

APPROACHING LIMITS

Sandeep Mukherjee

11.05.2023 – 30.06.2023

PROJECT 88, MUMBAI

Approaching Limits

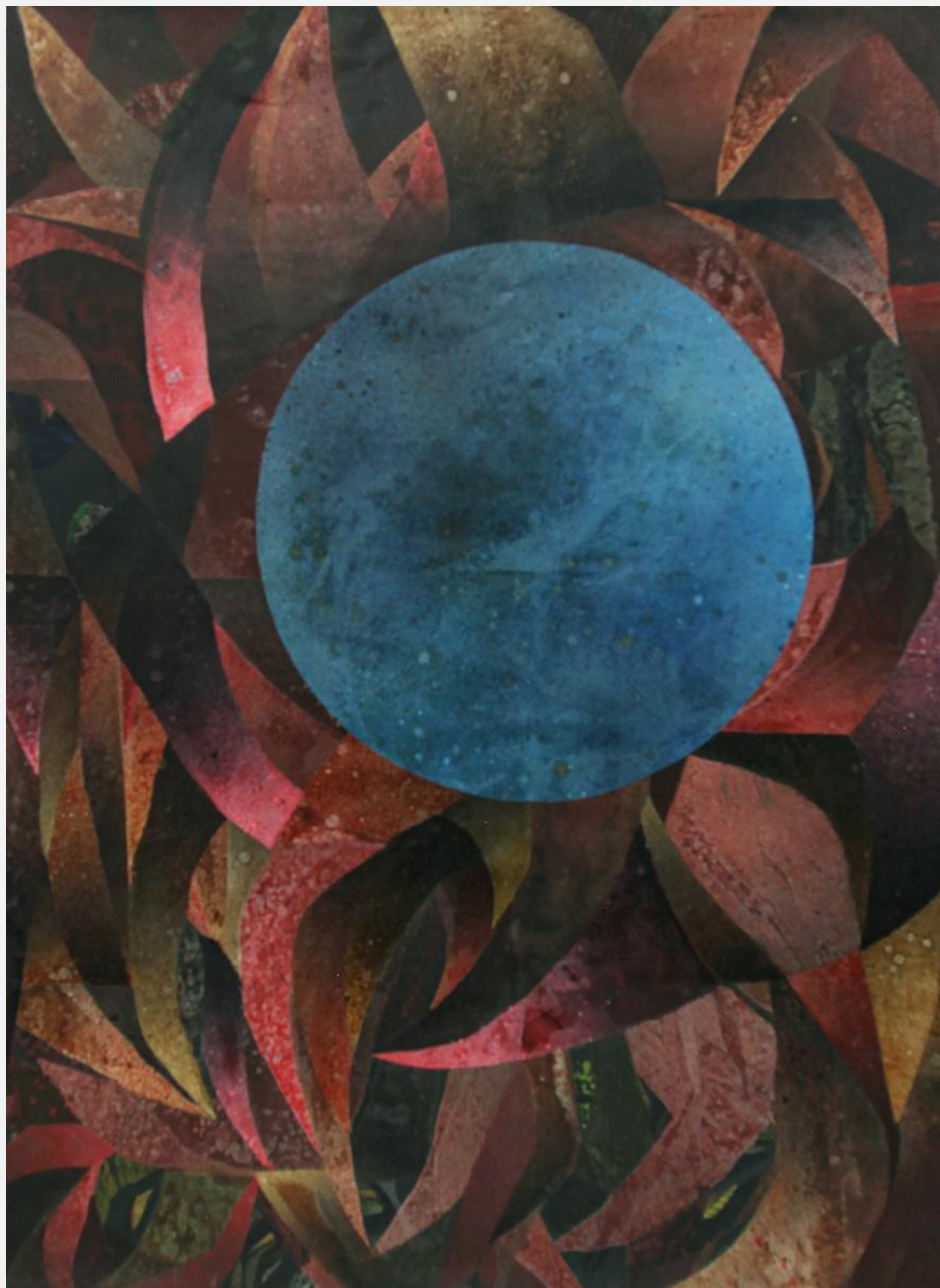
Project 88 is pleased to present 'Approaching Limits', Sandeep Mukherjee's third solo exhibition at our gallery space in Mumbai. With life-sized sculptural forms and acrylic paintings, this new body of work is typical of Mukherjee's oeuvre, wherein an immersive experience is an integral component of the artwork itself. The artist continues his probe into materiality and movement, whilst also reckoning with perennial questions on the tenuous relation between the human and non-human in the face of immanent entropy.

