

**MAHESH SHANTARAM****THE INDIAN WEDDING AS A MIRROR OF SOCIETY**

**With his eye for documenting the weddings of the Indian upper and middle classes, the Indian photographer Manesh Shantaram captures the complex and contradictory social structures of his homeland. Using photographs taken of more than 150 weddings over a period of six years, Shantaram constructs one long, intoxicating party, revealing fascinating insights into these meticulously choreographed events.**

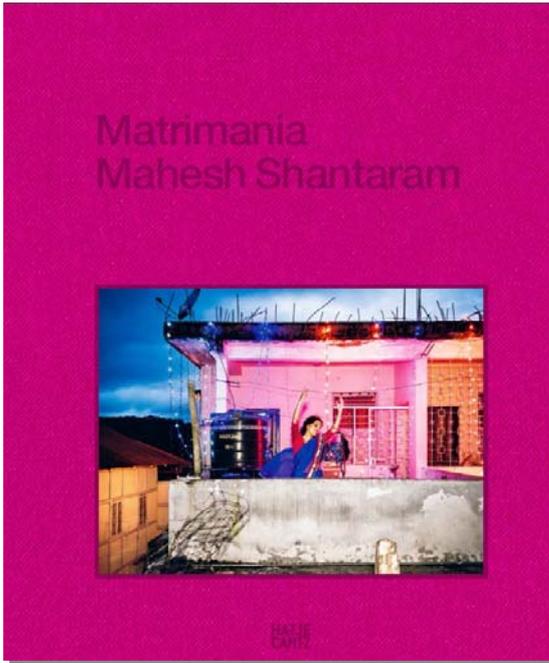
Berlin, February 7, 2019 – For many years, Mahesh Shantaram (\*1977), a member of the Agence VU', enjoyed privileged access to the wedding celebrations of the Indian upper and middle classes. He took advantage of these opportunities to draw a multifaceted picture of Indian society in his documentary photographs.

As it always has been, the Indian wedding ceremony is subject to strict religious and social traditions. Many of the marriages the photographer was able to depict were arranged by the couple's parents, with the main purpose being to unite families that belong to the same social classes and the same castes. Frequently, business relationships between two families can also play a decisive role. When this kind of pairing off succeeds, the wedding celebrations are a big social event that permit the families who throw opulent parties lasting for several days to solidify their social status. The social pressure is so great that families start saving up for their daughter's wedding as soon as she is born.

Mahesh Shantaram succeeds in capturing this luxury with a sobering gaze. He depicts only a few moments of great ecstasy, because he is more interested in what lies behind these sparkling presentations. Women acting as live lamp carriers, transporting gigantic candelabra on their heads; a shirts tightly spanning a stomach; sleeping teens; an exhausted clown removing his mask to allow a glimpse of his sweaty, tired face. Hundreds of workers entertain and serve thousands of guests, keeping the show going for days, while the invited guests immerse themselves in Bollywood-like fantasy worlds.

“Everything that's great about India—and everything that's wrong with it—can be summarized in a single wedding,” Shantaram says, summarizing the significance of his book of photographs.

*Matrimania* presents a personal view of the contradictions of twenty-first-century India, exposed by the wedding culture as if under a microscope.



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**MATRIMANIA**

Texts by Mahesh Shantaram, Gita Aravamudan,  
graphic design by Kummer & Herrman

English

2018. 112 pp., 51 ills.

clothbound

23.00 x 28.00 cm

ISBN 978-3-7757-4519-2

48,00 EUR

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Especially in the digital age, Hatje Cantz regards itself an element linking museums, artists, galleries, collectors, and art lovers. Conveying knowledge - in terms of both content and visuals - as well as an enthusiasm for art is always at the heart of our engagement.

In keeping with our ambition to make it possible to experience art beyond the medium of the book, Hatje Cantz has launched the EDITION GERD HATJE as we continue to expand our portfolio of strictly limited, signed editions featuring works on paper, photographic works of art, and art objects.

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