

# BIG IDEAS

## History of Loss

Sudarshan Shetty (Mumbai, India)

**WHO MADE THIS SCULPTURE?** *History of Loss* is created by Sudarshan Shetty (born 1961) in Mangalore, India.

Sudarshan graduated from commerce before earning a Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts in 1980 from the Sir J.J. School of Art, Mumbai. Aspiring to be an artist in India was considered a loser's choice. The artist considers himself fortunate to have had liberal parents who didn't measure success in terms of money or fame. Sudarshan is part of a growing number of young contemporary Indian artists who are garnering international attention. Their works break away from the traditional religious iconography, or use it in new ways. Sudarshan makes his Canadian debut in the 2009-2011 Vancouver Biennale.



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**WHAT IDEAS ARE BEING EXPLORED IN THIS SCULPTURE?** The casts of model aluminum Volkswagen Beetle cars are displayed in clear plexiglass boxes stacked in repeated rows, each marked with a date. The replicas are miniature, mimicking children's toy cars, a reference to a childlike desire and nostalgic memory. Shetty's piece draws attention to the environmental damage caused by the internal combustion engine by placing each vehicle into a coffin-like box on display as a museum relic or artifact.

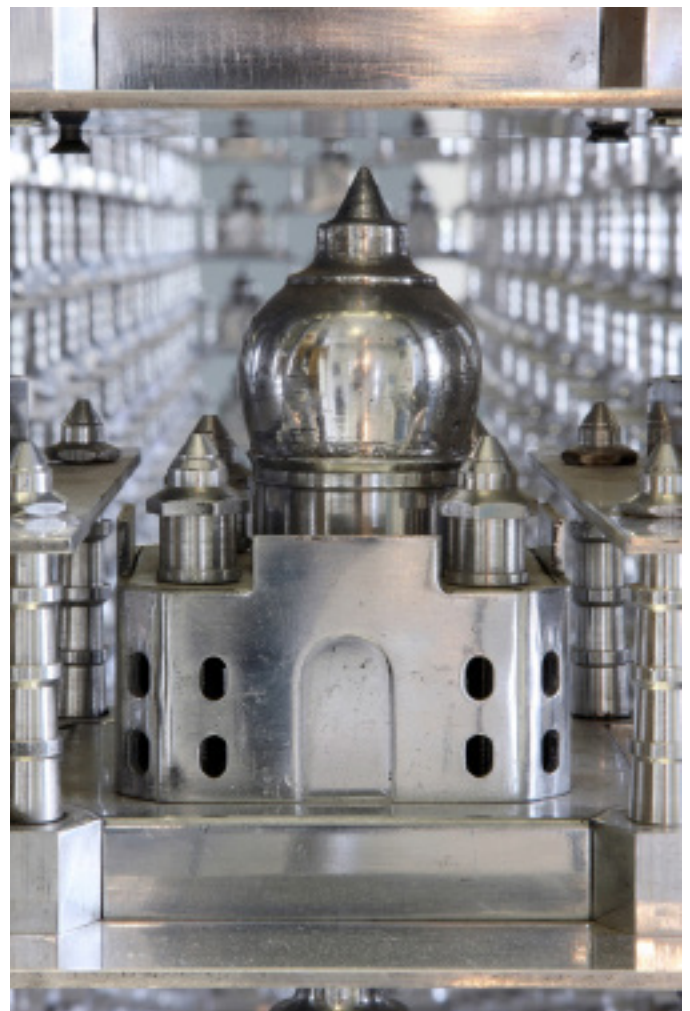


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**HOW WAS THIS SCULPTURE MADE?** Shetty diligently cast each individual car, identical, perfect and pristine. He then deliberately dropped them, one by one, from approximately 300 feet with the sole purpose of damaging each one and thereby making each an individual. Shetty describes his process: "The cars were manually smashed by me after being cast from a single mould, thereby representing the notion of their possible crash as an event. The dates on the vestibules represent the dates of possible crashes, but they really represent the dates to the deadline that I had in which to complete the work, which was completed in 42 days."

