TEXT APPEAL

Five things to know about **Jaideep Mehrotra**'s genre-defying new works

THEY'RE NOT EXACTLY PICTURES: The 10 large works in 'Metonymical Subtext' look like they're just patches of colour and lines of computer code until you step back. That's when the seemingly random lettering and colours coalesce into an image, possibly of someone you know: the Beatles, Aung San Suu Kyi, Mao Tse-tung, even Shammi Kapoor.

THEY AREN'T QUITE WORDS: What looks like Devanagari or Kanji at first glance is actually English or binary, spelling out a message over and over, and cleverly incorporating Mehrotra's name.

THEY'RE NOT JUST CANVASES: Layered over each painting and calibrated precisely to align with the colours below is a sheet of glass inscribed with text. Neither works without the other, and both canvas and computer were required to create it. "No one's tried anything like this before," says Mehrotra. "It drove my printers crazy."

THEY'RE ABOUT THE PAST AND THE FUTURE: The mixed media underscores how technology has changed us. "We're better connected but less personal," he says. "No matter who we're with, we're always somewhere else—on the phone, online, disconnected from here and now. There's an element of suspicion with the intangible. I'm not scared of where we're going, but we need a driving licence."

THEY'RE TYPICAL OF THE ARTIST: Mehrotra, who only encountered television at age 18, is tech-savvier than most artists. He had a website and a CD of images back when painters were wary of the medium. He's made digital lithographs and used colour-shifting pigments and sparkles. So, is he an artist or a geek? "I don't know; can you separate the two?" —*Rachel Lopez*

'Metonymical Subtext' shows in Mumbai at Tao Art Gallery from December 1-15 and Jehangir Art Gallery from December 19-25

REEL ART *Silver Screen* is part of Mehrotra's new exhibition

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