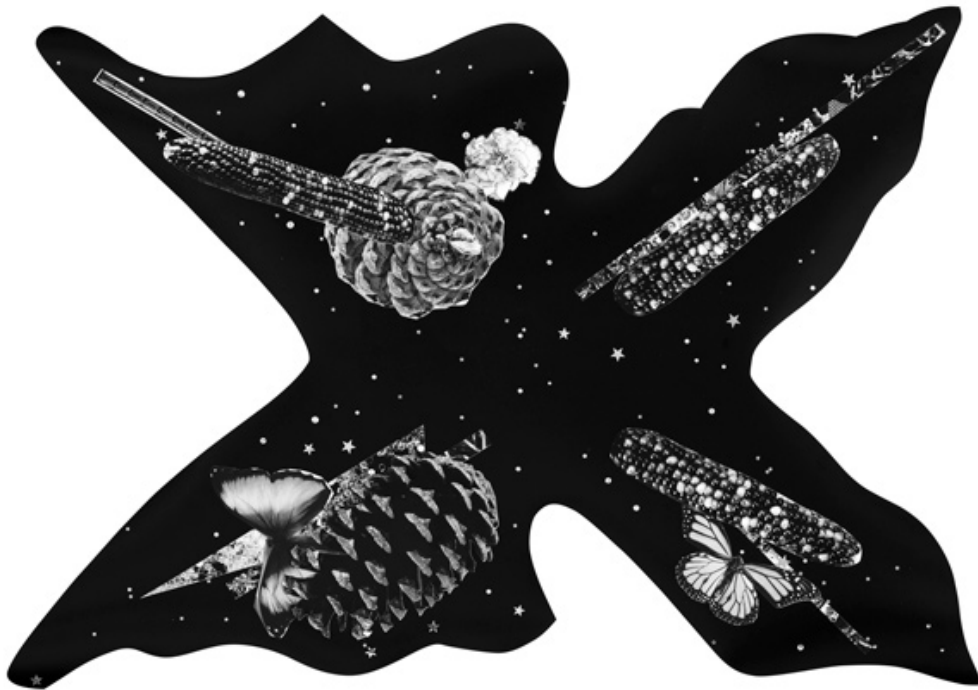


ARTILLERY

Shulamit Nazarian: Fay Ray



Fay Ray, Big Black Butterfly (2018). Courtesy of the artist and Shulamit Nazarian.

Fay Ray often says her work is about the construction of identity, which is something a lot of artists say. But in “I AM THE HOUSE” Ray takes that premise in sublime new directions, in a series of sculptures and photo-based works that through formal materials, actions and techniques of their processes, and narrative aspects of their content, do construct identity, right before your eyes. In the related methodologies of assemblage-based sculpture and accumulative, multi-layered photographics, Ray treats her cast aluminum replicas of corn cobs, cacti, feathers and the like, metal chain and industrial hardware, as well as her inclusion of natural elements like conch shells and honey-colored onyx, with a talismanic reverence tempered by a sharp wit.



Fay Ray, "I AM THE HOUSE," installation view. Courtesy of the artist and Shulamit Nazarian.

Crossing zones between function and ritual, agriculture and religion, luxury, art, and magic, the symbolism and significance of her iconography and mediums not only evoke tropes of religion and worship writ large, but also a set of references to cultural crafts and industrial materials tethered in her personal heritage. They are enormous and should be imposing: the dream catchers, wind chimes, and rosaries of giants. But instead they are ethereal, framing the space more than occupying it, and speaking to the outsize potency of accepted cultural signifiers in defining our conceptions of self.



Fay Ray, *Desert Shore* (2018). Courtesy of the artist and Shulamit Nazarian.

Remarkably, Ray's photo-based works present as more substantive, materially speaking, than her large-scale metal and stone sculptures. The black-and-white dye-sublimations on shaped aluminum have a compelling agate-like surface, pictorial depth, and expressive materiality in myriad ways both literal and illusionistic. Metal and stone literally appear elsewhere in the room, but these works echo their material qualities while also communicating a narrative of their own—esoteric but specific, about life, death, money, sex, power, beauty, and secrets. The large-scale black-and-white pigment prints also result from an elaborate sculptural and conceptual routine in which Ray arranges combinations of studio materials (foil, ribbon, steel shavings, pearls, flowers, eggs, pine cones) into tableaux that are then photographed. Those pictures are subsequently printed, cut up, rearranged, and re-photographed, with more materials added. The final results are both flat and cosmic, with hints of Rayograph and a fractal, organic artificiality. The wondrous *Egg Arch and Pearl Portal* (2018) combines elements of all three categories of her practice, in an elaborately rephotographed collage, printed on cut aluminum, that stands as a queenly Rosicrucian-esque apparition promising physical and

energetic transportation to another, more feminine dimension.



Fay Ray, "I AM THE HOUSE," installation view. Courtesy of the artist and Shulamit Nazarian.

Fay Ray, "I AM THE HOUSE," April 7 – May 26, 2018, at Shulamit Nazarian, 616 N. La Brea Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90036. www.shulamitnazarian.com