

Yamini Nayar, an axe for a wing-bone @Thomas Erben

By Loring Knoblauch / In Galleries / November 26, 2013

JTF (just the facts): A total of 8 photographic works, either framed in white/unmatted or mounted/unframed, and hung against white walls in the single room gallery space. All of the works are c-prints: 5 single images, 1 diptych, 1 triptych, and 1 set of 4 prints, all made in 2013. Physical dimensions range from 8x10 to 40x50 (or reverse) and all of the works are available in editions of 5+2AP (except for the group of intermediate studies). (Installation shots below.)



Comments/Context: Yamini Nayar's new photographs are stubbornly uncooperative, which is part of what makes them so beguiling. They're not dumbed down, they haven't cut our food for us, they don't reveal themselves instantaneously; in fact, they purposefully resist any kind of easy interpretation. While we can see that these are lively abstractions made out of assembled studio materials, our ability to draw other conclusions about what we are observing is altogether frustrated. Is this a table top construction/destruction or a room sized installation? What exactly are those objects/shapes/forms and what are they made of? How are the spatial relationships managed (front and back)? Even after sustained, repeated looking, these questions remain delightfully unanswered.

This show contains both "finished" works (framed) and intermediate studies (unframed), giving us a broader look at her end to end process. I've put finished in quotes as it becomes clear that Nayar's approach is open and organic, where rough constructions and installations take on a life of their own and just one more addition might spawn a cluster of other connections; in a certain way, these things look like they are never really "done", just in different states of being. Her abstractions are chaotic jumbles of construction debris: plywood planks, painted surfaces, cement, collaged in photographs, transparent filters, and other unidentifiable objects/textures that become part of the mix. What is most exciting about these pieces is the way in which Nayar has undermined spatial logic; it's nearly impossible to figure out the "where" of these pictures, as planes and angles jut and clash in flattened, compressed, two dimensional space, an object and a picture of itself competing for frontal positioning in the density of overlapped layers.

There is something magical about Nayar's ability to make photographs that are so uncertain and incomprehensible. Her fractured illusions and agglomerations break down our visual routines and assumptions, forcing us to step back and reconsider the composition of her abstractions in new ways. How often can we walk into a show of contemporary photography and be so thoroughly (and pleasingly) befuddled? In a world of increasing obviousness, her ability to keep us guessing and puzzling, to provoke head scratching and question asking (what is going on here?), is remarkable.

Collector's POV: The works in this show range in price from \$1500 to \$8000, roughly based on size and number of prints included. Nayar's work has little secondary market history at this point, so gallery retail remains the best option for those collectors interested in following up.