



## DEATH TASTES PLASTIC

Sarana Mehra

On View: November 1 – 30, 2024

Opening: Friday, November 1, 6-8 pm

The Institute for Art and Olfaction Gallery welcomes London-born, Los Angeles-based artist Sarana Mehra in her second solo exhibition at IAO Gallery.

Mehra's previous exhibition at the IAO, *Dyspnea*, explored our emergence from the pandemic where scent and breath were problematic.

In *DEATH TASTES PLASTIC*, Mehra continues to explore themes of ritual and how contemporary use of technology, language and symbology influence our everyday. Mythic and playful motifs of illness, death and memory run throughout the show and nods to ancient and extant use of votives that suggest a tension between the actuality of death and its spiritual extension. In this way, Mehra continues her examination how in times of disintegration belief and science exist in unison.

In this new and developing body of work there is an unanswered quest to find ritual and relief from the traumatic lived experience following years after Mehra's last show with the IAO. In these short two and a half years, the artist witnessed the death of her beloved mother, a sudden loss of a friend, and was hospitalized and recovered with two separate life-threatening illnesses.

*DEATH TASTES PLASTIC* examines how in Capitalism, and especially American Capitalism, illness and especially death exist in a void. Death rituals that were common human practice have now become minor incursions into more prosaic customs. How can one find comfort in the onslaught of content, crises and critique? What does one grief and recovery mean against the background of global atrocities and trauma? What does human care look like on a dying planet?

As part of the exhibition, Mehra developed a unique scent that simulates the smell of being in hospital, both as carer and as patient.

Signature cocktails generously provided by Tomorrow LA.

*Image credit: Sarana Mehra*



tomorrow



## 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 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 she sees herself as part of the LGBTQIA community.

*Photo credit: Saskia Wilson-Brown*

## About IAO Gallery

IAO Gallery plays host to visual art, performative, and installation-based exhibitions from artists working at the intersection of scent and art. We welcome artists from around the world in collaborative exhibitions that showcase visual art, performance, installation and – of course – scent.

### Open Hours:

M, W, Thu 1 to 5pm and by appointment

932 Chung King Road  
Los Angeles CA. 90012  
[artandolfaction.com/visit](http://artandolfaction.com/visit)

IAO Gallery is accessible by wheelchair.  
However, please note that there is a one  
inch cement lip at the entry to the IAO.