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Introduction

As a performance-based artist whose body goes where his art goes, I have been travelling with projects for a while now, engaging with communities, institutions and spaces; wandering through the cities; making connections, friendships and collaborations. In short, I have been ‘roving’ for a while.

— Nikhil Chopra, *Art Monthly*, Summer 2012/13, p8.

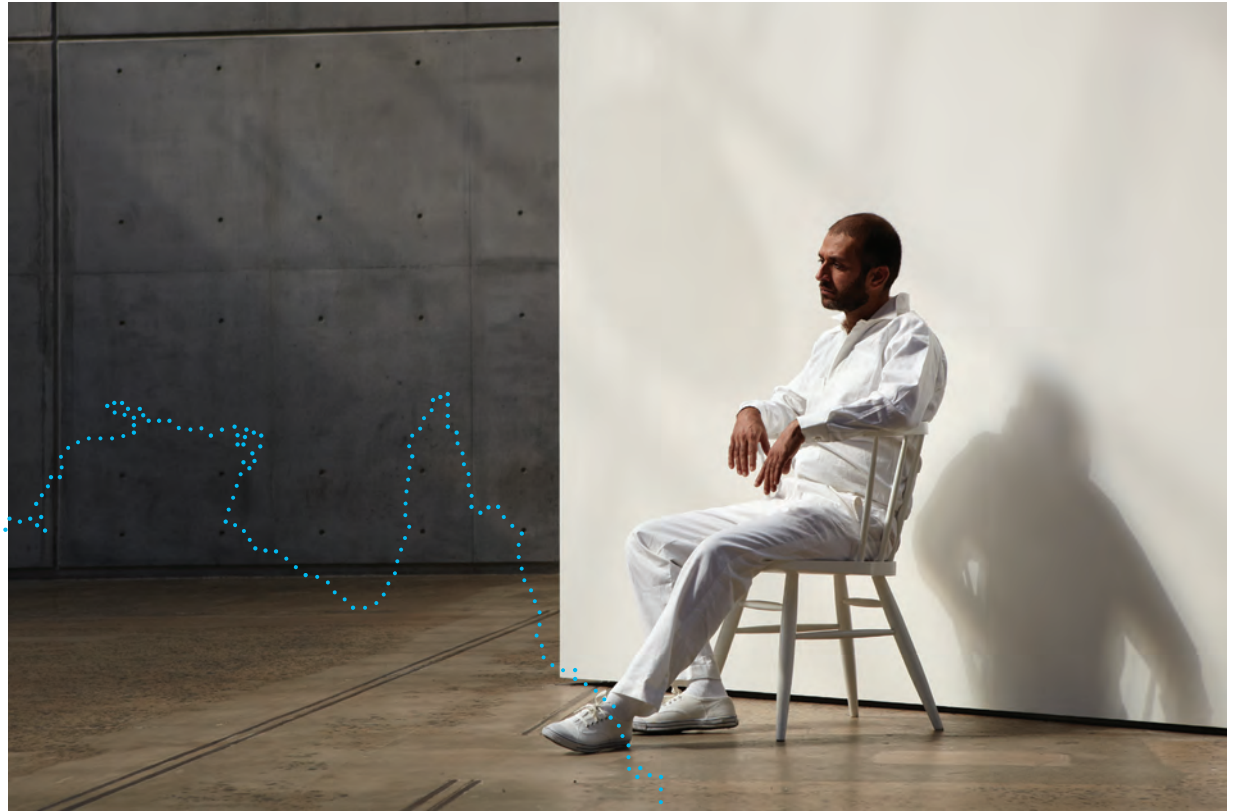
In 2012 interdisciplinary artist Nikhil Chopra became the inaugural recipient of Asialink’s ‘Roving Residency’ which unfolded across three Australian locations: Carriageworks, Sydney; Asialink, Melbourne; and the Fremantle Arts Centre, Western Australia. Chopra’s Roving Residency launched Asialink’s new ‘Arts Residency Laboratory’, a platform through which new, more sustainable and engaged models of arts residencies are trialled in the context of The Asian Century.

As Chopra ‘roved’ between locations and was introduced to diverse networks and settings, each leg of his journey resulted in different outcomes. In Sydney the artist delivered a three-day endurance performance commissioned by Carriageworks. Using the architecture and history of the site as an old rail yard, Chopra’s live-art performance transformed the space, himself and his audience.

In Melbourne Chopra delivered a performance lecture at the Victorian College of the Arts and participated in the forum *Lemuria: Cultural Entanglements between Australia and India*, presented by Utopia@Asialink and the Ian Potter Museum of Art as part of the 2012 Melbourne Festival.

In Western Australia time was taken to reflect on his residency, on connections made and how the experience might influence future projects. Chopra spent time cycling and sketching, and finished his time in Australia with a thoughtful performance lecture at the Fremantle Arts Centre that summed up his Roving Residency and moved the audience to tears.

Eliza Roberts, Asialink Arts Residencies Manager



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Fremantle

Sydney

Melbourne



Nikhil Chopra, *Blackening IV: Bay 19*, 2012, performance installation.
Work commissioned by Carriageworks, costume design Loise Braganza,
photography Zan Wimberley.



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Nikhil Chopra, *Blackening IV: Bay 19*, 2012, performance installation.
Work commissioned by Carriageworks, costume design Loise Braganza,
photography Zan Wimberley.

Nikhil Chopra

Nikhil Chopra's artistic practice defies categorisation. Encompassing live art, drawing, painting, photography and installation, he draws heavily from theatre, and fuses rehearsal with improvisation in live-art performances that often endure several days.

The passing of time is crucial in Nikhil's work, where the relationship between being in the moment (the performance) and the legacy (the photograph) is always carefully negotiated.

With the aid of carefully constructed props, backdrops and costumes, Chopra creates live photographs that play with everyday situations. The artist says this enables him to "experience my immediate world viscerally in the here-and-now, and engage my muscles and mind in alternative ways."

Chopra merges personal experience with historical narrative to confuse fiction and reality. The artist unpacks, tears open, and draws on colonial narratives using real and fictitious characters to bridge historical periods and localities. "At the heart of Nikhil's work lies the thought that epic journeys can bring you closer to home" says Curator Ric Spencer of the Fremantle Arts Centre.

Nikhil Chopra was born in 1974 in Calcutta, India. He trained as a painter at the Maharaja Sayaji Rao University in Baroda, India and the Maryland Institute, College of Art in Baltimore, USA. He completed an MFA at the Ohio State University, Columbus, USA. Nikhil spent 2011-12 in Berlin as Fellow at the Freie Universtat and now lives and works in Goa, India. Highlights of Nikhil Chopra's artistic career include a solo exhibition at the New Museum, New York in 2009; *Indian Highway* at the Serpentine Gallery 2008-09, *Making Worlds* at the 53rd Venice Biennale 2009, and *Marina Abramovic Presents* at the Manchester International Festival 2009.

Eliza Roberts, Asialink Arts Residencies Manager

Nikhil Chopra BLACKENING IV: BAY 19 Carriageworks, Sydney



“Modernity is the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is the one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immutable.” Baudelaire, 1863.

Nikhil Chopra’s art probes the human condition in the context of the urban experience. He transforms non-traditional art spaces with multilayered performances and installations. Chopra uses performance as a medium to question history, identity, and ideas of self-portraiture, adopting personae that are both fictional characters and extensions of his personality. His works are a form of storytelling that intermingles family histories, landscapes, personal narratives and everyday life. They are simultaneously simple and complex, austere and ornate, silent and declared. In 2012 Chopra was commissioned to make new work responding to the history and architecture of Carriageworks. Located in the inner-city Sydney suburb of Redfern, Carriageworks is a multi-disciplinary arts institution that occupies Sydney’s former Rail Yards.

The Carriageworks buildings (built between 1880-89) comprise the largest surviving workshop site from the steam-era in Australia. For over a century, the workshops employed thousands of people, building and maintaining the locomotive fleet for New South Wales and beyond. They were also one of the major employers of migrants in Australia, many of whom lived in the surrounding suburbs and shaped the diverse neighbourhoods of Sydney’s inner west.

Over his two week residency at Carriageworks, Chopra worked with his wife and collaborator Madhavi Gore to develop *BLACKENING IV: BAY 19*, a three-day, thirty-six hour endurance performance presented in the Carriageworks public space. A continuum of works made in Berlin in 2011 and 2012, the transformation that occurs in the blackening series poses the corporeal, metaphysical and political connotations of black as a colour. During the performance, Chopra colours his skin and clothes black. Working in silence, he engages the audience with his gaze, connecting with them, staring straight through them, or lowering his gaze as if to acknowledge their presence while drawing ever deeper into himself. At Carriageworks the artist’s silence is compounded by the distant rattle and rhythm of trains passing, moving people around the vast urban sprawl of Sydney.

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Nikhil Chopra, *Blackening IV: Bay 19*, 2012, performance installation. Work commissioned by Carriageworks, costume design Loise Braganza, photography Zan Wimberley.

Sydney



At 9am on Friday 28th September, dressed in pristine white overalls and white sandshoes, Chopra begins the thirty-six hour transformation of himself and the Carriageworks space. At the centre of the room one tonne of coal is positioned. A symbol of the blackening, it is a representation of Carriageworks' industrial history, a medium to create drawings, and a substance to blacken the body. For twelve hours Chopra shovels and sculpts the coal, manoeuvres and makes drawings on the six white walls, connects them, splits them apart, and at times encloses himself within them, creating a barrier from the audience. Episodes of frenetic drawing are contrasted with periods of rest, and over a number of hours the densely structured and enormous compositions begin to resemble train tracks, road plans, or an urban landscape seen from an aerial perspective. At the base of each wall a thick line of black charcoal dust develops, this residue becoming visible when Chopra pushes the wall to another location. These marks form a map of the artist's movement, his diversions and desire lines suggesting the labour of the day. Chopra also brings the outside world in, projecting images from a surveillance camera located behind Carriageworks, facing the Redfern tracks. This footage reminds us that this work is evolving in real time and at this place. At 9pm that evening, covered in dust, grime and sweat, Chopra sits, slumped into the mound of coal, camouflaged with the walls behind him and inseparable from the work. He is the work.

Chopra's art examines the specificities of repetition and routine in our lives. Movement, transport, eating, working, sleeping, bathing, dressing, the recurrence of actions performed consciously and unconsciously. These activities are intensified by the landscape he works in. Be it the subway of New York City, the cobbled streets of a medieval town in Tuscany, or a repurposed Rail Yard in Sydney, the connotations evoked by each sight prompt our personal and collective histories and engage us with the present.

Chopra begins the second morning of *BLACKENING IV* shopping for food at the popular Eveleigh Markets, held onsite at Carriageworks every Saturday. Dressed in fresh white work overalls and maintaining complete silence, he scours the market purchasing food for the public dinner he will spend the day preparing.



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Nikhil Chopra, *Blackening IV: Bay 19*, 2012, performance installation. Work commissioned by Carriageworks, costume design Loise Braganza, photography Zan Wimberley.





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Nikhil Chopra, *Blackening IV: Bay 19*, 2012, performance installation. Work commissioned by Carriageworks, costume design Loise Braganza, photography Zan Wimberley.

Inside the Carriageworks space Chopra's blackened costume from the previous day lies slumped on a chair and attention is diverted to a temporary kitchen and single long dining table with eighteen seats. Throughout the day curious visitors come to watch this silent man undertake the preparation of hosting a meal - chopping, slicing, frying, simmering, setting the table and finally dressing himself. Chopra's transformation from a man in work overalls to an androgynous character in a Victorian-era inspired hoop skirt fashioned from wire, lace and tarpaulin all takes place in the space. This is the performativity of life. Standing before his guests he shaves his head, applies make up and jewellery, undresses and dresses, revealing himself as a person as exposed or layered as any at the table. Such a flattening of hierarchy is what makes Chopra's work accessible. By heightening an experience and drawing attention to our differences, he affirms the fact that we are all human, flawed and vulnerable.

Sunday morning and the space is littered with the detritus of the night before. Crockery, cutlery, glasses, bottles, candles, and bones - the signs of a shared meal and a long evening. Chopra drags a table over to one of his walls and begins a day of meditative drawing. The existing marks take a more representational form. Lines become the roads and structures of the Carriageworks buildings, shapes become the portraits of guests at last night's table. These could be faces we see in the city or people whose paths cross everyday via their routines or habits. The light changes. A train passes by. Twilight arrives and the night falls. Architecture and landscape, the weather, the chaos and the commotion of contemporary life come together in Chopra's work. The costuming, selection and installation of props may provide us with clues to the world conjured up by his character but it remains uncertain and unfixed.

In *BLACKENING IV: BAY 19*, the audience has become part of the exercise of locating the performance within Carriageworks. And in turn, they have located themselves. Chopra allows this to unfold, exploring the histories of a site, highlighting our need for regularity and predictability, and reminding us that our connections to this fragile and uncertain world are through the people we share it with.

Beatrice Gralton, Visual Arts Curator, Carriageworks.

Nikhil Chopra was resident at Carriageworks Sydney from 24 September – 4 October 2012.



Melbourne

In Melbourne Nikhil Chopra gave a performance lecture at the Victorian College of the Arts and participated in the forum *Lemuria: Cultural Entanglements between Australia and India*. The forum was organised by Utopia@Asialink and The Ian Potter Museum of Art, and presented as part of the Melbourne Festival.



Nikhil Chopra, performance lecture, 2012, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne. Costume Loise Braganza.





Natalie King, Director, Utopia@Asialink
 delivering introduction for *Lemuria: Cultural
 Entanglements between Australia and India*.

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Forum Highlights

Lemuria: Cultural Entanglements between Australia and India

Asialink, Melbourne, October 2012

Natalie King :

The Utopian idea of Lemuria, is an imaginary submerged landscape, hugging the shorelines between Australia and India. Originating in the nineteenth century, this hypothetical lost land, or sunken continent, was invoked in the public imagination for new worlds. Mariner's tales, philosophical speculations, theosophical thoughts, yielded lost continents.

Lemuria first came into view as an attempt at explaining a zoological puzzle: the pattern of distribution of the Lemur family of primates in the region from Indonesia to Africa. While the history and preoccupation with Lemuria is fascinating, we are using this concept tonight as a framework for us to consider the cultural traffic between Australia and India and the Asia Pacific region more broadly. Many of us who occupy spaces within the arts, hug the shorelines of landmasses of cultures. We recognize that something; a family likeness perhaps; an eccentric sense of kinship of our practices; the broad features of common questions and concerns, hint at some kind of extended lineage that we can draw from. These include the histories of communication we have inherited and the questions that our social and political milieus confront us with.

So how can we navigate the shorelines of all our practices? The rubric of Lemuria might offer some insights as to what reciprocal and inclusive paradigms can be deployed for working between Australia and India. How can Lemuria, this fiction of location offer a unique vantage on the question of place, locality and cultural entanglement?

Nikhil Chopra:

I was thinking about the whole concept of Lemuria, as all us artists imagine our practices to be existing 'in between' spaces. My work exists in between drawing and performance art. In between ideas of abstraction, and the way in which my body moves across a space, and how marks of charcoal are traces that the body leaves as it occupies and lives in that space.

The way in which I'm thinking about how perhaps Australia and India converge or meet, is also because our histories in many ways overlap. I'm conscious about my own colonial upbringing; the way in which I set a table; the way in which I lay my napkin on my lap; the way in which I sip wine; the way



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Nikhil Chopra, *Blackening II*, 2012, GlogouAIR, Berlin. Photography Johnny Amore.

in which I converse; the way in which I conduct myself, is part of a very colonial upbringing. In fact, Hindi often seems to me a second language. I'm critical of that, but I also think of it in many ways as sort of an advantage, as a weapon, as an access to the world.

In this performance that I did in Berlin, I'm without costume, the body and the skin, and the way in which my hair sits on my body, become the costume. I take away my vision by literally taping my eyes shut for six hours and I'm making relentless marks on the wall without any awareness of what those marks might look like.

You can see a lot of pictures of me lying down, and at rest. I actually do see rest as a very important aspect of my work. Rest is as important as the work, because if I'm not collecting my energy or if I'm not resting, then I'm not being able to use my energy to its fullest.

So it's about incorporating most aspects of life within a performance. I'm really interested in that space in between outside and inside, and because the body is fluid, because the body can move, I like to break out of spaces and break out of the gallery space, or the white space, or the fortress space, and enter the landscape.

The initial trigger for performances comes from studio portrait photography- where studio backdrops were set up, and the model posed in front of them. In these cases, the subject actually creates that fantasy landscape, in front of which he, or she, will eventually pose.

This performance was in Yokohama. It's also in a way, the space in between identities as well, which I'm really interested in. Between being Indian and not Indian. Or what does that mean? Walking, journeying, going through spaces, going through landscapes is also a preoccupation.



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Nikhil Chopra, *Yog Raj Chitrakar: Memory Drawing IV*, 2009, Yokohama Triennale. Costume design Tabasheer Zutshi, photography Shivani Gupta, production assistance Tabasheer Zutshi.



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Nikhil Chopra, *Yog Raj Chitrakar: Memory Drawing V Part 2*, 2009, Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo. Costume design Yabasheer Zutshi, photography Tina Lange.



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Nikhil Chopra in collaboration with Yuko Kaseki, *9: Encounters, Meetings, Passages*, 2011, Grüntaler 9, Berlin. Dramaturgy Katherine Mezur, photography Tina Lange.

This was in Oslo. As artists- as privileged artists I should say- we have the opportunity to travel. And when I am being displaced, when I am moving and extracting myself from the comfort of my home, and constantly shifting that context, I'm always conscious of that, and how I incorporate that into the performance work. So again, here it's quite obvious how I'm bridging the outside, with the inside. The function of painting and the function of landscape painting as being something that hangs on the wall and something that acts as a window, as something that alludes to something that's beyond that wall is of interest to me.

What is 'in between' a studio, and what is 'in between' a gallery, became clear to me in my year in Berlin. For the year that I was there, I had a studio space that was a shop. I used this shop essentially for performances. And here it was not just I that performed, but it was also me inviting other performers to perform with. In this case it's a Japanese Butoh performer, Yuko Kaseki. And she pulverized me. But it was an interesting tension between this very reserved, almost gentleman kind of persona presenting his memories and his autobiography, and what you see in this image is Yuko systematically destroys that. Not destroys it, but sort of recreates it by going over them. Like blurring my photographs and objects of preciousness to me by smearing charcoal on them. This was a very important collaboration. It provoked me. It pushed me. And this is what she did to me...Tortured me!

This is Germany. I start off by playing the dictator. What I'm wearing here is a paper costume. I'm really interested in what material becomes part of these performances in terms of the drawing material, like charcoal, paper. I was looking at a lot of images of political statues of fallen leaders, of revolutions that are redundant now. The performance starts with me leaping off that table and almost committing suicide, almost killing myself.

And because it's paper, it has a beautiful quality it falls apart. It comes apart with movement, it comes apart with sweat as well. And literally about two hours into the performance the costume's already in tatters. There are performances that are long, that last days. They can last up to 99 hours; they can last up to 18 days, when I would spend that kind of time in a space.

The idea of existing in between gender as well is something that interests me- not just becoming a woman, because I don't think I can, I don't assume that position, but at least stripping myself of my masculinity.

Lemuria: Cultural Entanglements between Australia and India was held on October 15, 2012 at the University of Melbourne. Presented by Utopia@Asialink and the Ian Potter Museum of Art as part of the 2012 Melbourne Festival.

