

Taft, Catherine. "Critics' Picks, Los Angeles". Artforum.com, June 2008.

Los Angeles

CRITICS' PICKS

Sandeep Mukherjee

SISTER

437 Gin Ling Way

May 10–June 21

It's almost too easy to relate Sandeep Mukherjee's cosmic abstract paintings to the work of Lee Mullican, Jay DeFeo, or Lee Bontecou. While Mukherjee seems indebted to this vein of midcentury abstraction, what's more interesting (and surprising) about his newest paintings are their intensely filmic—as opposed to cinematic—qualities. Mukherjee's particular use of patterning; deep, saturated colors; and organic, spiraling forms seem more akin to the experimental, "direct" techniques of filmmakers Len Lye, Oskar Fischinger, and James Whitney than to painterly precursors. The twelve works in this two-part exhibition—which occupies both Sister and the new Chinatown venue Cottage Home—read like blown-up stills extracted from some lyric avant-garde reel. This is perhaps best demonstrated by three small, untitled works hung one above another at Sister; like isolated frames, the serial works seem suspended in time and evoke the meditative properties of mandalas or kaleidoscopes. Even their surfaces speak more to celluloid than to canvas; layers of watery acrylic ink appear to float over translucent, plasticlike planes of Duralene. At Cottage Home, a spacious and antiseptically lit gallery housed in a former movie theater, four other striplike works—the largest of which is fourteen feet long—surround the viewer with similarly atmospheric forms rendered on an enormous scale. In contrast to these numinous compositions are three minimalist compositions that are no less contemplative. *Untitled (Black Valley)*, 2008, for example, is an eight-foot-tall field of black, etched and inked with a series of equally dark lines that at once pucker toward the center and radiate outward. Here, the simple texture of Mukherjee's understated painting is as potent as even his most vivid arrangements.

The exhibition is also on view at Cottage Home, 410 Cottage Home Road, Los Angeles.

— Catherine Taft



Untitled (Black Valley), 2008, acrylic, gesso, and etching on Duralene, 96 x 60".