



Sandeep Mukherjee: *Untitled (Vines)*, 2008, acrylic ink on Duralene, 5 by 9 feet; at Cottage Home.

LOS ANGELES
SANDEEP MUKHERJEE
COTTAGE HOME AND SISTER

In this two-venue exhibition, L.A. artist Sandeep Mukherjee—one of the city's most underrated midcareer artists—revealed the full blossoming of his recent abstract turn. Born in India and trained as an industrial engineer before entering the MFA program at UCLA in the late '90s, Mukherjee shifted a couple of years ago from finely rendered self-portraits drawn and/or embossed on translucent Mylar to process-oriented abstractions suggesting geological phenom-

ena like mountains and bodies of water, horizon lines, celestial events and topographic maps. While similarly grounded in reality, the new works (all 2007 and '08), executed in acrylic ink and embossed lines on Duralene, are profound formal investigations of space and perception—the traditional concerns of abstract art.

Mukherjee constructs most of his images from small ink daubs of various earth and water tones. At Sister, the 14-foot-long *Untitled (Long Gold Spiral)* features gold and brown overlapping and interlocking circular forms partially filled with smeared strokes arranged concentrically. Three works 3 feet wide, dominated by circular shapes in both saturated and watered-down blue, green and brown, evoke a similarly hallucinatory vision of nature. Mukherjee's abstract forms suggest a variety of symbols or natural phenomena: mandalas, diagrams of planetary orbits, tree rings, microscopic cell life, solar emanations, ripples from stones tossed into water. While Lee Mullican's glorious sunburst and desert abstractions were clearly an inspiration, Mukherjee has developed a palette, technique and vision distinctly his own.

At Cottage Home, the 8-foot-tall *Untitled (Black Valley)* features three glossy-black embossed starburst forms within a valley flanked by two massive matte-black shapes. Evoking Jay DeFeo's *The Rose*, the rays seem

to emanate light, despite their jet surfaces. In the delicate *Untitled (Vines)*, Mukherjee renders tiny tangled plant shoots burgeoning inward from all four edges of the Duralene support. A central core of empty space seems to suggest light in a distant clearing. A related drawing at Sister takes a similar Hobbit-like perspective, suggesting a nether view of tendrils along the horizon of a gully. Exploring both macrocosmic and microcosmic space, Mukherjee's transcendent works share the spirit of great nature-based abstractions by such antecedents as Richard Pousette-Dart and Agnes Pelton.

—Michael Duncan