ARTS

"Oh, your love is sunlight"
HOZIER SUNLIGHT

Pink model of Taj Mahal on display at British art museum

BY LAURENTIA WOO
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Visitors entering the Yale Center for British Art this season are met with an unusual sight: a luminous pink model of the Taj Mahal.

Rina Banerjee's ART '95 immersive installation, "Take me, take me, take me...to the Palace of love," on display at the YCBA until Sept. 13, transforms the image of the Taj Mahal into something translucent, buoyant and alive with movement.

"I actually really like it, it's so unique," visitor Claudia Lenskold said in an interview. "At first you just see the vibrant color and these random objects suspended in the air. Then you read that it's about love."

Banerjee's Taj Mahal does not replicate the marble grandeur of its counterpart in Agra. Instead, it is constructed from unexpected materials: plastic wrap, toothpicks, found objects, antique furniture and suspended fragments. The bright pink and red colors of the sculpture are in stark contrast to white marble mausoleum on which it is based.

According to Banerjee, the origins of her engagement with the Taj Mahal date back to 1998. At the time, she had just been invited to participate in the Whitney Biennial — the longest running survey of contemporary art in the United States — but was unable to access her studio.

Working at home while caring for her young daughter — who would attend Yale in 2021 — Banerjee began experimenting at her table, wrapping food in Saran Wrap of various colors, she said. According to the artist, the material's vivid hues and its extraordinary versatility fascinated her.

Before becoming an artist, Banerjee was a plastics engineer, and her understanding of material science informed these early artistic experiments, she said. Banerjee said she was drawn to plastic wrap's resilience, its ability to withstand the warmth and pressure of hands and what she described as its memory property — the way it holds form after being shaped or stretched. Using toothpicks as armatures and a baby's milk bottle and cap for a dome, she constructed a miniature pink Taj Mahal.

Decades later, the concept expanded dramatically. In 2023, Banerjee was invited to create a major commission at the Massachusetts Museum for Contemporary Art, where the pink Taj Mahal would become a large-scale installation, she said.

Here, the project became deeply research driven, and Banerjee said she travelled to various storage facilities and auction houses to collect materials.

Banerjee said she realized that objects that symbolized refinement and prestige in the United States were largely made in Asia. This historical research shaped the installation now on view at the Yale Center for British Art, she said.

Banerjee's sculpture draws upon legend and cinema as well as history. She recalled a vintage black and white film in which a woman kneels before her lover, imploring him to take her to the Taj Mahal — the "palace of love." That plea became the work's title and emotional refrain. For Banerjee, the monument embodies modern romance: the desire to choose love as an individual, rather than submit solely to social arrangement.

The artist deliberately warped certain details of the iconic structure, she said. Banerjee described the monument as traveling — spiritually, intellectually and materially — across contexts.

Clara Ortenzi, a local high school senior visiting Yale, described feeling embraced by the piece. She interpreted the vibrant pinks and throne-like elements as symbols of love and creativity, which are especially resonant in February.

Claudia Lenskold, also a high school senior, noted her surprise at encountering such an installation at the museum. She also noted that the contrast between the marble original and Banerjee's assemblage — constructed from what might be dismissed as "garbage" — heightened its impact.

The sculpture will be on view until Sept. 13, 2026.

Contact
LAURENTIA WOO *at*
laurentina.woo@yale.edu.



ALEX HONG / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Rina Banerjee's installation called "Take me, take me, take me...to the Palace of love" will be on display at the Yale Center for British Art until September evening at the University

Tom Stoppard's 'Arcadia' opens as Dramat's annual first-year show

BY LENA KATIR
STAFF REPORTER

"Arcadia," a Yale Dramatic Association play produced entirely by first years, premiered Thursday at the University Theatre.

Directed by AJ Jones '29, Tom Stoppard's "Arcadia" invites audiences into an English country estate shifting between two centuries. The play follows a precocious young girl, Thomasina, and her tutor as their intellectual sparring and personal entanglements unfold alongside modern scholars attempting to reconstruct their story on the same stage.

"It takes place within two timelines in the same room," Jones explained, emphasizing how the scale of that space became a central design priority. "A lot of its sophistication relies on its simplicity. We sized down some of the furniture to make the room feel larger."

Jones said the production embraces the play's complexity by emphasizing the grandness of the room in which it takes place, adding that the team was careful not to overcomplicate the set as "much of the play's beauty lies in the language."

Jones also highlighted Mya Osei's '29 costume design work, which helps visually guide audiences by using clothing to distinguish between the early 19th century and the present day without disrupting the flow of the story, he said.

Producer Molly DellaValla '29 said that the collaborative process behind the show mirrors the play's own themes of curiosity and discovery. As a first-year production, the team brought together students with a wide range of theatrical experience.

"It's a process where we're all learning together," DellaValla said. "It's been such a beautiful experience to build our own culture as an entirely freshman company."

