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"Five Chili Peppers," 2013-14. Rosha Yaghmai.
Resin, Enamel, Dimensions variable. Photo: Courtesy of Tyler Wood Gallery

SAN FRANCISCO

Rosha Yaghmai: "in media res (couch surfing and insomnia)" at Tyler Wood Gallery

- Elwyn Palmerton

Los Angeles-based artist Rosha Yaghmai specializes in casting everyday objects and giving them a heightened, almost sensual, formal charge. The cast objects here include generally small, household items, mostly in bright semi-gloss enamel colors. A cerulean hatbox, lime-green stick, and some reflective pink molding all make appearances, for instance. These are scattered irregularly throughout the gallery but arranged with precision, as if snapped into an invisible grid or, in places, aligned along the edges of the gallery's floorboards. The shapes and colors bounce off of each other and activate the entire room compositionally. The overall effect is ebullient but tranquil- like a kind of Pop Art Zen garden. Individually, the color and facture of each object is generally at odds with its source material. Several resin casts of chili peppers (five chili peppers), for instance, are rendered in a variety of inorganic purple tones and litter the floor like flaccid prophylactics. Four perfume bottles sitting on a cylindrical plinth are incongruously hermetic: resolutely solid forms that reject their implied function as receptacles for liquid. Minor Characters, one of the three small drawings here, depicts a tree. It appears to be a miniature Romantic landscape but also contains a tiny figure, which happens to be the Shah of Iran walking his dog.

Likewise, the appearance of various culinary and erotically suggestive objects implies a night of seduction or a romantic dinner for two. The largest and centrally placed piece (Hospitality)-comprised of two matte black potted flowers bending heliotropically toward each other like stand-ins for two lovers-reinforces this narrative. This sense of intimacy pervades the exhibition, but rather than conjuring flights of fancy or overt eroticism it draws our attention to their material properties while holding narrative associations at arms-length. This tendency is affirmed by oblique references to all five senses. For instance, a cast of a floor vent's negative space (vent) calls attention to the insistent drone of actual ventilation in the gallery while itself remaining obstinately silent. Yaghmai effectively recreates those moments when the material presence of objects is more pronounced than our attention to their utility-the kind of visual epiphany that occurs often while traveling. BY distancing familiar things from their normal context and encouraging unlikely associations, she renders the mundane slightly strange, and manages to recreate with startling consistency one of the more ephemeral qualities of visual experience.