

PHOTO

STUDIO

# #1

PhotoDemos Pamphlet Series  
University College London  
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## Studios

It is reasonable to assume that in a world of mobile phones and digital platforms there is no use anymore for conventional photostudios. In much of South Asia, at least, this is not the case. Studios have seen significant parts of their business migrate, but they endure in large part because of the centrality of weddings in the societies in which they are embedded, and because the bureaucratic states of South Asia still require a proliferation of ID photographs to facilitate everyday tasks. Beyond this, the studio continues to offer the prospect of a culturally moored 'frame' as against the chaos of the 'screen'.

And yet it is never this fixed, for the frame of the studio is frequently a stage upon which to perform a fascination with modernity: the camera opens the future, inviting aspiration and the subjunctive consumption of commodities and identities that are yet-to-be.

Studios rather than being simply relics of the past are better understood once seen within the vortex of changes

within which they are caught and try to survive. Almost every studio I got to know in India, Nepal, and Bangladesh, bemoaned the threat to their livelihoods posed by the smartphone, and yet on many occasions my conversations with studio owners were interrupted by the arrival of clients seeking glossy paper prints from Bluetooth downloads of images from their phones.

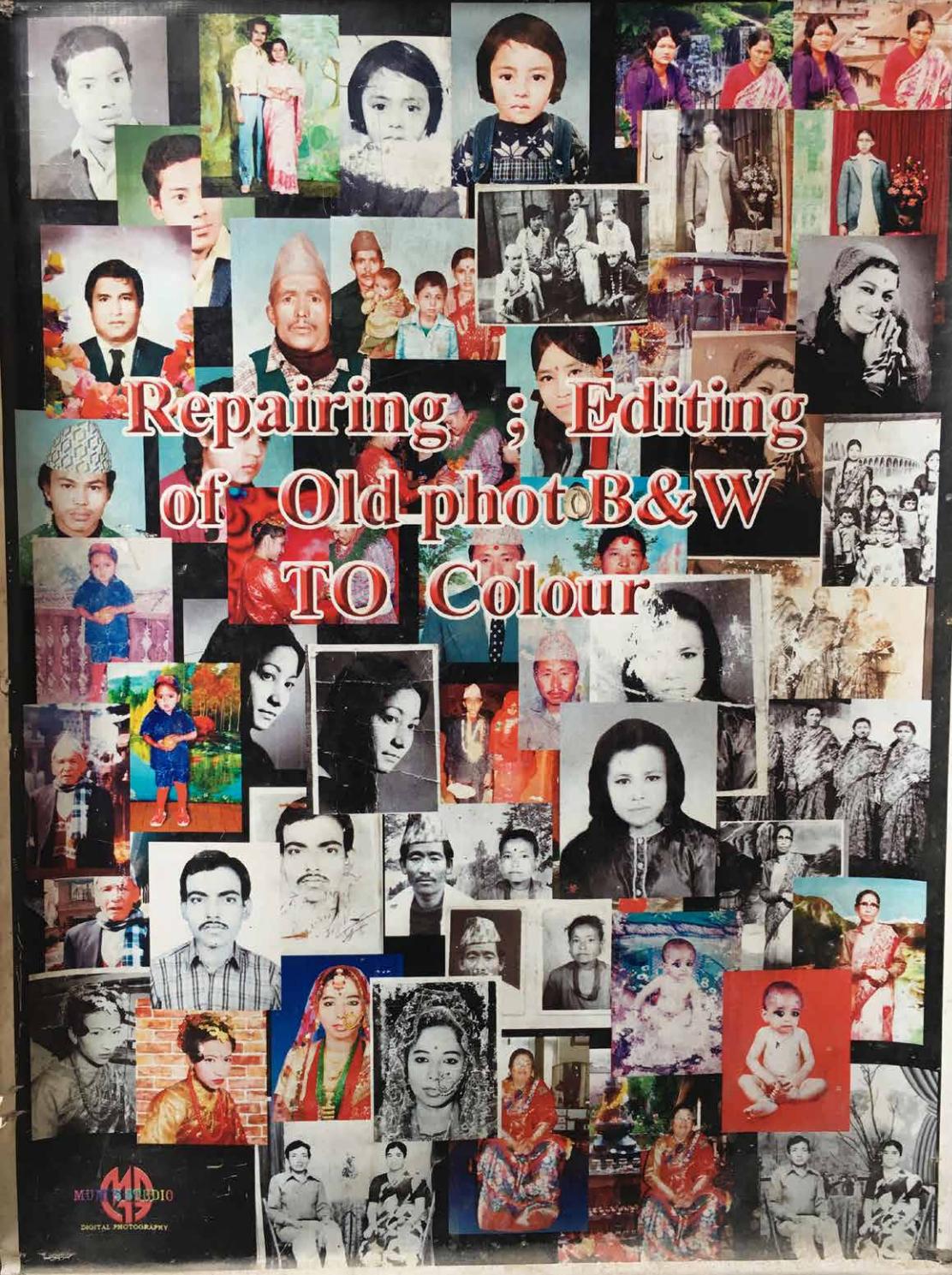
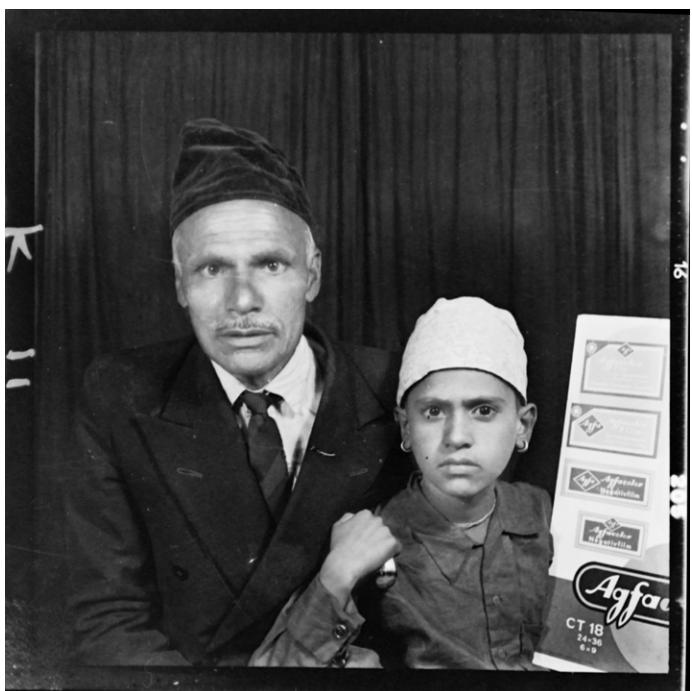
Photostudios are points around which networks of photographers, clients, and practices rotate. Studios still attract customers who are not only usually willing to verbalise their desires and aspirations but to also perform them for the camera. During the research recounted here I was able to meet many interlocutors for the first time at the photo studio. The studio is also usually an immense image repository of present and past representational activity in the form of both images and apparatus.

