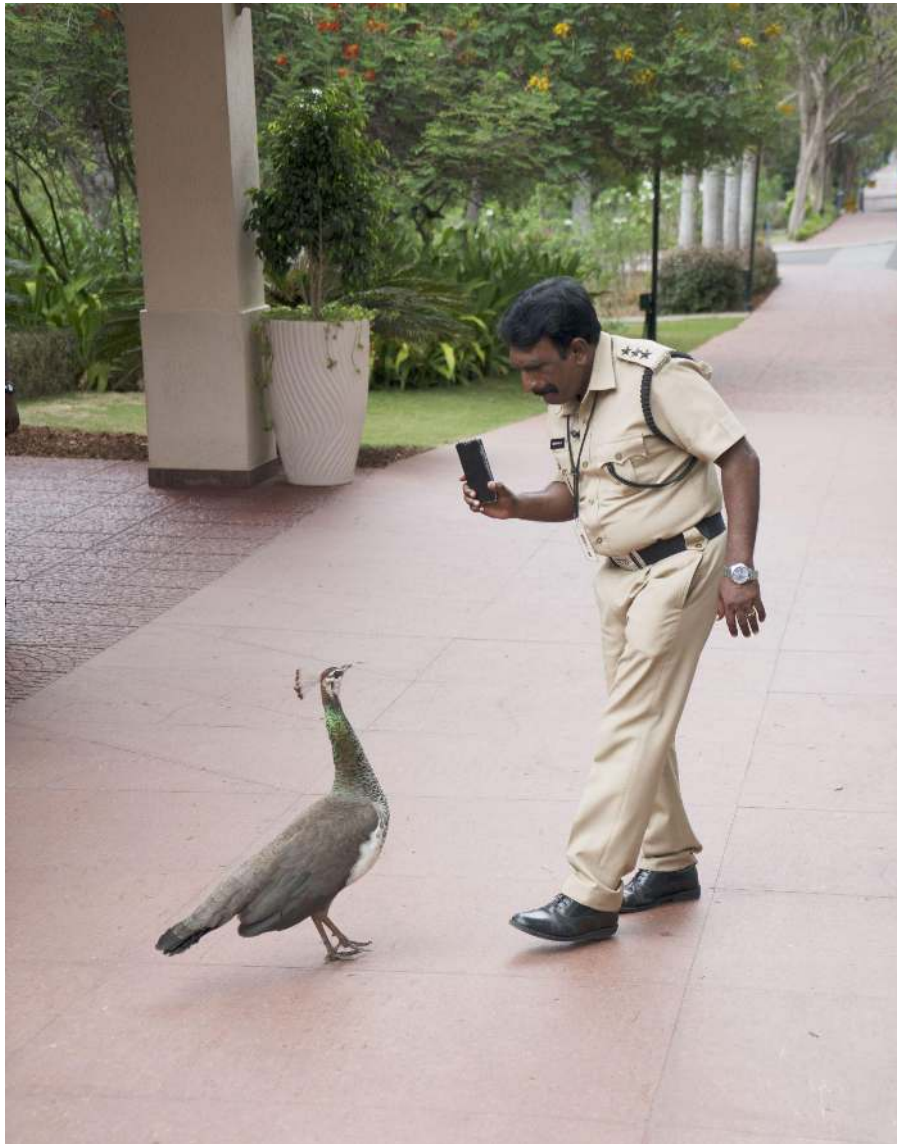
Transcribing the colour of this landscape in all its chromatic complexity to the photographic medium points to the need for aesthetic enhancements in two research areas: colour management and the possibilities for articulating colour photographs within the visual narrative. Colour management would enable more consistency in translating the colour captured in the landscape with the digital device and its transcription to the colour spaces of the monitor and printing. Concerning this research, the Vellore Institute of Technology has shown an interest in implementing an experimental print laboratory where devices can be calibrated to refine these transcription processes.

The research on the possibilities for articulating colour photographs within the visual narrative involves the study of different practices for image editing and layout. Over the process of creation, a complex palette of colours

was noted, along with an enormous variation in the luminosities of the Tamil Nadu climate, problematizing the construction of the sequence of images, the visual narrative, light and colour causing a disruption in their fluidity. On the other hand, could this difficulty denote a visual education based on narrow visual models? Or, like Colin Westerbeck, a discomfort over distancing oneself from the canons of US colour photography?

