

Revealing Humanity

What: Fazal Sheikh Lecture

Where: Tipton Hall

When: October 13th, 2008

How Much: \$5 general public, \$2.50 students/seniors/SFAI members

What: Fazal Sheikh Individual & Group Workshop Sessions

Where: SFAI

When: October 13th & 14th, 2008

How Much: Call for specific scheduling and pricing info

"It is one thing to photograph a group of people, it is another to try to understand them," writes artist and activist Fazal Sheikh. Sheikh uses his simple black and white photographic style to explore social injustice in third world countries. He photographs refugees and torn communities in Pakistan, East India and Africa, among others. Sheikh began using photography as a medium of both documentation and understanding on his first trip to Kenya in 1992. His initial intention was to photograph Swahili culture. But Somali refugees began pouring into the country because of the Civil war there, and Sheikh photographed them instead.

Born in New York City, Sheikh graduated from Princeton University. For his book *The Victor Weeps*, Sheikh traveled to Pakistan, his grandfather's birthplace. He began photographing and interviewing relatives and survivors of the Soviet invasion there. The book chronicles both his personal quest and the stories of those he meets. Charles Hagen of the New York Times writes of Sheikh's powerful photographic style, "what gives Mr. Sheikh's photographs their emotional power is their implicit assertion that the refugees share humanity with their oppressors, even if they no longer occupy the same land. Mr. Sheikh achieves this effect simply by treating his subjects not as representative types, bit players in a social and political drama larger than themselves, but as individuals."

At the core of Sheikh's work is a belief in spending time with his subjects, talking with them in an attempt to understand their stories and their culture, and to overcome his own prejudices. In relating this, Sheikh pairs his images with interviews and stories by his subjects. This coupling allows the reader to find another story beneath the image, and ultimately to discover and

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Fazal Sheikh

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understand his subjects.

Sheikh established the International Human Rights Series (IHRS) in order to support and create projects concerning human rights, with proceeds going to the International Humanitarian Fund. Sheikh's numerous books include several for the IHRS: *Moksha*, about the dispossessed widows of India; *Ramadan Moon*, an interview with a Somali asylum seeker in Holland about to be evicted; and *Patroness of the Americas*, which includes photos of and testimonials by Mexicans attempting to cross the border. Many of his books are available for free online through IHRS, and include alternate translations in Bengali, Hindi, Somali and French.

Sheikh has received numerous awards and honors, including fellowships from the MacArthur Foundation, the J. William Fulbright Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. He was awarded the International Henri Cartier-Bresson Grand Prize, the Prix d'Arles, and the Infinity Award from the International Center of Photography. Sheikh has had solo exhibitions at the United Nations, The Art Institute of Chicago and the International Center of Photography in New York City, and he has appeared in over twenty publications, including *An American Century of Photography*. ArtForum and The New York Times have written about him, as well as The Wall Street Journal and The Village Voice. Over thirty institutions have his work in their collections, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University, and The Art Institute of Chicago.

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For more information about Fazal Sheikh or interview requests, please contact Michelle Laflamme-Childs at mchilds@sfai.org or Gabe Gomez at ggomez@sfai.org or call (505) 424-5050.