

Photographer Yamini Nayar on Her New Show at Amrita Jhaveri Projects

 Email  Print  Save  Like 0  Tweet 0  +1 0  Pin it



Yamini Nayar

Detail from Yamini Nayar's "Ethos," C-print, 2012

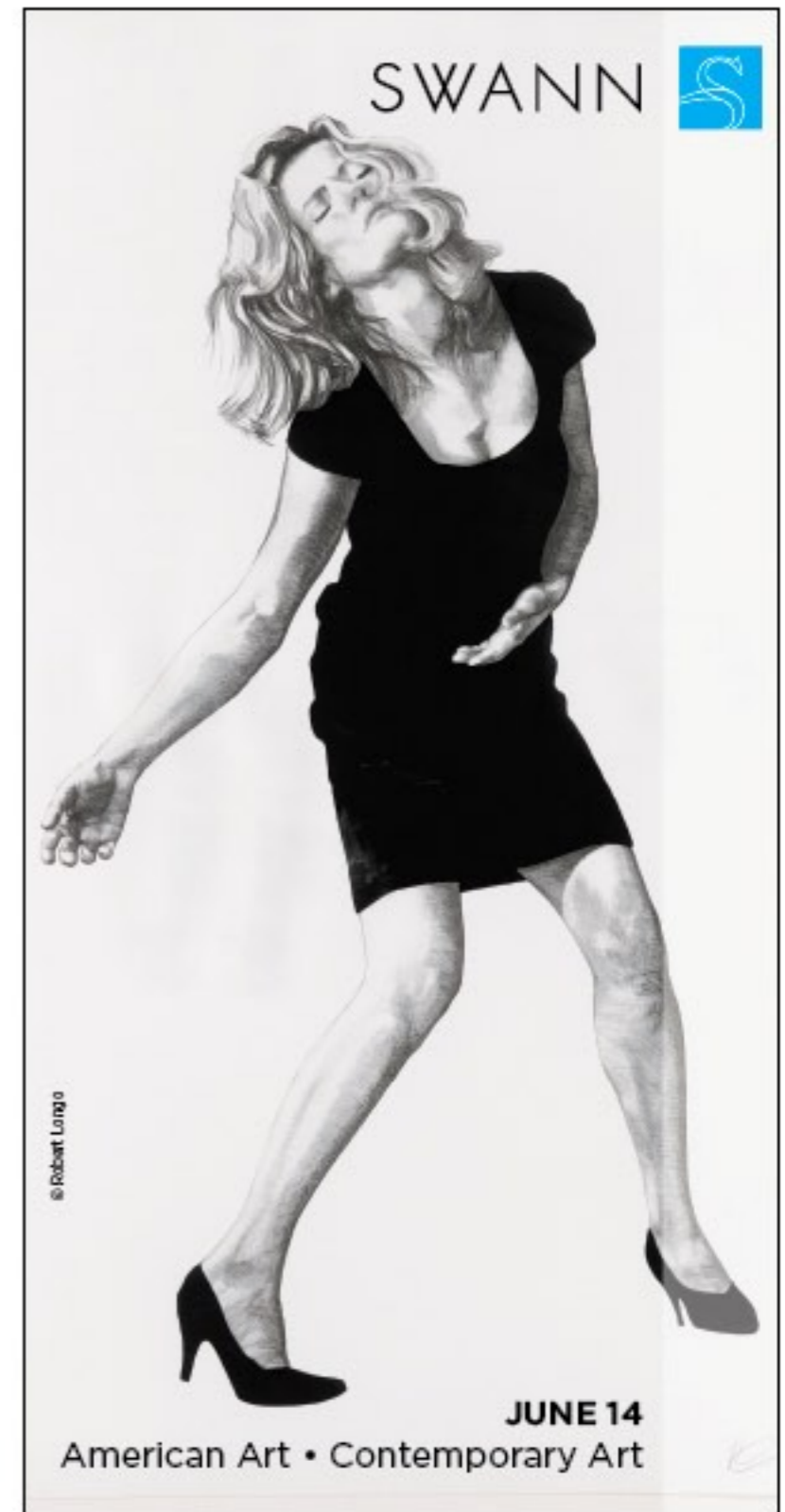
by Roselyn D'Mello

Published: March 30, 2012

A **Yamini Nayar** photograph is a document of constructed moments or a visual recording of a sculpture she has carefully built and then thoughtfully destroyed. In her words, her photographs “monumentalize and memorialize the fragility and decay of the sculptures, preserve the modest and humble experiences and detritus of everyday life from which they are constructed.”

The sculptures she builds on tabletops in her studio, the scale varies, and the material she uses are what she calls “residual,” like scraps of Styrofoam, wood, paper, and plaster that she finds while rummaging through the “excess and castoffs” of businesses located around her studio. Nayar also draws from her personal collection of found images from historical archives and old architectural magazines. “The found images are my anchors, the reference I keep returning to as each piece grows,” she writes in her artist statement for her show “In Space Between” that opened two days ago at the **Amrita Jhaveri** Projects in Mumbai. “Each image develops over time, accrues its own narrative, logic, and sculptural process.”

ARTINFO spoke to the New-York based artist and got her to talk about the ideas behind her constructed, collage-like, sculptural images.



Thousands of Artist Indices

Search for **FREE** now 



Blouin Art Sales Index

Your work takes off from sculpture and photography. How did you arrive upon this form?

During my undergraduate days, but it was also a confluence of different threads. I come from a photography background, but studied sculpture as well. In college, I was also looking at a lot of photography from India's colonial era and learned of various staging techniques used in many of the historical images. This interested me, in thinking about the idea of staged history and shaped memory, as did Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children" at the time, where I was struck by his attention to material culture and environment, and their shifts in meaning through time and era.

But I think the central core of my process really opened when I let go of preconceived ideas of what an architectural space 'should' look like, and began thinking of architecture and built structures as the intersections of multiple threads. Idealism, memory, time, failure, re-imaginings... And how the photograph can be expanded to convey this, beyond straight documentation.

