

**PRESS RELEASE**

Tue 11 January 2011  
For immediate release



New Art Exchange in association with Aicon Gallery (London) present

# Raghu Rai's Invocation to India

Curated by Saleem Arif Quadri MBE

**Exhibition dates: 29 January - 30 April 2011**

Launch event: Friday 28 January, 6 - 9pm

*As part of Format International Photography Festival 2011*

New Art Exchange is delighted to present an exhibition of works by world renowned Magnum photographer Raghu Rai, for the first time in a public gallery in the UK, including new work from 2010.

Rai's work proclaims the rich diversity of contemporary India, with its juxtapositions of ancient and modern, where the people are the landscape. He photographs an India teeming with colour, history, beauty and brilliance whilst uncovering a continent's domestic rituals with these striking images of Indian street life, festivals and the changing seasons.

*"Over the centuries, so much has melded into India that it's not really one country, and it's not one culture. It is crowded with crosscurrents of many religions, beliefs, cultures and their practices that may appear incongruous. But India keeps alive the inner spirit of her own civilization with all its contradictions. Here, several centuries have learnt to live side by side at the same time. And a good photograph is a lasting witness to that, as photography is a history of our times: being a multi-lingual, multi- cultured and multi- religious society, the images must speak these complexities through a multi-layered experience." - Raghu Rai*

Rai, who was born in present-day Pakistani in 1942, came to India during Partition and has been witness to some of the most significant events in his country's recent history. He was one of the first photographers on the scene after the 1984 Bhopal industrial disaster and has produced acclaimed documentary series on Mother Teresa, the Dalai Lama and the late Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

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In 1977 Henri Cartier-Bresson saw his work at an exhibition in Paris, and recommended him to become a member of Magnum Photo Agency. Since then Rai has taken India as his canvas and produced works that he simply describes as slicing out spaces and moments in front of him. Rai has taken the documentary form associated with Cartier-Bresson and the Magnum tradition and pushed it in a way that responds to the specificities of India. He captures the ways in which the past co-exists with the present in India, and on a more subtle level, the visual rhymes and congruities between the different components in his works. His works attest to a multi-layered reality, where people, objects, animals and buildings jostle with each other, where people's own personal space is overlaid and invaded by each other's space.

Other major books include projects on the Taj Mahal, Tibet, Sikhs, Dreams of India, Tibet, Reflections in Black and White, and his recent book on Indian Musicians (2010). A regular contributor to a huge range of international journals and British broadsheets, from '90 to '97 Rai judged the World Press Photo Awards.

With nearly 50 years of excellence and an extraordinary contribution to world photography and Indian photography in particular, in honour of his extensive photographic oeuvre and recognition of his commitment to excellence, in 1971 Rai was awarded one of India's highest civilian accolades - the Padma Shri. In 1992 he was awarded "Photographer of the Year" in the United States for the story "Human Management of Wildlife in India" published in *National Geographic*, and recently has been conferred the award of Officier des Arts et des Lettres.

There will also be a special talk: *In Conversation with Niru Ratnam and Saleem Arif Quadri at the launch night* - Friday 28 January, 8pm. Taking part are Niru Ratnam, Director of the Aicon Gallery (London), Saleem Arif Quadri MBE, Curator of 'Invocation to India', with the talk Chaired by Skinder Hundal, Director of New Art Exchange. Invocation to India will be on show at New Art Exchange between 29 January - 9 April, admission to the exhibition and launch are free.