Contemporary abstraction presents a plenitude of (seemingly disparate) visual forms, histories and methods, conceived for a distinct purpose: be it spiritual, gestural, symbolic, structural, or minimal. Yet with each renewed iteration, one question remains: *why* abstract our reality? Or put differently, how does abstraction continue to serve us today? Far too often, the 'abstract' is presupposed as a portal to *transcend* lived reality - and exist independently - by unlocking a fantastical realm of infinite, unlimited subjective possibilities. However, in this show, Sandeep Mukherjee evokes a radical potential in the opposite direction: with finite boundaries, precise edges, and contrasting textures, the artist approaches 'limits' from oscillating vantage points. These palpable (and pulsating) borders of materiality and meaning morph into unexpected *sources* of desire, wonder, and uncertainty; as such, Mukherjee's abstracted surfaces rediscover the ways in which we comprehend 'limits' themselves.

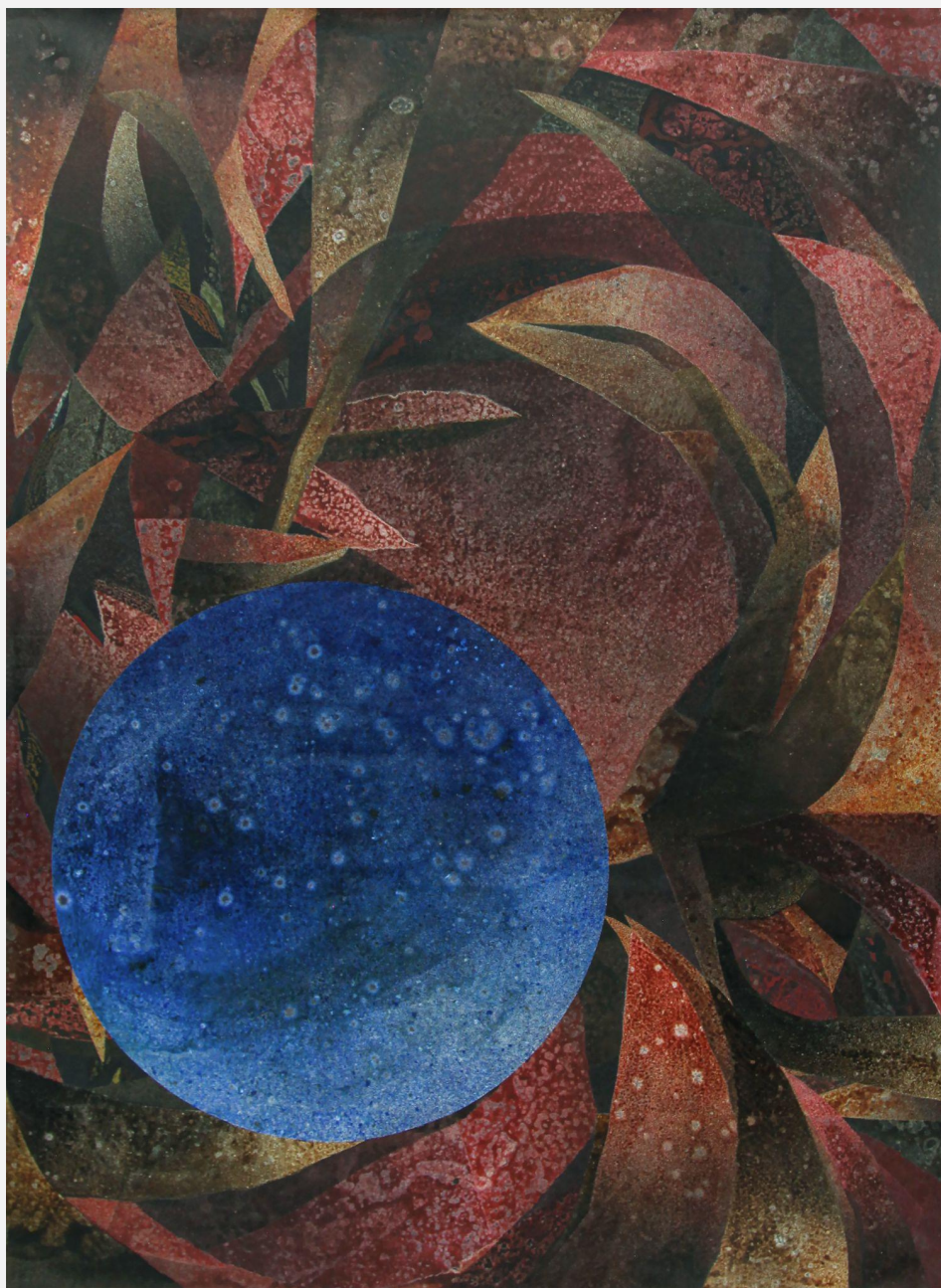
For Mukherjee, abstraction is no longer a noun - a site, an aesthetic, or a style - but transforms into a verb. He draws on the haptic and kinetic by slicing flowing matter in order to highlight a particular aspect of that flow. This movement allows the artist to approach different perspectives (and materials) in order to render the previously invisible, and at the same time, recognises the limits of each perspective. There's a fleeting retraction, an act of pulling away at the corner of each work; in the *Parallax* series, cosmic motifs both emerge and recoil. From afar, the precise geometric forms allude to hard-edge abstract painting from the 1960s - coined by art critic Jules Langsner - that referred to artists along the West Coast, where incidentally, Mukherjee currently resides. Langsner delimited bold autonomous shapes, rigid yet saturated colour fields, as it gathered to form a singularity within the historical continuum of geometric abstraction. But as you go closer, such finite forms suddenly expand - Mukherjee's surfaces then erode with gestural excesses, each diffracting light to breathe a space of its own. Whereas a birds-eye view indexes geometric modern constraint, a closer lens exposes expressionist textures and layers. This ceaseless contradiction - to recede yet erupt simultaneously - forms the crux of Mukherjee's kinetic approach. Situated at the very edge of the gestural and geometric canon, Mukherjee distills a nuanced visual vocabulary of his own, where to move is to see differently.