Speakers:

Nikhil Chopra – Goa-based artist and Asialink roving resident 2012

Emily Floyd – Melbourne-based artist who undertook an Asialink residency in New Delhi

Jitish Kallat – Internationally acclaimed Mumbai-based artist

Dr. Chaitanya Sambrani – Curator, writer and lecturer (Australian National University)

Gigi Scaria- Delhi-based artist, represented India at 2011 Venice Biennale

Chaired by Bala Starr, Senior Curator, Ian Potter Museum of Art and Natalie King, Director, Utopia@Asialink

Nikhil Chopra was resident at Asialink Melbourne from October 4 – October 18 2012.

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Nikhil Chopra, *Gedankenfreiheit*, 2011, Kunst + Projekte, Sindelfingen. Costume design Sabine Pfisterer, photography Sabine Pfisterer.



Fremantle

I think at the heart of Nikhil's work lies the thought that epic journeys can bring you closer to home - and that internal journeys once mapped and translated, can be transposed onto the greater expanses of the world as more fully contemplated and formed narratives.



Performance Lecture with Asialink

Roving Resident Nikhil Chopra, Fremantle Art Centre.
Costume Louise Braganza, photography Jackson Eaton.



Nikhil Chopra: being in and through history — a performance lecture Fremantle Art Centre, Fremantle

Nikhil Chopra's residency at Fremantle Arts Centre (FAC) ran from October 18 to October 31 2012 with a performance lecture on Tuesday October 30. He came to FAC as the closing chapter of an Asialink Roving Residency across Australia which had already included spending time at Carriageworks in Sydney and Asialink in Melbourne.

When I first met Nikhil Chopra at the airport he said he had travelled a lot – something we both had in common – and he also said he had first travelled extensively though his own country before venturing overseas. This is something we also had in common and something I think I understand – the need to appreciate where you come from before you attempt to throw yourself onto the rest of the world. I think at the heart of Nikhil's work lies the thought that epic journeys can bring you closer to home - and that internal journeys once mapped and translated, can be transposed onto the greater expanses of the world as more fully contemplated and formed narratives.

Nikhil's Asialink Roving Residency seemed to tie in beautifully with his work processes. The peripatetic nature of his past work combined with the intersections of time and space that his narratives convey, proposed a temporal way of examining one's life. Mix in with that a want to explore the histories of specific sites and we are privy to see a most poetic discourse unravel. It was wonderful to welcome an artist to FAC who not only considered the overlap of time and space but was willing to take this journey through their own narrative as a subjective site.

During his residency Nikhil spent time researching the social landscape of Western Australia and more particularly Fremantle. Drawing on the processes of mobility and performance that are installed in his work Nikhil spent time riding along the coast on a bike, visited the pinnacles, listened to the political history of Australia through the lyrics of Paul Kelly and gathered an insight into the middle class humour of Australian life through comedian Denise Scott. He also spent much time drawing in his studio where people came in and met and talked to him. All of this, somehow, seemed to come together seamlessly in the performance lecture – a sensual and immersive exploration of being in and through history.



The audience entered the performance lecture to find Nikhil standing still, motionless in meditative thought, before suddenly erupting into life and welcoming everyone, introducing himself as Nikhil's father before narrating a slideshow which discussed the possible processes of Nikhil's work, as he saw it, and the strands of Nikhil's processes that perhaps went back to his life and that of his father's (Nikhil's grandfather).

This engaged voyeurism was heartfelt and passionate as Nikhil and his father interwove stories that led us through past performances, past lives and the past of FAC while weaving his own sense of theatre as he transformed during the performance, slowly becoming the emerging identity of a woman in a blue dress (coincidentally and unknown by Nikhil at the time the presence of a woman in a blue dress is part of folklore in the haunts of FAC buildings). The dress was bound to Nikhil, wrapped around his waist with tape, and then the woman beckoned the audience to follow as she swept out of the performance space and down the stairs into Nikhil's studio. Here the audience became part of the performance lecture as boundaries were also swept away and the woman in the blue dress ushered the fifty or so participants into the studio, where they were greeted by a charcoal sketch of FAC done during Nikhil's residency playing opposite a copper beaten three dimensional drawing of FAC retrieved from storage. Once everyone was in, the woman in the blue dress collapsed to the ground, falling gently into repose, the body lying askew across an arm with a softly extended hand, held out openly, vulnerable, to the audience. Here the body lay unmoving for some time as the audience participants slowly filtered out, sat in contemplation, offered gifts or also lay on the ground in empathy. The air was intense and tears flowed as Nikhil's performance connected with a sense of searching and the idea of your self being at the cross roads of family and cultural history, held here in the form of a collection of people at this time in this space; Fremantle Arts Centre, Tuesday October 30, 2012.

