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YAMINI NAYAR

Age 33

Hometown Brooklyn,
New York

Education BA, Rhode
Island School of Design;
MFA, School of Visual Arts,
New York (photography)

Medium Photography

A cushion on a bedroom floor; a mike on a table; a rickety staircase leading to an empty room with a disco ball: Yamini Nayar's work examines scenes where someone has just been, something has just happened. A nostalgic aftermath she interprets as miniature dioramas—interiors devoid of, yet existing through, the hint of life.

"I'm interested in the undercurrents of things," says Nayar. "Maybe it has to do with my mom being a psychoanalyst."

Her themes are an exploration of Indian-American culture. At college, Nayar, who was raised in Detroit, became interested in the idea of immigration. "I think my art was a way to explore my own history," says Nayar. "In the 1960s, people were coming over in droves from India, but it seemed to be a vulnerable point. Much of my work focuses on spaces or situations that are in transition, in a state of becoming."

She starts by making miniature versions of childhood homes, photographs the scenes (made of plaster, tin foil and thread) and then destroys the sets. "I enjoy playing with scale and reality," says Nayar. "The magnified scenes of private interiors aim to displace the viewer and invite him to read in non-traditional ways."

The invitations call the audience into a voided present brimming with unseen meaning, a vacuum of illusionary pasts and anticipatory futures. A work titled 'On the Surface of Things There Are Traces' has pictures of a WWII American soldier giving a sari to a young Indian girl. On the side is a cabinet, an exploration, says the artist, of what their life together would have been like.

Says Nayar, "I'm interested in new ways of thinking about the past, the ways in which history, memory and fantasy can work together to remember."

SAHAR KHAN ■



"Yamini works with the photographic medium, creating miniature environments out of personal and found items that then lend themselves to the photographic image. She's a new artist and virtually unknown to Indian audiences; however, a recent exhibition in Mumbai has given collectors a chance to see her work."

Sharmistha Ray, Director, Bodhi Art Gallery