This abstraction must be grasped in close relation to the materiality of each work; for instance, with an unparalleled technical rigour, Mukherjee now pushes his painterly limit into the realm of sculptures. Here, material is no longer constrained as a medium or metaphor, but rather, transforms into an active agent within his process of making, and subsequently, into our ways of seeing. In *Tree Skins*, colossal sculpted forms - that echo dense tree barks - float weightlessly from above, eerily suspended mid-air. Their roots have vanished, assuming an afterlife, haunting a threshold of the gallery. In this work, Mukherjee collides his own body upon the surface of a tree - separated by a narrow layer of aluminium, which then records (and moulds) impressions of this encounter on both sides. As a viewer, you stumble upon their striking metallic imprints, the raw 'skin' textures intimating conflicted pasts. In a sharp contrast to existing discourses on the anthropocene, Mukherjee doesn't seek to romanticise the 'boundless' planetary in relation to human dystopia. Out here, nature *is* human: mortal, split, violent, often grotesque, but at times, arrestingly beautiful in its imprecision.

Sandeep Mukherjee
Parallax 2
Acrylic and acrylic ink on Duralene
84 x 60 inches
2022



Sandeep Mukherjee
Parallax 4
Acrylic and acrylic ink on Duralene
84 x 60 inches
2022



Sandeep Mukherjee
Parallax 5
Acrylic and acrylic ink on Duralene
84 x 60 inches
2022



Sandeep Mukherjee
Parallax 6
Acrylic and acrylic ink on Duralene
84 x 60 inches
2022



Sandeep Mukherjee
Parallax 8
Acrylic and acrylic ink on Duralene
84 x 60 inches
2022



Sandeep Mukherjee
Tree Skins 2
Installation View
6 Panels, 6 x 4 ft each
2018



Sandeep Mukherjee
Tree Skins 2
Installation View, Reverse View
6 Panels, 6 x 4 ft each
2018



Sandeep Mukherjee
Tree Skins 2
Detail, Acrylic and acrylic ink on hand molded aluminium
6 x 4 ft
2018