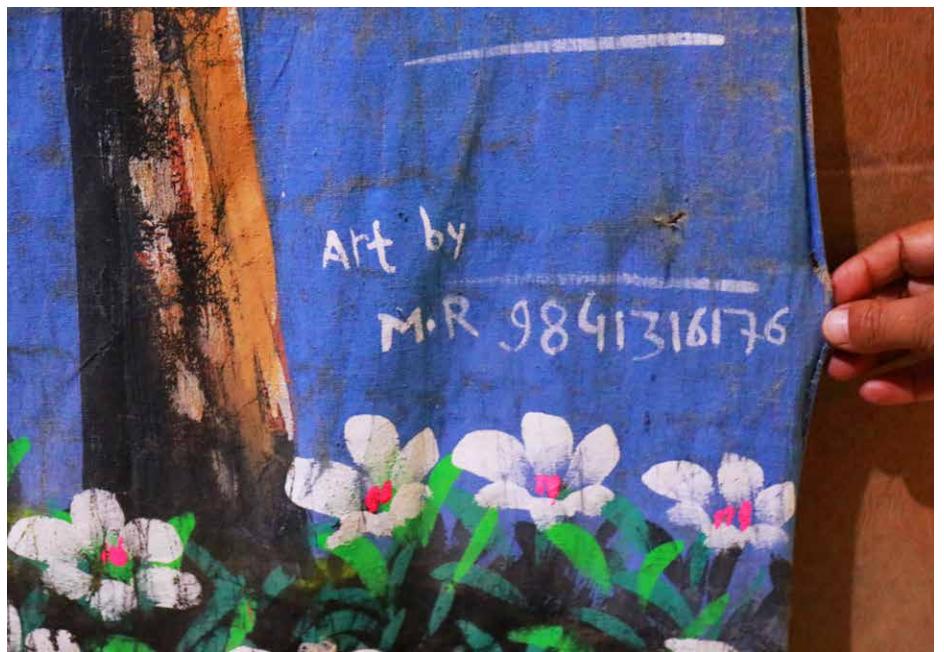
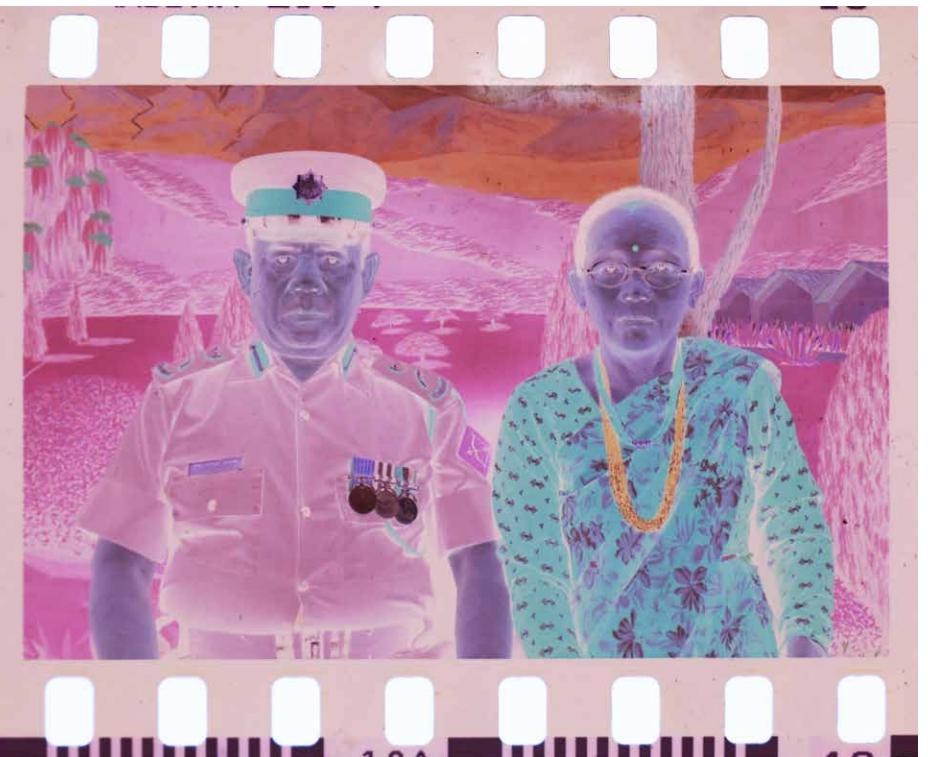
If the camera offers an oneiric space in which we 'day dream' through photography, then the photo studio is the analyst's couch, the stepping stone from which we can leap into society's 'optical unconscious'.

