

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Kolkata to Dhaka, 1971: Marc Riboud's Lens on History**

#### ***A Photographic Chronicle of Humanity, Resilience, and Liberation***

**Exhibition Dates:** March 15 - March 29, 2025

**Venue:** First Floor Gallery, Kolkata Centre for Creativity

**Organised by:** Kolkata Centre for Creativity, Alliance Française du Bengale, in collaboration with Les amis de Marc Riboud, Guimet - National Asian Arts Museum, Liberation War Museum, and Alliance Française de Dhaka.

**With the support of:** Institut Français en Inde

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### **Introduction**

Kolkata Centre for Creativity and Alliance Française du Bengale present the exhibition, "Kolkata to Dhaka, 1971: Marc Riboud's Lens on History," a tribute to one of the most celebrated photojournalists of the 20th century. This retrospective brings together a powerful collection of images that document the defining moments of Bangladesh's struggle for independence and the humanitarian crisis that unfolded in Kolkata and its surroundings. This will be the first time in India that an exhibition is entirely dedicated to Marc Riboud, reaffirming the significance of his work and its enduring legacy.

Marc Riboud, a legendary figure in photography, captured the resilience of refugees, the intensity of war, and the transition towards freedom. Through his lens, we see not just history but the human stories behind it. This exhibition offers a unique opportunity to rediscover these moments through the eyes of an artist who was committed to revealing the depth of human emotions in times of crisis.

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### **Marc Riboud and Kolkata: A Deep Connection**

Marc Riboud's ties with Kolkata date back to 1956, when he spent a year in India, immersing himself in the culture and artistic vibrancy of the city. He formed close connections, notably with the family of Krishna Roy, his sister-in-law, which allowed him a rare, intimate perspective on Kolkata.

His admiration for the city was shared by Satyajit Ray, who once said of Riboud:

*"He is one of the rare photographers capable of capturing the very essence of India with remarkable sensitivity and understanding. His photographs reflect deep empathy and an*

*authentic connection with his Indian subjects, transcending clichés to reveal the true soul of the country."*

When Riboud returned to Kolkata in November 1971, he found a city deeply affected by the Bangladesh Liberation War. Kolkata had become a center of humanitarian aid and political activity, sheltering thousands of refugees fleeing the conflict. His photographs from this period not only document war and displacement but also reflect hope, resilience, and the unwavering spirit of the people.

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### **A Witness to History: The 1971 Liberation War**

In **December 1971**, Marc Riboud crossed into **Bangladesh with the Indian Army**, documenting the decisive moments leading to the country's independence. His images from **the refugee camps, the frontlines, and the streets of Dhaka on December 16, 1971** are among the most valuable visual records of this historic transformation. **Few international photographers witnessed the war as closely as Riboud.**

From the **Battle of Jamalpur** to the **fall of Dhaka**, Riboud's photographs reveal the raw emotions of a people at the threshold of a new nation. His work stands alongside the finest examples of war photography—not as mere documentation, but as an artistic and humanist exploration of struggle and liberation.

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### **Exhibition Highlights**

This exhibition features **over 43 iconic photographs**, carefully selected to represent key themes from Riboud's time in Kolkata and Dhaka:

- **Kolkata as a Refuge** – The humanitarian crisis, the influx of refugees, and the city's response to the war.
- **Faces of Resistance** – Portraits of **freedom fighters, civilians, and children**, capturing their courage and determination.
- **Crossing into a New Nation** – The historic entry into Dhaka alongside the Indian Army on December 16, 1971.
- **The War and Its Aftermath** – The devastation left behind and the spirit of rebuilding a new Bangladesh.

These images are accompanied by archival materials, press clippings, and personal notes from Marc Riboud, offering deeper insight into his thought process and experience.

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### **A Collaborative Effort**

This exhibition is the result of a strong partnership between cultural institutions across France, India, and Bangladesh. First presented at the Liberation War Museum in 2021 then at the Alliance Française de Dhaka in October 2022, it now comes to Kolkata in collaboration with

the Kolkata Centre for Creativity, reinforcing the historical and cultural ties between these regions.

The exhibition is made possible through the support of Institut Français en Inde, highlighting the commitment of France to preserving and promoting shared histories through art and photography.

