



[Home](#) > [Lifestyle News](#) > [Culture News](#) > [Articles](#) > Making of memory: With analog and digital photos, a new show in Mumbai traces how we remember and forget

Making of memory: With analog and digital photos, a new show in Mumbai traces how we remember and forget

Premium

Updated on: 04 April, 2022 09:17 AM IST | Mumbai

[Nascimento Pinto](#) | nascimento.pinto@mid-day.com

Share: [f](#) [🌐](#) [🐦](#)

Text [AA](#) [AA](#)

Bengaluru-based artist Philippe Calia, who has spent a considerable time in Mumbai over the last 10 years, will showcase his first solo show titled 'Lethe' in the city. He explores how going digital is changing the very essence of photographs



Share



Cloud Atlas (Buenovista), 2022. Photo Courtesy: Philippe Calia/TARQ

What links photographs and memories together and how do those ties evolve as the world becomes increasingly digital? Bengaluru-based artist Philippe Calia, who has spent a considerable time in Mumbai, explores this through his latest and first solo exhibition in a gallery space ever, which happens to be in this city.

The show 'Lêthe' — named based on the river Lethe from Greek mythology, which makes people who drink from it experience forgetfulness — is set to open at the TARQ art gallery in Colaba. Calia's artworks use different mediums such as photochemigrams, cyanotypes, and video to explore the essence of digital memory today.

For this, the artist, who is also a photographer and filmmaker, draws from two memories from his childhood, which left a lasting impression on him. The first one was of a factory sending out plumes of smoke, which is how he thought clouds were made, which today, he uses to depict the digital cloud and Cloud Atlas. In his video piece, he makes use of a 1970s photograph of his family and juxtaposes it with his own pictures that he has clicked over the years at the same location and others to reflect on the possibility of decline of memories over time.



Murin Murin (Australia, 2021). Photo Courtesy: Philippe Calia/TARQ

Mid-day Online reached out to Philippe Calia to understand the idea behind this exhibition.

What inspired you to choose Lethe as your theme for this exhibition?

I chose this title very recently. I felt it did justice to the work in several ways, echoing with the process (the act of diluting the thermal prints, or washing the cyanotypes in water), as well as with certain themes and motifs I was exploring throughout the creation of this work: oblivion, entropy, ecology, geology, overflow... to name a few.

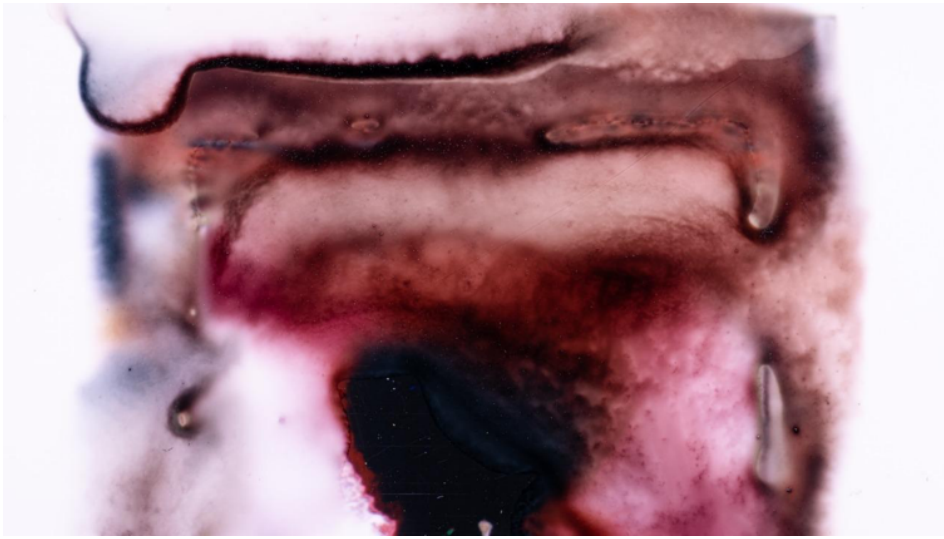
How is this exhibition different from your work till now?

It is my first solo show in a gallery space and I am really happy that this happens in Mumbai, which still feels home after having been living there for almost 10 years. It is also a special one in the sense that even though I am speaking about photography and using photographic techniques, the works are abstract/non-representational, and mostly produced from available imagery. Indeed, I worked with satellite images, damaged photographs which I have collected over the years in Paris and Mumbai, but also some prints from my own family album.

Artist, photographer and filmmaker Philippe Calia uses the process of creating photochemigrams, cyanotypes and video for this exhibition. Photo Courtesy: Philippe Calia/TARQ

How did your early memories influence you to create these artworks?

Two specific memories from childhood emerged while making these works. These are not of memories of events but rather of belief and perception of reality. What mattered for me is not so much if they influenced my creative process as much as how they could enrich the viewer's experience of the works.



You have also used a photograph from the pre-digital days in this exhibition and attempted to change the way we view it today. With the overwhelming nature of easily accessible photos today, what made you go back and use the old photographs as a medium?

Old photographic prints are images which bear a life of their own, and I wanted to look at them almost like forensics. Their degradation stands in contrast with the (supposed) absolute stability of the digital image, the one of the “cloud”, safely kept and backed up in multiple data centres. That way they help me assess the hypermnesic society we are heading towards, and accept the value and importance of oblivion.

What are the different mediums you have used for this exhibition? Why did you decide to use ‘photochemigrams’, cyanotypes and video for this exhibition?

Chemigram was a term that was coined in the 1950s by Belgian artist Pierre Cordier, to describe his process of making works to paint with chemicals on light sensitive paper. My process of photographing prints that I dilute/destroy/erase myself is quite different. Yet, because the starting point has an indexical nature (satellite imagery) and the arrival point is similar in its abstraction, I call them “photochemigrams”.

Similarly, Cyanotype printing is a method that is allowing me to “bring back” the digital image in the physical world, handle it with my own hands and give it an existence that is more than just between, let’s say, a computer and a printing device. The production of an imaginary atlas of the digital cloud, with a printing technique that was used in architecture for “blueprints”, made even more sense. As much as the ambiguity of the colour - the blue can be of the sky, or the sea that reflects it. As for video, it is for me a way to explore the process of an image coming together or apart in duration.

Which medium do you prefer and why?

I am trained in photography but I am very interested in photographs as objects, and all the emotional charge we put into it. I am committed to explore further the video medium, while since the pandemic, I also started working with drawing and printmaking.

In what ways did the pandemic influence your art and visualisation over the last two years?

I always wanted to develop bodies of work with pre-existing imagery, as a gesture of refusal. I actually tried this methodology while working on a collective project in

Mumbai in 2016-17 - but in that case, more from a desire to question representation. The pandemic acted as a frame, in which I could imagine and conceive one more of these refusals, but this time confined in my studio and based more on a mix of personal and ecological concerns.

[Also Read: Dr Ambedkar Book Centre: Six years after demolition, the legacy continues at a makeshift stall in Dadar](#)

