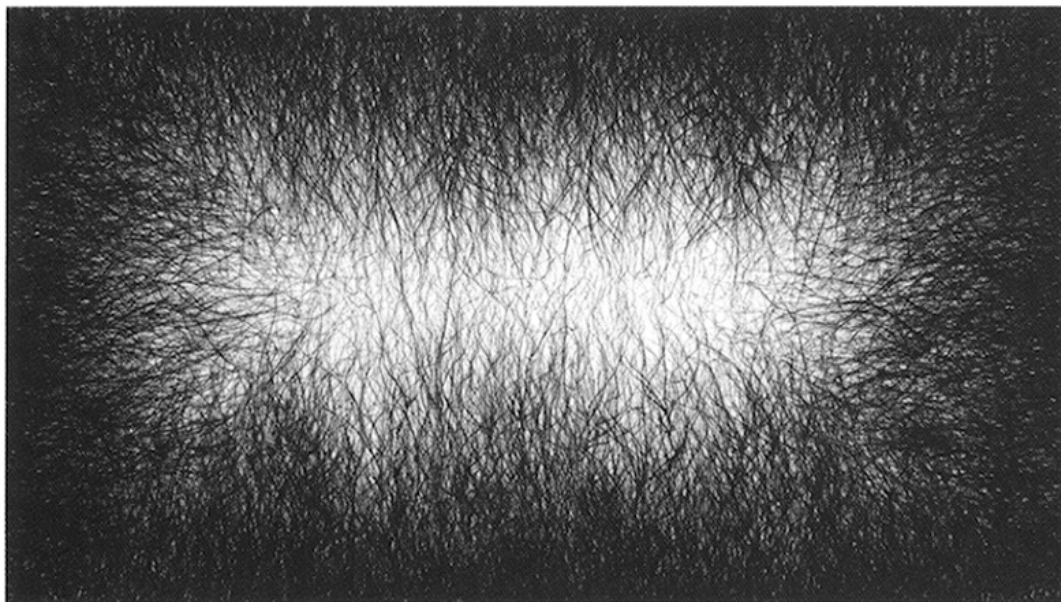


SANDEEP MUKHERJEE by Mary Anna Pomonis

Sister Gallery, Los Angeles CA May 10 · June 21, 2008



Known for his kaleidoscopic, mural-scale ink “paintings” on translucent vellum, Sandeep Mukherjee has created five more super-sized works and seven smaller pieces for Sister Gallery and its new, more ample extension, Cottage Home. Unlike his very focused show at Margo Leavin in 2002, this time Mukherjee has used the extra space to experiment on a far grander scale. Among the different kinds of manipulation involved, the use of an air compressor to blow ink across the surface of radiating abstractions seems especially compelling.

Made from a mix of acrylic ink, gesso, and etching on duralene, the mostly horizontal paintings hang unframed on the wall. Pared down to

primarily two, seemingly opposed forces—a centrifugal system of growing interference patterns and an almost Baroque obsession with empty surface—everything about these radial, back-to-front constructions is marked by visual expansion and contraction. For instance, in some instances a cotton swab has been laboriously used to remove acrylic ink, creating spatial vortices that spin outwards as in time-lapse photography. Another of Mukherjee’s techniques involves etching and reverse painting, as we see in a pair of untitled “negative” images of a “white” mountain and valley, simultaneously set off and shaped by a series of scored lines. These apparent opposites together open up a cavernous sky-ground framed by terrestrial crimp marks in the foreground.

This game of presence and absence extends even to the total removal of the artist’s hand, as in the air-gun work *Untitled (Vines)* (2008), which from a distance could be eyelashes, pubic hair, root tendrils, or the human cardiovascular system. The murky edges in the background seem to flip over into a cloud-like hole in the center, creating a tangibly absent presence on the wall. The piece gets better as you move forward and begin to realize that the progression from heavier to lighter marks has been facilitated by directed air rather than deliberate strokes of the hand. Once again, the very debasement of the artist’s identity as mark maker makes for a pretty arresting picture.