By contrast, in 2014 and 2015, as part of my doctoral research,[11] I was able to study and photograph in Egypt, a country that was also extensively photographed during its colonization, as well as represented abundantly by Orientalist painters and writers. The predominance of orange and ochre in the unplastered constructions and buildings, the arid desert of the monumental outskirts of Cairo, which, permeated by an almost always hot light with a low colour temperature due to the dust in the atmosphere, generated a set of photographs with a lower chromatic scale and in principle easier to be articulated within the sequence of the visual narrative. Comparing the two experiences from an editing viewpoint, fitting together the photographs of Egypt was like assembling the pieces of a simpler jigsaw puzzle than the one represented so far by the set of photographs produced in India.

Closer involvement in the landscape of Tamil Nadu also enabled me to observe its prolific visual universe. A singular context observed in innumerable visual manifestations like architecture, *kolam*,[12] popular paintings on trucks, the pattern of the traditional fabrics, and vernacular uses of photography. In all these visual manifestations, colour plays an important role in construction and visualization. Consequently, the study of the landscape that ensued involved me in the observation of its visual representations, approaching this observation as an aesthetic apprentice-ship in the adoption of potential solutions, variations and derivations of colour within and between photographs.

While it has been possible to enumerate the aesthetic difficulties, the educational challenges have proven equally numerous. As a professor, I am conscious of how my foreign mode of representing India can influence students to reproduce this same distancing. In this sense, aesthetic and educational issues both complement and merge into one another without clear boundaries. On this point, teaching Photography must shift beyond its technical dimension to include the decoding of the intentionalities and contexts where photographs are produced – whether these contexts are military, advertising, journalistic or academic. This deconstruction is

11 Schellini, Marcelo. 2017. *UMM al-DUNYA Mãe do Mundo. GIS - Gesto, Imagem E Som - Revista De Antropologia*, *2*(1). https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2525-3123.gis.2017.128973
12 *Kolam* is a genre of popular art involving elaborate geometric designs commonly painted at the entrance to houses using rice flour by women in southern India.

necessary to investigate their possible paradoxes. In terms of landscape photography, the photographic representation of space should not dispense with the photographer's involvement with the place being represented. Perhaps in this way, the landscape ceases to appear as the landscape of a distant place. In search of this closer contact, the photographer must become interested not in the visitable place but the habitable place. The photographer's presence should be visible in some way in the landscape, even if only perceived in the *off-camera*.

Just now it is still difficult to anticipate the complexity of the educational challenges that await us. With classes suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic, teaching has depended primarily on online platforms, a medium that has allowed the term programs to continue and that entails a significant reformulation of teaching dynamics. On the other hand, as in other institutions and countries where the teaching of visual arts is evaluated within the parameters of the traditional academic model, a constant shortfall in meeting certain evaluative criteria and curricular performance can be noted. I would observe that adopting the same evaluative criteria for such distinct branches of knowledge – such as the artistic educational process – can compromise the understanding and development of future works. Likewise, privileging only the traditional written academic form as a means of legitimizing and divulging visual research proves to be an ineffective means for visualizing it. Hence, the paradoxes inherent to photographic practice can only be properly understood and evaluated within parameters specific to artistic research rather than through other paradigms.

EPILOGUE

Henri Cartier-Bresson photographed Tamil Nadu between the 1940s and 1950s. In one of the best-known photographs from the resulting essay, we can identify the figure of a peacock. Although the photo is in black and white, we can perceive that the peacock is a rare example of a bird of the species with white plumage. Today on the Magnum site this photograph is accompanied by the following caption: "INDIA. Tamil Nadu. Tiruvannamalai. 1950. While Sri Ramana Maharshi is dying in his last incarnation and thus becoming a god, his favourite peacock (the gift of a rajah) strolls the ground of his last earthly home."[13] It seems interesting that this photograph proposes to represent the *off-camera* of an event occurring simultaneously.

