

SARAH SZE

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

September 16 – October 23, 2010

Sze welcomes the viewer into her first New York solo exhibition in five years with a small, unassuming sculpture placed in the entryway of the gallery. Locked to the interior staircase, *Stripped* (2010) comprises two painted bicycle frames and a neat pile of bright tape rolls. With its everyday structure and playful nature, the work serves as a precursor to the sensory whirl of the show's key work, *The Uncountables (Encyclopedia)* (2010), installed in the adjacent room. The reach of this installation extends to the room's edge with lines of tape, threads and pebbles. These guides lead to an assemblage of tilted shelves, dangling ladders and hundreds of vernacular objects—evoking associations to a mad scientist's lab. Meticulously ordered by color and size along shelving units and tables, the mundane objects include painted milk cartons, disposable cups and plates, lamps, twigs, plastic bottles, stacked jewelry boxes, plants, powders, medicine containers, and a bevy of small cast and clay articles. Visitors navigate through this work apprehensively, since what appear as stabilizing components, like cinder blocks and 2x4's, are in fact objects incorporated solely for decorative effect.

As in previous works, Sze references Japanese landscape design principles by employing disorienting and illusionistic methods, like shifting scale and conflicting floor plans, through which the visitor is required to navigate their way. While it is clear there is a system to this “madness,” we are not privy to it. The multiple perspectives and options inherent to each work result in an experience personalized by the viewer. Furthermore, the seemingly fragile nature of the works makes us highly aware of our choices and how our body interacts with the surrounding objects. This notion is more subtly employed in *360 (Portable Planetarium)* (2010), a circular sculpture installed in a dark room, which is fashioned from bended wood, birdcages, branches, and plastic ladders. The sculpture displays several references to earth, including images of forests, bodies of water, and fire. Similar to *The Uncountables*, it appears as a dynamic, self-contained system in constant mutation. While we cannot walk into this sculpture, Sze immerses us by covering the lens of several overhead projectors with punctured black paper—creating a star-like effect on the nearby wall. With this simple gesture, she places the visitor in a fabricated universe, viewing the world from the outside.

In another installation, Sze re-creates the appearance of natural decay. *Never Enough (Projector)* (2010) is centered around a black cot with organically-shaped perforations throughout its fabric surface. On its one end, a small disco ball hangs from the metal frame, lit from below by a piercing white light. Nearby, three mirrors lay on a plate of water blown in circles by an adjacent fan. The subtle jagged patterns formed by the ball and mirrors are reflected onto a re-purposed letter-sized page. This interaction between water, light and air makes us mindful of these elements' tangible qualities that often go unrecognized. As in all of Sze's works, the smallest details produce the largest effects—often requiring a little extra attention for us to fully realize their complexity and inner logic.

Yaelle Amir