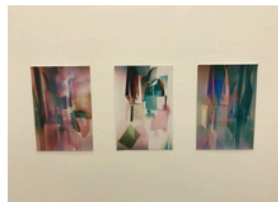
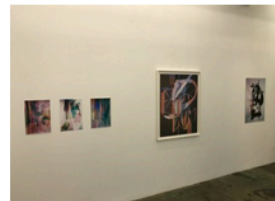
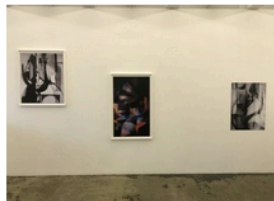
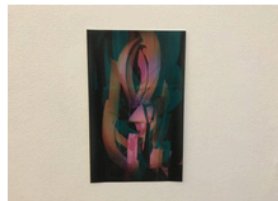
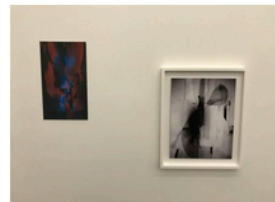
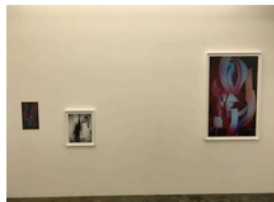
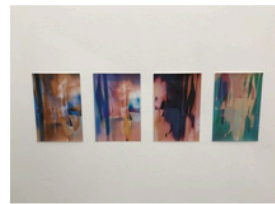
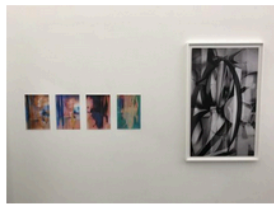
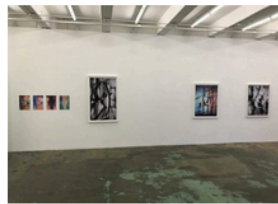


Yamini Nayar, Three Spaces for Time @Thomas Erben

By [Loring Knoblauch](#) / In [Galleries](#) / March 4, 2020

JTF (just the facts): A total of 19 black-and-white and color photographs, either framed in white and unmatted or unframed, and hung against white walls in the single room gallery space. The 6 black-and-white works are gelatin silver prints, while the 13 color works are c-prints, and all of the images were made in 2020. Physical sizes are 14×9, 16×11, 18×14, 36×34, 40×30, or 50×30 inches, and all of the prints are available in editions of 5. (Installation shots below.)



Comments/Context: Over the past decade, Yamini Nayar's artistic practice has continually probed the unlikely intersection of sculpture and photography. And while many of her photographic contemporaries have experimented with arranging and constructing tabletop and studio sized setups designed to be photographed, Nayar's entry point into these same artistic problems has largely stayed rooted in the parameters of sculpture. She has consistently built disorienting and visually incomprehensible structures, which the eye of the camera has then flattened into even more perplexing spatial puzzles.

Back in 2013 (in her gallery show reviewed [here](#)), Nayar's abstracted images were often bewildering and deliberately confusing, but a close inspection of the photographs told us that the images were largely straight, with no post-production manipulation or tweaking being used to create the overlapped layers or to exaggerate the effects. This realization led to a kind of appreciative wonder, as it was often difficult to discern just how the pieces fit together – and being fooled so decisively even when we knew we should be on our guard felt a little like magic.

But that kind of sophisticated trickery, even when executed with style and craftsmanship, must at some point start to feel like a parlor game to the artist. So it isn't entirely a shock that Nayar's newest photographs make decisive evolutionary step – in a sense, she has allowed herself to embrace more of the tools in the photographic toolbox, which has taken a bit of pressure off of the sculptural side of her meticulous illusion building.

All of Nayar's new works still begin with studio constructions, where abstract planes, arcs, geometries, and lines are gathered into dense formal agglomerations made from painted wood and metal. Many of these sculptures are vertically oriented (the forms building up or tumbling down), and several step back to include narrow slices of the stairs and walls of the surrounding studio, creating views with more spatial depth. During the construction process, Nayar has made multiple exposures, some capturing the work in different phases of development, while others see it from alternate vantage points and angles. She then composites these together digitally, creating images that both multiply the formal properties of the sculpture and collapse the discrete layers into one multivalent moment.

As seen in her black and white compositions, this overlapping leads to all over movement, where transparent shapes interact with each other and contrasts of dark and light (along with shadow) activate the static sculptures. This approach immediately recalls the multiplicities of Cubism, and also introduces the variable of time, as the step-wise variants create interleaved before/after relationships. Mostly, these composites feel thicker and denser, with geometries stacked on top of each other and crowded together with improvisational energy, like ghostly overlays or fading memories.

When Nayar brings color into the equation, she doesn't do it by simply making colored sculptures and photographing them in color. Instead, she starts with sculptures executed in monochrome tonalities and photographed in black and white, but then employs three color separations to build up her colors additively (not unlike the process involved in some of Jessica Eaton's work.) Depending on how she uses multiple exposures and how she allows the separations to misregister and misalign, the colors can range from saturated and flared to soft and misty, with edge areas fanning out into mismatched combinations.

Given these colors are essentially applied later, they are interpretive, allowing Nayar to start with a composition and iteratively rework it layer by layer. In some cases, this effort leaves the sculptures as identifiable constructions, the colors creating echoes, jitters, and turning glares that expressively change the mood of the underlying forms. In the *Permutations* series, Nayar goes much further, the underlying images dissolving into nearly pure fields of mottled color, with only a hint of a wall or a staircase discoverable in the swirl of ghostly pastels. These works push the color to overwhelm the sculptural shapes, encouraging interruptions and distortions that become almost watery in their warping effect.

In the end, Nayar's new works feel like an artistic bridge. She's slowly leaving behind parts of her earlier approach and experimenting with new photographic options, and while she hasn't optimized all the variables yet, the evolution (and expansion) of her ideas is taking place rapidly. The standout images in this show (*Night Work*, *Passage*, *Messenger*, and some of the smaller *Permutations*) offer us hints of where she is going, and the complexity of the aesthetics that she is wrestling with will take some time to control and refine. There is unfinished risk taking here, and that's a promising sign of an innovative jump.

Collector's POV: The prints in this show are priced between \$1500 and \$8000, in rising editions. Nayar's work has little secondary market history at this point, so gallery retail likely remains the best option for those collectors interested in following up.



Read more about: [Yamini Nayar](#), [Thomas Erben Gallery](#)