

panoramic view of Manhattan. There, Chopra began his drawing of the skyline only to be interrupted by an onslaught of pouring rain. Chopra led the small group of drenched spectators, who had followed him from the beginning of the performance out of the park where he dressed in a simple white kurta and shaved himself before returning to the gallery. There, he hung his drawing on the gallery wall and donned a white corseted gown, wig and makeup, transforming into the same unnamed Victorian empress with which he had ended his December performance.

In this and other performances, Chopra draws on personal and historical paradigms specific to India, especially the contradiction of being part of a privileged upper class but still bound by colonial rule and norms, as illustrated by the very title “Sir Raja.” Chopra’s work boldly questions the boundaries between the mediums of drawing, alternative media and live art. Though he proves his aptitude with charcoal, Chopra makes the point that the drawing is not the primary art object by destroying or abandoning it. Here, the drawing was “abandoned” on the gallery wall; memory, video and photographic documentation suffice as the record of his live acts.

Following a long period in which oil on canvas was the dominant medium for contemporary Indian artists, Chopra’s achievements are particularly timely given the recent enthusiasm for performance and alternative media in India. Embodying the dynamism in India’s art world today, Chopra and his growing group of avatars are poised to lead the scene ahead. ●

Untitled performance by
NIKHIL CHOPRA, 2008.
Photo by Eddie Jackson
Lloyd-Dyke. Courtesy
Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai.



LOS ANGELES

Haegue Yang: *Asymmetric Equality* REDCAT

Jennifer S. Li

Born in Korea and currently splitting her time between Seoul and Berlin, Haegue Yang has spent much of her career exploring her own itinerant existence. She expresses the liminality between physical spaces and emotional states of being in her installations of strangely mismatched objects. The artist’s arrival in Los Angeles, however, has provoked an exploration of the concept of stasis. In “Asymmetric Equality,” the culminating project of her year-and-a-half-long residency at Los Angeles’ Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater (REDCAT), Yang leaves her former dislocation behind as she ushers in a new period of work that speaks of inclusion and belonging, community and home.

A small, unassuming mixed-media sculpture *Hippie Dippie Oxnard* (2008) is created out of a clothing rack, off of which hang miscellaneous objects such as light bulbs and a soup ladle. It sits at the entrance of the exhibition, beckoning visitors to enter the space like an alien host. Beyond, in the one-room installation *Yearning Melancholy Red* (2008), Yang incorporates her customary repertoire of unconventional materials—moving strobe lights, infrared heat lamps, standing room fans, cables, steel structures and electronic scent machines—but she also introduces a new element of sound with a full drum set that viewers are invited to play. In the darkened installation room, the viewer is thrust into a cacophony of multi-sensory stimulation, triggering one’s hearing, sense of smell and sight. Maneuvering through

a succession of custom-made Venetian blinds—which the artist has been employing since 2006—suspended from the ceiling, viewers catch unexpected glimpses of themselves in a central nucleus of paneled mirrors, highlighting their physical presence in the space. Around the corner from the labyrinth of mirrors and blinds is a drum kit that the viewer is asked to play, providing the aural element for the installation. Bangs and clangs set the entire work in motion as the lights literally move to the beat of the viewer’s drum. The strobes project alternating radiance and darkness onto the space, filtering through the blinds to create abstract patterns that resemble woven wallpaper on the blank white walls.

Yang employs the drums as a tool to activate the installation and as a voice telling a story—both the viewer’s and more importantly, hers. If one considers the Venetian blinds and the scent emitters wafting a fresh-laundry fragrance as symbols of an interior domestic space, perhaps this is a story of how an erstwhile nomad seems to have finally found her place. Yang says of her time in Los Angeles, “Even though I am new to this city, I feel very much at home.” Yang’s budding relationship with Los Angeles is taking root; she will return in 2009 for a group exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). ●

Installation view of
HAEGUE YANG’s
“*Asymmetric Equality*”
exhibition at the Gallery
at CalArts REDCAT,
Los Angeles, 2008.
Photo by Scott Groller
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