As only a consummate storyteller could do - Nikhil's journey across the expanses of Australia ended with a comprehensive coming home. His internalised landscape, informed by the colonial history of the former asylum, spilled into the studio and performance spaces of FAC as a rhetorical narrative posed by his father to himself - this is the way I see your work my son - this is how your own life's work has been informed by your father, and your grandfather and the lives and loves of those who have come before you. Through his father the audience at FAC was able to engage in Nikhil's journey, as an artist working across different projects and different internal and external landscapes.



Performance Lecture with Asialink

Roving Resident Nikhil Chopra, Fremantle Art Centre.

Costume Louise Braganza, photography Jackson Eaton

Ending his Australian adventure on the western edge of the continent, a gateway where journeys begin and end, the format of the performance lecture seemed an apt departure point toward understanding Nikhil's approach. The act of speaking within a performance, or indeed of directly becoming involved with the audience, is not common within Nikhil's work and I think the structure of this lecture, holding within it a poetic narrative, allowed an opportunity for artist, performer and storyteller to successfully come together.

Dr Ric Spencer, Curator, Fremantle Arts Centre

Nikhil Chopra was resident at Fremantle Arts Centre from October 18 – October 31 2012.



Reflections on a Journey



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Madhavi Gore and Nikhil Chopra in Melbourne Laneway

Reflections on a Journey: In-conversation with Nikhil Chopra and Eliza Roberts

Eliza Roberts (ER): Asialink Arts Residencies Manager

Nikhil Chopra (NC): Asialink Roving Resident 2012

ER: You were the Inaugural recipient of the Asialink Roving Residency and the idea was to introduce an international artist to different locations, networks and opportunities across Australia. As you experienced, the regions across Australia are so spread out, that each is dramatically different. What are your observations about that?

NC: Even just in terms of art and the art scenes, these were so different across the three cities.

Generally speaking, from a ‘roving’ perspective, one becomes so aware of the co-existence of the ancient and the new and that is something that almost everyone in Australia is aware of - the tension between what we understand as the new world and actually how old the geographical land is. The way in which people live their lives in each of the three places is very different. Sydney reminds me of a commercial capital. It is a beautiful city with very interesting art spaces.

What I experienced in Sydney is that although art activities happen a lot at an institutional level, spaces like Carriageworks and Cockatoo Island are built out of raw industrial spaces. That was interesting to me - that some of these factories and commercial spaces were being taken over by art.

In Melbourne, a lot of the institutions that I visited were museums - they were big temples of art activity. But as well as that I had the opportunity to go into the studios of a couple of graffiti artists and see how graffiti culture has also been institutionalised where artists are working on commissions for different sections of the city, as opposed to it being outlawed. Also going to see things happening in underground spaces, at little hole in the wall galleries or performance spaces where a studentesque performance night was going on. So I really had a sense of what was happening in the underbelly of the art world as well as the big Melbourne Festival. The spectrum in Melbourne is really quite broad.

On the other side, Fremantle is that small town on the edge of the city with an art centre that had been created out of an old lunatic asylum. After spending so much time in art spaces in Sydney and Melbourne, in Fremantle I was really happy to not be in a big city. It felt like a breath of fresh air to be in a small place on the edge of the ocean. I really enjoyed being outdoors. I enjoyed being on my bicycle and swimming in the ocean and doing lunches in people’s houses.



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Cockatoo Island, Sydney

The Fremantle Arts Centre is incredible. I had a studio space which I used everyday, there were events and performances almost every night, and I would just sit on the lawn and do drawings, thinking about where I was heading, what is the meaning of my practice, how has it changed, and taking the time to be alone.

ER: Do you think that the traditional residency model is about that? Giving the artist an opportunity for time out and uninterrupted time for thought and creativity. Do you think that is still relevant today when artists are so mobile and working internationally?

NC: I think it is absolutely vital that the artist takes time away from networks and media because ultimately so much about being an artist is about being in the studio engaging with material and thinking through your body as you are making art. Unless you take the time to do that the networks really make no sense. The work is what resonates more than the networks. As an independent, solo artist, to take time out in the studio and think through some of these things exclusively was a gift. It was something for me to take advantage of, and I think I did that.

If I was to look at my residency, not in terms of cities but in terms of what I did, it started with a commission, an artwork which represents where I am with my practice at that moment. I came to Australia without many preconceived notions about what I was going to deal with. Then the residency went into a very interesting mix of shows, networks, festivals, visits, the bush, interactions with artists, with writers, interactions with artists from India who were in Australia - so it was very much about meeting people, and that was a really interesting way to get a sense of an art community. That was very rich.

Then it was “put the brakes on”, use the last two weeks to process what had happened during the past month and spend time in the studio. It was not just about the cities, but the agendas associated with each place that made it special and quite unique.



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Nikhil Chopra, Fremantle, watercolour, October 2012.

ER: When you were performing in front of Australians did you feel that they reacted or engaged in a different way to elsewhere?

