

Back, Forth and Round About

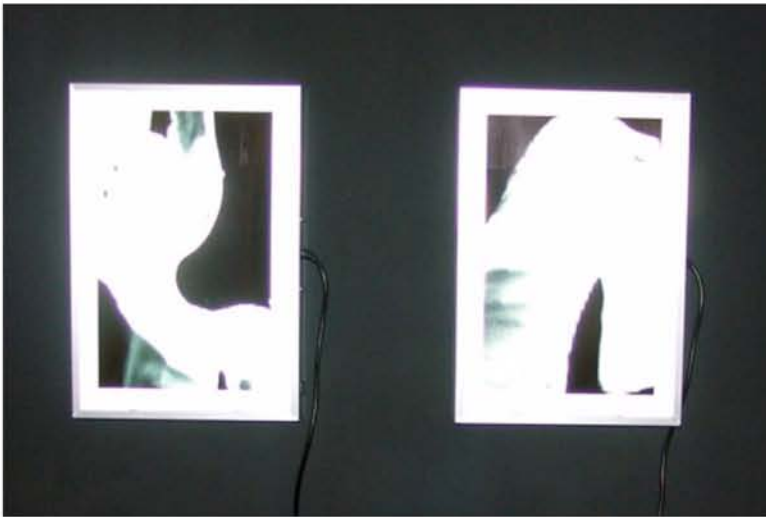


Vijai Patchineelam, *Arthur (detail)*, 2005, *Digital Photograph*.

Back, forth and round about at Thomas Erben gallery in New York is an exhibit revolving around three visual artists, all of south Asian descent, whose works maneuver in a poetic drift through complexly layered strategies of photography, painting and moving images.

The title of Jaret Vadera's (B. 1976, Toronto) *here be dragons*, 2009, refers to early map makers' practice of labeling unexplored areas as being occupied by fearsome beasts. Two light box displays are convincing as X-Ray images, but are in fact ambiguous-looking black and white photo transparencies of acrylic paintings. By drawing upon the appearance of medical knowledge and X-Ray images of the body, Vadera makes the viewer's inability to pinpoint what is depicted in the imagery viscerally disconcerting.

The "what is it?" question of looking at art, and the simultaneous "is it human?" question when confronting Vadera's X-Ray imagery are ominous ones, particularly in relation to his more illustrative (but less effective) collage works. Images of "tiger hunts" are submerged in layers of torn posters depicting high tech military weaponry, paint and glitter. Resembling animal pelts or potential geographies these works underline a violent and colonial subtext within *here be dragons*.



Jaret Vadera, here be dragons, 2009 (installation view).

Vijai Patchineelam's (b. 1983, Rio de Janeiro) large inkjet print *Arthur*, 2005, depicts an image of a hunched over, barefoot body, photographed while posing next to and mimicking a painting. Presented nearly at scale with the viewer's body, the illusion is absorbing. The physicality and hierarchy of the depicted painting and body are equalized, or even debased, as dark voids within the print, creating a strange surface tension that pulls the viewer between real and imagined spaces.

Sreshta Rit Premnath's (b. 1979, Bangalore) fastidiously intricate, yet low-fi installation *Blue Book, Moon Rock* incorporates variations of a photograph of a "Moon Rock" that shifts meaning through competing forces within his installation. A reproduction of a page from Wittgenstein's *Blue Book* is displayed, with lined out text that frames the only remaining passage "We ought to talk further on about the meaning of 'forgetting the meaning of a word'". The quote threads the installation in which a meticulous, looping narrative of (and about) constructs of meaning unfolds.



Sreshta Rit Premnath, Blue Book, Moon Rock (detail), 2009.

In a photomontage, a crudely cut out print of the moon rock image was re-photographed in front of a light source, creating a sort of paper doll, low budget lunar eclipse. The photo is superimposed on top of the grey and white checked background used to indicate a "transparent" area in a Photoshop image, and framed by measuring tape thumb tacked over the print, further mimicking a paradoxically materialized Photoshop work area. In the works of Premnath, Patchineelam and Vadera there is mood and meaning found in the spaces between images and how they are rendered as material objects.

[Back, forth and round about](#) is on view through March 21 at Thomas Erben Gallery in New York.

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