

## REVIEWS

### KARTHIK PANDIAN RICHARD TELLES - LOS ANGELES



KARTHIK PANDIAN, *Darkroom*, 2008. Six channel looping 16 mm film installation with optical sound, scaffolding, oriented strand board, digital sound, powered speakers and acoustic foam, dimensions variable.

Leaning toward a '60s/'70s expanded cinema sensibility, the debut solo show of L.A.-based artist Karthik Pandian brings an avant-garde, Fluxus-like attitude to moving images with a contemporary sensibility.

The show revolves around various experiments with celluloid and movie making, but

the core of the exhibition is a large environmental installation titled *Darkroom* (2008). This consists of a large, raw, traversable structure made of particle-board scaffolding and walls that serve as an infrastructure to hold 16 mm projectors for six films screened on three areas of the gallery's walls. Indeed, projected two at a time, each film (*Kunst-Wet*, *Super-Wet* and *Icarus-Wet*) is the result of two overlapping projections. While the surrounding soundscape emerges from the combination of a minimal techno score (composed by Eric D. Clark) and the chanted repetition of muttered sentences from the films, the pictures have no specific narrative and feature typical postcard shots: cityscapes, landscapes, sunsets, unknown figures evoking family snapshots.

But what is most peculiar to the work is that the architecture almost substitutes the space of the gallery, expanding until the gap between the gallery's walls and the scaffolding permits only a very tight corridor for spectator access. Like a map of the brain, the structure is open, populated by labyrinthine pathways revealing the inside mechanics of the work.

The idea of performed cinema and the synaesthetic interaction of several media brings to mind illustrious predecessors: Pandian's setting is reminiscent of psychedelic experiments such as the Velvet Underground and Andy Warhol's groundbreaking multimedia spectacle *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* (1967) or the architectural energy of Stan Vanderbeek's spherical theater and multi-projector performances of *Movie-Drome* (1963).

In this kinetic environment, an interesting symmetry and tension is at play between the ephemerality of the films and the material, bulky presence of the infrastructure that contains them. Everything in the installation revolves around the idea of kineticism: not just the 16mm projections whose films run in long loops winding around the space, but the architecture itself which, articulated and twisted, leads the spectator to wander inside it. The recurring themes of the soundtrack, the labyrinthine structure and the overlapped loops of film both disorient and spellbind the visitor.

*Sonia Campagnola*