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**Quote by Richa Agarwal (Chairperson of Kolkata Centre for Creativity)**

At KCC, we believe in the transformative power of art to bridge histories, cultures, and human experiences. Hosting 'Kolkata to Dhaka, 1971' is an honor, as it not only brings to light a pivotal chapter of our shared past but also serves as a reminder of resilience and humanity in times of crisis. Riboud's lens masterfully captured war, displacement, and the human spirit's extraordinary strength. This exhibition reaffirms our commitment to showcasing narratives that matter, fostering cross-cultural connections, and preserving the essence of artistic storytelling. We are proud to be a part of this collaboration, ensuring that Riboud's compelling visual narratives continue to inspire and engage audiences across generations."

(Says, Richa Agarwal, Chairperson of Kolkata Centre for Creativity)

**Quote by Nicolas Facino (Director of Alliance Française du Bengale)**

To capture an image is to seize a fragment of time, to bear witness to history, and to invite contemplation. Marc Riboud's images, imbued with both aesthetic depth and journalistic precision, transcend time to offer us a profound meditation on resilience, identity, and the human condition. This exhibition is an invitation to revisit a pivotal moment in history through the eyes of a master, whose lens captured events and also the very essence of those who lived them.

(Says, Nicolas Facino, Director, Alliance Française du Bengale)

**Quote by Lorène Durret (Director of association Les amis de Marc Riboud)**

Marc Riboud has never been politically involved but his photographs speak for themselves. As the photographs he took during the Algerian independence, during the war in Vietnam, his photographs of 1971 express his sincere empathy towards the people he photographs. I think that the young Freedom fighters also reminded him of his young days when he joined the French Resistance, in his early twenties, in Vercors during the Second World War.

(Says, Lorène Durret, Director of association Les amis de Marc Riboud)

**Why Kolkata?**

Bringing this exhibition to Kolkata is a historical homecoming. It was in this very city that Riboud captured some of the most moving moments of his career. Kolkata, with its unparalleled love for cinema, photography, and history, serves as the ideal setting for audiences to engage with Riboud's legacy.

Through this exhibition, we not only remember the past but also reflect on the enduring power of visual storytelling to bridge cultures and generations.

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## **About Kolkata Centre for Creativity (KCC)**

Kolkata Centre for Creativity (KCC) is a pioneering, multidisciplinary, interactive art center, purpose-built and housed in an accessible, green building. Located in Kolkata, West Bengal, India, and established in 2018, KCC is a unit of the Anamika Kala Sangam Trust, a not-for-profit public trust. Spanning 70,000 sq. ft., KCC has quickly become a cornerstone of India's contemporary art and cultural scene.

**Our Mission:** Led by Chairperson Richa Agarwal, KCC is dedicated to socially responsible programming that integrates diverse creative and cultural practices. Through curated initiatives, we offer collaborative arts and culture efforts, education, research, support, mentorships, and programs for children and DEAI. Our initiatives encompass Capacity Building, Well-Being, Conservation & Restoration, Craft & Design, Culinary Arts, and Visual and Performing Arts. The organization acts as a catalyst for artistic growth through exhibitions, fellowships, labs, residencies, conservation projects, research, and intellectual discourse.

**Our Approach:** KCC is a premier cultural destination that believes in the symbiotic relationship between popular and intellectual pursuits. Our team is united by core values of respect, inclusivity, collaboration, excellence, and integrity, ensuring that KCC remains a vibrant hub for creativity and cultural exchange. Rooted in the principles of Cultural Diversity, Gender Equality, Environmental Conservation, and Inclusion, KCC designs programs that embody these values, driven by empathy and optimism. We encourage the cross-pollination of ideas and creativity across borders, fostering long-term community relationships through public outreach and capacity building.

Join us in creating a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable environment for the arts and culture. Explore our programs and be part of our inspiring journey.

## **Practical Information**

**Exhibition Dates:** March 15 - March 29, 2025

**Venue:** First Floor Gallery, Kolkata Centre for Creativity

**Entry:** Free and open to the public

**Organizers:** Kolkata Centre for Creativity, Alliance Française du Bengale, Les amis de Marc Riboud, Guimet - National Asian Arts Museum, Liberation War Museum, Kolkata Centre for Creativity, Alliance Française de Dhaka

**Supported by:** Institut Français en Inde

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