

Art Review:Asia



Jaret Vadera

In Alan Moore's *Watchmen* (1986–7), the jailed vigilante Rorschach is shown his namesake inkblot test by a psychiatrist trying to probe his 'demented' mind. As Moore's antihero visualises dead children, dismembered limbs and a dog's split-open head, he tells his interrogator, with the smoothest of poker faces, that he sees flowers, birds and beauty.

Certain elements of Jaret Vadera's recent work play a similar game. But instead of the Rorschach test, he offers us search engines as a new form of memory, in which unemotional algorithms take over from the human mind but prove just as adept at refraction, distortion and deception. In *All We See Is Vision* (2014), the results of image searches are layered in the computer

to create a new aggregate image that is then outputted as a single vinyl form and mounted onto the gallery wall, annotated with the file names, IP addresses and server locations of the original source files. In a site-specific installation for the 2010 *Ballard Estate Project* at Religare Arts Initiative, New Delhi; J.G. Ballard and a colonial port in Mumbai are linked through search words common to both.

These works are only a fragment of Vadera's large body of experiments in form, most of which have remained unseen by curators and critics. The people who have followed his work

All We See Is Vision, 2014, vinyl on wall, 23 × 10 cm.
Courtesy the artist

consistently for the last decade are fellow artists, especially those in the South Asian diaspora.

Vadera cites Stanisław Lem's novel *Solaris* (1961) as an influence, but I think of other dreamscapes, where night visions are rendered nightmares much faster than they are in Tarkovsky's film of the book: the murderous superheroes of Moore, for example, or the conniving dream players of Neil Gaiman's plots. The search-engine games also seem akin to the moment in Michael Haneke's *Funny Games* (1997) in which one of the protagonists picks up a remote control and 'rewinds' the film in order to prevent his colleague from being shot. A person may choose what to remember and what to forget, but Palo Alto databases ensure you never escape.

