

Karthik Pandian: Elements of Style

March 12 – April 23, 2011

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What happens when history finds its gaze in the mirror? How does it regard itself? Its figure? Its look? Like the exhalation of a stale gas, this reflection bespeaks a spiritual emptiness that pervades *Elements of Style*. The third and final installment of a trilogy of exhibitions that draws on the artist's two-year investigation into the celestial, archaeological and architectural milieu of the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site in Collinsville, Illinois, *Elements of Style* presents an ensemble of new sculptural, sound, light and wall works that brings this body of work home to the locale Pandian's research began.

Using the rammed earth technique and repurposed mirror pane glass from his 2010 exhibition *Before the Sun* at Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis, Pandian has created a new large-scale sculpture that bisects the gallery diagonally into two triangular halves. Inspired by the persistence of the Japanese folding screen as an icon of chic, generalized spirituality, the sculpture, entitled *Cahokia Byōbu (Broken Screen)*, embraces the functional and decorative possibilities of the form, while playing on the subject of landscape and pastiching the artist's own fascination with ancient and modern entanglements.

The two wall works, or *Shards*, included in the exhibition are remnants from the formwork used to create the rammed earth pillars featured in the artist's exhibition *Unearth* at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Exhibited here for the first time, the fragments bear the traces of the pillars' varied earthen surfaces and are incised with the grid that has come to symbolize the archaeological-architectural horizon dividing the trilogy.

For the initial evening of the exhibition, Pandian has created a work in the tradition of the nightly *son et lumière* shows that animate architectural monuments from French châteaux to the Pyramids of Giza. A program of shifting colored light inspired by the lighting design of the Cahokia Mounds Interpretive Center is set to an ambient soundtrack based on field recordings from the apex of Monk's Mound during sunset. While the sound and light show represents a significant time-based feature of the project, *Elements of Style* is Pandian's first exhibition to emphasize sculpture without a moving image component.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Main Gallery:

Cahokia Byōbu (Broken Screen), 2011

Mirror pane glass, rammed earth with cement, sea shells, mason's line, 16mm film strips, glass shards.

Dimensions variable; As installed: rammed earth wall sections 24 x 96 x 6 inches each, mirror pane glass sections 24 x 96 x .25 inches each, 294 x 96 x 36 inches overall.

Sunset, 2011

Digital audio file.

15 minutes 13 seconds, looped.

Library:

Shard B2a, 2011.

Incision, earth, and cement on plywood with 2 x 4's.

23½" x 31½" x 2¼"

Shard C3b, 2011.

Incision, earth, and 16mm film emulsion on plywood with 2 x 4's.

23½" x 31½" x 2¼"

All artwork courtesy the artist and Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

In the past year Karthik Pandian has had three one-person exhibitions, including the concurrent *Unearth*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; *Before the Sun*, Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis; and *1991*, curated by Vienna 2010, (with Mathias Poledna), Galerie Meyer Kainer, Vienna, Austria. His films have been screened internationally, including viewings at the Anthology Film Archives, New York; Electronic Arts Intermix, New York; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; and the New York Underground Film Festival, New York. Pandian's work has been discussed in *Artforum*, *Mousse*, *Art in America*, *FlashArt* and *The New York Times*, among other publications. Pandian earned degrees from Brown University, Rhode Island and Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste Städelschule, Frankfurt before receiving his MFA from Art Center College of Design, Pasadena in 2008. He lives and works in Los Angeles.

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Interns: Taylor Crossland, H. Lindsay Donahue, Simon Rhim, and Mel Trad.

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4568 Manchester Avenue

Saint Louis, Missouri 63110

www.whiteflagprojects.org