

ARTFORUM

Vishal Jugdeo

LORA REYNOLDS GALLERY

360 Nueces, Suite 50

January 18–March 15

Vishal Jugdeo's installation *A Weight Dangles Above Your Head / A Shaky Picture Has No Weight*, 2014, is captivating and as elusive as its subject: the instability of representation and of arriving at truth. The project's twenty-three-minute video, a version of which was presented at Performa 13, features the artist and his boyfriend performing a script loosely revolving around Guyana, where in the 1800s Jugdeo's family was brought from India as indentured laborers. Slipping from staged scenes and dialogue between the couple in Los Angeles to footage and sound Jugdeo shot in Guyana, the project proves that this young artist, like Harun Farocki and Omer Fast, is capable of pushing cinematic tropes—self-reflexivity, documentary—to reflect on the impossibility of historical and personal certainty.

Jugdeo mixes the film's diegesis with the viewer's real-time existence to productive effect. The footage plays on a screen suspended above a platform dotted with symbolic objects (a video camera and globe among them). Painted like props, they extend the filmic artifice into physical reality, as when we first hear dialogue between the boyfriend, whose voice comes from a speaker in the globe, and Jugdeo, whose voice comes from one in the camera, while sound captured in Guyana plays from speakers visible at the bottom of the screen. Jugdeo is asked to describe what he sees, and he struggles: "An ocean trapped behind a wall." Later in the video, Guyanese field workers preen as Jugdeo talks about his discomfort filming them. Often, the artist appears withdrawn behind closed eyes; this, along with the couple's discussions about the difficulties of getting to the center—"What is at the core?" "I wish I could show you a clearer image"—make it clear that the project is about far more than Guyana. To his credit, Jugdeo does not push for resolution. In a final scene, a man and woman flirt at a bar while Jugdeo says: "The fastest route to empathy is just pressing your body against someone else's...we are all just a field of undefined signs...waiting to wash ashore."



Vishal Jugdeo, *A Weight Dangles Above Your Head / A Shaky Picture Has No Weight*, 2014, mixed media, dimensions variable.

— Kate Green

All rights reserved. artforum.com is a registered trademark of Artforum International Magazine, New York, NY