

The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

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1979 - 1980
12th Season

CINEPROBE

An Evening with Al Wong
(San Francisco, California)
Friday, June 6, 1980 at 6:00 p.m.

Program: SHADOW AND CHAIR (1980; mixed media installation; 11 min)
24 FRAMES PER SECOND (1977; color; 14 min)
TWIN PEAKS (1977; color; 52 min)
entire program: 77 minutes

The films of Al Wong are marked by a very precise technical imagination. His films present a series of intriguing perceptual conundrums which are distinguished by a strong sense of composition, an expert deployment of special effects, and a clearly comprehensible structure.

SHADOW AND CHAIR, one of his most recent works, is a mixed media installation piece which hinges on the ambiguity of the filmic surface and the actual three-dimensional object. At times, a trompe-l'oeil effect is created, as when the (projected) shadow of a man appears to sit in the (actual) shadow of the chair. The chair has been treated with luminous paint, so that, when the film shifts in its tonalities from light to dark, the chair, having absorbed the light, is illuminated as a three-dimensional surface in the space of the projected film.

24 FRAMES PER SECOND opens on the image of a bluish light (presumably heat through a lens) as the "film" burns from the bottom of the frame. This bubbling burn moves in apparent unison with the camera. Then, the screen is dark, as shapes (frequently lines and scratches) appear and disappear against the black background. Drops of water appear, and large felt-tip markers color the screen. For the final part of the film, the transparent surface which had provided the basis for the water droplets is utilized as an adjunct to the camera lens. Against this surface, various parts of the body are pressed, so that an eye, a nose, a mouth loom as unfamiliar objects.

TWIN PEAKS is a contemplative film which takes the idea of a journey as its form. The camera is set inside a car, which proceeds to traverse a desert area between two mountain peaks. The unwinding of the road, slowly and majestically, provides a metaphor for the temporal attenuation of the film. The shifts in scenery, tonality, and composition provide a subtle commentary on repetition and continuity.

About the filmmaker:

Al Wong first began exhibiting his films and video works in 1967 at major film festivals, galleries, universities and museums throughout the United States and Canada. In 1971, he received his M.F.A. degree from the San Francisco Art Institute. In 1975, he began to exhibit his works in Europe; by the end of that year, he had received a grant from the American Film Institute in association with the National Endowment for the Arts to complete a proposed film project. For three years, he held the position of summer-guest lecturer-instructor for Advanced Filmmaking at the San Francisco Art Institute. From 1975 to 1977, he held the position of Lecturer of Fine Arts in Film and Video at the State University at Sacramento. He also taught similar film and video courses at the