Could one deduce that you privilege the medium of photography, considering that you dismantle the sculptures you create and the photograph is then the only record that the object once existed? Or is part of a larger commentary?

I am interested in making photographs, at the end of the day. For me, the photograph is the point of accessibility; the lens constructs and opens an installation as it records a structure or moment. But the photograph also is stopped time, frozen time. What is depicted is no longer, there is no referent, so the image becomes the object rather than simply a record. And the physical moment was constructed, even performed for the lens as it was realized. This makes me think of Barthes' thoughts on portraiture, and the act of being photographed as an act of becoming. I think of my photographs as acts of becoming.

What are the aesthetic and thematic concerns that you feel your work addresses?

My work stems from a deep interest in the ways we shape our surroundings, and in turn how our structures impact us. I am also intrigued by the ways in which varying communities layer themselves within our environment through time. Architecture is a central concern because of its idealistic, often utopian, goals and inevitable vulnerability to human manipulation and time. We make space our own, but I think there is tension in this, an inherent drama.

Could you walk us through the process you go through while creating your art?

I begin with a fragment of an object and/or a photograph, or sometimes even just an idea, which act as departure points for the sculpture that includes and references elements from both. The camera is introduced early on in the process of creating a work, and the sculpture is really built for and around the lens. Once the photograph is made, I let go of the physical installation itself. But it's really not a linear process.

Is this a medium that you think you will continue to work in for a while?

No, my process is not an experiment. Though there is much room for experimentation within my practice, which is exciting. There's an evolution of ideas in which one piece leads to the next as specific themes expand and develop. This, in turn, feeds my interests and research which guide my practice. It's a symbiotic relationship.

Though I think artists have a few distinct obsessions that end up really fueling their work, the internal and important questions they begin with only deepen through time and as one's practice matures.