

photography

CLARE VISION

Bengaluru-based photographer Clare Arni hunts for fleeting calm in chaotic spaces. She's now showing her most favourite shots, from a 25-year career



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1. Bidar 2014; The Bidar fort built in 1428 by Ahmed Shah Bahmani

2. Jaipur 2013; Stepwell behind Amber fort, Jaipur

3. Burma 2009; Interior of one of the 2,300 pagodas in the ancient city of Bagan on the banks of the Irrawaddy river



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In 1989, the UK-born, self-taught photographer Clare Arni started documenting the works of architects in Bengaluru. Soon, she moved on to shooting historical architecture for books on heritage. It led to a lifelong love affair with geometric patterns made by stairs, passages and buildings. Along the way, she "learnt on the job while working on diverse assignments, ranging from fashion, to horse racing, capturing children's portraits and even shooting a chicken farm".

Now, Arni (53) is showcasing a selection of 41 photographs shot over 25 years, which document South Asia's cultural heritage and architecture. Titled Anatomy of Stillness, the exhibition allows you to catch a glimpse of Kolkata, Fatehpur Sikri, Benares, Mumbai, Gulbarga, Bijapur, Hampi, Mysore, Sri Lanka and Burma.

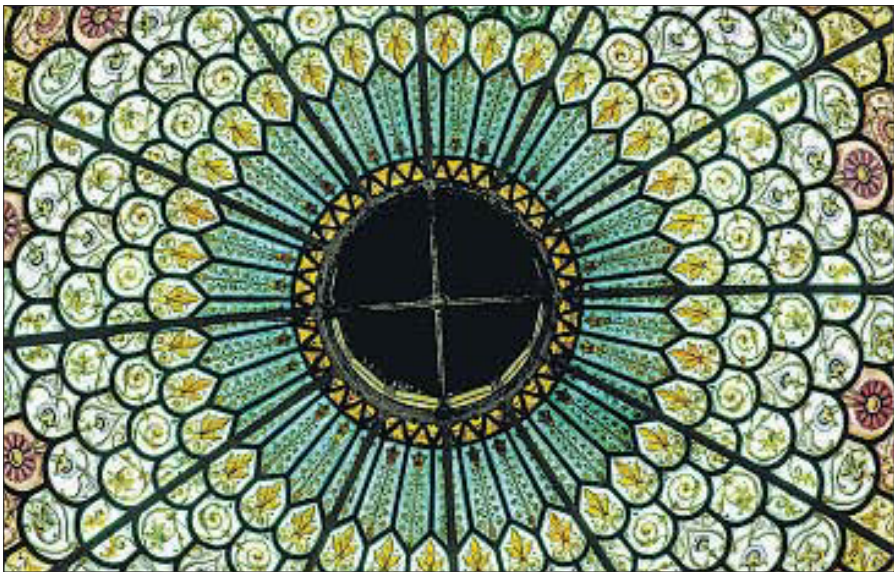
The title refers to Arni's focus on the pockets of serenity amidst bustling, chaotic spaces. What stand out are the images like of a lone girl in Bengaluru, face turned away from the camera, facing a curtain and awaiting her entrance in the circus; or the empty staircases in chaotic spaces like Khotachiwadi and the ghats in Benares where clothes fluttering in the wind lend it a magical allure.

"I have been travelling the length and breadth of India documenting cultural and architectural heritage. During the shoots, I would sometimes find a moment of stillness in the cacophony of a normal working day. It could be a perfect conjunction of light and shade, or the shapes made by a stairwell or corridor that would transform an ordinary scene into something eternal," shares Arni.

After shooting for more than two decades, Arni admits that the challenges are now to photograph in public spaces: "Permissions are required and there is suspicion as to one's motives. On assignment, you drive miles to some desolate place where there is a hidden architectural gem and you never know whether you will be able to photograph it or not," says Arni.

Born in UK and based in Bengaluru, Arni boasts of an eclectic background. She grew up in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, where her father was employed with a textile company.

In the past, her work has been exhibited at reputed institutions like the Essl Museum, Vienna and Berkeley Art



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4. Mysore 2005; Mysore Palace; ceiling of the marriage pavilion

5. Mumbai 2014; 19th century homes in Khotachiwadi

6. Bangalore 2008; Behind the scenes of the circus, a young woman awaits her turn

7. Udaipur 1989; A meandering street in the bazaar of Udaipur



ANATOMY OF STILLNESS

The exhibition is ongoing till October 28

Open 11am to 6pm (closed on Sundays)

Tarq, Dhanraj Mahal, Apollo Bunder

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Museum, California. Her photographs are also part of the permanent collection of the Saatchi Gallery, London and the Freer/Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian Institute, Washington. Based on her travels, she has also released coffee table books on the architectural history of Benares, the palaces of the Deccan and recent excavations of Hampi.

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