

Melting Scripts and Thawing Figures

Sonali Bhagchandani responds to Jaideep Mehrotra's metal on canvas.



Jaideep Mehrotra. 1192. Acrylic, oil, metal and mixed media on canvas. 48" x 48". 2016.

Jaideep Mehrotra has often employed atypical material in his works – in *Metonymical Subtext* at Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai, six years back, he attempted to deconstruct the relationship between technology and its perception by linking digital and painted layers. We see undercurrents of this exploration in his recent show *Reflections in Mercury* at the same gallery from the 23rd of September to the 27th of October. Here, he reinvents his practice by combining molten metal and paint to build sculptural presences on two-dimensional canvases.

Mehrotra's current series has evolved over a period of four years. His technique involves a series of complex layering processes. Radiant liquid metal that has solidified holds your reflection on the surface of the canvas. The constant interplay between light and shadow turns into a pathway framing a liminal moment where the escape from one reality is but an entry into another.

Although the works seem interconnected from a distance, each canvas evokes a different response as you walk closer. One looks like an old scroll, burnt through the centre. The drips of silver paint resemble a melting script that you can't decipher. Another work begins to coruscate with a delicate golden hue. Mehrotra often uses alloys of copper and aluminium to achieve this hypnotic effect. One can almost trace contours of the shadow of a thawing figure in yet another work. Some works carry intimations of mortality with elegant red splatters suggesting patterns of dried blood.

The thrill of this show lies mainly in the technique employed – the tangible tension between the reflective surface and the fluid metal structure give the works their intriguing 'look'. The real challenge for Mehrotra would be to see how far he can carry on with this style and whether it takes him to a place where he can resist its charms. /