This sculpture was built using aluminum and polycarbonate with stainless steel fastenings.

**THE SCULPTURE IS 14 FT IN HEIGHT, 30 FT IN WIDTH AND WEIGHS ALMOST 800 KG (1,760 LBS)**



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HOW DOES THIS WORK CONNECT WITH THIS ARTIST'S OTHER WORKS? Although Sudarshan studied painting, with time he has increasingly turned towards large format sculpture and installation. From his 1995 *Paper Moon* to 2003 *Consanguinity* exhibits, Sudarshan's work has consistently explored the idea of personal, psychological, and social boundaries. His work is a celebration of the materials that define boundaries and a brutal narrative of their inevitable destruction. His preoccupation with the suffocating viscosity of human life is on display in his 2006 solo show *Love in Mumbai*, 2007 *Pure in Pittsburgh* and a single, untitled work in a curated show *Pink*. Shetty is now best known for his sculptural installations with mechanized moving parts, which art critic Ranjit Hoskote has described as "giant toys whose conception of play is as serious as a game of life and death".



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Sudarshan has recently completed a piece titled *House of Shades*, commissioned by Louis Vuitton for the Women's Fashion Week in Milan, which was installed at Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II. This piece is a kiosk, reminiscent of the kind found at airports. It is composed of rows of moving sunglasses. In a recent interview with CNNGo, Sudarshan talked about how the kiosk, which viewers could enter, "subverted the usual viewer/object role, as the person inside the kiosk is looked at and therefore becomes the object."

During that same interview, the artist also shared his view on public arts. Most artists in India went to art school in Mumbai, where they were taught art from a Western point of view. When Sudarshan was a student, he started making crazy, abstract kinds of art that were hard for others to understand. Then he soon realized that in India, art is closely related to the idea of entertainment. His mechanically driven sculptures stem from an idea of luring the passerby from the street with the promise of entertainment. Once you attract someone's attention, then you have an audience to speak about other things.

Sudarshan also noted that his inspiration comes from people in Mumbai and what he calls 'street technology'. He meets and observes people first hand working in their many small business. He then takes the interesting things he finds in their labour and brings these elements into his own works.

**WHO PUT THIS SCULPTURE ON DISPLAY IN VANCOUVER?** This sculpture is part of Vancouver Biennale 2009-2011 Exhibition. The Vancouver Biennale is a non-profit charitable organization that celebrates art in public space. Each exhibition transforms the urban landscape into an Open Air Museum, creating globally inspired cultural experiences where people live, work, play and transit. The Biennale features internationally renowned and emerging Contemporary artists that represent a diversity of cultural perspectives and artistic disciplines including sculpture, new media, performance works and film. The objective is to use great art as a catalyst to transformative learning and social action.

The Vancouver Biennale also creates supporting public programs, events and publications including the award-winning BIG IDEAS Education program, the International Artist Residency Program inspired by Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream", the CineFest LIVE documentary film festival and the Tour de Biennale and BIKennale arts & culture cycling events.

**TO LEARN MORE** you can search the terms **BIENNALE**, **PUBLIC ART** or **OUTDOOR SCULPTURE PARKS** on-line. Also Visit the Vancouver Biennale website at [www.vancouverbiennale.com](http://www.vancouverbiennale.com)

**IMAGE CREDITS:**

- 1 Artist portrait; Artist
- 2 *History of Loss*; Dan Fairchild
- 3 Installer with *History of Loss* Volkswagen; Dan Fairchild
- 4 *History of Loss* (installation); Dan Fairchild
- 5 *Taj Mahal*, 2008, Richmond Art Gallery; Dan Fairchild
- 6 *Taj Mahal* (detail), 2008, Richmond Art Gallery; Dan Fairchild
- 7 *Double Cow, Love*, 2006; GALLERYYSKE
- 8 *Leaving Home*, Art Basel; GALLERYYSKE
- 9 *House of Shades*, Galleria Vittoria Emanuele II, Milan; CNNGO

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