

# In the Tiniest Gestures, Delicacy on an Epic Scale

A richly colorful mural by Sandeep Mukherjee delineates forms with pinpricks in vellum.

## Art Reviews

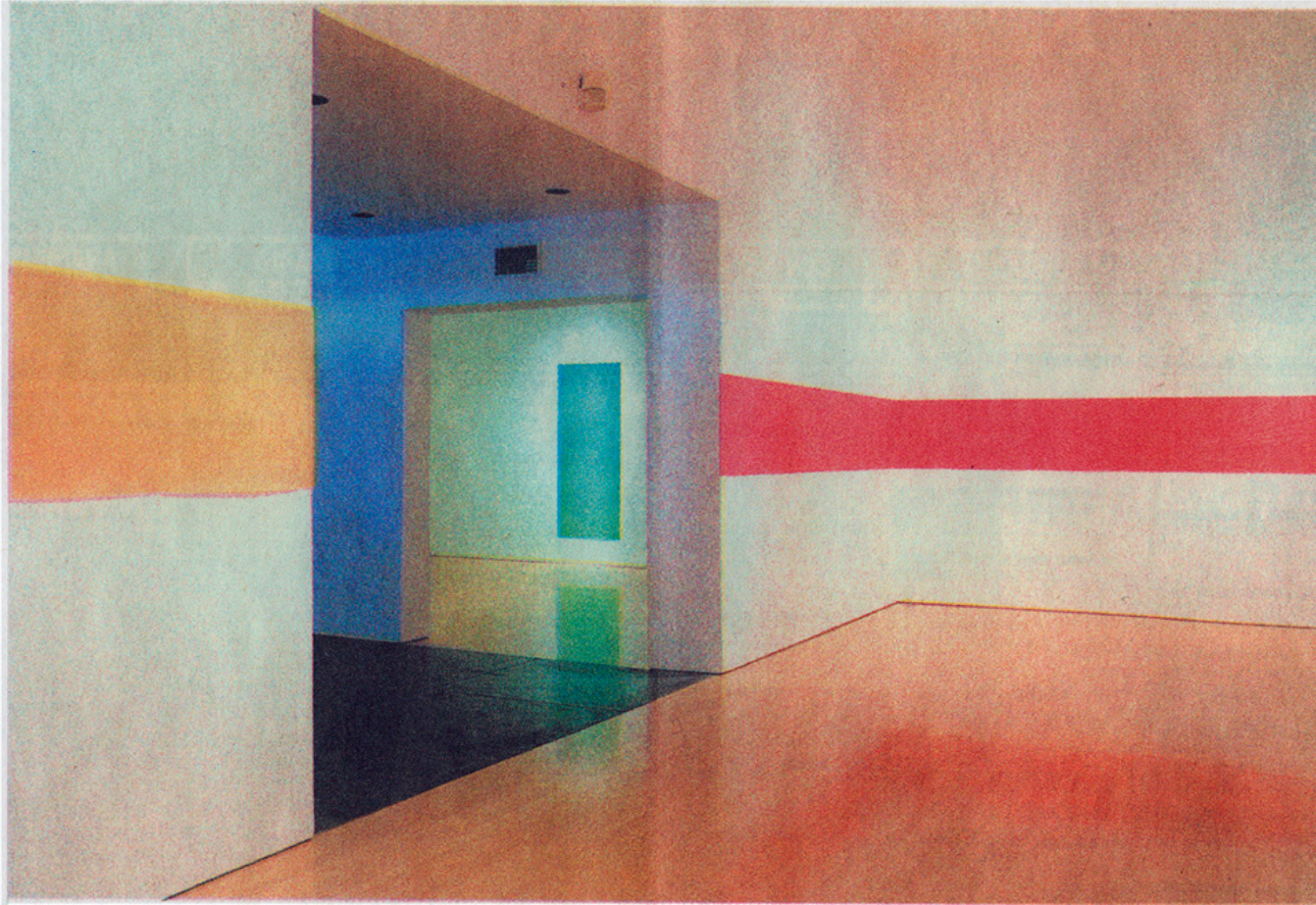
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The stunning centerpiece of Sandeep Mukherjee's second solo exhibition at Margo Leavin Gallery is a narrow, horizontal mural that, when all is said and done, wraps around four walls to a length of more than 110 feet. It's a gently epic narrative of sensual pleasure and extrasensory wonder.

The mural is drawn on translucent plastic vellum, painted on the back with rich, flat colors. It reads from left to right. Deep rose slides into pink, whose temperature slowly rises before slipping into orange and, finally, yellow.

The saga begins with delicate clusters of bobbing heads, their linear contours made with pricks of a needle in the vellum. The heads—self-portraits—stare, smile and make exaggerated gestures with their mouths, as if attempting to speak. The poetic tension between the vibrant skin of colored vellum and the empty space of the pinpricks that delineate bodies makes them preternatural.

When the mural reaches the first corner, it explodes into a wide-eyed head, drawn in red pencil, which is surrounded by a radiant aura made by scoring and folding the vellum. Ambient light becomes a dramatic player, as palpable as graphite and paper. For several feet, the mural is nothing more than folded colors in starburst patterns, which are oddly exciting to examine. It's as if you've had a sud-



Margo Leavin Gallery, 812 N. Robertson Blvd., West Hollywood, (310) 273-0603, through Oct. 19. Closed Sunday and Monday.

Sandeep Mukherjee's 110-foot mural is executed around the gallery walls in folds and pinpricks on translucent plastic vellum.

den revelation of the extreme beauty that a sheer surface can contain.

As Mukherjee's mural unfolds, small, faintly drawn, exquisitely precise naked bodies suddenly tumble into view. Round another corner and the bodies get larger, wrapped in pinpricked ribbons of colored light. Eventually they grow to life-size, while the ribbons are

replaced by showers of stylized stars or flowers. Like a dream of flying, the imagery has erotic overtones, which are enhanced by the equivalence Mukherjee asserts between subject matter and art as skin.

At the end, the tumbling bodies disappear and the star flowers peter out. The wide-eyed, grinning portrait heads return, this time

lined up in a playful loop-the-loop. Visually, Mukherjee sets a viewer gently back down on the ground.

A suite of four slightly larger-than-life drawings in another room uses the same marvelous techniques to show a standing figure (the artist) embracing an ephemeral shaft of light or falling leaves. Finally, an independent drawing is made from hundreds of

horizontal lozenge shapes scored into the minty green vellum to create a surface as palpable yet permeable as water.

This last work recalls the perceptually mysterious visual conundrums of Vija Celmins, although by wholly different means. Mukherjee has found a unique process for tapping into a resonant tradition of Light and Space art.

Margo Leavin Gallery