Since the act of seeing does not happen in isolation, our perception establishes spatial and temporal relations inside and outside the field of vision. Just as

13 Cartier-Bresson, Henri. 1950. *Peacock*. Magnum Website. https://pro.magnumphotos.com/image/PAR46305.html

there is a desire to understand and translate landscape, so it also becomes necessary to decode the innumerable contexts of its representations. Based on the intuition that the voyage proposed here is not just one of spatial movement, researching landscape has implied exploring its representations to conclude that the best reply to an image is another image.
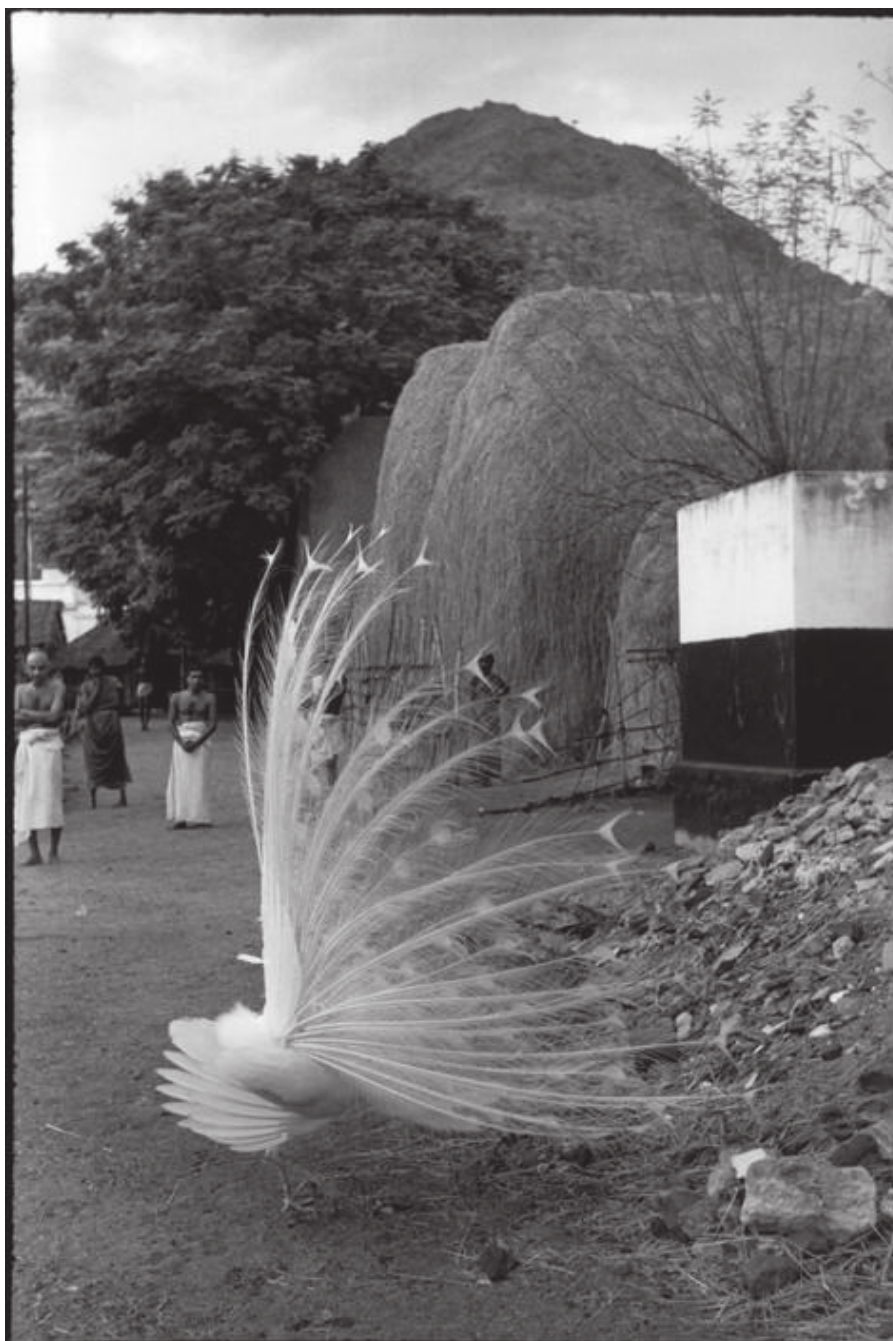
On this trip, guided by the encounter with a new perception of colour – present in the prolific visual universe of Tamil Nadu – I have been oriented by the colour present in the genre of Indo-Islamic miniature paintings.

