

শহরনামা | Calcutta 1990-1993

Photographs by Kushal Ray

Dates: 8 August – 18 September, 2026

Venue: Gallery 3, Emami Art, Kolkata

Preview: 5:00 PM, 8 August 2026

Emami Art is pleased to present শহরনামা | Calcutta 1990-1993, a solo exhibition of photographs by artist and photographer Kushal Ray, opening on 8 August 2026. Drawn from thousands of negatives made during an intensive engagement with Calcutta in the early 1990s, the show offers a rare view into one of the most sustained photographic studies of the city from that period.

At the heart of Ray's practice is a humanist philosophy grounded in observation, discipline, and proximity. Returning repeatedly to particular neighbourhoods, routes, crossings, bridges, ferries, buses, parks, public benches, and street corners, he built an expansive record of the city and its inhabitants. In 1991 alone, he exposed over 268 rolls of film. And, across this archive, people occupy every frame, commuting, waiting, working, resting, or gathering, caught within the ordinary rhythms of urban life. His images carry a strong sense of structure and timing, shaped by an attentiveness to the unpredictability of a place the artist knows intimately and inhabits closely.

Many of the social worlds and surfaces depicted here have since changed profoundly or vanished altogether, making these photographs a record of Calcutta on the threshold of transformation. So vast was the output of those years that numerous negatives remained unprinted for decades; several works in this exhibition are being seen by the artist as positive images for the first time, more than thirty years after they were made. Together, they reintroduce an extraordinary photographic record and reaffirm Kushal Ray's place among the city's most dedicated visual chroniclers.

শহরনামা | Calcutta 1990-1993, marks a significant reintroduction to Kushal Ray's work and his remarkable archive of Calcutta and Calcuttans.

Total words: 296

QUOTES

“Emami Art is delighted to present Kushal Ray’s solo exhibition, bringing overdue attention to a remarkable and deeply committed photographic practice. Ray’s images offer a vivid encounter with Calcutta in the 1990s which is a meditation on photography itself...the patience, observation, and his gaze. The exhibition reflects our commitment to presenting historically significant practices that continue to shape contemporary conversations around photography, urban memory, and visual culture.”

— Richa Agarwal
CEO, Emami Art

“Kushal Ray’s photographs hold a significant place within the history of contemporary Indian photography and the visual culture of Calcutta. Working with extraordinary consistency through the early 1990s, he produced an expansive body of images that observed the city through its quotidian movements, public spaces, and social rhythms. I approach his photographs as an incidental yet precise inscription made in the midst of a changing world. And, what emerges then is a dense and restless field of encounters where life remains suspended within the still image.”

— Ushmita Sahu
Director and Head Curator, Emami Art

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Kushal Ray (b. 1960) is a journalist-turned-photographer-painter. He started his career with The Telegraph newspaper in 1982 as a sports journalist, quit journalism in 1991, and began working as an independent photographer. In 1995 he joined Arts Acre, Kolkata, taking part in many group art exhibitions while two of his solos were held at Kolkata's Academy of Fine Arts in 2001 and 2002. In 1998, he began documenting the everyday life of a joint family in Kolkata which spanned more than a decade and culminated in his book *Intimacies* published by Niyogi Books in 2012, curated by Ina Puri with an essay by author Kunal Basu. His first solo photography exhibition was *Everyday Life of an Exotic Land*, Piramal Gallery, Mumbai (1998). A solo institutional presentation of his photographs curated by Amit Chaudhuri was also held at the University of East Anglia, Norwich (2010). His first solo in Kolkata was *No One is a Stranger: Photographs by Kushal Ray* curated by Swastik Pal at Kolkata Centre for Creativity, Kolkata (2025).

His photographs have been part of many group exhibitions including *Vivartan: Fragments of Tradition and Continuity*, National Gallery of Modern Art, Kolkata (2026); *Bengal Divided* curated by Sarker Protick and Munem Wasif, Dhaka and Singapore (2017); an exhibition at the British Museum, London under the aegis of the Royal Anthropological Institute (2014) where images from *Intimacies*, the Ladakh series, and the portrait project *Little Cinderellas Who Grow Up to Be Sour* were screened during a public talk in the museum's main auditorium; *Where Three Dreams Cross: 150 Years of Photography from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*, London (2009-10); the 1st Singapore International Photography Festival (2008); *Click! Contemporary Indian Photography*, Delhi (2008); and *Relative Values: Some Current Trends in Indian Photography* curated by Sunil Gupta and organised by the University of Southampton, UK (2007); among several others.

Ray was feted with a Senior Fellowship by the Ministry of Culture in 2011 for his documentation of the Indian Railways, which was published in the photobook *Once on a Train* while *Intimacies* was nominated for the Best Photobook award at Le Bal des Débutantes, Paris by Dayanita Singh in 2012. He is the first recipient of the Dignity Grant awarded by Dayanita Singh. Photographs from his early Ladakh series are held in the collection of the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi.

He lives and works in Kolkata, India.

PRESS CONTACT

Sreyashi Sircar

+91 98306 85017

sreyashi.pr@emamiart.com

SOCIAL MEDIA

Instagram: @emami_art

Website: www.emamiart.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/emamiart/>

Linktree: <https://linktr.ee/emamiartIN>

ADDRESS

Emami Art

Kolkata Centre for Creativity

777, E.M. Bypass

Kolkata 700107