

SEANKELLY

Himelfarb, Ellen. "Idris Khan's 'Beyond the Black' at Victoria Miro," *Wallpaper*, September 23, 2013.

Wallpaper*

THE STUFF THAT REFINES YOU

Idris Khan's 'Beyond the Black' at Victoria Miro

ART/23 SEP 2013/ BY ELLEN HIMELFARB



The artist Idris Khan in his studio

We've all explored the power of repetition - whether condemned by a teacher to write lines, whose literal meaning is consumed by a greater consciousness, or flummoxed by uttering a single word so often, it loses all meaning. The artist Idris Khan is a young virtuoso of repetition. And experiencing his work, as with other adventures in repetition, is like watching the whole transcend the sum of its parts.

The Wallpaper* Handmade 2012 contributor has entranced patrons with his digital composites. He's layered every page of the Koran in a single frame and every stave of Chopin's 'Nocturnes' to beautiful, if bemusing, effect. His latest works venture out from there, this time layering his own writings into abstraction. For 'Beyond the Black', at London's Victoria Miro gallery until 9 November, he has used Friedrich Nietzsche's 'The Birth of Tragedy' as inspiration, engraving his analysis onto rubber stamps, then overlaying them in celestial formations until they leave the literal world and enter the sublime.

The artist, who favours monochrome, has gone for a Rothko-esque all-black look in many of his works here. His backgrounds are layers of black pigment, rabbit skin glue and slate dust, which he sanded down before building up the text in black oil paint. The exception is one climactic installation, in which 120,000 lines of text are stamped directly onto the gallery wall.

'Beyond the Black' is a love letter to modernists like Rothko, Ad Reinhardt and Richard Serra, and all artists who worked with a black-on-black palette. Yet as the title hints, it

is also a philosophical departure from modernism. The difference is Khan's use of language as a medium, employed to represent a barrier to true spirituality and also as a reaffirmation of our humanity.



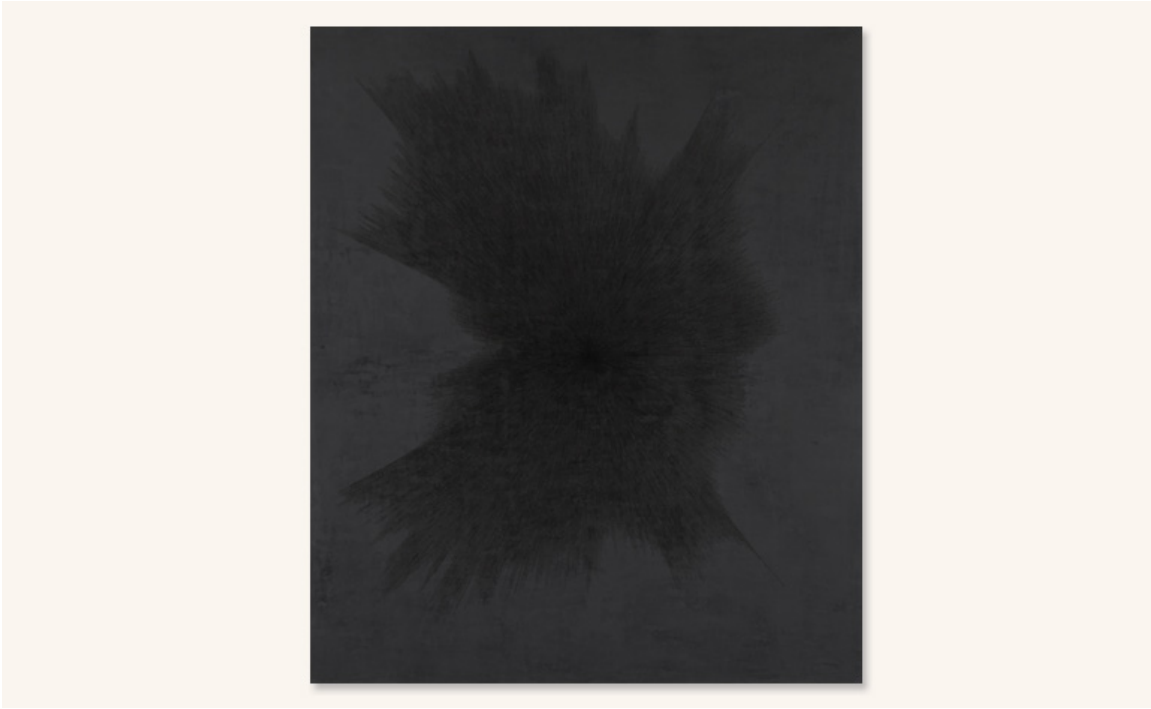
Installation view at Idris Khan's 'Beyond the Black' exhibition. *Courtesy the Artist and Victoria Miro, London*
© Idris Khan



The anchor of the exhibition is 'Walldrawing 2013', an installation featuring 120,000 lines of text, stamped directly onto the white wall of the gallery. *Courtesy the Artist and Victoria Miro, London*
© Idris Khan



The layering of the text renders it illegible. The repetition is a meditative exercise, devoid of literal meaning. *Courtesy the Artist and Victoria Miro, London © Idris Khan*



The words that form the works explode outward in celestial forms. *Courtesy the Artist and Victoria Miro, London © Idris Khan*



In their illegibility, the works seem abstract, otherworldly. *Courtesy the Artist and Victoria Miro, London © Idris Khan*