

Creative Process

EXPOSURE: DEV DHUNSI

The artist talks to Gem Fletcher about the complexities of identity and the elusive nature of photography, which presents itself as fact, but always “captures something that has already shifted, already disappeared”

By Gem Fletcher 22/05/2026



Much of Dev Dhunsi's work begins with experiences that don't quite have a name: gestures, accents, inherited habits, and bodily memories that fall outside clear categories. In that friction between what is lived and what can be said, is where he often works.

As a Norwegian with Indian heritage, Dhunsi grew up between languages, cultures and expectations, and in Norway, there is no equivalent word for 'mixed' without consolidating ideas about race.

This absence became the catalyst for his first photobook, titled *Mixed*, where he presents a constellation of photographs, image interventions, archival fragments, and text that together creates an experimental, mythical world that thrives in that open space. Here, humans can exist outside of conflict: fluid, plural and free.



Top and above: *Mixed*



Mixed

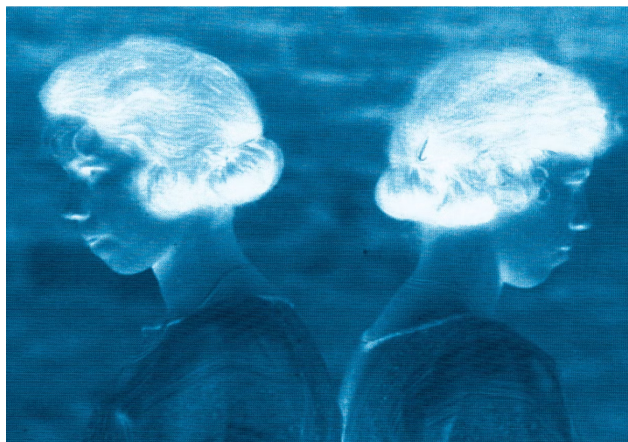
“At the book’s core lies the question: what happens when language is insufficient to name lived experience?” explains Dhunsi when I ask him about the book’s genesis. “Growing up between Norwegian and Indian contexts, I was always slightly out of sync with expectations – not enough of one thing, too much of another. That friction became formative.”

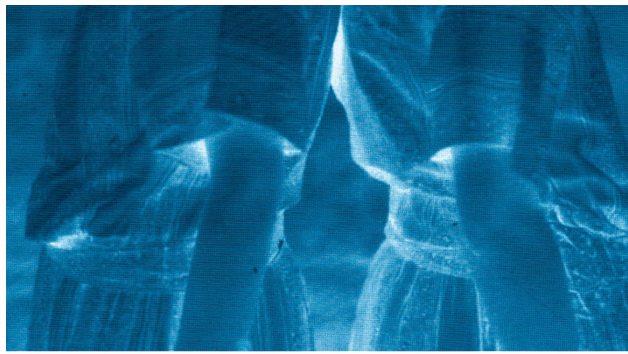
“Being queer is very similar to this position. You learn early on how to adapt, to read the room, to shift yourself depending on where you are. What I later understood is that this ‘in-betweenness’ is not a lack, but a productive position. It allows you to see how systems of belonging are constructed – how categories like culture, heritage and even normality are maintained through repetition.”

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Dhunsi’s work is not about representation; it’s about subverting and destabilising the political and social frameworks that demand it in the first place. During his research, he spent time in the racial archive at the State Institute for Racial Biology in Uppsala, making him more aware of the country’s violent history towards its population and humanity at large in the name of measuring, categorising and fixing identities.

Photography’s role as the dark accomplice to this pseudoscience is well known, but Dhunsi was shocked by the ways contextual information was removed to create further harm.





Mixed



Mixed

“The savage encounters with the archive didn’t push me toward defining ‘mixedness,’” he says. “But rather toward celebrating it as something that resists definition. It also inspired me to loosen up my approach, allowing my collaborators to take the wheel and direct me on the shoot. This opened up a two-way dialogue and made each shoot more immersive.”

This intentional release also enabled the artist to experiment freely with photographic genres, resisting categorisation and crafting a complex vision of identity that is both personal and collective. Dhunsi and his collaborators’ touchpoints are vast and idiosyncratic – from Norwegian mythology and harpists to Vedic scripture and a commemorative sweater created by Liberia and Norway to celebrate a Liberian winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986.

“Photography always arrives too late. It captures something that has already shifted, already disappeared. That delay opens a space where fiction can enter”

As viewers, we are invited to traverse photographic genres, moving between document, fiction, myth, darkroom interventions and performance, never settling or being pinned down. This is only amplified by the sequence, which loops, glitches, and contradicts itself, functioning like a labyrinth of ideas and emotions rather than a narrative.

The book, which is small and intimate in form, feels radical in contrast to the slew of contemporary photobooks where concepts are held so tightly they get flattened, or where projects are so overly explained they become didactic. Dhunsi likens the experience of creating the book to karaoke, which is heavily referenced throughout.



Unmistakably You exhibition at the Nitja Centre for Contemporary Art in Norway; Photo: Tor Simen Ulstein

“This experience of lacking language and terminology opens up the performative,” says Dhunsi when I ask him to connect the dots on these seemingly disparate touchpoints. “People sit in the audience nervously before karaoke, but they put themselves through it. They want to go up there and sing.” It’s that exact juxtaposition of something painful and uncomfortable opening up a door of possibility that embodies his own experience of making.

Dhunsi describes his entry into photography as being “seduced by its authority”. How the medium presents itself as evidence, something to be trusted, but in fact is completely unstable beneath the surface. “Photography always arrives too late,” he tells me. “It captures something that has already shifted, already disappeared. That delay opens a space where fiction – both fortunately and unfortunately – can enter. A kind of magic, or something ghostly.

“Over time, the image stopped being an endpoint and became a starting point – something I could extend into textiles, sound, and spatial constructions”

“So, while I began with photography as a way of holding onto something, I stayed because it allowed me to question what is being held, and for whom. Over time, the image stopped being an endpoint and became a starting point – something I could extend into textiles, sound, and spatial constructions.”

These material and spatial interventions are evident in Dhunsi’s recent exhibition, *Unmistakably You*, at the Nitja Centre for Contemporary Art in Norway. Using the book as its point of departure, he takes the world on the page and allows the audience to enter it, reinforcing the idea that identity is not something we own, but something we make.





Unmistakably You exhibition at the Nitja Centre for Contemporary Art in Norway; Photo: Tor Simen Ulstein



Mixed

Instead of presenting works as neutral objects on walls, he constructed a floating labyrinth. Printed textiles and jacquard-woven photographic objects destabilise the image, causing it to shift, fold, and resist a fixed reading, forcing the viewer to navigate uncertainty. “You don’t stand outside the work – you move through it, negotiate it, and become part of its unfolding.”

In both the book and exhibition, Dhunsi doesn’t explain who he is, but rather embraces mixedness, a working method – a way of moving between different materials, histories, positions openly and without resolution.

He resists the urge to neatly contain and lets contradictions roam free, opening up a more expansive experience of his ideas and the medium of photography at large. “What interests me more is depth – to build projects that can hold complexity without simplifying it.”

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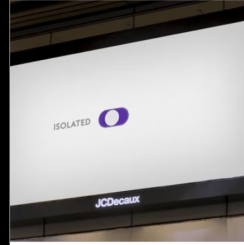
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