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### Notes to Editors:

- **Raghu Rai's** *Invocation to India* will be on show at New Art Exchange between Saturday 29 January - Saturday 9 April 2011
- The launch event takes place on Friday 28 January 2011, with free admission to all
- Venue: **New Art Exchange**, 39-41 Gregory Boulevard, Nottingham NG7 6BE
- Curated by Saleem Arif Quadri MBE, whom previously co-curated the critically acclaimed *An(other) Story* at New Art Exchange
- This exhibition is part of Format International Photography Festival 2011: 'RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW: exposures from the public realm' on between 4 March - 3 April 2011
- The exhibition is a partnership between New Art Exchange and Aicon Gallery (London)
- The special talk accompanying the exhibition - *In Conversation with Niru Ratnam and Saleem Arif Quadri* takes place on the launch night - Friday 28 January @ 8pm. Taking part are Niru Ratnam, Director of the Aicon Gallery (London), Saleem Arif Quadri MBE, Curator of 'Invocation to India', with the talk Chaired by Skinder Hundal, Director of New Art Exchange.
- Opening Times: Monday to Saturday: 10am - 5pm, Sunday: Closed
- Admission to the exhibition is FREE
- For more information visit the NAE website: [www.nae.org.uk](http://www.nae.org.uk)

### Biography

Born in 1942 in a village that is now part of Pakistan, Raghu Rai took up the camera with seriousness after one of his photographs was published in The [British] Times in 1966: "It sort of tickled me and soon photography became a passion. It was just by chance, not that I wanted to become a photographer". He started off with a box camera presented to him by his brother. He was 'discovered' in 1977 by Cartier Bresson at an exhibition in Paris, and then invited to become a member of Magnum. Since then Rai has taken India as his canvas and produced works that he simply describes as slicing out spaces and moments in front of him. These spaces are often tumultuous, multivalent and polyphonic but also on other occasions capture an individual's stillness or a moment of calm within the ongoing flux.

Rai has taken the documentary form associated with Cartier-Bresson and the Magnum tradition and pushed it in a way that responds to the specificities of India. He brings a sense of the multitude compared to the relatively confined picture planes of Western modernist photographers. Rai has talked about the experience of being immersed within India as being a 'horizontal' experience, suggesting that at any one moment of immersion, India stretches on

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seemingly infinitely in all directions. In each work there is the strong suggestion that life and the crowds teem on beyond the frame - indeed sometimes a stray foot or other parts of bodies outside the borders of the photograph directly attest to this.

Rai captures the ways in which the past co-exists with the present in India, and on a more subtle level he captures the visual rhymes and congruities between very different components in his works. One might argue that Rai only has one subject: India. His works attest to a multi-layered reality, where people, objects, animals and buildings jostle with each other, where people's own personal space is overlaid and invaded by each other's space, where temporalities rub up against each other. His works are extracted from a complex external reality: *"When I slice out a space, a moment, it should be done with such simplicity and faithfulness that when I give it back to life, life starts moving and flowing around it without a stutter."*

### New Art Exchange

- **New Art Exchange was awarded £5million** of funding from Arts Council England, Nottingham City Council, the Greater Nottingham Partnership, East Midlands Development Agency, Radford and Hyson Green New Deal for Communities, and European Regional Development Funding, and took 18 months to build. The organisation was a big winner in Arts Council England's the January 2008 review of national arts funding gaining a 58% increase in its annual funding grant. The award was made in recognition of the organisation's vital role in supporting visual and performing arts.
- **The building designed by architects Hawkins\ Brown** boasts 5 -storey building provides 1360 sqm space dedicated to visual arts with; galleries, workshop/performance/rehearsal space, artists in residence facilities, and a cafe. Distinguished from the red clay buildings of the neighbourhood by its black brick façade and arrangement of frameless windows ranging in size (from 0.16 sqm to 4.84sqm), offers incidental and unexpected views into and out of the building.
- **Mission:** *The New Art Exchange ambition is to become a national centre of excellence promoting contemporary arts development within the cultural and creative industries, to deliver an innovative and exciting programme of activity to promote, support and advocate contemporary multi-cultural arts development in visual and performing arts and new media. To be a cultural centre led by African, African Caribbean and South Asian arts practice. To serve an international community from roots firmly embedded in the local area.*
- New Art Exchange has won a number of awards, including: **The RIBA National Award 2009, RIBA East Midlands Award 2009, The Lord Mayor's Awards for Urban Design - New Build and Overall Award**, and the **National Civic Trust Award 2009**