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Art in Review



Greene Naftali

Art about art: Guyton/Walker's installation at Greene Naftali includes paint cans and paintings that share motifs.

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GUYTON/WALKER

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Greene Naftali Gallery

508-526 West 26th Street, Chelsea

Through Aug. 7

If there were a Geiger counter that measured levels of art-world cleverness at a given locale, it would go completely haywire at Greene Naftali Gallery. There you will find, and perhaps initially be overwhelmed by, the latest from Guyton/Walker, the collaboration of Wade Guyton and Kelley Walker, who also have thriving solo careers. The show is painting about painting, art about art, references

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Luhring Augustine

Zarina Hashmi's "Home I Made/A Life in Nine Lines" is part of her show "The Ten Thousand Things" at Luhring Augustine.

about references to the ntn degree. Its runnouse formalism engrosses but rings hollow.

The largely silk-screened paintings and painting ensembles here reference, as they say, several generations' worth of artists, motifs and tactics, as well as painting's banalities: its need for shipping crates, its use as décor, its influence on design. They are derivative with a vengeance, although the impact of color and pattern is fantastic. (These two are rare among young artists for their boldness with color.)

The recurring stripes, dots, abstracted flags, monochrome fields and Op Art sample the staples of 1950s and '60s abstract painting and their after-images. [Andy Warhol](#)? [Jasper Johns](#)? [Frank Stella](#)? All here, along with Marimekko and Peter Halley.

The installation pushes deconstructive self-consciousness to extremes, replacing canvas with drywall (the material on which paintings usually hang). The drywall works lean against the wall in stacks of 10 or 20 like commodities; other works are propped up, as in a studio, on paint cans printed with the motifs of the paintings. The dots connected run from Robert Ryman to Richard Prince to Cady Noland.

The line between abstract and representational is fluid. Sometimes the stripes belong to zebras; some dots are orange slices or halved coconuts that resemble open paint cans. Two jumbled chandeliers feature three-dimensional coconuts, or at least plasterlike casts of them. Like the paint cans, they are part of the Guyton/Walker brand, which has been expanded to include images of Warhol-like bananas. These are frequently layered with a compositional verve that evokes [Robert Rauschenberg](#). The bananas and coconuts suggest a not-so-subtle sexual subtext, either all male or male-female.

The drywall also leads, logically I guess, to some paintings' being displayed high overhead, on spindly metal contraptions that turn out to be machines for mounting drywall. All the patterns have also migrated to that symbol of hip '60s interiors, the Formica-covered Parsons table.

Guyton/Walker's explorations of the means of mechanical reproduction — mostly silkscreen — are so astute as to have Walter Benjamin, who made the phrase indelible, grinning in his grave. Yet if you look closely, the patterns are also rather fussily knit together, and sometimes combined with drips of real paint, so as to counter the prevailing absence of the artists' touch and to reintroduce the handmade distinctiveness that makes paintings valuable.

Once you parse the references, what's left seems too close to window dressing or party props in storage. The motto of the crate-maker, visible on the shipping labels on each crate, is "Moving Art Forward." Here's hoping. In the meantime, there is not enough there here, in the personal sense, even if the outside is the new inside. **ROBERTA SMITH**

ZARINA HASHMI

'The Ten Thousand Things'

Luhring Augustine

531 West 24th Street, Chelsea

Through July 31

Zarina Hashmi has been showing regularly in New York City for many years, at A.I.R. Gallery, June Kelly Gallery and most recently at Bose Bacia. But her debut solo at Luring Augustine is her most comprehensive appearance here, and it is characteristically austere

and expressive.

Ms. Hashmi, who has often used the single name Zarina, was born in 1937 into a Muslim family in northern India. After marrying an Indian foreign service officer in 1958, she changed homes frequently, living in, among other places, Paris (where she studied printmaking with Stanley William Hayter), Bangkok and Tokyo, and settling in New York in the mid-1970s.

Her art belongs to an intensely personalized minimalist strain in South Asian art that has only fairly recently begun to be acknowledged. The two earliest pieces in the show, dated 1979, are made from single sheets of paper perforated with pinpricks, creating an impression of delicacy and irritation. From five years later comes a row of 20 aluminum sculptures in the shape of miniature houses, neat but closed-up and mute.

As has been noted many times, Ms. Hashmi's recurrent subject is home as an idea and an ideal; about enclosure as both protective and entrapping. The print series "Homes I Made/A Life in Nine Lines" (1997) is basically an autobiography told in a language of floor plans. The portfolio of woodcuts called "Home Is a Foreign Place"(1999) is a vision, through abstract forms and single words printed in Urdu (threshold, door, sun, fragrance, time, and so on), of domesticity as an atmospheric condition, poetic but unstable.

Over time Ms. Hashmi has given her work a specific political content, though this is played down in the show. And she has infused it with her interest in Sufism, evident in touches of gold leaf to evoke a presence of light. The results look — or more to the point, feel — different from most other art in Chelsea, but make sense there, which suggests the possibility of interesting changes in the tone afoot in new New York art. As for Ms. Hashmi, she is exactly who she has been for 30 and more years. We are finally ready for her. **HOLLAND COTTER**

LEIDY CHURCHMAN

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