NC: Usually what happens is people come and engage with you and that is that, the evening is over. Whereas in Australia it is a little different. You will have three drink invitations, two dinner invitations, one trip to the botanical gardens, a visit to the museum and a bicycle ride. All these invitations will happen as a result of a performance and a presentation, because people want to know you, and people want to know more about you. And that sense of curiosity and engagement is very refreshing and genuine. There is this real sense of engagement that is quite different from my experience elsewhere in the world, it certainly doesn't happen in Europe. A lot of our time was spent eating and drinking together and doing museum tours. Dining tables are as important as the museums.

ER: Do you feel like you just scratched the surface of Australia? Do you feel you want to come back and continue on and spend more time here?

NC: It is really just only scratching the surface. I would love to come back to Australia. So these networks are really important because the networking is essentially what creates the opportunity to come back or to build on a relationship. It is not only about coming back but about coming to Australia again, and about Australia coming to India as well. In a sense what I hope is that there is some synergy so that I think of you as a resource and you think of me as a resource and that we continue on a relationship because a lot of things happened and a lot of alliances were made and because we already did a few things we know the potential and I look forward taking this step further and seeing where we go next, whether it is Australia or India. It is about coming together and not just about us coming together but facilitating others to do so.

ER: Do you see yourself as more of an international artist or an Indian artist?

NC: I am someone who belongs to the contemporary art community. I am connected to it because that is the circuit in which I rotate and rove worldwide. In a sense I believe that I belong not to nations but to the nation of art. If art was a country then I would be a citizen of that country. We keep trying to label artists International, Indian, South Asian, Asian, Northern Hemispheric. We keep trying to label what kind of a performance, drawing performance, theatre, theatre festival, visual arts section of the theatre festival these artists are working in... but I like to exist in between these spaces. In between international and local. I like to think of myself as an artist who makes things and comments on his immediate world.

ER: If you could take one memory of your time in Australia what would it be?

NC: There are so many. But one of the favorite memories is the day that Ric Spencer at the Fremantle Arts Centre drove me out into the desert. I spent all day with him at The Pinnacles, went for a swim in the ocean, grabbed a delicious fried fish sandwich and drove back to Fremantle with all of that beautiful landscape in my mind - the bush becoming the desert. Really seeing that transition I got a glimpse of what the larger part of Australia may look like.

Then coming back to the Fremantle Arts Centre and listening to Paul Kelly talk about his musical journey in conversation with Lucky Oceans, and then doing this incredible concert in the courtyard of the Fremantle Arts Centre. I could see and feel all those associations in that music and in that poetry.

When Paul Kelly talks about Fitzroy in his music, I know exactly where that is. It's also at that moment - virtually at the end of my time in Australia - that I'm seeing the desert and I'm listening to Paul Kelly play. My whole time in Australia came together so beautifully in that moment.



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The beach at Fremantle.

Artist Biography

Nikhil Chopra

Education

2003 MFA

Ohio State University,
Columbus, Ohio, Usa

2001 BFA

Maryland Institute, College Of Art,
Baltimore, Maryland, Usa

1997-1999

Maharaja Sayaji Rao University,
Faculty of Fine Arts, Baroda, India

1995 BCOM

Narsee Monjee College Of
Commerce and Economics,
Mumbai, India

Solo Exhibitions

2012 Inside Out

Galleria Continua,
San Gimignano, Italy

Blackening IV: Bay 19

Carriageworks, Sydney, Australia

2010 Yog Raj Chitrakar: Memory Drawing X

Chatterjee and Lal Gallery, Colaba, Mumbai
and Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum, Mumbai

2009 Yog Raj Chitrakar: Memory Drawing IX

New Museum, New York

2007 Yog Raj Chitrakar: Memory Drawing II

Chatterjee and Lal Gallery, Colaba, Mumbai

2005 Sir Raja III

The Fourth Floor, Kitab Mahal, Fort, Mumbai

2003 Sir Raja II

Kinnear Warehouse, Columbus, Ohio

Group Exhibitions

2012 **Decimo Parallelo Nord: Fotografia Contemporanea Da India E Sudamerica**
Fondazione Fotografia Fondazione Cassa di
Risparmio di Modena

Inside Out: As The Stars Viewed The Palace

Finding Time, Columbus Public Art 2012,
Columbus, Ohio

2011 H Box

Art Sonje, Seoul ; Today Art Museum, Beijing;
Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou

N India And Far Beyond:

Khoj International Artists' Association

Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen IFA Gallery,
Stuttgart and Berlin

Generation In Transition:

New Art From India

Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw

Liberalis

Kunst + Projecte Sindelfingen, Galerie der
Stadt Sindelfingen

Beyond The Self

National Portrait Gallery, Canberra

Paris Delhi Bombay

Centre Pompidou, Paris

2010 Production Site:

The Artist's Studio Inside-Out

Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago

The Land Between Us:

