

Thomas Erben Gallery



Installation view, east wall (photo credit: Fernando Sandoval/MW).

Yamini Nayar *Ouroboros*

May 2 - June 15, 2024

Opens Thursday, May 2, 6 - 8:30pm

Thomas Erben is thrilled to present *Ouroboros*, Yamini Nayar's eighth exhibition with the gallery dating back to the artist's first show in 2009 (with Sheela Gowda) and including solo presentations at NADA, Art Cologne and the India Art Fair. This exhibition is presented conjointly with Jhaveri Contemporary in Mumbai.

Nayar chooses the image of the ouroboros - a snake biting its own tail, which symbolizes the cyclical renewal of life, death and rebirth - as a metaphor for her own creative process. Guided by the knowledge of her "hand", the artist builds materially-invested, often life-size assemblages using ubiquitously available materials such as paper, plaster, studio detritus and printed ephemera. During this cumulative process of building, taking apart, "risking ruin" and burrowing into, ideas emerge intuitively, often springing from the subconscious. Once recognized, Nayar then clarifies and enriches what is coming to the fore, tapping into her own bodies of research such as Alchemy and Myth. These assemblages are built for the camera apparatus, which not only gives permanence to their continuously shifting gestalt, but also serves as the photographic "eye".

Departing from Nayar's previous concerns with modernist architecture's singularity and its preoccupation with "the line", as exemplified in such works as *Akhet* (2013), this new body of work privileges organic, more natural forms to suggest the feminine, the ornamental, the body and Eros. Completely built by hand, Nayar's work questions the fundamental shift in our relationship to the environment as it emerged in the Renaissance when architectural drawing became the primary site of exploration, distancing concept from execution, thus putting into play our extractive relationship to the environment.

In *Feeding the Silkworm* (2024), for example, shapes are cut from board and individually painted in hues of mainly brown and green, with an orange surface placed more centrally. Differently sized and collaged over time, these shapes are individually active but together form a dynamic thrust which, combined with their rough materiality, create a tension with the camera's compression and stilling. It is in this friction that a reference to Alchemy and Myth emerges.

Included in the exhibition are source materials resonating with Nayar's ongoing training as a Jungian psychoanalyst, Bengali and Keralite background, as well as interest in psyche, matter and the archetypal field.

Yamini Nayar (b. 1975) received her MFA from the School of Visual Arts, 2005, and her BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design, 1999. Currently, she is an analyst-in-training at the CG Jung Institute, NY.

Most recently her work was included in Phaidon's *Vitamin C+: Collage in Contemporary Art* and reviews have appeared in major publications such as *Artforum*, *The New York Times*, *Art India*, *Asian Art Newspaper*, *Vogue India*, *Art in America*, *The New Yorker* and *Whitewall Magazine*. Over the years, Nayar's work has been exhibited widely. Major survey shows include: *Ray Photo Triennale*, **Museum für Moderne Kunst**, Frankfurt; *Constructs/Constructions*, **Kiran Nadar Museum of Art**, New Delhi (both 2015); *Sculpture is Everything*, **Queensland Art Gallery**, South Brisbane (2012); *Manual for Treason*, **Sharjah Biennial**, UAE (2011); *The Empire Strikes Back*, **Saatchi Museum**, London (2010); and *Fatal Love*, **Queens Museum of Art**, (2005). Nayar has also shown with **Jhaveri Contemporary**, Mumbai (since 2012); **Wendi Norris**, San Francisco (2019) and **BosePacia** (2006). Public collections include the **Art Institute of Chicago**, **Guggenheim Museum**, **Queensland Art Gallery**, **Kiran Nadar Museum**, **deCordova Museum** and **Cincinnati Art Museum**.