



DYSPNEA

By Sarana Mehra

April 1 - 26, 2022

IAO Gallery (932 Chung King Road, Los Angeles CA. 90012)

As we emerge from the Covid 19 pandemic, artist Sarana Mehra uses her new body of multimedia work to explore the role of scent in the alchemic responses to death and disease. *Dyspnea* ('dis(p)-nē-ə) literally translating to bad, unfortunate breeze, is a medical term for shortness of breath and one of the common symptoms of Covid 19.

Dyspnea examines the collective human experience of living through a plague when even the act of breathing becomes a source of fear and anxiety. As the air between friends and family became poisonous, not just through the passage of disease, but due to beliefs and politics, Sarana looks at the ways in which humans turn to protection or assault when faced with an unprecedented medical event.

Interweaving her long-standing research into historic and extant systems of language, technology, medicine and belief, Sarana explores how scent can be a trauma trigger and a spiritual cleanser in times of fear. Smell, more than any other sense, has the ability to erase time and space. As a "high risk" disabled person who has undergone multiple cardiac interventions, Sarana found that the ubiquitous smell of isopropyl alcohol, particularly at the start of the pandemic, triggered traumatic PTSD responses to previous medical events. However, for the first, time personal trauma meshed with the collective as even able bodied, healthy people feared inhalation and death. To capture some of this anxiety's surrounding smell, the artist has collaborated with IAO to create a novel scent for this show. In addition, Sarana has created a series of drawings, sculptural votives and relics that draw on contemporary symbolism, ancient myths and rituals of both the Eastern and Western cultures of her ancestry.

Like in times past, *Dyspnea* suggests that in spite of our monumental medical and scientific advancements, the unease of disease still pulls at the threads of civilization.

ABOUT SARANA MEHRA

Sarana Mehra is a multidisciplinary artist whose work examines the relation between the body, body-politic and the cycle of disintegration and evolution in human-made systems like art, language and technology. Having lived in the liminal space between life and death for much of her life Sarana explores the cycle of collapse, renewal and possible blank spaces left between human experience and online interaction. Drawing on Eastern and Western mythologies and the artifacts of past civilizations gathering dust in our museums, Sarana uses her practice to examine a "future relic". Each piece, like the remnants of our ancestors, leaves clues and symbols but ultimately obfuscates their contemporary use and ritual. Her work posits that despite our technological advancements we remain, like our primordial predecessors who left their handprints on the cave wall, desperate to be remembered yet unable to thwart decay. Sarana Mehra is a bi-racial British-American artist living and working in Los Angeles. Sarana gained her BFA from the University of Oxford and her MFA from Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design (London). Sarana Mehra is a co-founder and media director of Artists 4 Democracy, a grassroots LA-based artist activist group, a member of the Binder of Womxn artist collective and an advocate for healthcare justice. Sarana's pronouns are she/her/they/them and sees herself as part of the LGBTQIA community.



Website: saranamehra.com

Instagram: @sarana_mehra



LIST OF WORKS

Gallery

From left to right as you enter the gallery

1. Protolith (2021)

Drawing, gouache & sumi ink on cotton paper
\$650

2. Caponpix (2021)

Drawing, gouache & sumi ink on cotton paper
\$650

3. Canula (2022)

Resin and paint
\$1500

4. Bad Breath (2022)

Resin, Hydrocal, sand & clay
\$5000

5. Scratching the Cage (2021)

Resin, Hydrocal and pigment
\$1200

6. Vent (2022)

Resin, sand, clay, mixed media, scent
Price on request

7. Cask (2021)

Drawing, gouache & sumi ink on cotton paper
\$1500

8. Plumonaria (2022)

Resin & sand
\$1500

Library

Burn Baby Burn (2021)

Gouache & sumi ink on cotton paper
\$1500

Window

Various X Voto (2020 - 2022)

Mixed media, sold individually or as set
Price on request

ABOUT IAO GALLERY

The Institute for Art and Olfaction's gallery is devoted to exhibitions, performances, installations and other expressions that make use of or engage with the medium of scent.

Website: artandolfaction.com/exhibitions

Instagram: @artandolfaction