Sandeep Mukherjee
Tree Skins 2
Detail, Acrylic and acrylic ink on hand molded aluminium
6 x 4 ft
2018



Sandeep Mukherjee
Tree Skins 2
Detail, Acrylic and acrylic ink on hand molded aluminium
6 x 4 ft
2018



Sandeep Mukherjee
Tree Skins 2
Detail, Acrylic and acrylic ink on hand molded aluminium
6 x 4 ft
2018



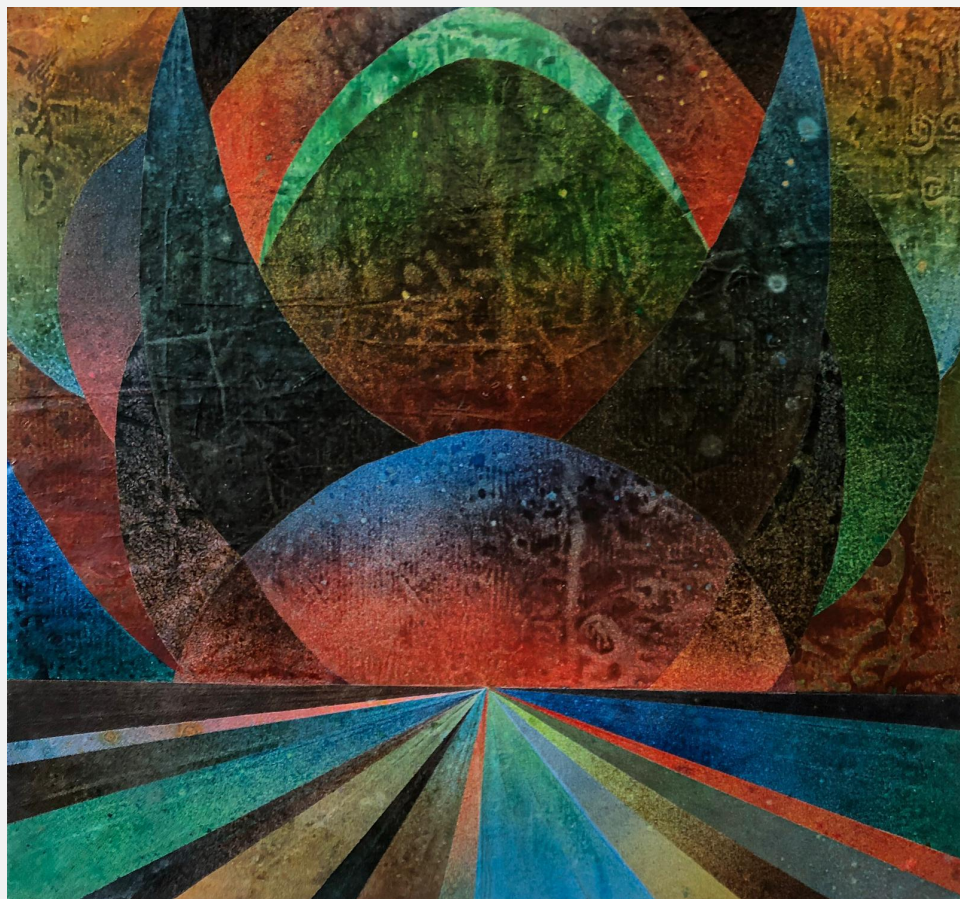
Sandeep Mukherjee
Tree Skins 2
Detail, Acrylic and acrylic ink on hand molded aluminium
6 x 4 ft
2018



Sandeep Mukherjee
Tree Skins 2
Detail, Acrylic and acrylic ink on hand molded aluminium
6 x 4 ft
2018



