

Untitled (*Puja and the Moon*) by Catherine Jansen



Catherine Jansen, (b.1950), *Untitled (Puja and the Moon)*, printed 2019, archival digital photo on paper, 20x64 inches, Collection of the Artist.

Looking Questions:

- What do you see? Describe all the details you can find in this artwork.
- Does this photograph look real or imaginary? What do you see that makes you say that?
- What is the focal point in this work of art? Why?
- How does the artist use light to create mood in this work of art?
- How would you describe this work of art—happy? Sad? Thought-provoking? Calm? Disturbing? Peaceful? How does it make you feel?
- How do you think the artist feels about her subject matter?

About The Artwork:

Catherine Jansen has been inventing, exploring and creating photographic processes that merge state of the art technology with traditional photography since the late 1960s. She has created artworks with color copiers, cyanotypes, and Kirlian photography on cloth. From the late 1990s until today, Jansen has been working with a digital camera and Adobe Photoshop to create a visual vocabulary that builds photographs into a long format that can express psychological and emotional time and space within the image. After taking multitudes of photographs, she weaves them into increasingly complex and meaningful images. This work has coincided with over 15 trips to India, and is an ongoing project called *The Nada Series*.

Catherine Jansen's first photographs were focused on the domestic landscape and her backyard garden. Now, her life has changed and her body of work has expanded to include her extensive travels and changing perceptions of the world around her. Catherine has found that photographing and then merging images taken from several angles and perspectives gives a closer echo of her experiences. She also confesses that capturing images during her "down time" has increased her opportunities to photograph. It has made it easier for her to meet people, especially children, who have befriended her and allowed her into their personal lives. She has also become more aware of the animals who play a unique role in Indian life. Intimate encounters with people, animal or places have, in her words, quickened her breath, and frozen her eyes.

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Visual Arts Activities:

- Take several digital photographs that reflect the essence of your community. Use Adobe Photoshop or other comparable software to combine and manipulate these images to change their meaning. Present your final photographs in a display.
- Artists have long been fascinated by the distinctive light of the moon. Depicting the night sky along with this light in visual art presents unique challenges which vary depending on the medium used. For painters, a work most often is based on notes, observations or sketches, and completed in the studio. For photographers, capturing the night sky requires a specific set-up, equipment and camera settings. Both require the study of atmosphere, color, light and shadow. Inspired by Jansen's work, create a painting or drawing of the moon. How will it be different than an image created of the daytime?
- Create a collage of images from original photographs and/or magazine images that makes a strong statement about a part of the world that has meaning to you. Use color copy processes to make multiple copies of the work.

Language Arts Activities

- Catherine Jansen once said, "Many [of my best] photographs were taken while stopping by the side of the road to accommodate carsickness, or in tiny villages waiting for flat tires to be repaired --and on paths to outdoor toilets." What does this quotation mean to you? Do you feel other artists also find their inspiration during such mundane moments, or does great art only come from great moments? Find some artworks that illustrate these types of moments and create a visual display of your findings.
- Increase your understanding of India by reading books by Indian authors: *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri, or *A Suitable Boy* by Vikram Seth. Younger readers would enjoy these tales of India: *The Road to Mumbai* by Ruth Jeyaveeran, *Monsoon* by Uma Krishnaswami, and *I is for India* by Prodeepa Das.
- What is the meaning of puja? Explore what puja is and its various meanings in different religions. How is this reflected in the work of Jansen? Discuss this with a friend or family member and write a report on your findings.
- Catherine Jansen volunteers several months a year at the Little Stars School in India. Here, over 400 students are learning to read and write, develop their English language skills, computer skills, have arts programs, and have access to good health care and hygiene. This school is funded completely by private donors. Learn more about the Little Stars School. How is the artwork of Catherine Jansen impacted by her work with children at this school? What clues do you glean from her work that make you say that?