

Corn, agave, and abalone make their way into metal mobiles: Fay Ray at Shulamit Nazarian

Lindsay Preston Zappas | June 2, 2021

At Shulamit Nazarian in Hollywood, Fay Ray's large aluminum mobiles hang throughout the gallery. Some suspend from the ceiling, their metal tendrils kissing the ground, while others are bound to the wall, hanging on oversized metal hooks. The works feel modernist (think Alexander Calder) yet approachable—various stones and pieces of driftwood mix into these creations, mitigating their monolithic nature.



Lacuna, installation view, Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles, May 16 – June 26, 2021.
Courtesy of the artist and Shulamit Nazarian. Photo by Morgan Waltz.

To soften and add dimension to her metal pieces, Ray applies various salts and chemicals to their surfaces and exposes them to the sun. If placed outside, these patinas would continue to shift and slowly corrode, yet inside the gallery, they are paused in their current state. Corn, agave stalks, and seashells are strewn into Ray's mobiles—like beads on a charm bracelet—each one referencing a childhood memory or aspect of the artist's family history. The amalgam of industrial and natural materials, and various art histories (modernism, sculptural assemblage, and jewelry making), blend with personal memory to create complex combinations that welcome softness and vulnerability despite their metal exteriors.

On view: May 15 – June 26, 2021

Gallery Talk: Fay Ray

Gallery talk is your insider look into the stories of gallerists, curators, and artists in the Los Angeles art community.

Clamshells, churches, and truck yards

For “Lacuna,” Fay Ray looks to memories, symbols, and materials informed by her experiences growing up in the church.

“Those are the spaces where I learned how to worship and use objects and images to show reverence, and I find a lot of similarities between looking at a sculpture and looking at a statue of Jesus or Mary,” she explained in a [short gallery video](#).

Ray’s material, aluminum metal, is also a nod to her childhood.

“I grew up going into a lot of junk yards and truck yards and there were big rig diesel parts all over the place,” she says. “There were rocks to climb, and seashells to collect, and machine matter—natural matter everywhere that kind of took our imaginations.”

Throughout the show, Ray incorporates various natural materials like agave, seashells, and corn. She uses clam shells and abalone to reference her family’s past in the Gulf of Mexico.

“In my family there is a history of migrant workers, and either picking, hauling, or transporting agriculture. So, I use corn a lot in my work. That becomes a connecting point between more abstract shapes in the work.”



Algodones (detail), 2021, Aluminum and driftwood, 92 x 38.5 inches.
Courtesy of the artist and Shulamit Nazarian. Photo by Morgan Waltz.