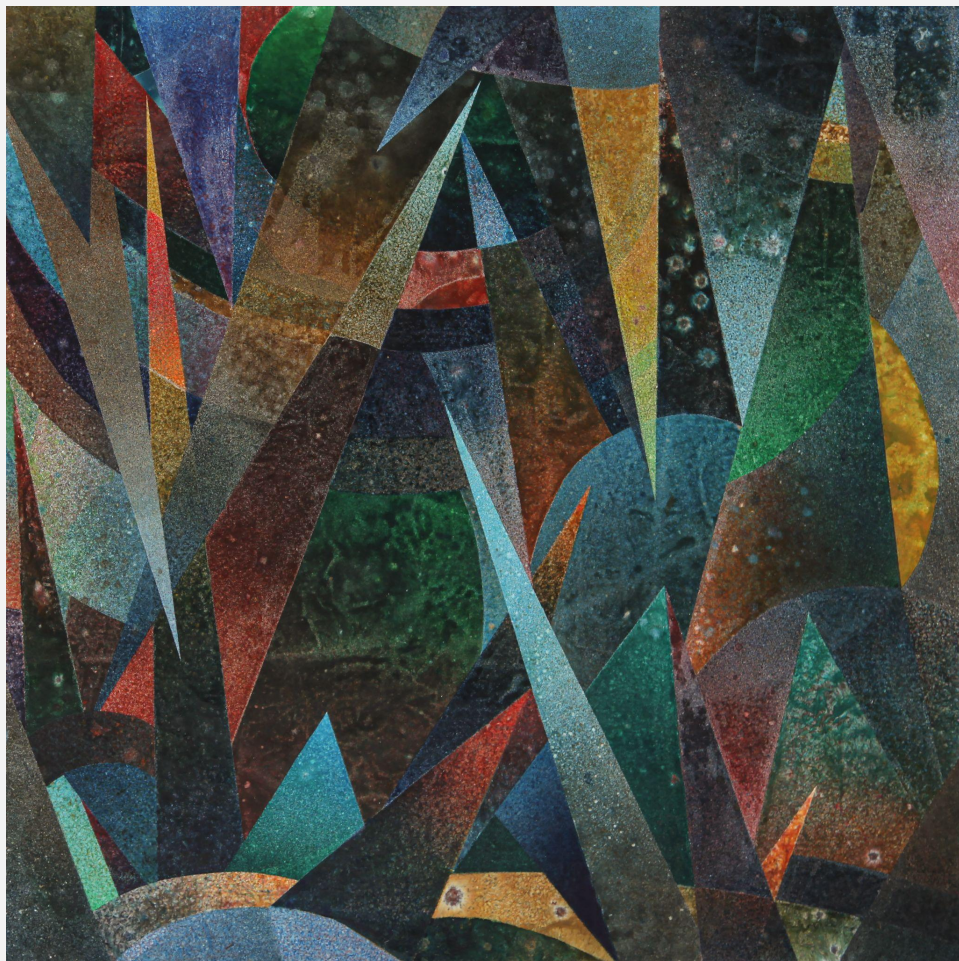
Sandeep Mukherjee
Pasts, Presents, Futures
Acrylic and sand on aluminium
48 x 51 inches
2020



Sandeep Mukherjee
Arch
Acrylic on aluminium
35.75 x 40 inches
2023



Sandeep Mukherjee
Cones
Acrylic on aluminium
48 x 48 inches
2023



Sandeep Mukherjee
Weave
Acrylic on duralene
42 x 44 inches
2023



Sandeep Mukherjee
Valley 2
Acrylic and sand on aluminium
48 x 74.5 inches
2023



Biography

Sandeep Mukherjee

Born in Pune, India, Sandeep Mukherjee lives and works in Los Angeles. He received his MFA from UCLA (1999) and a BFA from Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles (1996). Since 2006, he has been a Professor of Art at Pomona College, CA. Mukherjee's works are in numerous public collections, including those of MOCA, Los Angeles; MOMA, New York; LACMA, Los Angeles; UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi; the Jumex Collection, Mexico City; the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara; the San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose; the Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach and the Microsoft Collection, Washington among others. The artist has had solo shows at Brennan & Griffin (New York), Project 88 (Mumbai), Margo Leavin Gallery (Los Angeles), Sister Gallery (Los Angeles), 68 Projects (Berlin), Chimento Contemporary (Los Angeles), Shilpakala Academy (Dhaka) and the Pomona College Museum of Art among others. Mukherjee has been commissioned for large-scale permanent works at the Facebook Headquarters in Los Angeles, a Federal Courthouse in Toledo, Ohio, and the YouTube Theater at the Sofi Stadium in Los Angeles. He was the recipient of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship and the Berlin Fellowship for 2017. He was also the recipient of the 2015-16 City of Los Angeles (COLA) Fellowship and the California Community Foundation, Mid-career Fellowship in 2008.