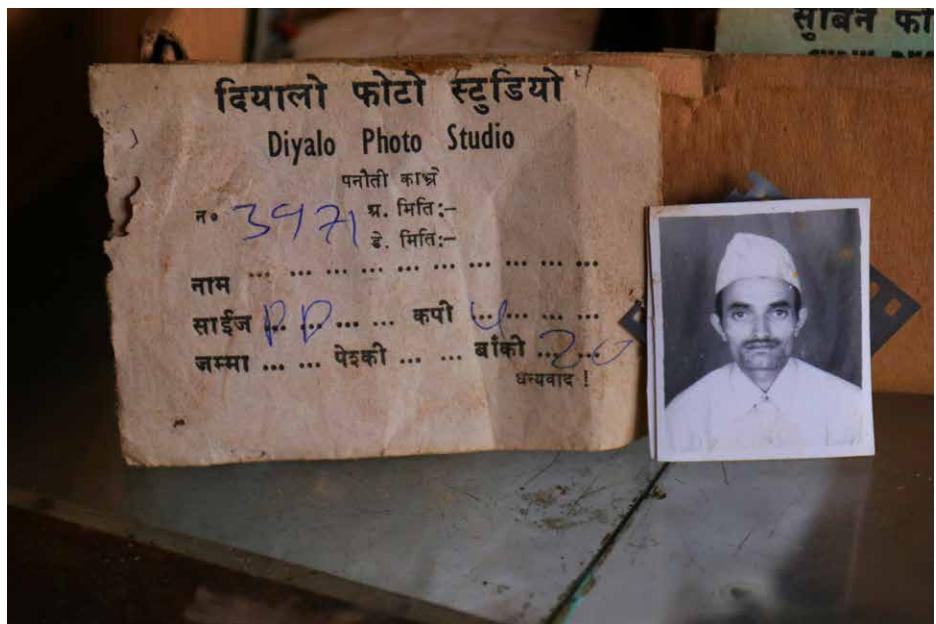
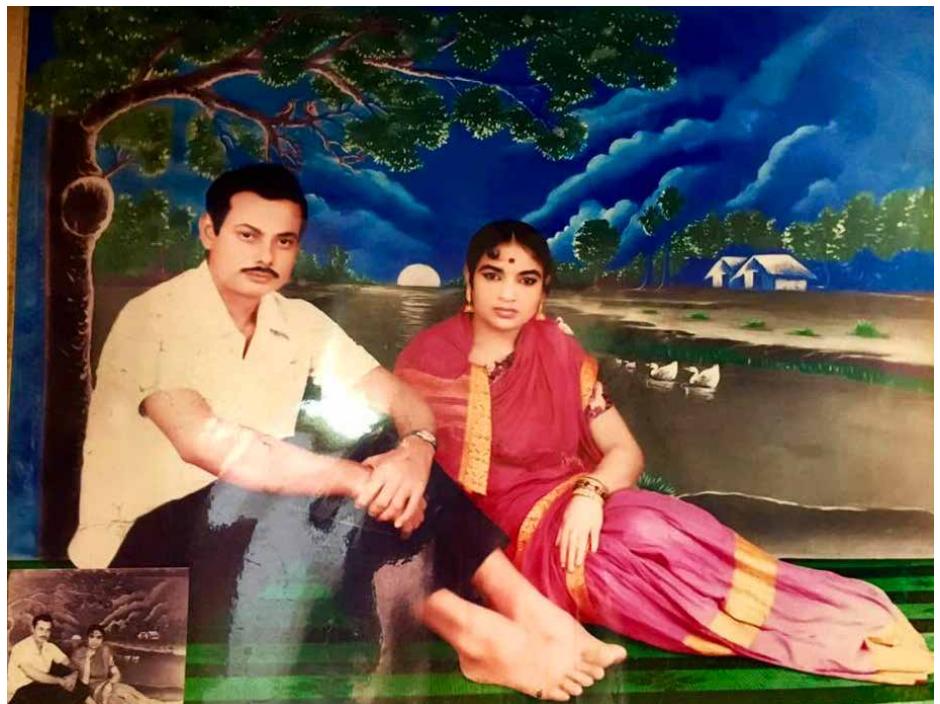
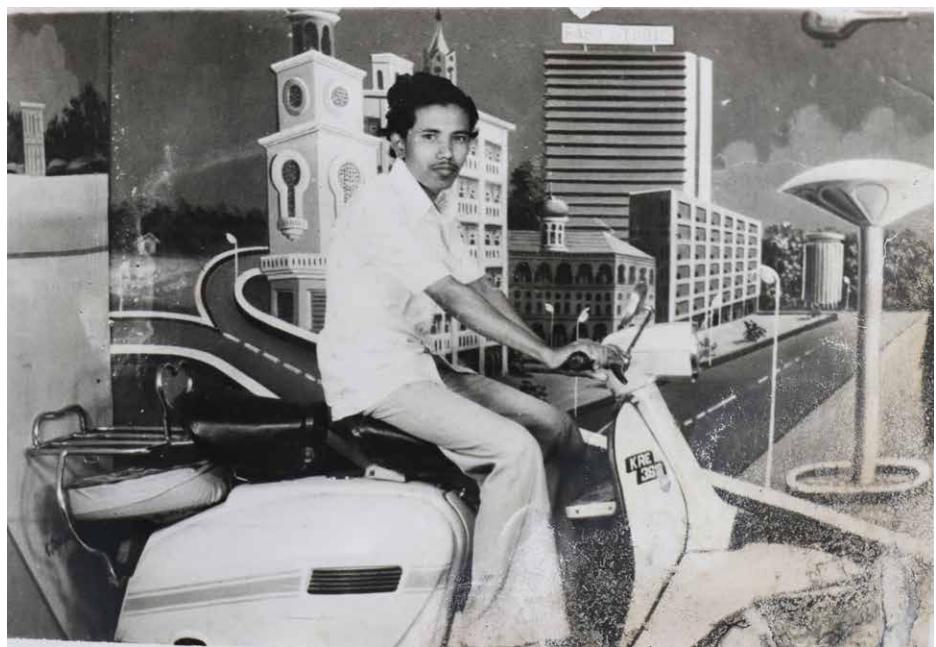
– Christopher Pinney





