

Indelible Black Marks

Kulpreet Singh

Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke is pleased to present Indelible Black Marks, the first major solo exhibition by Patiala-based artist Kulpreet Singh. In this series of performances turned paintings, films and installations, Singh reflects materially and conceptually on the permanent black marks systematically inscribed onto our ecosystem. Extending from the histories of land and environmental art, he emphasizes farming and farmlands — echoing the main occupation of his home state of Punjab.

During the stubble-burning ritual traditionally used by farmers to remove residual weeds and pests from farmlands in India, Singh orchestrated an engagement of dragging massive canvases across the burning fields. The idea was to capture the residue of the land on canvas, as it is prepared for another harvest cycle. As someone who was raised amid farmlands, Singh elaborates that the farmers have been compelled to burn the fields as it is their only affordable option to prepare the ground immediately for the next crop cycle. At a broader level, the burning farmland becomes a microcosm to reflect on the changing conditions of the planet today. The very act of moving amid the stubble for Singh is the closest to experiencing the threshold of temperatures that the world will be soon crossing.

From an art historical perspective, Singh's transformation of the farm into a canvas aligns with the iconic land art moments of the 1970s led by visionary artists such as Nancy Holt, and Robert Smithson. His particular emphasis on an aerial vision to experience his works resonates with Smithson's Spiral Jetty (1970), an earth sculpture created to transform with its surrounding conditions of water, land, and atmosphere. Unlike Spiral Jetty which allowed for a long-term conversation with its immediate

environment, Singh's performances extend across a diversity of locations in Punjab dependent upon the harvest cycles of the region. They also move beyond the framework of land art by integrating space, performance, film and community to configure a new form of artistic engagement. These repeated actions that map Indelible Black Marks, bring to the fore multiple conversations around land and biodiversity, making us aware of the contrast between projections and realities on the ground.

Text: Srinivas Aditya Mopidevi