

Jannatul Mawa, Maria Kapajeva, Cristina Nuñez, Alexandra Serrano, and Andrea Diefenbach are some of the most conspicuous names in contemporary photography. The medium they use has taken them to different countries to document actual space in connection with their imagination and reality. Therefore, the most significant aspect of their powerful images is the concept. Each concept instead of telling stories leads us into a labyrinth of questions. And inside our mind we answer those questions and line up our own stories. The stories they produce, through a reproduction process, becomes our own. We talked to the photographers about their life, philosophy, work, and production process.

**Cristina Nuñez: The Self Portrait Experience**  
The real power of photography



Close Distance by Jannatul Mawa.



The Self Portrait Experience by Cristina Nuñez.



Between Finger And Thumb by Alexandra Serrano.

others say. What's important is that you go deep into yourself, only then can your work become universal." She also adds that if we stay in the surface then it's too self-indulgent, because it cannot relate to others. There's no vulnerability in the surface.

**Jannatul Mawa- Close Distance**

Jannatul Mawa, a Bangladeshi photographer tries to break the "spatial taboo, more precisely class taboo in urban middle class homes." She may place two

women from two different social class in a single frame, house owner and maid. She explains: "Through my work I want to explore the possibility of creating bonds of intimacy among women sitting in the same sofa who, according to dominant norms, are unequal, which we ourselves internalise."

Mawa brings, through her text, the historical perspective and shows that despite the introduction of wage labour by the British and even after achieving independence from the British colonial rule and the Pakistani occupation force, no minimum wage has been fixed by the government for those in domestic service (full time, part time), nor weekly holidays, nor working hours per day, particularly for those working full time. There is no public discourse around this issue either, she adds.

But the question remains: can her work break the age old taboos? She believes that the class distinctions are deeply embedded and it is not that easy to erase it. Instead the work is a process where she tries to explain the matter profoundly. So her work runs through the invisible boundaries between classes, which are simultaneously physical and ideological. She says, "Usually, we do not sit with our house help on the same sofa. Spatially we are very close, in the sense that we inhabit the same space, but due to deep class divisions we prefer to ignore their existence altogether." Through her work she would like to reflect on domestic relationships, though many people think it as 'natural' she terms it as social and historical relationships.

How can a photographer survive in this era of competition? Mawa agrees that it is not easy. She explains that in Bangladesh photographers mostly depend on wedding photography and INGOs (International Non-Government Organisations). Those who are lucky enough can get INGOs' assignments but most photographers are not that fortunate because of different issues like lack of communication and the absence of a proper portfolio. She says, "It is hard to survive in a highly expensive city like Dhaka. You have to have four hands to earn and survive. But I believe photographers have to be smart enough to know how to get work and how to present their work to the world."

**Maria Kapajeva- Interiors**

"Am I taking photographs of an existing reality, or creating my own world, so real but nonexistent?" Noted Latvian conceptual photographer Misha Gordin asks an indispensable question on conceptual photography, terming it as a higher form of artistic expression that places photography on the level of painting, poetry, music and sculpture. Maria Kapajeva's conceptual work 'Interiors' presents an extra dimension of physical presence and beneath the characters lie another person; we can never achieve the keys behind the mystery.

Today all images are manipulated to a certain degree. But we want the photograph we view to reflect reality. Like paintings and music, Maria

# Seeing the Unseen

Five photographers from five different cultures and countries delve deep into five different matters that emerge in reality as metaphors, in different spaces and times, representing five issues that we know but ignore in our everyday life.

**ANANTA YUSUF**

emerges when reality is presented in a way that the audience can believe that what is captured by the camera exists in reality. Spanish photographer Cristina Nuñez is interested in uniting opposites. Putting together people who are apparently very different and from different times. She tries to abridge her connections and put forward a dialogue with her ancestors and says, "A picture (Self Portrait Experience) of myself naked in bed, close to that of my ancestors (female), became a way to explain the history of women, how we women have changed, how our life has changed in the last century, and at the same time, there are similarities."

It is about women's liberation she says. Women from the past had bodies like her, and they could have become artists, lawyers, politicians, if they had had the opportunity and the freedom. She explains her portraits, "In my portraits, I want to capture my deep relationship to the subject; I want to see myself

in them. I want them to see me and give me their vulnerability, so that I can express their strength."

As a child Cristina always felt invisible. She always wanted people's attention. During her teens the craving for attention led her to do drugs. "I was an addict for five years, until my dad told me that he didn't want to see me anymore if I didn't quit drugs. I quit then, but my self-esteem was very low and I was tremendously confused. All the problems that had made me an addict were still there." In 1986 she met an Italian photographer and moved to Milan. With him she discovered the power of the camera, and immediately turned the lens to herself. That first experience with the camera changed her life forever. And that was the beginning of her remarkable story - Self Portrait Experience.

She believes vanity is the first step towards self-knowledge, and further adds, "As an artist, you have to go deep into your path, without caring what