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'Dwelling on the Metaphor of Home'

By Seph Rodney

Artist Gigi Scaria looks carefully at our sense of belonging and home and the uncertainty that accompanies each.



Gigi Scaria, "Shadow of the Ancestors" (2015) Single-channel projection with sound, 4:00 min. (all images courtesy Aicon Gallery unless otherwise noted)

Buildings can seem tedious and boring, especially in their repetition in a city like New York. But they are an enduring sign of our species' survivability and perseverance. It was only 12,000 years ago (in an approximate 200,000-year continuum of existing as human beings in our current forms) that the Neolithic Revolution took place and we transitioned from hunting and gathering to become farmers, create settlements, and domesticate our helper animals. It might be around this moment, at the beginning of becoming sedentary people that we imagined what constitutes a house, or a home. Our homes now are fraught with the ambivalence that's rooted in the fundamental question of whether that was a good choice.

Whatever our domiciles look like, they are places of opposition. They represent our need to carve out a space for the self, as the poet John Ciardi said: "walling in and walling out / in that most concrete version of the either-or." Yet, they are often also designed to exist in a larger shared structure. Residential buildings are both about solitude making its peace with mutual space — individual compartments that are linked within one superstructure. In Gigi Scaria's *All About This Side*, exhibition at Aicon gallery, the buildings become genuinely

surprising because they are allegorized in myriad ways that reveal a history of varied uses for the idea of a dwelling place: surrealist structures, temples, edifices conected from minerals housed in natural rock, features of the landscape, repeated theoretical design templates that are ostensibly created for people though no humans are in evidence. Before this show, I did not know that a house could do and be so much. For all the ways it makes one look at and reconsider the domicile as a constitutive part of being, this show is completely worthwhile.



Installation View of About This Side (photo by the author for Hyperallergic)



Installation view with "Trial" (2017) to the left (photo by the author for Hyperallergic)

The show is lovely in its extrapolation of housing from the very basic elements the planet gave us, as in “Shadow of the Ancestors” (2015), in which the trunk of a tree casts a shadow that is a building — thus prompting a discussion about how our first home came from trees. She show also illustrates contemporary structures showing that they are representative of humans even when we are absent. In my favorite piece in the show, “Trial” (2017) human figures appear as copper-colored figurines on the wall standing on balconies painted a steely blue. Here the building is implied as the one patch of land the individual has to take in a view of everything else. It is our ground, our earth, that little patch of land, and so it is immensely important.

Gigi Scaria’s All About This Side continues at Aicon gallery, (35 Great Jones Street, East Village, Manhattan) through September 23.