

Gulliver's Gate

THE VERY BIG WORLD OF VERY SMALL THINGS

Right in the middle of Times Square rests a new experience that took two years to plan and just over a year to build: Gulliver's Gate, a 25-city tour of five continents in meticulously detailed miniature form. It sprawls across 50,000 square feet of prime real estate, an ambitious endeavor that debuted in 2017 and is intended to be a permanent, evolving fixture.

By Jenna Glatzer



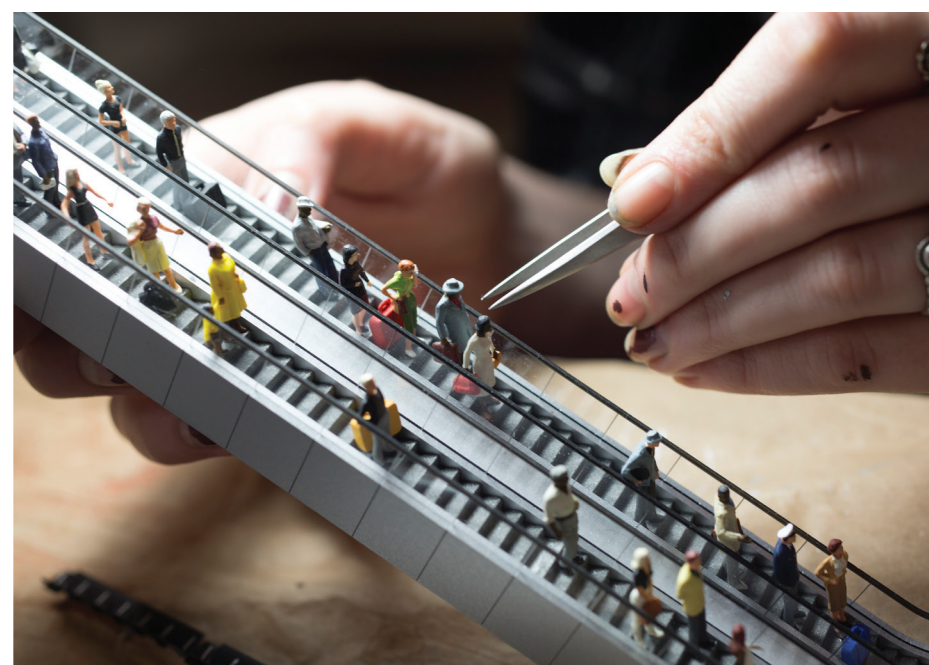
The cofounders behind Gulliver's Gate, Eiran Gazit and Michael Langer, set out to create the most technologically advanced, most interactive, largest miniature world in the United States. The project's inspiration came from Miniatur Wunderland in Hamburg, Germany, the largest model railway and miniatures exhibit in the world, which attracts more than 1 million visitors a year.

Working with a \$40 million budget, Gazit and Langer tapped 600 artists and craftspeople across eight countries to create tiny versions of important landmarks and features from their regions that would give NYC visitors an accessible view of the world, both historic and modern. Here, you'll find a working model of the Panama Canal, Niagara Falls, the Arenal volcano, the Taj Mahal, and much more.

The crafting, too, blends traditional sculpting and building methods with modern-day 3D printing. The Shanghai Global Financial Center, for instance, was 3D printed, while most of the Russian models were handcrafted using basic materials such as balsa wood and polypropylene.

While you will find that the set pieces are true to the spirit of their larger counterparts, don't expect exact replicas: the artists have taken advantage of their creative license to tear buildings open so you can see the cross-section view, add colors and lights, and play with scale and placement.

One of the greatest delights about the display is its whimsy: It mixes ancient and modern touches within a few feet of one another, and the miniature people are arranged in scenes that are sometimes expected, but often humorous, filled with Easter eggs for viewers to spot. Noticing the graffiti artist tagging a wall, the "Scream" villain approaching nudists on a beach, or the Pokémon on Mt. Fuji adds a layer of fun to the sense of awe you'll feel as you admire the craft and detail that went into this grand undertaking. You'll also find not-so-hidden funny scenes, like the group of people banding together with ropes to try to straighten out the Leaning Tower of Pisa.



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When you arrive, you receive a souvenir key that makes the exhibits interactive; turn your key in one of approximately 50 keyholes to make something move or change... Watch the Loch Ness monster surface, a couple dance, or a trolley car move on its track. Gazit expects they will eventually double the number of interactive features.

Gullivar's Gate will always be a work in progress, explains Gazit, as the plan is to consistently come up with new and interesting things to add. They've recently launched a working airport with several planes that take off and land, and are working on adding an Africa display. Not limiting themselves to just the Earthly realm, though, they're also considering adding a colony on Mars, which will hang from the ceiling.

Gazit can't tell you his favorite display—"it's like asking which of my three sons is my favorite!"—but he can say he's delighted with the work ethic and craftsmanship of every team he worked with. In a sense, they came together to create a utopia, he says.

"We've created a world where there are no borders and no conflict," he says. "That was an important part of the concept."

You can even become a "citizen" of Gulliver's Gate: Step into the on-site model station for a complimentary 3D photograph that can be turned into miniature form—one to keep, and one to be placed in the display.

Plan to spend hours making your way through the exhibition. Children are welcome, though little ones will need to be lifted up to see most of the displays. Adults will be uplifted all by themselves. **B**

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