Exhibition By Leading International Photographer Shahidul Alam As Part Of Freedom City 2017

Monday 6 November, 2017

NEPN and Breeze Creatives present Kalpana's Warriors, an exhibition by leading international photographer Shahidul Alam as part of Freedom City 2017.

Kalpana Chakma was a vocal and charismatic leader who campaigned for the rights of indigenous people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts area of Bangladesh. She was abducted from her home at gunpoint over 20 years ago by a military officer and two members of the Village Defence Party and has never been seen again.

Through this powerful installation, using photographs printed on large straw mats each one illuminated by a candle, the acclaimed Bangladeshi photographer, artist and activist Shahidul Alam attempts to break the silence surrounding her disappearance.

Kalpana, who was only 23 when she was abducted, had made it her life's mission to campaign for the rights of the indigenous people living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). She belonged to the Chakma or Pahari community, and was a leader of the Hill Women's Federation.

The ethnic conflict in the CHT, which began in 1977 soon after the Bangladesh state came into being, continues to this day in spite of a peace treaty negotiated in 1997 between the state and the Pehari people. Amnesty International reports that more than 100,000 Pahari have been displaced by the conflict. There have been multiple reports of human rights violations, massacres and the razing of entire villages by Bangladeshi forces.

The portraits of Kalpana's warriors – those who have refused to let go of her memory and legacy – were created using laser etching on straw mats. This innovative technique, developed specifically for this exhibition, is rooted in the everyday realities of the people and the sparse conditions of Kalpana's home where she slept on the floor on a straw mat. Shahidul Alam said, 'I wanted the wanted the portraits to be burned onto the straw mats by a laser beam to remind the viewer of the fires deliberately set by the authorities who had burnt the Pahari villages – something that Kalpana was protesting about in her last confrontation with the military.'

Alongside the portraits, a series of prints explore the internal displacement of the Paharis and the arrival of the government-backed Bangali settlers.

Speaking about the exhibition Alam said, 'I have never met Kalpana Chakma, I only knew her in terms of her activism but I feel I know her in other ways. I have sat on her bed, read her diaries, spent time with her family, and I have looked at archival footage of her talks. But more importantly, I have felt her presence among the people who survive.'

A talk with Shahidul Alam will be held in the gallery on Friday 8th December at 6-9pm.

The exhibition will be open from 1st December – 11th January, Wednesday to Saturday, 11am – 5pm. Entry is free.

More information is available at www.abject.gallery

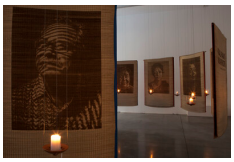
Shahidul Alam: Kalpana's Warriors
Artist Talk: **Friday, 8th December 2017, 6:00pm – 9:00pm**
Exhibition: **1st December 2017 – 11th January 2018**
Opening Times: **Wed – Sat, 11:00am – 5:00pm**
Location: **Abject 2 Gallery, 2nd Floor, Bamburgh House, Market Street (East), Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 6BH**

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Media:





Related Sectors:

Entertainment & Arts ::

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Exhibition :: Bangladesh :: Freedom City 2017 :: Kalpana Chakma :: Newcastle ::

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Information for editors

For media enquiries contact Zoe Anderson on 0191 673 0098 or email info@breezecreatives.com.

Press image available at:
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/630htfuxmoidrel/AAClmfcNP8yy_zlyLn8j86Jya?dl=0

Additional images can be emailed upon request.

Kalpana's Warriors is presented by NEPN and Breeze Creatives. The exhibition was curated by Autograph ABP with Rahnuma Ahmed, Shahidul Alam, Saydia Gulrukh, Sadia Marium and ASM Rezaur Rahman in partnership with Drik, Bangladesh. Supported by University of Sunderland. The exhibition is part of the Freedom City 2017 programme.

About Shahidul Alam
Shahidul Alam is an internationally recognised photographer, human rights activist and digital pioneer. After studying Chemistry in London, where he gained his PhD, he returned to Bangladesh where he founded the Drik (a Sanskrit word meaning 'vision') photo agency in 1989. Alam is an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Photography Society and visiting professor at University of Sunderland. Alam has chaired the World Press Photo jury and his book My Journey as a Witness has been described as "the most important book ever written by a photographer".

About NEPN
Established in 2009, NEPN (North East Photography Network) works as a development agency for photographic practice in North East England. NEPN offers a programme of professional development and a high-quality commissioning programme, which aims to support and present innovative, critically-engaged practice in the north east and beyond. NEPN is an initiative of and is hosted by the University of Sunderland. www.northeastphoto.net

About Breeze Creatives
Breeze Creatives is a Community Interest Company based in Newcastle upon Tyne that specialises in arts and cultural projects around the North East of England. Creating opportunities for a diverse range of practitioners, Breeze Creatives fills the gap between the artist's studio and the independent contemporary gallery. www.breezecreatives.com

About Abject Gallery
Abject Gallery, run by Breeze Creatives, is a new contemporary art gallery, in Newcastle city centre that exhibits a selection of national and international artists. Located on the 8th floor of the Bamburgh House arts centre on Market Street East, the gallery is also known for its stunning views of the Quayside including the Tyne Bridge, Sage and BALTIC. www.abject.gallery

About Freedom City
Freedom City 2017 is a programme marking the 50th anniversary of Dr Martin Luther King Jr. receiving an honorary degree from Newcastle University. Freedom City 2017 takes place at venues and public spaces across Newcastle and Gateshead throughout the year. For more information, visit www.freedomcity2017.com

About Autograph ABP
Established in 1988, Autograph ABP is a charity that works internationally in photography and film, cultural identity, race, representation and human rights. Read more at www.autograph-abp.co.uk

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