

Clare Arni

The Bangalore-based photographer on documenting the disappearing professions of urban India

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Your six-year project has taken you to six cities. How did it come about?

This project started when I realised that many professions in India had disappeared. Many urban trades, like the Delhi calligrapher or the Bangalore handloom silk-weaver were vanishing, along with mattress-fluffers and knife-sharpeners.

Why are they becoming obsolete?

Some are due to changing markets. Some, like film hoarding painters, Chinese shoe-makers, Bangalore dhobis are victims of soaring rents.

What's your new book *Kanara: A Land Apart* all about?

It looks at communities coexisting along Karnataka's coast—Catholics, Jains, Hindus and Muslims—and documents their rich cultural heritage.

As an architectural photographer, what's your opinion about modern Indian architecture?

I am currently working with some young architects who are doing exciting work.

What's the B&W photo-docu on the work of a German ad agency about?

We covered women's empowerment in Rajasthan, maternal health in the Sunderbans.... It was challenging to see India in black and white.

Do you want to focus on the marginalised?

It's vital to focus on forgotten communities.

Do you think there's a growing interest in documenting urban landscapes?

Globally, there's an interest in photographing middle-class lives inhabiting urban spaces.

Which other projects have you worked on?

I've contributed to books on architects Charles Correa, B.V. Doshi and Geoffrey Bawa.

Does photography in India match up to international standards?

There are very talented Indian photographers whose work I greatly admire.

What's next on the line?

I am working on a book for Tata Power Solar, on communities living with only solar power. This has taken me to Ladakh, Sunderbans, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh.