()'Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation, 1850-1900'—on view at the UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History from March 7 through July 3, 2004—presents more than two hundred master photographs taken by travelers, military surveyors, and professional studios within the context of the British colonial era and examines how images laid the historical foundations—real or imagined—on which an ordered empire, rather than an assemblage of colonial trade relationships, might be constructed.

This traveling exhibition presents some of the greatest architectural sites of the Indian subcontinent—from Mughal, Jain, and Sikh monuments in the north to Hindu temples of South Asia, and Buddhist monuments in central India—and explores the social, political and anthropological role of images in the creation of national identity. ‘Traces of India’ includes such masterpieces as Felice Beato’s exquisite views of the Taj Mahal, the Golden Temple, and monuments in the city of Lucknow; Dr. John Murray’s three-plate panorama of the 17th-century Pearl Mosque in the Agra fort; and a remarkable 21-plate panorama by Captain Linnaeus Tripe recording an inscription that runs along the base of the 11th-century Rajarajesvara temple in Thanjavur.

The Fowler Museum is the third and final stop and the only West Coast venue for this exhibition, which is organized by the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal, (CCA) and features many images from their collection, along with loans from the Yale Center for British Art (the only other American venue), and the British Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Getty Research Institute.

The exhibition is organized around six themes. The first, Projecting India, begins chronologically with the 18th century and displays encounters of British artists with Indian historic landscapes. It features
engravings and aquatints by William Hodges, Thomas and William Daniell, and Samuel Davis, and photographs by Dr. John Murray, Felice Beato, Baron Alexis de La Grange, and Samuel Bourne. This section of the exhibition illustrates the important role of photographs as souvenirs of distant India.

The second theme, Capturing India’s Past, demonstrates how photography was used to record and preserve Indian historic buildings, transforming them from stone to paper. India presented Western historians with a mesmerizing number of ancient monuments endangered by time. Survey photographs of Indian architecture not only provided accurate representations of Buddhist and Hindu temples and their inscriptions, but also brought the perilous state of these ruins to public attention. Stunning works by British officers and draftsmen, and by photographers Major Robert Gill, Captain Linnaeus Tripe, Colonel Thomas Biggs and Dr. William Pigou, illustrate the correlation between photography, the preservation of architecture, and the creation of a western historiography of India’s ancient monuments.

Museumizing India, the third theme, shows how the cultural ownership implicit in British protection of ancient Indian monuments transformed India into a kind of museum in which ruins were left intact, on site, while reproduction in the form of photographs, drawings, and plaster casts were transferred to collections and archives in England. The exhibition brings into question the role of photographs as copies or replicas of buildings and their function of providing knowledge about India to European institutions.

In considering the fourth theme, Re-imagining India After Independence, a selection of images from popular Indian culture, such as calendar art and clips of Bollywood films, are displayed to explore contemporary Indian visual culture and its links with 19th-century architectural images in the realms of religion, tourism, and politics. This portion of the exhibition looks at how architecture participates symbolically in post-independence India and how the imagery of devotional sites and colonial sites appropriated from the 19th century is used for new, national purposes.

The fifth theme, Staging Indian Architecture, shows photographs and documents of selected world fairs in which India was exhibited through arts and crafts in temporary pavilions. The exhibits demonstrate the appreciation of ornament and decoration in Islamic and Rajput architectural traditions, which was replicated in England following the Crystal Palace exhibition of 1851. Photographs from five world fairs are featured, from the Crystal Palace to the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition in London.

The final section, Memorializing the Raj, demonstrates how photographs of Indian architecture and sites of war were often vehicles for collective remembrance by the British community of its experiences in India. They were not only views of distant times and places or documentary records of ancient buildings; they were also memorials to battlefields and fallen political regimes. The Indian Rebellion against the British (1857–1858), codified as a “mutiny,” generated a vast production of views of India as sites of war. Photographs of Agra, Lucknow, and Delhi by Felice Beato and John Murray are displayed together with newspapers, watercolors, and popular forms of entertainment, suggesting the value of these photographs as cultural artifacts and traces of colonial memory.

‘Traces of India’ is guest curated by Maria Antonella Pelizzari, former associate curator of photographs at the CCA, and designed by New York architect Lindy Roy. This exhibition was made possible with generous support from the Shirley and Ralph Shapiro Director’s Discretionary Fund, Navin and Pratima Doshi, Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, UCLA School of the Arts and Architecture, NPA, Sona Doshi and Kevin McCarthy, Anil and Geeta Mehta, Bhupen and Surbala Randeria, Dinker and Aruna Shah, Uka Solanki, Vikram and Anjana Kamdar, Thomas and Sarah Peter, and additional private donors. An accompanying book co-published by the CCA and the Yale Center for British Art will be available in the Fowler Museum Store.
‘Traces of India’ will be on view Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5 pm; and on Thursdays, noon until 8 pm. The museum is closed Mondays and Tuesdays. The Fowler Museum, part of UCLA’s School of the Arts and Architecture, is located in the north part of the UCLA campus. Admission is free. Parking is available for $7 in Lot 4. For more information, the public may call 310/825-4361.

‘Traces of India’ Programming:

Thursday, April 15, 2004 7 pm
Lecture: Between Village and City: Continuity, Change and Ambivalence in South Indian Architecture
Join Peter Nabokov, an anthropologist, writer, and professor in UCLA’s Department of World Arts and Cultures, for this lecture about the architecture of India.

Thursday, April 22, 2004 7 pm
Lecture: An Introduction to the Visions, Sounds, and Themes of Popular Indian Cinema
Learn about the vast film traditions of Bollywood! This lecture, featuring film clips with English subtitles, will be lead by Professor Joseph Nagy and Assistant Professor Yogita Goyal, both of UCLA’s English Department.

Sunday, May 2, 2004 noon–5 pm
Family Festival: INDIA!
See classical Indian dancers and musicians, participate in art workshops, and explore the exhibition Traces of India during this free celebration of Indian cultures. Indian food and drinks will be available for purchase.

Saturday, May 15, 2004 9 am–5 pm
Symposium: Monumental History: Photography and the Making of National Memory in India
This symposium will explore critical themes of photography, architecture, and Indian history addressed in the exhibition Traces of India. Distinguished participants include Partha Chatterjee, Tapati Guha-Thakurta, Swathi Chattopadhyay, Kajri Jain, Sally Stein, Felicity Scott, and exhibition curator, Antonella Pelizzari. Organized for the Fowler by Saloni Mathur, Department of Art History, and Aamir Mufti, Department of Comparative Literature, UCLA. Information: 310/825-8655.

Saturday, May 22, 2004 2 pm
Lecture/Screening: Satya ("Truth")
Directed by Ram Gopal Verma, this acclaimed 1998 Hindi film is a paradoxical tale of an orphaned Indian man called Satya living in the Mumbai underworld. The running time is 170 minutes and the film will be preceded and followed by comments from Vinay Lal, associate professor of history, UCLA.

Thursday, May 27, 2004 6 pm
Fowler Out Loud: Indian Classical Music
Featuring students from the Indian Music Ensemble. Outdoors; light refreshments provided.

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