Among the artists of this genre is Ustad (Master) Mansur, who at the beginning of the seventeenth century – according to accounts from the period – attained excellence in the pictorial representation of the natural elements (wildlife and flora) of the landscape. Honoured by the Mughal Emperor Jahangir with the title *Nadir al-Asr* – 'Marvel of the Era' – he is identified as the author of the exquisite watercolour painting 'Peacocks,' depicting the perfection of the bird's plumage in harmony with the shapes of the floral elements of the minutely detailed landscape.

The peacock is one of the national symbols of India. Its mythic figure appears in Dravidian religious iconography innumerable times next to Murugan, a splendidly faced youth who is the god of war. The peacock is his war mount and, simultaneously, celestial mount. Riding the bird, Murugan is ready for victory. The figure of the peacock is also frequently encountered in popular paintings on trucks. Covering their cabins and bodies, the image has more than a decorative function. The peacock is the strength and traction that transports the loads of a country that seems to be under construction twenty-four hours a day. On the building sites, in the dust of the endless roads, it is the peacock that performs the task of supplying and assisting the construction of one of the largest populations on the planet. And even so, the peacock is a delicate creature.

I would also like to add that it is not difficult to produce a 'beautiful photograph' of the landscape. However, just as the peacock's beauty has a natural function, landscape photography should be a study to better understand the environment in which we live. The plumage of the peacock, the exuberance of its colours, as well as other natural elements, are not beauty without purpose. While the natural landscape mostly makes me think: *Seeing live is much more beautiful*. In this sense, the photographer's perception should not be limited to framing idealized scenes. On the contrary, the camera should probe the landscape and the photographer should be capable of apprehending its complexity, its innumerable layers, its paradoxes. Following this precept, the photographer will use the optical device as an instrument for diving into space – into the landscape.

TRANSLATION:
David Rodgers

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Al-Biruni, Abu Rayhan. (Trad. Edward C. Sachau). 1910. *Alberni's India: An Account of the Religion, Philosophy, Literature, Geography, Chronology, Astronomy, Customs, Laws and Astrology of India About A.D.1030.* Edinburgh: Ballantyne, Hanson & Co.

Banerjee, Sandeep. 2014. *"Not Altogether Unpicturesque": Samuel Bourne and the Landscaping of the Victorian Himalaya.* Cambridge: University Press. Cambridge.

Cartier-Bresson, Henri. 2017. *Interviews and Conversations 1951 - 1998.* New York: Aperture.

Cartier-Bresson, Henri. 2018. *The Decisive Moment* (3rd Ed.). Göttingen: Steidl.

Chaudhary, Zahid R. 2018. *On finitude: Life and Death under Neoliberalism.* Amsterdam: Schilt Publishing. http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/pbkt-1s70

Eaton, Natasha. 2013. *Colour, Art and Empire: Visual culture and the nomadism of representation.* New York: I.B. Tauris.

Eaton, Natasha. 2014. Swadeshi Color: Artistic Production and Indian Nationalism, ca. 1905–ca. 1947. *The Art Bulletin*, 95:4, 623-641. DOI:10.1080/00043079.2013.10 786096

Guy, John, and Jorrit Britschgi. 2011. *Wonder of the Age: Master Painters of India 1100–1900.* Exh. cat. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Kaimal, Padma. 2011. *Color and Sculpture in South Asia.: Notes in the History of Art*, Vol. 30, No. 3, SPECIAL ISSUE: SUPERFICIAL? APPROACHES TO PAINTED SCULPTURE (Spring 2011), pp. 33-39. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Nagar, Kshitj. 2016. *World's Oldest Working Photo Studio Shuts Down After Long Legal Battle.* Petapixel, 18/06/2018. https://petapixel.com/2016/06/18/worlds-oldest-working-photo-studio-shuts-long-legal-battle/

Newhall, Beaumont. 1982 [1937]. *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the present* (5th ed.). New York: Museum of Modern Art.

