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**NATASHA BISSONAUTH ON YOGESH RAWAL AT AICON
GALLERY, NEW YORK**



'Untitled 19'

On a trip to Goa, Yogesh Rawal explains how he and a friend got lost and suddenly found themselves in complete darkness, waiting for a bus they were not sure would ever arrive. He could not even see the outline of his own hand and, for a moment, he was slightly frightened. Rawal's solo exhibition, which opened Thursday, July 12th at Aicon Gallery in New York, experiments with the fundamental role of light in art. He explores its every instance, even in absolute obscurity.

In line with most abstract manifestos, Rawal returns to the essentials of art. In an interview he explains how he unlearned his training in painting. He would not grasp the

basics at play for another nine painful years, during which time he labels his art as mere exercises. He eventually turned away from the fundamentals of point, line and color to discover that the role of light - ironically - had been left in the dark.

At first, the works appear like abstract paintings, but the show is actually comprised of large collages made from tissue paper, cellulose and synthetic resin on treated wood. In this respect, Rawal questions the hierarchy of different media and elevates the status of crafting. It is hardly instinctual to appreciate collage for its formal aspects but this hanging has post-minimalist implications. As the type of material allows light to seep in, an otherwise rigid surface adopts a translucent quality. Light hence becomes an integral part of the medium. Rawal works in monochromatic series and fleshes out the variations in shades. This is evident in his red and tonal sequences such as 'Untitled 19' and '23'.



'Untitled 23'

Most interesting are the black and white works which were hung separately on their own wall. For the first time, Rawal ponders the possibilities of light and the color black. He buttresses his 'no matter equals matter' logic by alluding to a sheet of glass in complete darkness: 'you can still see its reflection, so light must be present' he remarks. His project is adequately summarized in Untitled 4. It features four blocks of varying shades which point to his range in this show. Fittingly, it hangs at the end of the narrow space in climatic conclusion.



'Untitled 8'

Humbly, he points to his least favorite work, 'Untitled 8'. He feels he did not achieve his goals. As the catalogue's cover and already bearing the prestigious red bullet on its label, I had to inquire further. Rawal explains that it only hinted at his intentions. However it definitely marked the beginning of his future project which involves a move in the opposite direction, into darkness. It seems Rawal is not so frightened anymore.

Natasha Bissonauth