

CRITICS' PICKS LOS ANGELES

Samantha Roth

Tyler Park Presents
4043 West Sunset Blvd.
April 20, 2024 - May 25, 2024
By Andrea Gyorody

May 10, 2024 4:03 pm



Samantha Roth, *Committed*, 2024, paper, black gesso, colored pencil, 42 1/2 x 22 1/2".

There's a good chance that anyone who has recently parented a small child will see themselves reflected in Samantha Roth's latest body of work. For some time now, Roth has been drawing with colored pencil on black-gessoed paper. But for "Double Take," her second solo exhibition at Tyler Park Presents, she seems to have found this strategy's greatest purpose in capturing the nocturnal rhythms of the postpartum months. In *Night Vision*, *Night Life*, and *Night Owl* (all works 2024), Roth depicts bookshelves lit by low lamps, with just enough dappled light bouncing off adjacent objects to give us a sense of space. But the atmosphere is eerie and disorienting: We're looking at the shelves—and their subtly anthropomorphized night-lights—from behind, as if we're part of the midnight mise-en-scène.

Early parenthood is a liminal, crazy-making state, one that Roth represents with playful symbolism. In the trio of drawings *Latch*, *After Bridget Riley*, and *Wild Card*, mother becomes magician and court ^{YGMZ} attempting to entertain her (unseen) child with high-contrast cards and toys recognizable to any pregnant millennial receiving targeted ads on social media. *Committed* offers a very different view of the mother's (headless) body: Here it is cloaked in a diaphanous robe with cabbage leaves poking out from under her black bra and underwear, a nursing set that is formally a void, evocatively cut from the drawing's inky background.

Mothering can certainly make the body feel foreign. In *Cactus Hour*, an incandescent succulent sprouts hands contorted in a range of gestures learned for infant care, such as fingers pinched to express milk or cupped to coax a reluctant baby to latch. And in the mirrored pair *Vice Versa* and *Versa Vice*, we see disembodied hands tossing play silks in the air, one from the perspective of the parent and the other from the imagined view of the child. Roth's black gesso, much like the transition to parenthood, can feel like a dark abyss, but it also puts everything—even the most ephemeral, delicate moments—into stark and glowing relief.