

artillery

KILLER TEXT ON ART



ROSHA YAGHMAI

Thomas Solomon Gallery

- Carol Cheh

"EVER LET THE FANCY ROAM" was a sparsely populated solo show with only five objects placed throughout the single-room gallery. A sense of quiet pervaded the space, but it was a stillness that commanded attention. Each object, deliberately situated, held an inner power that was as seductive as it was initially cryptic.

The large sculpture anchoring the rear of the room, *Love Forever* (all works 2011), mimicked a white sheet draped over a love seat, recalling classical Greek works in the muscular realism of its various folds and indentations. Interestingly, the love seat itself was missing from the work; Yaghmai made the sculpture by pouring fiberglass and resin over an old sofa, with the resulting shape, minus the sofa, constituting the final product. *Love Forever* instantly brought to mind an old, uninhabited house; the desire to preserve our cherished belongings; a sentimental remembrance of love; and perhaps the empty misplacement of affection onto memory rather than life itself.

On the right side of the gallery were two sets of concentric brown rings titled *Removal*, *Removal #1* and *#3*. Hanging closest to the gallery entrance, *#1* was comprised of actual rings taken from a redwood tree, while *#3* was made up of resin casts of the negative space surrounding the rings. Not present was *#2*, which would have been the mold. Quietly memorializing the enormous lifespan of the redwood tree, Yaghmai questions civilization's theft of the same through manufacturing.

In Light of Today was the goofiest piece in the show, deviating from the spartan perfectionism surrounding it. The huge Lightjet print presented a leafy-green abstract background, in reality a close-up image of the soft insulation found underneath carpeting. Digitally collaged atop this background was a small rectangular image of a dark-haired girl in exotic attire sitting in a field of pink flowers — an image taken from a minor 19th-century painting, possibly of the Rococo variety. Even with and perhaps because of its visual clunkiness, *In Light of Today* deftly conflates domestic convenience and exotic kitsch.

In an adjacent and slightly darkened anteroom one could view the final piece in the show, a spectacular collage titled *Eclipse 2*. For this work, Yaghmai took an image of an eclipse and pasted various cuttings atop it that both mirrored and magnified the eclipse's dramatic effects, radiating scenic fragments out from a prominent black hole in the center. Collage elements were taken from a variety of sources, including magazines and the artist's own photographic prints. Evoking again the nature of nostalgia, fragments of culture and scenes from past encounters emanated from a place of emptiness that blocked out the sun's light.

Yaghmai's work conveys the rich inner life of objects, the mystery of their containment, and the intricate ways in which such objects carry meaning for us and for culture. "Ever Let the Fancy Roam" reached deep and lingered in the mind long after viewing.