

resemble urns. They each stand earnestly on earth-red stone and have tiny blue-and-white beaded necklaces draped around their necks. Their lids are topped off with copper covers pierced by the archetypal copper arrows that Vitra has used in the past, which refer to *Ohosi* (or Ghost), an orisha or divine spirit associated with animals and the hunt in Afro-Brazilian spirituality. The lids themselves differ slightly yet significantly, as do the designs carefully painted on the surfaces of the vases. Such minor disparities within the otherwise strong eloquence of Vitra's ordered visual language entice the viewer to wonder what is being communicated through the alteration of patterns and material configurations. The vase with arrows emerging from it at all angles appears to imply a ritual or spiritual purpose different from its otherwise identical companion, with arrows pointing straight upward from the lid.

These works, like all the others on show, were made during the artist's six-month stay in the municipality of eThekweni in Durban, South Africa, in 2024. There she learned Zulu techniques of wire weaving and beading, which she has used in such works as those in the "*Matemática dos espíritos minerais (1-6)*" (Mathematics of Mineral Spirits [1-6]) series. In each, she's woven a sparse pattern of tiny, folded copper squares and small blue-glass beads onto LP-size pieces of reddish-brown fabric with hair-fine copper thread, all neatly sided and tasseled with tightly beaded flaps. Lined up on the wall, they seem like coded messages to another realm.

The most complex work in the show, *As contas do meu rosário são balas de artilharia*, whose English translation serves as the show's title, consists of seven large blue, white, and brown banners falling onto the floor from rods hanging from the ceiling. Each banner is the same as its neighbor in length. Only their patterns differ slightly, in such a way that the middle one seems to hold a significant role due to the longest portion of white at its top—as if it's accumulating the energies of the others and guiding these upward. All of them are pulled forward and held down by rocks, dramatically suggesting a connection between heaven and earth. This cosmological evocation is underlined by the objects placed on the banners: for instance, upright wooden totems with copper attributes, bound in white burial fabric—some with beaded patterns sewn into them—and tacked with rusted nails, or large reddish rocks alongside constellations of small copper dishes holding collections of bright-blue lapis lazuli stones. This serene yet total and overwhelming installation takes the mystical qualities of Vitra's materialist work one step closer to the supernatural.

—Huib Haye van der Werf

MUMBAI

Kulpreet Singh

GALERIE MIRCHANDANI + STEINRUECKE

Every winter, for several years now, a blanket of smog descends on New Delhi, transforming the city into a sepia-toned version of itself. An acrid smell snakes its way into the nostrils of its denizens and you can taste the pollutants on your tongue. This phenomenon is attributed mainly to the burning of crop stubble by farmers across the neighboring states of Punjab and Haryana, coupled with a dip in temperatures.

These burning fields provided fodder for Kulpreet Singh's compelling exhibition "*Indelible Black Marks*." As the son of a farmer from Punjab, Singh is keenly aware of the perilous plight of those who work the land. They resort to torching the crop residue because they can't afford other means to dispose of it. Central to the exhibition was the evocative eight-and-a-half-minute video *Indelible Black Marks* (all works 2022–24), which depicts stubble being set ablaze and brown fields turning coal black. We spot Singh along with several volunteers

racing across long rows of smoldering fields, dragging yards of canvas cloth behind them. Plumes of smoke and ash arise as they hurry along, while soot, ash, and fire leave traces on the fabric. In other shots the men are seen moving in a circle, the cloth still trailing behind them. They present an arresting sight, their white clothing a stark contrast to the blackened earth. Singh's keen cinematic eye comes to the fore in the mixture of drone and eye-level shots that capture the process of creating his fabric works.



Several of the fire-singed, soot-imprinted canvases created during Singh's field performance were on display, among them the ocher-toned *Painting V*, the dark-brown *Painting IV*, and the somber-hued diptych *Painting I*. The streaky strokes on them served to underscore the natural elements at play. *Painting VI* consists of two canvases that were placed at right angles to each other in a corner of the gallery space. At the top of one, two neat circles had been burned out, almost counterbalanced by two circular forms made of gold leaf. The latter recalled the Japanese art of *kintsugi*, in which the precious metal is used to repair broken pottery.

For Singh, the earth also serves as a canvas on which he can carry out his artistic explorations. He has traded in brush and paint for a tractor, with which he creates patterns in the fields. A strong sense of geometric abstraction informs his earthworks, often with circular and rectangular shapes visible chiefly from the air. His interventions in the landscape recall the Land art movement in the 1960s and '70s, but they need to be read within the contemporary context of climate emergency. The artist appears to find himself in a conundrum—he is cognizant of the air pollution and health hazards caused by the incineration of stubble, but also knows the farmers have no viable alternative. At the mercy of nature's vagaries, they are often just a step away from crop failure and penury.

At the center of the gallery, the installation that shares the show's title consisted of long-sleeved shirts suspended by fine metal wires from a circular channel. They were reminiscent of the scarecrows that farmers erect to protect their crops and thereby their subsistence. The fragile garments were fashioned out of cotton cloth, stubble ash, and ash from wooden stoves collected at sites of farmers' protests. Bits of burnt stubble from the slowly disintegrating garments wafted gently to the floor, serving as a poignant reminder of the precarity of farmers' lives and of our natural environment.

—Meera Menezes

Kulpreet Singh, *Indelible Black Marks*, 2022–24, cotton cloth, thread, stubble ash, ash from wooden stoves at farmer protest sites, 9 × 22 × 22'.