

Around Town

Make it new

A photo exhibition looks at the life and landscape of Delhi's elites, **Aayush Soni** reports.

Working on assignments for *Newsweek* and London's *Sunday Times*, Findlay Kember travelled constantly and quickly – his professional trips around South Asia never lasted for more than a week. The opportunity to spend time on a subject only presented itself in 2008, when he was posted in Delhi as photo editor for Agence-France Presse. Over the next year, Kember shot at the Metro, backstage at fashion shows, and in front of glass-and-steel buildings to chronicle the new landscape of the city. Twenty-three of these images will be exhibited as part of *new new delhi* at the India International Centre. Kember tells *Time Out* about why he chose to chronicle the change "taking place right in front of my doorstep".

The title of your exhibition is intriguing. How new is New Delhi?

The city is evolving each and every day. The city has historically shifted geographically south and 20 years from now, New Delhi as we know it, India Gate to GK-I, will merge and be the old New Delhi, and Gurgaon can be the new New Delhi. Or someone can come up with a different term for another generation.

Do you fear that, because you're a foreigner, people will criticise you for capturing the affluent side of Delhi?

I can walk out of my house, see abject poverty and seek to capture that but it's an easy trap to fall into. The society I hope I've managed to capture is not a middle-class society or an upper-class society but what perhaps will be perceived as mid-range. These are the everyday lives of people. They're going to nightclubs, driving their cars and using the Metro.

Was it challenging shooting Delhi's new glass-and-steel buildings? They're usually criticised for being aesthetically, and ecologically, in poor taste.

I think the opposite, actually. One of my signature pictures is of a man cleaning the window of a building in Gurgaon which has a glass façade. It is as beautiful as a sixteenth-century structure in its own way.

When the Pompidou Centre was first built in Paris, people were like, "It doesn't look like the Sacre Coeur." But now it's part of the establishment and people have warmed to it. It hasn't had the benefit of longevity. Since we haven't got used to seeing it for 400 years, you have to use your eyes more than you would with buildings that have been used for 20 generations.

new new delhi opens Wed Apr 20. See Exhibitions in Listings.

Field trip



Water mark University students upstream of the Wazirabad barrage

A bus tour within Delhi will make you see red – and green, says Aayush Soni.

Around the time of the Commonwealth Games, the Delhi government started the Hop-On Hop-Off (HOHO) bus service. The idea was to take visitors on a tour of the city's landmarks in an air-conditioned bus. One of the places it would pass was Rajghat, Mahatma Gandhi's cremation ground, where the tour operator gave passengers a quick history lesson about the Indian freedom struggle. What he didn't talk about was the condition of the Yamuna river right behind it.

That task will fall to Govind Singh, an environmentalist and the director of the Delhi Greens NGO. This fortnight, he conducts an eco-tour on a Delhi Transport Corporation bus, which includes a visit to the Wazirabad barrage to highlight the dire pollution of the river. Singh began conducting Urban Eco-Tours in Delhi in 2008, when he realised that participation in Delhi Greens' initiatives was low because Dilliwalas had no sense of ownership over their city or its natural heritage. Earlier tours have visited Agrasen ki Baoli, which is now bone-dry, or the Aravali biodiversity park, where he spotlights the region's natural resources and ecosystems. "After they attended

the tour, participants understood the problems facing Delhi's natural resources and the response to our efforts got better," Singh said.

This edition of the Urban Eco-Tour is limited to North Delhi, which means that even if some locations are pretty, the stories behind them will be especially ugly. Apart from the Yamuna banks, the tour will visit the Northern Ridge, where participants will go on a ramble and participate in a symbolic clean-up, and an urban farm in Majnu ka Tila, where the food the families rely on is grown in contaminated soil.

It isn't just citizens who have responded positively to Singh's initiative, but also the Delhi government. "Our first eco-tour was conducted with support from the government's department of environment," Singh said. "They advertised the tour on our behalf in the *Indian Express*." Delhi Greens has now tied up with the Earth Day Network and this Urban Eco-Tour will commemorate international earth day. "Our previous eco-tours didn't have any such associations and still 200 people signed up for them," Singh said. "But people are more aware on certain days than on others, so while Earth Day may be symbolic, it reinforces the fact that there's something called a planet." *See Sat Apr 23 in Events.*



In a nutshell Findlay Kember's shot of a couple at *The Love Hotel* at ai.