

# cincinnati art museum

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**\*Images Available Upon Request**

## **Cincinnati Art Museum to feature Sohrab Hura in *The Levee: A Photographer in the American South***

**CINCINNATI**—Contemporary Indian photographer Sohrab Hura receives his first solo museum exhibition, organized by the Cincinnati Art Museum, from October 5, 2019–February 2, 2020. *The Levee: A Photographer in the American South* presents an 83-picture suite titled *The Levee*, in which Hura explores themes of connection, perspective and place.

Exhibited in its entirety for the first time outside India, the suite has been acquired by the Cincinnati Art Museum through the generosity of the artist and Experimenter Gallery, Kolkata. The Cincinnati Art Museum is the first American museum to exhibit Hura's work and the first public institution to collect his photographs. The exhibition is accompanied by an exhibition catalogue—the first substantial book publication about the artist.

While *The Levee* consists primarily of black and white photographs, the exhibition also includes hand-drawn maps and ambient sound. Unexpected color and evocative natural materials support the artist's perception of tenderness in his American experience. Communal seating and browsable photobooks in the gallery will invite reflection and consideration of *The Levee* in larger context.

The landscapes and portraits of *The Levee* trace the artist's 2016 travels along the lower Mississippi River. Hura made the pictures as a participant in Postcards from America, a loose, serial collaboration in the form of a photographic road trip, first conceived by American photographer Alec Soth in 2011. Over the course of six years, Postcards fostered a reexamination of photographic perspective, as well as producing rich documentary reflections on contemporary American life.

Hura's spring 2016 trip with the Postcards group was a timely examination of the South, a region that has often been represented in photography, yet remains the object of romanticization and stereotype. However, Hura also had a personal connection to place: just before the artist's trip along the levees of the Mississippi, his father had traveled the river while at work on a container ship, unable to step onto land. The photographer's journey became a metaphor for a difficult, often distant relationship with a father who was physically and emotionally out of reach.

Nathaniel M. Stein, Cincinnati Art Museum's Associate Curator of Photography, has long observed Hura's career. "The clarity and urgency of his work often stopped me in my tracks," Stein says. "Sohrab is knowledgeable about the history of photography, but always shedding it in an effort to touch the quick. He has a way of making experience present—not by picturing its outward appearance so much as plunging into its pulse and flow. For some of his work this means pictures that embrace so-called mistake: grain, wild exposure, blur...For *The Levee* it means something quite different—a steady forthrightness that seems to measure both pain and gentleness. Alec Soth recently said to me he feels he can smell these photographs. Artists like Sohrab show us the edges of what we believe photography can be and do."

Hura's experience speaks to Cincinnati's meaningful history as a river city and a gateway to the American South. Public programming at the museum will use *The Levee* as a springboard for the community to examine issues ranging from regional and national perceptions of the South, to race and identity, to social implications of mental health disorders. Programs include:

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- An informal conversation series, held around the exhibition's communal table, featuring guests from the regional artist community, Speed Art Museum, and Xavier University's Brueggeman Center for Dialogue, among other organizations.
- An open discussion about spirituality in daily life, from the ways we nurture hope amidst pain to the notion of being present in place, nature and community—moderated by Alice Connor, University of Cincinnati chaplain and author of *How to Human: An Incomplete Manual for Living in a Messed-Up World*.
- An 8-week photography workshop, *Regarding Place*, aimed at gaining and picturing nuanced understandings of place, convened in partnership with the Manifest Drawing Center.
- A rare American screening of Hura's mesmerizing, award-winning films, including *Sweet Life* and *The Lost Head & The Bird*, offered in partnership with The Mini Microcinema.
- An exhibition-inspired reading list organized in partnership with The Mercantile Library, inviting audiences to explore literary routes through the American South, South Asia, and along the Ohio River.

See the museum's [website calendar](#) for full program dates

*The Levee: A Photographer in the American South* will be on view to the public for free in gallery 105. Related public programs are free with the exception of the 8-week workshop, *Regarding Place*.

The Cincinnati Art Museum will co-publish an exhibition catalogue with Candor Arts, enabled in part by the support of Peter and Betsy Niehoff. *The Levee: A Photographer in the American South* includes original scholarship by exhibition curator Nathaniel M. Stein and a conversation between Hura and the American photographer Alec Soth. The exhibition catalogue is the first major publication on Hura. It is slated for release in January 2020 and will be available for pre-order through the Cincinnati Art Museum gift shop.

Hura was born in 1981 in Chinsurah, West Bengal, India and currently lives in New Delhi. He was nominated to the renowned Magnum Photos collective in 2014. Hura has exhibited widely, including at Experimenter Gallery, Kolkata; Videonale, Kunstmuseum Bonn; Oberhausen International Short Film Festival; Vancouver International Film Festival; Image Forum, Tokyo; Moscow International Experimental Film Festival; Berlin Atonal; Shanghai Biennale; Minnesota Street Projects, San Francisco; FotoFest Biennial, Houston; Art Basel, Hong Kong; India Art Fair, Delhi; Bontanique, Brussels; Science Museum, London; and (in fall 2019) Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, England.

He has published several award-winning photobooks under the imprint Ugly Dog, including *Life is Elsewhere* (2015), *A Proposition for Departure* (2017) and *Look It's Getting Sunny Outside!!!* (2018), which deal with his relationship with his mother through her mental illness, and *The Coast* (2019), which delves into the shifting landscape of fact and fiction in contemporary Indian society. *The Levee* (an artist's book that complements the catalogue accompanying Cincinnati exhibition) is his next anticipated title.

## **About the Cincinnati Art Museum**

The Cincinnati Art Museum is supported by the generosity of individuals and businesses that give annually to Artswave. The Ohio Arts Council helps fund the Cincinnati Art Museum with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The Cincinnati Art Museum gratefully acknowledges operating support from the City of Cincinnati, as well as our members.

Free general admission to the Cincinnati Art Museum is made possible by a gift from the Rosenthal Family Foundation. Special exhibition pricing may vary. Parking at the Cincinnati Art Museum is free. The museum is open Tuesday – Sunday, 11 a.m.–5 p.m. and Thursday, 11 a.m.–8 p.m. [cincinnatiartmuseum.org](http://cincinnatiartmuseum.org).