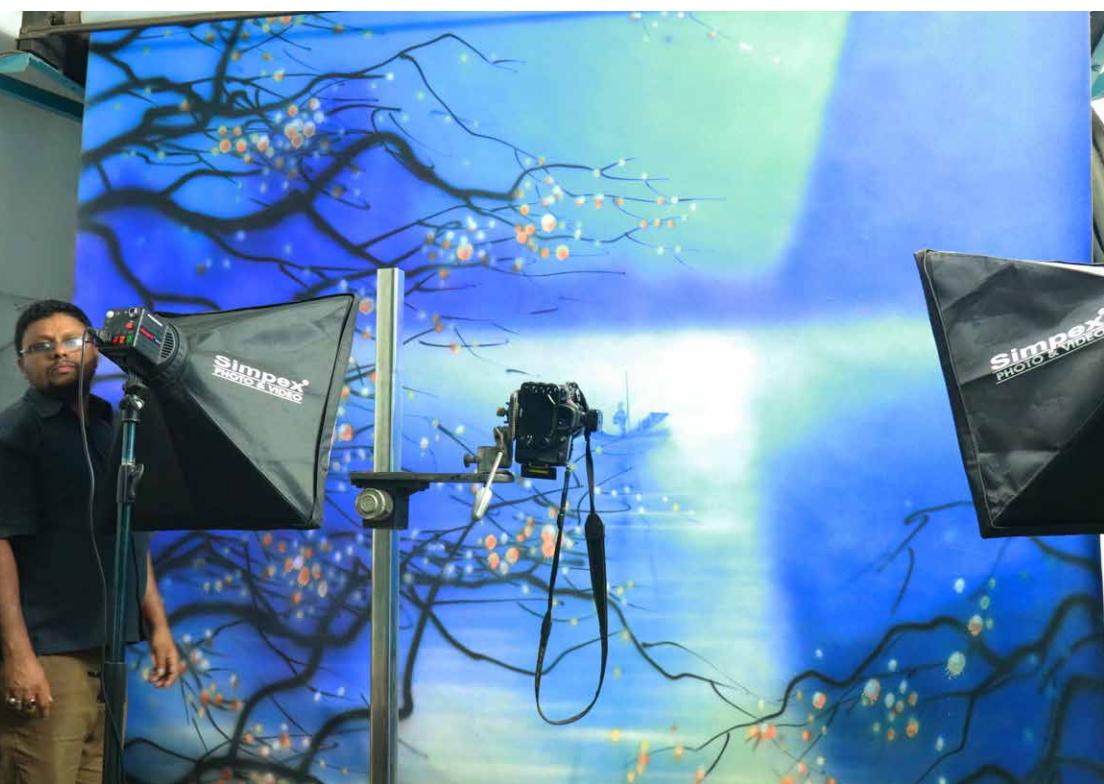
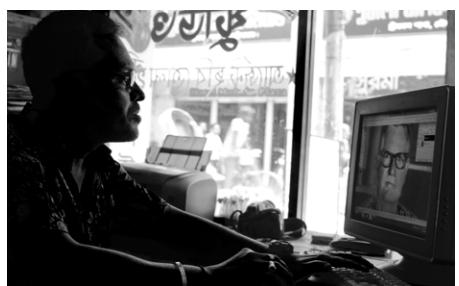