Pinney, Christopher. 2008. *The Coming of Photography in India*. London: The British Library.

Rosenblum, Naomi. 1984. *A World History of Photography*. New York: Abbeville.

Schellini, Marcelo. 2017. UMM al-DUNYA Mãe do Mundo. *GIS - Gesto, Imagem E Som - Revista De Antropologia*, *2*(1). https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2525-3123.gis.2017.128973

Singh, Raghubir. 2003. *The Ganges*. London: Thames & Hudson.

Singh, Raghubir. 2006. *River of Colour: The India of Raghubir Singh* (2nd ed.). London: Phaidon Press.

Sreedhar Pillai. 2019. *As Tamil releases for 2019 fall below norm of 200-mark, a look at factors that led to declining numbers.* Firstpost, 25/11/2019. https://www.firstpost.com/entertainment/as-tamil-releases-for-2019-fall-below-norm-of-200-mark-a-look-at-factors-that-led-to-declining-numbers-7693251.html

Vellore Institute of Technology. 2020. *Self Study Report for 4th Cycle of Accreditation*. Submitted to the National Assessment and Accreditation Council: Bangalore.

Westerbeck, Colin, Sarah Greenough, Joel Snyder, David Travis. 1989. *On the Art of Fixing a Shadow: One Hundred and Fifty Years of Photography*. Los Angeles: Library of Congress

VISUAL REFERENCES

Linnaeus Tripe.

Em Victoria and Albert Museum Website.

https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/
linnaeus-tripe-working-methods

Samuel Bourne.

Em Pinney, Christopher. 2008. The Coming of Photography in India. London: The British Library.

Samuel Bourne.

Banerjee, Sandeep. 2014. "Not Altogether Unpicturesque": Samuel Bourne and the Landscaping of the Victorian Himalaya. Cambridge. Cambridge: University Press. Cambridge.

Raghubir Singh.

Westerbeck, Colin. 1989. On the Art of Fixing a Shadow: One Hundred and Fifty Years of Photography. Los Angeles: Library of Congress.

Raghubir Singh.

Singh, Raghubir. 2006. River of Colour: The India of Raghubir Singh (2nd ed.). London: Phaidon Press.

HURA, Sohrab.

Magnum Website
https://creative.magnumphotos.com/photographers/
sohrab-hura/

HURA, Sohrab.

Magnum Website
https://creative.magnumphotos.com/photographers/
sohrab-hura/

Henri Cartier-Bresson.

Magnum Website
https://pro.magnumphotos.com/image/PAR46305.
html

Mansur.

Guy, John, and Jorrit Britschgi. 2011. *Wonder of the Age:
Master Painters of India 1100–1900*. Exh. cat. New York:
The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

ABSTRACT

This essay presents images and texts depicting the contemporary landscape of Tamil Nadu in Southern India. In early January of 2020, as a result of an educational experience at an Indian academic institute, I conducted visual research that approached landscape photography as an immersive procedure in space, allowing me to reflect on the territory and its representations. Over the course of its development, with the landscape revealing itself as a space for interaction, the genre of landscape photography juxtaposes complex relationships that go beyond a simple transcription of nature, expanding the idea of landscape through the transformations provoked by its inhabitants, the observer's presence, the *off-camera* and its historical representations.

Marcelo Schellini is PhD in Visual Poetics of the Universidade de São Paulo (USP), Master Degree in Studies of Visual Culture by the University of Barcelona, Spain and Bachelor of Photography by Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Comercial de São Paulo (SENAC-SP). In 2015, he was granted the Exchange Schoolarship Program of CAPES and studied for one year in Egypt, attending Al-Azhar University and courses in Islamic calligraphy. His work develops towards the discovery of subjective cartography of the world, deliberately in search of crossing territorial and language boundaries. Currently, he is a professor of Photography and Design at the VIT University Vellore - India. E-mail: marcelo.schellini@vit.ac.in