Power, Place and Dislocation

Whitworth Gallery, Manchester

2009 Marina Abramovic Presents

Manchester International Festival, The Whitworth
Gallery, Manchester

Making Worlds

53rd Venice Biennale, Venice

Kunstenfestivaldesarts 09

Brussels

- The Self And The Other. Portraiture In Contemporary Indian Photography**
Espai 2 - Palau de la Virreina, Barcelona
- Indian Highway**
Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo
- 2008 Indian Highway**
Serpentine Gallery, London
- Chalo India!**
Mori Art Museum, Tokyo
- Time Crevasse**
2008 Yokohama Triennale, Yokohama
- Everywhere Is War**
Bodhi Art, Mumbai
- Emerging Discourses II**
Bodhi Art, New York, New York
- In New York City**
Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai presents at Thomas Erben, New York, New York
- Khoj Live 08, International Performance Art Festival**
Khoj International Artists' Association, New Delhi
- 2007 Posing, Abrons Art Center**
Henry Street Settlement, New York, New York
- House Of Mirrors**
Grosvenor Vadhera Gallery, London
- Beings And Doings, British Council**
Queen's Gallery, British Council, New Delhi
- 2006 Asian Contemporary Art Week, Asia Society, New York**
Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York

- 2005 Maurizio Couldn't Be Here: The Taste Of Others**
Apexart, 291 Church Street, New York, New York
- 2004 Contemporaneity, International Video Art In Kyrgyzstan**
G. Aitiev Kyrgyz National Museum of Art, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Residency

- 2012 Asialink Roving Residency, Australia**
Carriageworks, Sydney
Asialink, Melbourne
Fremantle Arts Centre, Fremantle
- 2011-12 Fellowship**
International Research Center "Interweaving Performance Cultures", Freie Universität, Berlin
- 2010 Residency**
Centre Intermondes, La Rochelle
- 2009 Residency And Reflection**
Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Brussels
- 2007 International Performance Art Residency, Khoj**
Khoj International Artists' Association, New Delhi
- Khoj Kasheer, Srinagar, Kashmir**
Khoj International Artists' Association, New Delhi

Awards And Grants

- 2003 Edith Fergus Gilmore Materials Grant**
Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio
- 2002 Preparing Studio Art Faculty Program Grant**
Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio
- 2001 Graduate Teaching Associate**
Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio
- 2000 Santa Farinella Sangiamo Scholarship**
Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Maryland

Carriageworks, Sydney, Australia

Carriageworks presents a contemporary multi-arts program that engages with contemporary ideas and issues. The program is artist led and emerges from Carriageworks' commitment to reflecting social and cultural diversity. The Carriageworks artistic program is ambitious, risk taking and unrelenting in its support of artists. Carriageworks is a cultural facility of the NSW Government and receives support through Arts NSW. www.carriageworks.com.au

Fremantle Art Centre, Fremantle, Western Australia

Fremantle Arts Centre (FAC), City of Fremantle is a multi-arts organisation that's been going strong for 40 years. Located on Finnerty Street, the historic site was originally the first purpose-built 'lunatic' asylum in WA. It has since been a women's home, a naval base during WW2 and a technical college before opening as Fremantle Arts Centre in 1973.

FAC operates a number of programming streams, including Exhibitions, Learning, Events & Music, Communications, Finance, Reception, Shop and Grounds departments.

FAC is an Asialink Arts Residencies host partner, facilitating a reciprocal exchange with Artists in Residence (AIR), Taipei since 2010.

www.fac.org.au

1. Shanthiroad, Bangalore, India

Since it's inception in 2003 1.Shanthiroad has grown to house artists from diverse countries in its residency programs. It believes in fostering interactions between artists, curators, scholars, writers and young students in the local and global context. The focus is to collaborate, share and have interactions with the local artist community.

The residency program provides an opportunity to interact, experiment and work with local materials to extend one's visual language. Bangalore offers diverse inspirations as a cosmopolitan and eclectic city.

The artists of the city have straddled diverse genres and are part of the divergent contemporary landscape. The challenges of the residency program will encourage artists to move beyond the comfort of their studio spaces and work in new circumstances.

1. Shanthiroad is an Asialink Residency Host Partner. In 2012 1. Shanthiroad hosted an Australian Performance Artist, forming a reciprocal residency between Janet Meaney and Nikhil Chopra.

www.1shanthiroad.com

Asialink Arts, Melbourne, Australia

The role of Asialink Arts is to develop opportunities for cultural exchange between Australia and Asia and improve the Asia capability of the cultural sector based on the principles of partnership, collaboration and reciprocity. The four core programs of Asialink Arts comprise: Exhibition Touring, Arts Residencies, Writing Exchanges and Utopia@Asialink.

Since 1991, the Asialink Arts Residency Program has developed into the most sought after international residency program in Australia. The program enables Australian artists, writers and arts managers working across artforms to participate in residencies throughout Asia annually. The program promotes sustained cross-cultural exchange by also facilitating reciprocal residencies and testing innovative models.

Nikhil Chopra's Roving Residency forms part of Asialink's new 'Residency Laboratory', a platform for testing new, more sustainable and engaged models of Arts Residencies in the context of the Asian Century.

www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au

Roving Residency: Nikhil Chopra

First published 2013

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ISBN 978 0 7340 4817 2

This publication was generously supported by the
Department of Culture and the Arts, WA.

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Partners & Supporters

