

REGEN PROJECTS*

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jeroen de rijke/willem de rooij

reviews

Regen Projects
Los Angeles

Jeroen de Rijke and Willem de Rooij create well-constructed pieces dealing with real people and their cultural contexts. But here, in a gallery near Hollywood, it was difficult to dismiss the old-fashioned American race politics that inevitably infiltrate the perpetuation of moving images.

The Dutch pair installed a film and a video in the gallery space, having built a projection booth along one wall. Beside the booth, the twenty-minute video *Junks* (1994) played perpetually on a monitor. The video's subjects are junkies in Amsterdam, filmed in a dark public place with their faces tightly framed. Their scripted action was to stand still and look directly into the camera, an objective met by none of the chemically dependent stars. Their faces bob nervously, their jittery eyes darting every which way, as they try hopelessly to perform a role that seems barely on the edge of their cognition.

The ten-minute film *Bantar Gebang* (2000) is like a landscape painting out of a sci-fi future; it changes subtly as perfectly articulated illuminations of morning creep across the view. Figures move about as the moments

progress; birds fly in and out of the picture while a lingering mist hovers among distant tropical trees. However, this is no idyllic scene—the landscape is an Indonesian trash dump, home to an impoverished shantytown. Playing into Hollywood tradition, the film locates an exotic magic within the destitute domain of a colonized country. The brown-skinned subjects come and go like the birds themselves, never roving near enough to the camera to threaten the screen that divides us from them. Perhaps the artists intend to contrast our white-walled experience with the negative reality that our wealth and solipsism have created elsewhere in the world. However, the compositional beauty of the piece stands squarely in the foreground; any economic critique is buried among the heaps of trash. De Rijke and de Rooij are certainly talented, but perhaps they could look more closely at the colonizing effects of their visual language.
Malik Gaines



Jeroen de Rijke/Willem de Rooij *Bantar Gebang*,
2000, still from 35mm color film, variable dimensions.