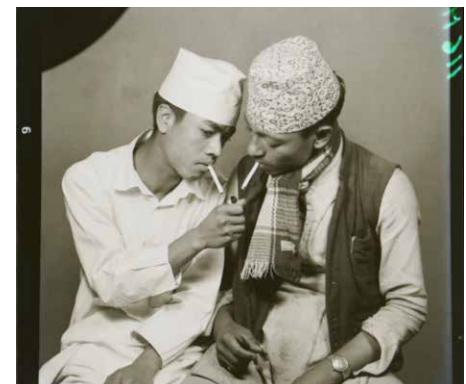
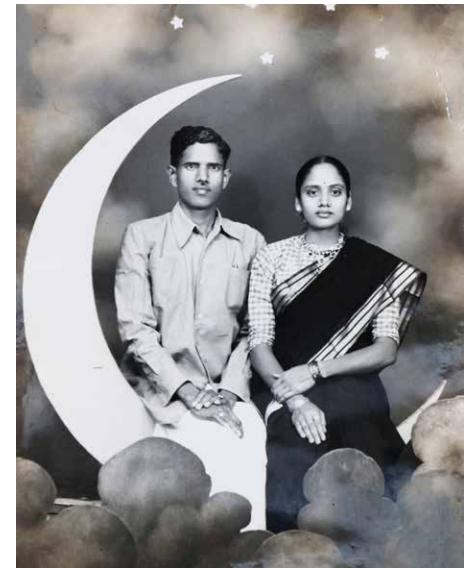