Stage manager Noah Allen '29 said the play's thematic range makes it feel particularly at home at Yale.

Many of the characters, Allen said, exist "on the spectrum of sciences and humanities" and move between modes of thinking in ways that mirror Yale's academic culture. "The main character embodies the Yale spirit of caring about a lot of different kinds of knowledge," Allen said.

For Jones, what ultimately grounds the production is the cast's attention to character, and he said he hopes audiences will be able to see "the tremendous amount of care the actors have put into their characters."

"Arcadia" is running from Feb. 26 through Feb. 28 at the University Theatre.

Contact
LENA KATIR *at*
lena.katir@yale.edu.



COURTESY OF SADIE SCHOENBERGER
The Dramatic play, which is produced entirely by first years, will follow a young girl's forays into science, history and desire.

REVIEW

'Encounters' exhibit shows fresh side of onetime architecture professor

BY ELLISON DUNN
STAFF CRITIC

The Yale School of Architecture is featuring an exhibition on one of its own: Denise Scott Brown, a professor of architecture from 1967 to 1970. "Encounters: Denise Scott Brown Photographs," is up through July 3 in the Rudolph Hall gallery, the same building in which she taught some 60 years ago.

Curator Izzy Kornblatt ARC '28, a graduate student in architecture, and curatorial associate Peter Xu '27, an undergraduate student majoring in architecture, gave me a look into the motivations and inspirations for the show.

The exhibition explores the birth of postmodern architecture, for which Scott Brown and her Yale colleague Robert Venturi are to thank. However, the walls of the gallery in Rudolph Hall are concrete and bush-hammered, entirely representative of architect Paul Rudolph's Brutalist aesthetic.

Without choosing a side, "Encounters" playfully engages with the decades-old debate between Scott Brown and Rudolph's respective architectural styles. The exhibition "changes how you interact with the space," Kornblatt said — in an effort to build on, juxtapose and perhaps even contest Rudolph's Brutalist design.

"You have Denise taking a picture of you when you walk in," Kornblatt added, gesturing toward the exhibition poster: a photograph circa 1968 of Scott Brown holding her camera in a mirror. A massive rotunda structure was built specially for this show. It is gift-wrapped in an abstracted floral motif: large reflective decals on a mint-green background. The pattern alludes to a 1978 project by Scott Brown and Venturi, the "Best Products Catalogue Showroom."

The playful, colorful reference poses a stark contrast to the concrete walls of the gallery, successfully transforming the space as the curators intended. I watched as a visitor took a selfie on the reflective surface of a flower decal, stunningly mirroring Scott Brown in the poster photograph.

Photographic prints line the walls around the rotunda. The exhibition also features posters, dishware and, of course, architectural plans — little treasures from throughout Scott Brown's career. The photographs and ephemera provide visitors with a new and intimate perspective on her life, especially for those already familiar with her work.

Streets' worth of buildings are documented on long strips of paper that line the walls and display cases. Like these monographs, the exhibition itself is a panorama of sorts, collapsing Scott Brown's life and career down into a legible yet novel bite.

"Encounters" acknowledges Scott Brown's childhood in South Africa as formative for her photographic eye and passion for photography, while confronting the challenging, not-so-distant history of apartheid. As a white South African photographer working during that period, she had an "asymmetrical relationship" to non-white photographic subjects, as one of the wall labels reads. The exhibition also follows her travels after leaving South Africa, her personal relationships and her time teaching at Yale, to name just a few highlights.

Walking into the rotunda through a mint-green curtain, there is an audible click, something shifting: the thunder before lightning. The entire space illuminates as projectors cast onto two large screens, playing a slow montage of Scott Brown's photography. Cubic stools invite visitors to sit and experience the photographs as they were intended to be seen: massive projections like those Scott Brown would show her students in lecture.

The order of the photographs follows that of Kornblatt's photography book, which he designed with Scott Brown herself, also titled "Encounters." Kornblatt described how, by maintaining Scott Brown's ordering of the images, the projected images "keep her voice alive" amid the show's fresh curatorial perspective.

Kornblatt and Xu spoke about how special it was to work on this exhibition with other students. "I haven't seen another show by students from different programs" like this one, Kornblatt said as we were leaving, describing it as a "special opportunity for us to get to work on this together."

At the heart of "Encounters" are the students: those curating, those visiting and those whom Scott Brown taught. Especially striking is one particular display case with anonymous student work from Scott Brown's days teaching at Yale: syllabi, quizzes, notes from studio. How incredible to think that the same documents are being produced now in this very building, perhaps to be archived and displayed in an exhibition 60 years from now, tattooed in anonymous ink.

Contact
ELLISON DUNN *at*
ellison.dunn@yale.edu



ELLISON DUNN / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
The exhibit "Encounters: Denise Scott Brown Photographs" — open through July 3 at the School of Architecture — presents a panoramic view of Scott Brown's life and career.