

Traces of Struggle

In a compelling photo-journal, Surendra Lawoti attempts to capture the many sides of struggle – political and domestic – in his Nepal, in this edition of Space Frames curated by Dr. Deepak John Mathew.

Photographs: Surendra Lawoti

Curated by: Dr. Deepak John Mathew (dr.djmathew@gmail.com)



Nepal has gone through dramatic transformation. After 239 years, monarchical rule has come to an end. The country witnessed a decade-long Maoist rebellion that resulted in over 16,000 deaths, and displacement of over 100,000. Various social and political movements, and discourses of equality and justice have heightened. Last May, the elected Constituent Assembly was dissolved after it failed to deliver its mandate of writing Nepal's constitution after four years of deliberation. Now there is a precarious political vacuum. A caretaker government runs the country as it tries to navigate uncharted waters of running a country with an interim constitution that can be interpreted differently; depending who interprets it. And of course, there is the meddling in affairs by foreign powers such as India, US and China.





Surendra is interested in engaging with those who have been historically marginalised and their collective struggle for liberation.





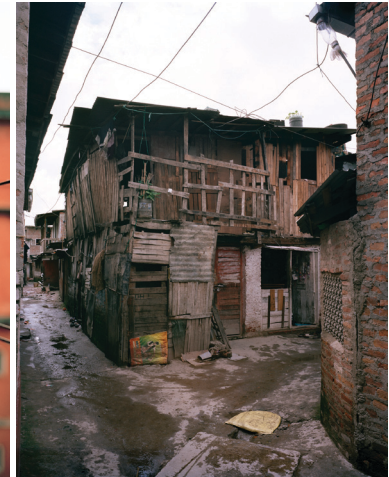
The images are from Surendra's trip to Kathmandu from the last summer. During these seven weeks, Surendra photographed on the streets of Kathmandu, photographed its landscape, visited squatter settlements, visited offices of political parties and met with social activists, political activists and intellectuals. He has also visited manpower agencies, newly built housing colonies and other places that reflect the social and political vernacular of Nepal. Just as Bagmati River meanders through Kathmandu Valley, inequality and its political struggles during a vacillating process of democratisation run through the heart of this body of work. Surendra is interested in engaging with those who have been historically marginalised and their collective struggle for liberation. Similarly, he is also interested in the embodiment of space and place, physical and metaphysical, personal as well as political. This work is about human struggle, introspection, discovery and liberation. It is about a landscape going through transformation. ■

Space Frames investigates issues of architecture and environment through the medium of photography. To contribute, write to us at iabedt@jasubhai.com or to the curator Dr. Mathew at dr.djmathew@gmail.com.



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Surendra Lawoti

Surendra Lawoti was born in Nepal. After completing high school, he moved to the US, where he studied Photography in Chicago and Boston. He has made Toronto, Ontario his home since 2008. His work has been exhibited internationally in the past 12 years. He has received awards from Ontario Arts Council, Artadia (Chicago), Dept. of Cultural Affairs, City of Chicago and others. His past photography projects have included photographing within the Nepali Diaspora in Chicago, Michigan and Boston. A major part of his work deals with home, migration, loss, and sense of longing and belonging. Amidst the precarious tussle between nature and urbanisation, the work looked at a group of people living in the peripheries of the mainstream society. As an artist, he is interested in the human experience amidst the forces of social and political transformations. His Nepali Diaspora work dealt with the migratory landscape in a post-9/11 period.

He is represented by Gallery Kayafas in Boston and teaches as a Sessional (Adjunct) Faculty at Ontario College of Art and Design University.

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