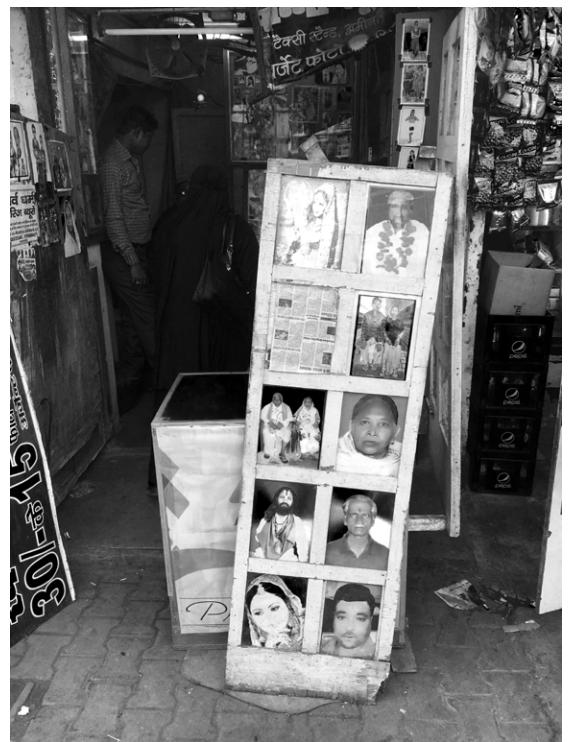


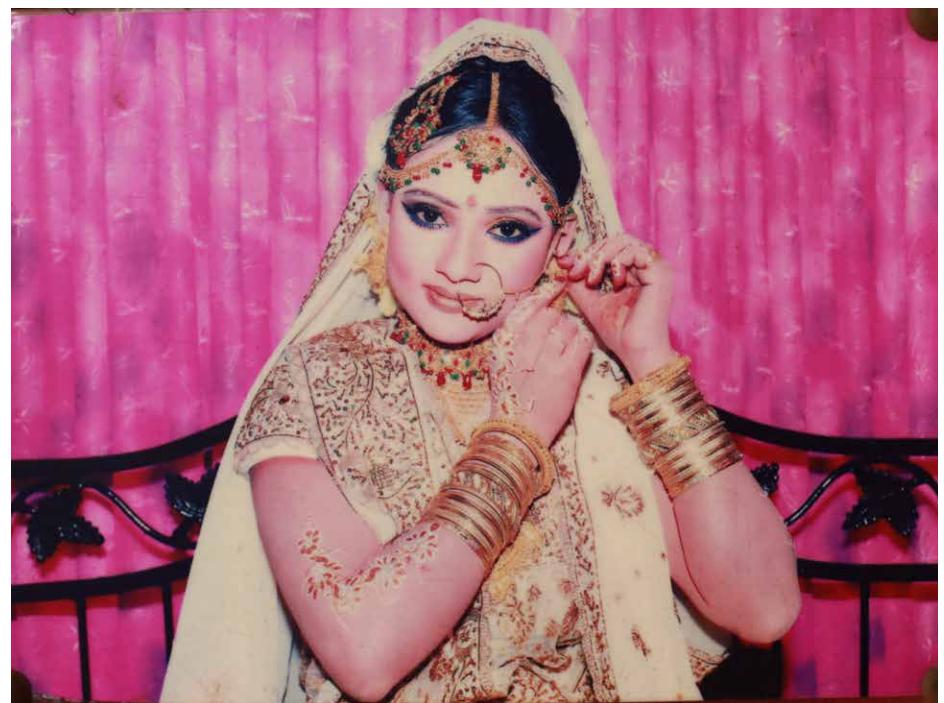


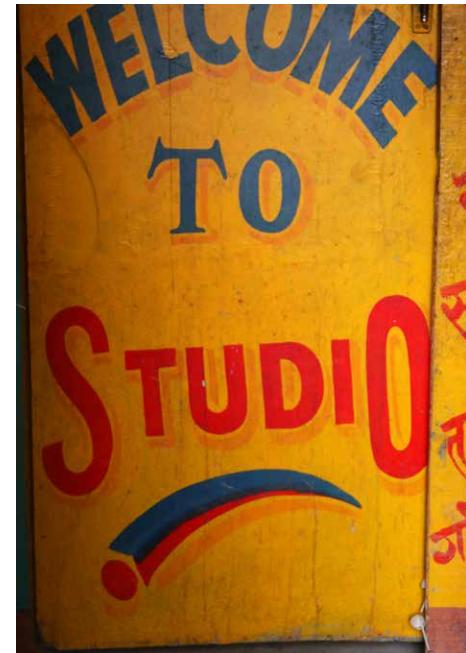
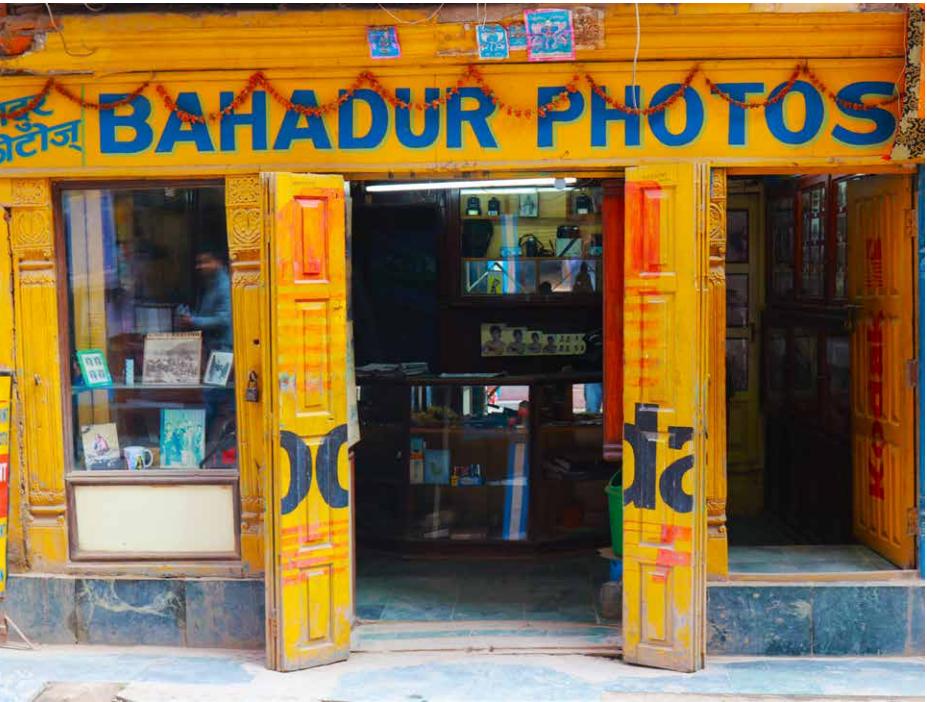




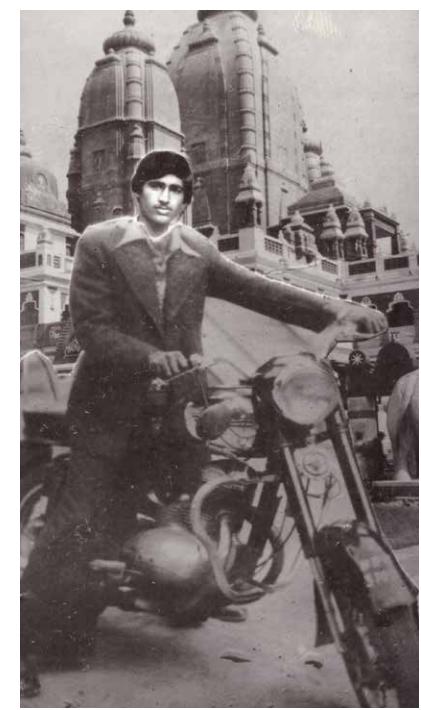












# Citizens of Photography: the Camera and the Political Imagination



The PhotoDemos project is an empirical anthropological investigation into the relationship between “representation” through everyday images and “representation” through politics.



The PhotoDemos Collective is a group of six researchers.

The names of the researchers and the countries in which they researched are:

Naluwembe Binaisa (Nigeria)  
Vindhya Buthpitiya (Sri Lanka)  
Konstantinos Kalantzis (Greece)  
Christopher Pinney (Bangladesh,  
India, and Nepal)  
Ileana L. Selejan (Nicaragua)  
Sokphea Young (Cambodia)

The project is based in the Department of Anthropology at UCL and is funded by a European Research Council Advanced Grant no. 695283.

More information on  
<https://citizensofphotography.org>

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Research in Nepal and Bangladesh was assisted by Usha Titikshu, Nadvi Abdullah, and Ahsan Habib.

Layout by Dominik Hoehn.

