

Gigi Scaria

Artist Statement and Biography

Artist Statement

I have been engaged with the city of Delhi since the last 18 years. Observing and engaging with Delhi on a permanent day-to-day basis has formed much of my perception of urban spaces in India. The layers of social structures and hierarchies one encounters in a single day in Delhi leaves thought for the understanding of a much larger and wider notion called 'India'. The urban and the rural, the class and caste, religion and practice and the endless list of eccentric and idiosyncratic exchanges of different social groups somehow create its own mystery in any urban space in India.

For us 'modernity' is a big claim, which has to be approved and contextualized at every stage of any discourse. On the other hand an economically booming India stands with millions of middle class on its side, which constantly erase and redraw the map of India with a completely different set of tools and calculations. The repercussions and resonance of these new voices has also been woven into the urban fabric with variety of architectural and cultural forms.

Many of these observations have been a catalyst for the making of the *Elevator from the subcontinent*. It is a bit larger than a normal size elevator cabin with an automatic door system. When you press the button, the door opens, inside the elevator you witness three backlit projections. Then the door closes behind you and images on all the three projections around you create a car parking basement. Slowly the parking space moves down giving you an illusion of going upward in the elevator. Then it reaches the next floor, which is the interior of a middle class household. Thus the elevator travels through different levels, each one displaying different living space. These living spaces can be identified as different social strata and hierarchies. The ride is of about ten minutes and finally one comes back to the car parking space and the elevator door opens.

The elevator has a symbolic significance when we think about the logic in which it makes up and down movements. Elevator is a sculptural version of a progressive logic imposed by the state on its citizens. According to its structure, progress comes with linearity and its vertical façade. In this work an attempt is made to break the structural logic of the space by viewing the living spaces in horizontal layers thereby creating vast spaces of parallel existence. In another sense the layers of vision blocked by the walls get illuminated by each spectator while experiencing the elevator.

Artist Biography

Gigi Scaria **India**

b. 1973, Kothanalloor, India

Gigi Scaria was born in Kothanalloor, a village in southern Kerala, India, in 1973. In 1995, after completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the College of Fine Arts, Thiruvananthapuram, Scaria moved to New Delhi where he undertook a Master of Arts at Jamia Millia Islamia. In the mid-1990s, while establishing his career as a professional artist, Scaria also illustrated children's books and taught art at an experimental school in New Delhi.

By 2000, increased international exposure was accompanied by prestigious residency opportunities and solo exhibitions in India, Germany, America, Hungary, the Republic of Korea and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. In 2002, Scaria was awarded an Inlaks Scholarship, and was artist-in-residence at UNIDEE, Cittadellarte-Pistoletto Foundation, Biella, Italy. That year, he also participated in his first exhibition in Australia, *Indians + cowboys*, at Gallery 4A, Sydney.

Scaria's creative repertoire includes painting, photography, installation, sculpture, and video. Since 2002, he has made over thirty-five video works including: *A day with Sohail and Maryan* (2004), *Home: in/out* (2005), *Raise your hands those who have touched him* (2007), *All about the other side* (2008), and *Raise your hands those who have spoken to him* (2010). Subjects of early videos include the children who inhabit the streets of New Delhi, and the memories of people who have met or seen Mahatma Gandhi and Mao Zedong, while recent video work deals with the impact of the rapid growth of India's cities and the social conditions that have been affected by this change.

Scaria's first project for an American museum, *Gigi Scaria: City unclaimed* was held in 2013 at the Smart Museum of Art, the University of Chicago. A large photo based mural of an imaginary cityscape, and a 3.6-meter high water fountain were sited in the museum's reception for twelve months. Scaria's recent solo exhibitions, *Amusement park* (Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai, 2009), *Difficult to imagine, easy to construct* (Art Asia Miami, 2008), *Site under construction* (Videospace Budapest, 2008), and *Triviality of everyday existence* (the National Art Studio, Changdong, Republic of Korea, 2008), featured video art that included interviews (fictional and non-fictional), documentaries and animation.

In 2010 Scaria participated in *West Heavens*, the first major artistic engagement between India (historically referred to as the West Heavens in Chinese Buddhist texts) and China. The exhibition *Place time play: India-China contemporary art*, was displayed at various venues by the Shanghai International Culture Association, Institute of Visual Culture, China.

The following year Scaria was one of five artists (with Zarina Hashmi, Sonal Jain, Mriganka Madhukailya and Praneet Soi) to represent India at the 54th Venice Biennale in the exhibition, *everyone agrees: it's about to explode*, curated by Ranjit Hoskote.

Scaria exhibited a major installation, Elevator from the sub-continent, which created a simulated space representing an actual elevator that the audience was invited to step inside in order to 'time travel' to different locations in India. In 2011 Scaria's work was presented at the 3rd Singapore Biennale as well as in Crossroads: India escalates for the Prague Biennale.

In 2012 Scaria participated in the Oz Asia Festival exhibition, the needle on the gauge: the testimonial image in the work of seven Indian artists, Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide, and he created a sculptural installation for the exhibition Topical heat: new art from South Asia at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in New Plymouth, New Zealand. His work also appeared in Critical mass at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, the first major exhibition to introduce contemporary Indian art to the Israeli public. Gigi Scaria was a 2012 University of Melbourne Macgeorge Fellow, and presented an exhibition of video works at the Ian Potter Museum of Art as part of the Melbourne Festival. In January 2013 Scaria was a participant in the Australia India Institute artists' retreat in Jaipur, India. Right now his solo exhibition titled 'Dust' is on view at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne.