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Photo Essay: Some Notes on Cine-addictions: Image Trails Running from the intimate Sphere to the Public Eye

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Citation

Gerritsen, R. (2008). Photo Essay: Some Notes on Cine-addictions: Image Trails Running from the intimate Sphere to the Public Eye. *South Asian Visual Culture Series, 2*, 1-33. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/15574>

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).



Tasveer (Urdu):
image, picture, photo, icon,
symbol, print, likeness, depiction, face,
portrayal, figure...

Ghar (Hindi):
house, home, hut, building, storage,
place, shelter, enclosure, haven, meeting point...

Cine-Addictions:
Image Trails Running from the Intimate Sphere
to the Public Eye

A Photo Essay by Roos Gerritsen,
Leiden University

South Asian Visual Culture Series, no. 2

edited by Christiane Brosius

(this paper has been edited in collaboration with Sumathi Ramaswamy, Duke University, and [Tasveer Ghar](#): A Digital Network of South Asian Popular Visual Culture)

Heidelberg, 08. January, 2009

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Cine-Addictions:

Image Trails Running from the Intimate Sphere to the Public Eye

*A Photo Essay by Roos Gerritsen
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The cityscapes of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry¹ are dominated by hoardings, posters, murals, cutouts and other signboards of particular styles and formats. Typically, they present a plethora of stimuli signposting the most diverse products. Huge billboards advertise all sorts of jewelry, sarees, mobile networks and new urban development plots, while less sizeable hoardings show the latest movie releases. In the same vein, numerous shop fronts and buildings are covered with brightly colored paintings publicizing wares on shutters, blind elevations, and front or perimeter walls. Whenever available, these ad spaces can also be given away for commercial advertisements, or serve political purposes by showing the portrait or symbols of a party leader. Throughout the region's cities, the media promoting consumption goods seem to mix just as easily with these portraits of public figures as with film paraphernalia. Within this visual urban cacophony, film stars represent just one of the city's visual tropes. At the time of a movie release one can see hoardings, wall paintings, and posters representing movie stars appearing at different

¹ The Union Territory of Pondicherry officially changed its name to Puducherry in 2006.

sites. This is particularly so near film theatres, but also on busy streets and in tucked-away residential neighborhoods. These images portray a selective range of local Tamil stars, and form visual signs that indicate the presence of their fan clubs. Practically everywhere in Tamil Nadu these fan clubs' signs and images leave a pervasive trail that, despite being rather ephemeral, has a continuous, familiar face and hence a strong evocative effect (Holland 2004: 2).

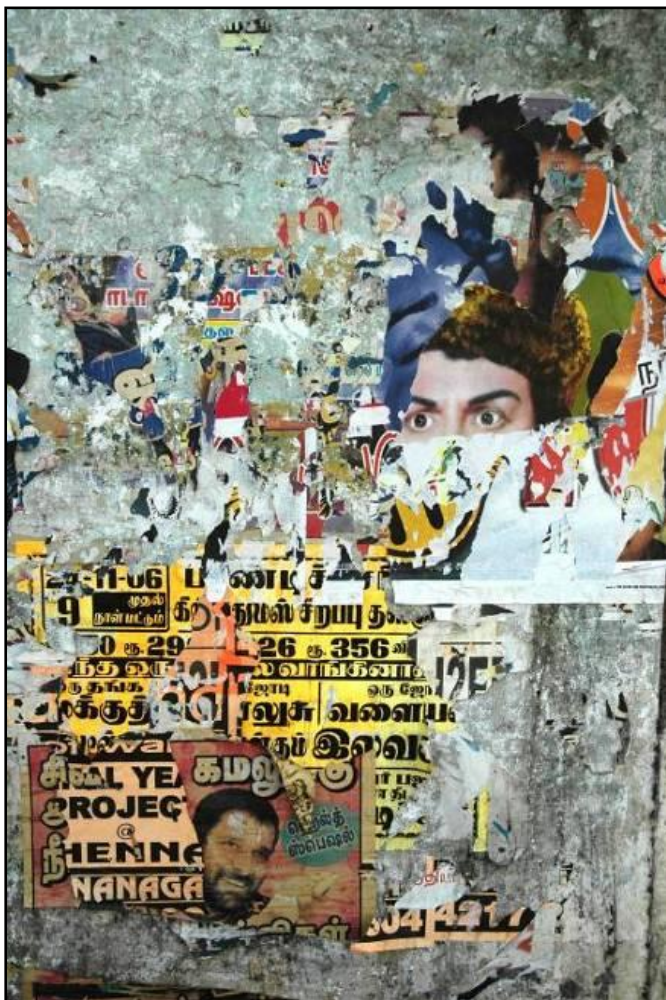


Figure 1. Crumbling posters on a wall, Puducherry 2007 (photograph by the author).

This essay is about the ephemeral yet consistent trail of images left by fan clubs. These fan clubs, whose members consist mostly of men, are devoted to local Tamil movie actors, in whose names they organize certain events. Fans go and watch their heroes' films together in local movie theatres; they celebrate the stars' birthdays and come together to discuss the latest news items they have collected. These seem to be leisure activities, but fan club members themselves emphasize their philanthropic outlook by their involvement in social work. In the name of their heroes, they donate blood or distribute schoolbooks, sarees, and food on the occasion of their birthdays or other events. Moreover, members of fan clubs of the established 'older' actors are often involved in local political activities. Fans campaign for and join political parties. In some cases, the fan clubs have been

transformed into political party cadres upon their hero's entry into the political realm. Although fan clubs can also be found in other parts of India,² particularly in South India, the numbers in especially Tamil Nadu exceed those elsewhere.

In this photo essay I will focus on the fan clubs devoted to movie star Rajinikanth. Through Rajinikanth, Tamil Nadu's best-known movie star, these fan clubs bring into play a number of practices defined by imagery; they collect and archive all kinds of images and paraphernalia for personal use, but also place these in the public realm as cutouts,

² See Srinivas (2005) for an account of fan clubs in Andhra Pradesh.

hoardings, or posters. I do not intend to give a full overview of a fan club's visual practices. This photo-essay is exploratory rather than comprehensive; I will trace fan images as they are hidden and revealed and as they transgress and fuse the intimate and the public spaces of the everyday.

Ask any man in the streets of Tamil Nadu whether he has any link to a fan club and it



Figure 2. Hand-painted signboard of a 'fan welfare association' (*rasigar narpani manram*) dedicated to movie star Vijay. Puducherry 2002 (photograph by the author).

will turn out that he, his brother, son or father were or are indeed a member of one.³ Fan associations for movie stars (*rasigar manram*) are widespread throughout Tamil Nadu,⁴ highly visible by the imagery they produce, disseminate, and consume. This is actually how I started my research in 2006: looking around for murals, cutouts, or hoardings (see for instance figs. 2 and 3), and taking note of clues or tags that would lead me to its fan club members. And they did. Figure 2 shows a metal board signposting a fan club of Vijay's, a movie star of recent ascent, on a main road in the city of Puducherry, clearly visible for passers-by. It was painted by N. Kumar, one of the first and most famous painters of cutouts and billboards in Puducherry. The board shows three different images

³ Fan club activity is a genuinely male activity. However, there are the odd women fan clubs.

⁴ See Dickey 1993; Baskaran 1996; Pinney 1997; Derné 2000; Srinivas 2005 for relevant contributions on film and fan culture in India.



Figure 3. Wall painting revealing a Rajinikanth fan club in a neighborhood (left). Puducherry 2007 (photograph by the author).

of Vijay, with at the top the name of the fan club “Youth Vijay rasigar narpani manram” (Youth Vijay fan welfare⁵ association). *Youth* (2002) is the name of a movie featuring Vijay in the lead. In the middle of the signboard the names of the founding fans are listed. The second photo, figure 3, shows a wall painting revealing a Rajinikanth fan club in the neighborhood. The same wall is also used for a tailor’s advertisement. The fan painting, named after the movie *Adutha Varisu* (1983), lists only one member’s name and shows Rajinikanth in a still from this film. The painter’s name, Remo, is mentioned at the bottom.

Images play a crucial role in mediating the relation between star and fan(s); watching movies together, putting up hoardings and collecting images are only a few of the activities relating star to fan and vice versa. These “[c]ollective experiences of mass media ... can create sodalities of worship and charisma...” (Appadurai 1996: 8) and therefore not only create a form of collective fandom but also inform the daily, intimate relation of a fan with his hero. This enables a form of agency, “both in direct acts of consumption and in the indirect acts of producers aiming to satisfy consumers” (Freitag 2003: 398). Stars, in

⁵ Movie stars encourage their fans to be involved in welfare, and therefore many fan clubs add the prefix *narpani* (welfare) to their name.

this way, not only create their fans but fans also create their stars⁶ by collecting, producing, disseminating and consuming their images. The images used by fans, such as posters, stickers etcetera are mobile and therefore appropriated in new and unintended ways. "Paradoxically, it is their condition of stasis and being in a state of freeze, that makes them mobile" (Pandian 2005: 59).

The conspicuous consumption of imagery must be seen in the wider context of South Asian visibility. Through mechanical reproduction images started to acquire independent meanings beyond their original contexts. It was especially the widely available popular prints such as calendars depicting deities that widened the access to these deities and made it possible for them to be appropriated as devotional objects. Christopher Pinney characterizes this as 'the democracy of the image' (1995:91). The widespread dissemination of visual materials has enabled audiences to shape what they view by their personal and individual consumption of mass-produced materials, "in ways simultaneously shared and particularized" (Freitag 2003: 372). In this way, fan clubs create both their own collectivity and an intimate relation with the star by recycling and restaging their heroes' images, derived from movies, magazines, the internet etc. in the form of the portraits, posters, and hoardings they make. In this way, they leave a trail of images traversing personal and public spaces.

The entanglement or overlap of various visual domains is part of what Appadurai and Breckenridge have identified as the "inter-ocular field" in which "meanings, scripts and symbols transfer from one site to another" (1992: 41). The notions of interocular or intervisuality, defined by Mirzoeff as 'interacting and interdependent modes of visibility' (2000:7), help us understand the myriad of visual productions pervading the everyday lives of fans. It is, however, not only the richness of the inter-ocular but also the 'omnipraxy'⁷ or repeatability of images that shape the ubiquitous presence of and overlap between visual esthetics and meaning (see Mitter 2003). Therefore, the intervisuality and ubiquitous presence of images seem to enhance their appropriation and efficacy. It is here that Pinney's notion of 'corporethetics', the embodied and corporeal esthetics, instead of "'disinterested' representation" proves relevant (2004: 8). Pinney introduces the notion of corporethetics in order to deal with the embodied, active way in which images are appropriated in India. He contrasts a Kantian tradition of aesthetics, which separates the image from the beholder and implies a disinterested evaluation of images, with

⁶ See also Srinivas' discussion of fan clubs in Andhra Pradesh, in which he argues that the relation between fans and the cinema industry is constantly negotiated by what is expected from fans and what empowers them (2005).

⁷ Daniel Smith uses the term 'omnipraxy' to describe the various ways in which ritual activities take place as a result of the availability of popular prints or so-called 'god posters' (1995).

corporetics, which “entails a desire to fuse image and beholder, and an evaluation of efficacy [...] as the central criterion of value” (*op. cit.*: 194). This shifts the focus to practices that surround images or the ways in which images are appropriated by their beholders. Therefore, looking at fan club imagery, and not at how these images ‘look’, but at what they can ‘do’ [emphasis mine] (*op. cit.*: 8) will give insight into their efficacy and the affective relations that they establish with their beholders.

Technological changes around the beginning of the 21st century have resulted in considerable changes in the corporetic appropriation of images in the public arena. This brings me to another thread I would like to follow in this essay: a brief chronicle of the downfall of the hand-painted cutouts and hoardings, and their displacement by digitally printed vinyl hoardings. Many artists have seen their businesses disappear because they could not keep pace with the transition to digital production and printing technologies. Customers are now more interested in commissioning vinyl hoardings because of their price and production time, and most importantly, because digital pictures can offer something the hand-painted images cannot do so easily: show the fans themselves. From the beginning, cutouts, cloth hoardings and posters, unequivocally essential to fan clubs, listed members’ names for various reasons – recognition and competition between fan clubs being the most prominent. Showing one’s face on a digital hoarding next to the star, however, not only makes one’s presence more apparent in public space but also brings about a new form of intimacy with the star. In this way, the movie stars to whom these hoardings are dedicated seem to have become commodities of adulation, while at the same time serving as advertisers of their fans. Since the visual tropes in fan club imagery intersect with other imagery – together putting their stamp on Tamil urban spaces – I think they provide a fitting point of departure for an exploration of Tamil Nadu’s current visual culture.

Image Trails Running from the Intimate Sphere to the Public Eye

The first fan clubs in Tamil Nadu were devoted to movie star M.G. Ramachandran, popularly known as MGR.⁸ They were started in 1953, the same year in which MGR became a member of the political party DMK (*Dravidar Munnetra Kazhagam*). Even though the fan clubs have been initiated by MGR’s fans, political support was to be part and parcel of their subsequent activities. In this way, the MGR prehistory serves as a substantial point of reference relevant to contemporary fan club practices. Like MGR, several stars and film personnel in the Tamil film industry would become active in the political arena. From resistance against colonial rule onwards, films and theatre have

⁸ See Sara Dickey’s account of MGR fan clubs (1993).

included nationalistic, anti-colonial sentiments and themes, many of the actors being actively involved in politics. After independence, it was particularly the DMK, a party that had its roots in the Dravidian movement,⁹ that made use of cinema as a propaganda vehicle. Scriptwriters, directors, movie stars and other cinema industry personnel were drawn to the DMK. As a result, the party attracted massive crowds by its pervasive use of cinema's heroic images and movie stars. The entangling of the two fields came to a climax when MGR, movie star and initially a DMK party member, started his own AIADMK party. In 1977, after the first elections that MGR and his party participated in, MGR became Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and continued to occupy this post until his death in 1987. His passing away caused intense reactions: millions attended his funeral and several people mutilated themselves or committed suicide in his name. His popularity as Chief Minister was undoubtedly the result of his immense popularity as a movie star: MGR, hero of the downtrodden. Besides his films permeated with political symbols and rhetoric the imagery of MGR circulating in the public arena was part of this same entanglement of two spheres and helped to construct MGR's charismatic persona. His image was actively emphasized by, among other things, propaganda material containing private photos of a generous MGR, disseminated by means of short popular accounts of his life (Pandian 1992).

The 1970s and 80s brought a new generation of Tamil film stars to the fore, Rajinikanth being one of them. Rajinikanth's star persona was the result of his being continually typecast in certain roles and styles, in combination with the audience's familiarity with his unprivileged background and supposedly modest lifestyle. His images circulate widely in newspapers, fanzines, and cinema magazines, often highlighting his off-screen life. In this sense, Rajinikanth is as much a self-made star as that he has been actively shaped by fan pressure continuously persuading him to take on the same type of role. Almost all the feature movies in which he moved away from his conventional role proved unsuccessful. Just as in MGR's case, the circulation of imagery and narratives outside the realm of movie theatres has been crucial in building up Rajinikanth's star persona.¹⁰ It is based on a kind of intervisuality combining images that together result in the accumulation of charisma in the person of Rajinikanth.

This has implications not only for the film performance and for the popularity of a movie star but also, as already noted in the case of MGR, for the political practices of these stars. Since MGR's death, today's movie productions have strongly reduced their use of

⁹ The Dravidian movement, under the leadership of E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, defined itself by opposing brahmanical domination in Tamil Nadu and by propagating Tamil self-respect.

¹⁰ See also Rosie Thomas' work on fanzines in which she demonstrates how gossip in fanzines constructs an actress's star persona (1989).

overt, unambiguous political imagery. And although this relationship may have weakened – a leader such as MGR has yet to surface again – the fields of cinema and politics continue to have close connections. Many movie stars join or affiliate themselves with political parties, politicians sponsor movies, and occasionally a movie star starts his own party.¹¹ At this moment, all eyes are on Rajinikanth to see whether he will start his own party or not.

Within the mixed spheres of cinema and politics, fan clubs have often been considered potential political cadres, as for example happened with MGR's fan clubs when he started his own party. This is also expected in the case of Rajinikanth's possible entry into the political arena. Even though Rajinikanth transferred his allegiance several times to different political parties, many of his fans remain willing to undertake campaigning activities during elections, anticipating the moment of his own entry. Likewise, his fans join local branches of the party he supports, and some of the established members follow their own political careers, partly in his name. However, having waited for more than 10 years for him to start in politics, many fans are becoming restive. They will stand behind Rajinikanth after he enters the political arena with his own party, but until then bring his fame into play at their own discretion. Therefore, seeing fan clubs merely as potential party cadres completely ignores the ways the fans themselves deal with their fandom and socio-political aspirations. Political involvement of fans has less to do with the stars' own preferences but more with the complex mediation of local alliances (Srinivas, forthcoming).

Nowadays, every prominent Tamil hero has his own fan club.¹² The number of fan clubs for Tamil actors is impressive although exact figures are difficult to find. Rajinikanth, for example, has limited the number of fan club registrations – the surge most likely due to his expected entry into politics at the time – to about 20,000, with an average of 10 to 30 members per fan club. This does not hold his fans back from starting new, unregistered, clubs. When these clubs are taken into account the number of fan clubs probably doubles.

¹¹ Recent examples are Vijayakanth, who started the DMDK (*Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam*) in 2005, and movie star Sarath Kumar, who already had a career in politics behind him. He started the AISMK (*Akila Indiya Samathuva Makkal Katchi*) in 2007.

¹² There are hardly any fan clubs dedicated to actresses. However, there are some; see Jacob for a discussion on the 'deification' of former actress and politician Jayalalitha. Furthermore, in 2006, some women started a fan club for Tamil actress Trisha. The best-known example, however, is the temple built by fans in Trichy for actress Kushboo (the temple was later demolished as an objection to Kushboo's remarks on premarital sex).

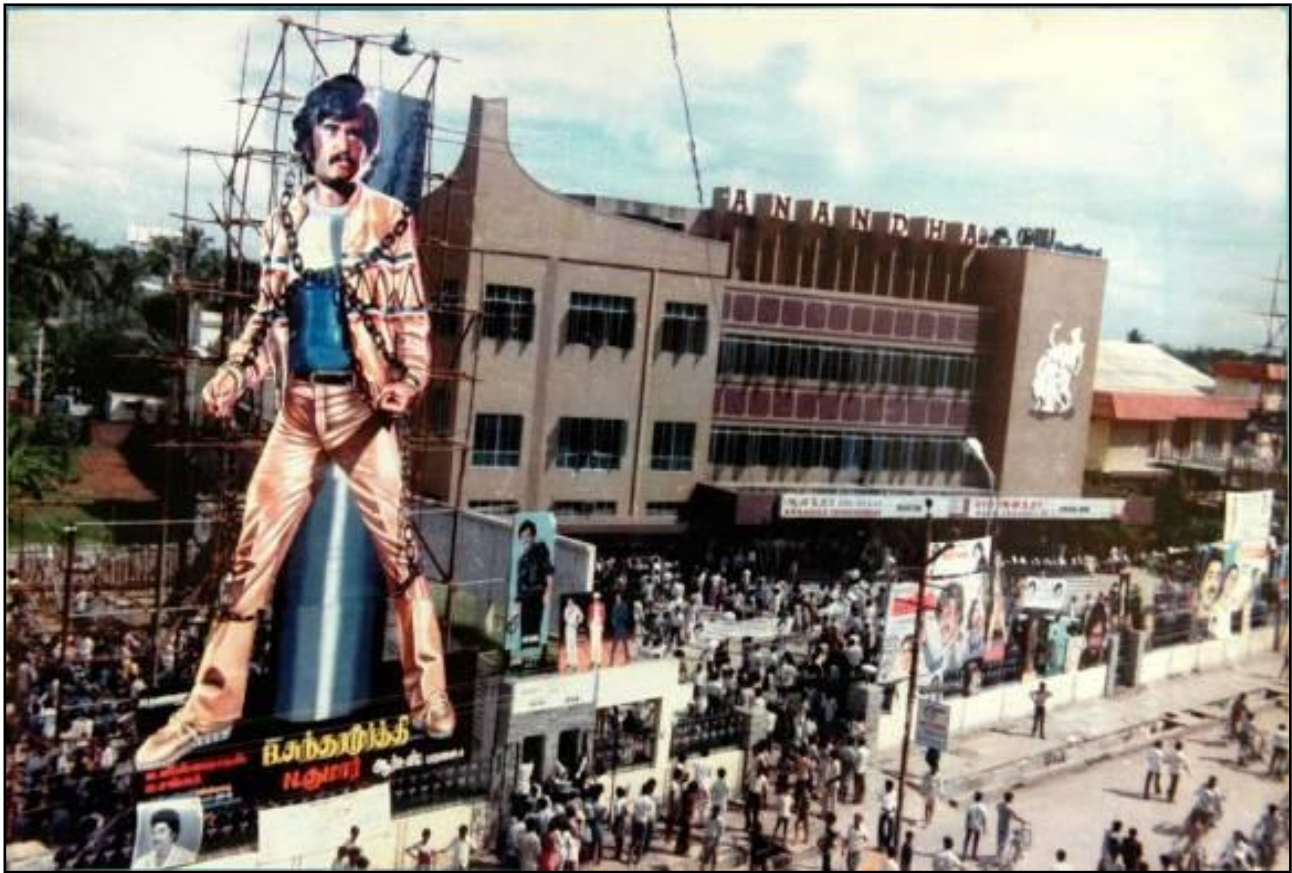


Figure 4. Cutout commissioned by fans on the occasion of the release of the Rajinikanth movie *Maaveeran* (1986) at the Anandha Theatre. Puducherry 1986 (collection N. Kumar, Puducherry).

The number of fan clubs devoted to particular actors corresponds directly to their popularity. The older and established Tamil movie stars have a relatively stable base of fan clubs, whereas younger actors depend on their movies' success as well as on their fan clubs' activities. When fans are disappointed with the movies or the benefits they receive from being a club member (these benefits range from political profit and local alliances to merely impressing girls), they easily move to a fan club of another actor, which can provide more of what they want. This results in a rather paradoxical situation: while on the one hand people seem to go as far as to commit suicide in a movie star's name (as we have seen with MGR), on the other hand those same movie stars can be exchanged from one day to the next. This raises questions about the concepts of fandom, star persona and charisma, and how these are created and propagated.

Even though Rajinikanth, the celebrated 58-year-old movie star, could be almost at the end of his acting career, he remains larger than life – and not just in the cutouts made of him (see for instance fig. 4), but in the imagination of his fans as well. Even though Tamil actors of a younger generation such as Ajith and Vijay are becoming more and more popular today, Rajinikanth keeps attracting young fans. Despite his age and several



Figure 5. Selvam's house. On the right a Rajinikanth calendar next to a Ganesh calendar. Puducherry 2007 (photograph by the author).



Figure 6. Selvam showing his photo album against the background of several of his Rajinikanth posters and the Neyam music channel - run by Rajinikanth fans - playing on TV. Puducherry 2007 (photograph by the author).

movies that turned out not to be a success (*Baba* 2002; *Kuselan* 2008), most of his movies still appeal to large audiences, as for instance his recent movie *Sivaji: the Boss* (2007).

However diverse Rajinikanth fans and their motivations for being a member may be, a few recurrent themes stand out. These are channeled through their adulation of the star and visualized by an array of shared images that has been personally collected and disseminated within the collective of the fan club. I will discuss this imagery by highlighting personal collections of images related to Rajinikanth, and the exhibition of hoardings and posters during both fan club activities and personal events.

Fans of Rajinikanth collect a whole range of paraphernalia related to the star: fanzines, film magazines, newspaper articles, to name just a few. They are documented and stored away at home, mostly in plastic bags or in a photo album. Posters and other images decorate the walls and stickers are pasted on motorbikes, refrigerators, and doors. The two pictures above (figs. 5 and 6) depict the interior of fan club member Selvam's house. His walls are covered with posters of Rajinikanth alongside framed portraits of his deceased mother, other personal photos, and a calendar picturing Ganesh. Selvam's photo album contains pictures of his fan club's activities, and hoardings, wall paintings and cutouts he commissioned for Rajinikanth's birthday or movie releases. To these pictures he has added images of Rajinikanth that he has collected throughout the years. But only special images of Rajinikanth make it into the album. The major part of Selvam's collection is kept in a plastic bag. From this store Selvam selects images of Rajinikanth for the public hoardings and wall paintings he and his fan club commission for events.

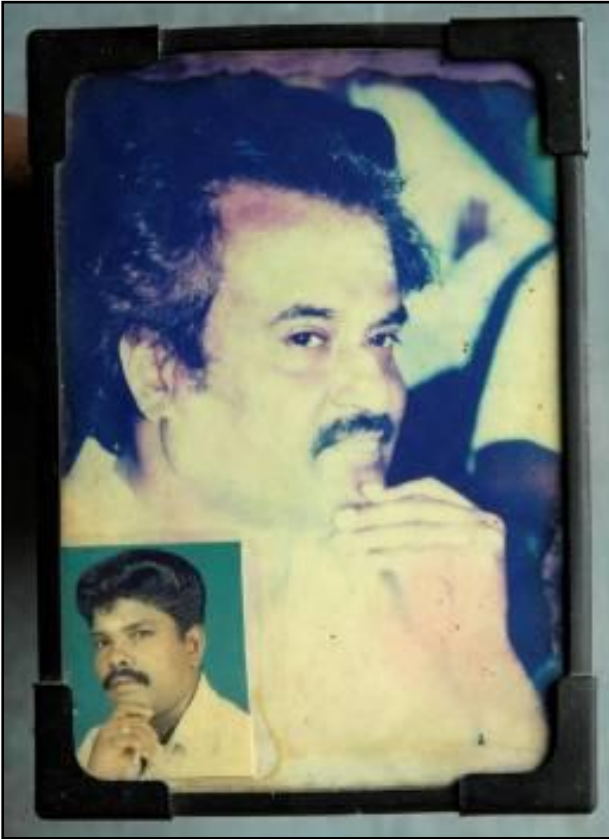


Figure 7. Rajinikanth and Annamalai. Puducherry, date and photographers unknown (collection Annamalai).

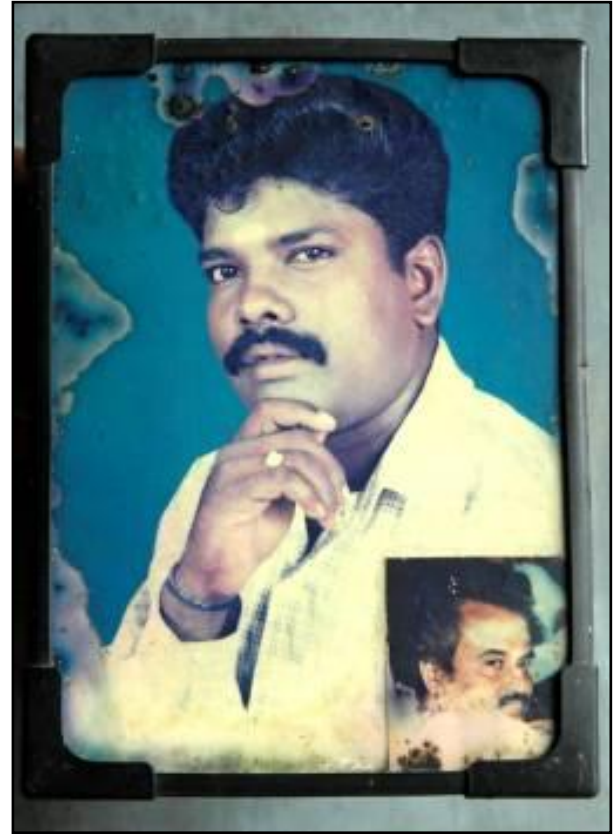


Figure 8. Annamalai and Rajinikanth (collection Annamalai).

In figure 6, you can just make out the edge of the portrait Selvam made of Rajinikanth and himself on top of the television set. The best-preserved and most displayed images are the ones recounting fans' meetings with Rajinikanth. They are often enlarged and framed and figure proudly on a television set, or are stored away in a fan's pocket or wallet.

Annamalai, working as an auto-rickshaw driver, is proud to be the only one in Puducherry having a Rajinikanth flag fluttering on top of his vehicle. He tries to imitate Rajinikanth in every possible way, admiring him particularly in the highly successful movie *Baadsha* (1995) in which the actor played a rickshaw driver. During a conversation with Annamalai in his rickshaw, he keeps emphasizing that nothing is more important to him than waking up and seeing Rajinikanth's image first. It is not his wife, not his children he wants to see; it is Rajinikanth he wants. That, he says, is why there is such a huge poster of the actor above their bed. Indeed, in their small one-room house, this poster is visible from every corner of the room. Just in front of it, there are two highly interesting images on the television set (figs. 7 and 8). Annamalai – imitating Rajinikanth in every possible way – combined his own photo, he explains, with Rajinikanth's in two picture frames. One of the frames shows an enlarged portrait of Rajinikanth to which he added his own



Figure 9. Rajinikanth and Selvam, Puducherry, date and photographer unknown (collection Selvam).

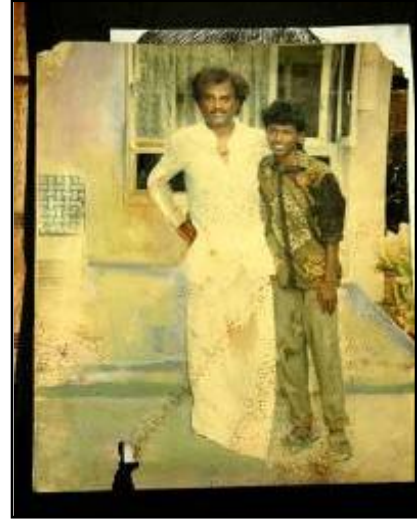


Figure 10. Rajinikanth and Ranjit, Puducherry, date and photographer unknown (Ranjit's family collection)

passport-size photo in a similar pose. In the other frame, he enlarged himself instead, adding only a passport-size photo of Rajinikanth. This is rather exceptional. Usually, fans portraying themselves in a larger size than the star go against their own 'unwritten regulations.' Since this photo is only for 'personal' display, however, it seems that Annamalai just played around with mimicry and in this way enhanced the physical proximity to, and hence intimacy with, Rajinikanth (Pinney 2001). So, on the one hand Annamalai is actively mimicking Rajinikanth, and in this way confirms his genuine devotion to his hero; on the other hand, the way in which he does this – by comparing himself to Rajinikanth – is considered to be inappropriate.

It is the fans' ultimate dream to meet Rajinikanth at least once in their lifetime, even though most will never accomplish this. As fan club member Rajesh explains: "*Hindus have ambitions to go to holy places like Rameshwaram at least once in their lifetime. Christians would like to go to Bethlehem. Muslims would like to go to Mecca. So in this way, my ambition is to see Rajinikanth once in my lifetime.*" This wish to meet Rajinikanth is first of all a desire to be physically close to and see Rajinikanth and to receive his blessing, as one often hears people explain. This is in accordance with the concept of *darshan*,¹³ seeing and being seen by the divine, but here applied more generally to reciprocal embodied visual exchange of gazes. The importance of seeing and being seen by one's hero is expressed almost literally in the parallel Rajesh draws with pilgrimages to religious sites. It shows dedication or devotion towards the star, something that all fans consider crucial in expressing their fandom by means of Rajinikanth's images.

¹³ See Diane Eck on the concept of *darshan* (1981).

Seeing and being seen does matter, but not without a photographic memento – preferably one that can be enlarged and framed. However, this does not always happen. Several fans showed me photos of their meeting that were badly framed and out of focus due to the hectic moment and the fact that the photographer was overwhelmed by seeing Rajinikanth and just pressed the button without thinking. Nevertheless, in spite of being blurred or badly framed, at least it is evidence. Without a photo, the meeting does not really count, as shown by disappointed fans that did meet Rajinikanth but do not have a photo of the occasion. Since they cannot show ‘evidence’, they do not talk about their meeting in the same way as fans that do have photos of their meeting.

The desired proximity expressed in these photographs relates to photography’s more evocative and imaginative qualities. Pictures offer the opportunity to come closer to realizing one’s desire to be physically proximate to Rajinikanth, a potential that is increased by contemporary digital technology. Photos of imaginary meetings become souvenirs in which physical presence is central (Strassler 2003). The first two portraits made by Annamalai were created by bringing Rajinikanth’s photo and his own physically together. However, in these two images, it is not only physical proximity but also mimicry that stands out. Who actually mimics whom?

Figure 9 shows the photo on top of Selvam’s television. Selvam did meet Rajinikanth, but does not have a photo of the event. Therefore he actually asked a photo studio to insert his own face, replacing someone else’s who did get to meet the star. Even though Selvam is at first somewhat reluctant to reveal this transposition, he is also happy to see himself physically close to Rajinikanth. Selvam’s photo shows that images can be entirely interchangeable but that nevertheless certain photographic practices are considered inappropriate. This is the case with both Annamalai’s play with mimicry and Selvam’s manipulated picture. With photos in the more intimate, private sphere of the home there is more leeway than the strict prescriptions of the unwritten regulations.

Figure 10 shows a meeting of the late Ranjit, artist and fan club member. He met Rajinikanth once, but not alone. Being a painter Ranjit could easily erase the other person in the picture by repainting the figure so that the background of the photo was continued.

The photographic practices shown by Annamalai, Selvam, and Ranjit show how fans actively employ images to create intimacy and invoke a personal relation between themselves and Rajinikanth. Whether or not the meeting really occurred, it is the image that is looked at and the ‘actual’ or ‘mimicked’ physical presence that is envisaged.

This corporeality is also present in the hoardings commissioned by fans and exhibited in the public arena. These are made for events such as Rajinikanth’s birthday, movie releases, or fans’ special occasions such as weddings. By exhibiting their hoardings around theatres or main junctions, especially during movie releases and Rajinikanth’s birthday,



Figure 11. Hoardings for Rajinikanth's birthday. Puducherry 2007 (photograph by the author).

fan clubs completely “take over public spaces and literally leave their signature” behind (Srinivas 2005: 308). Figure 11 shows two such hoardings made for the occasion of Rajinikanth's birthday in 2007. On the left-hand hoarding, we see fans filling up the space among the Rajinikanth images. The right-hand hoarding once again shows a fan's meeting with Rajinikanth with two images of other fans underneath. Instead of the images discussed above, kept as intimate souvenirs, these images are displayed in public and are intended to reach a wider audience.

In keeping with Rajinikanth's alleged ‘philanthropic’ character, fan clubs consider conducting acts of charity in their hero's name one of their main activities. They carry out social work on special occasions, particularly on Rajinikanth's birthday, the days of official movie releases, or on starting a new fan club. Recurrent activities revolve around blood donation camps and the distribution of notebooks, sarees and dhotis, and rice or sweets. Giving away items like these must be seen in a wider context of gift exchange relationships in which local politicians or ‘big men’ attract supporters by drawing on generosity (Mines 1990; Mauss 1997). The generosity is central to their fame (Mines 1990: 764). It is being publicly visible and showing one's generosity rather than following Rajinikanth's example that seems relevant here. I will discuss this in more detail below.

Public visibility and the acquisition of fame – on different scales – works through images, as reflected in the hoardings and posters put up for various events. These hoardings and posters inform people about scheduled events as much as they convey personal wishes to the star and to other fans. In this way, they are on the one hand

directed at the star himself, and as such also show the fan's relation with the star. On the other hand, the hoardings are aimed at a wider audience by promoting the star.

The hoardings made by fan clubs often show the hero accompanied by photos of the fans that commissioned the hoarding. Making billboards and dedicating them to the hero is a way of praising him, in the same way as images (*murtis*) honoring or praising deities or living persons such as politicians or deceased relatives. Bate (2002) speaks of a 'hierarchical intimacy' revealing the relation between he who is praised, in this case the movie star, and he who praises, in this case a fan club member. Praising creates an emotional, corpothetic bond and involves intimacy between the praiser and the one that is praised (Appadurai 1990).

Hoardings that honor leader figures can be seen all over Tamil Nadu. It has become common practice for politicians and their followers to exhibit hoardings signposting political and personal events. Near main roads and junctions, party meetings and party leaders' birthdays are indicated and celebrated, respectively, by dozens of hoardings covering the adjacent buildings, shops, and traffic signs. The imagery displayed is part of a wider genre of images, materializing in the form of posters, hoardings, and cutouts, directed mostly at politicians but at present also popular to commemorate personal lifecycle rituals such as birthdays, weddings or anniversaries of deaths. More recently, due to the availability of cheaply produced vinyl hoardings, more and more 'ordinary' persons use these hoardings to reflect personal and family events. Let us first have a look at the following six images.



Figure 12. DMDK hoarding depicting cine-politician Vijayakanth and local party members. Puducherry 2006 (photograph by the author).



Figure 13. Fans' birthday wishes for Rajinikanth pasted over political posters. Puducherry 2002 (photograph by the author).



Figure 14. Hoarding for a wedding, showing movie stars Ajith and Rajinikanth (left). Puducherry 2008 (photograph by the author).



Figure 15. Birthday poster for a fellow-Rajinikanth fan club member. Puducherry 2007 (photograph by the author).



Figure 16. Birthday celebration hoarding of a young boy. On the left cine-politician Vijayakanth and movie star Ajith. Puducherry 2008 (photograph by the author).



Figure 17. Digital hoarding and sign board for the anniversary of the same person's death. Puducherry 2008 (photograph by the author).

Figure 12 shows a relatively small hoarding, though this type of hoarding represents Tamil Nadu's visual landscape just as much as its bigger cousins that are easily twice or four times as large. The hoarding was made by DMDK followers¹⁴ for the second anniversary of the events that led to the formation of the party. It shows Vijayakanth on the left, and the faces of party cadres, usually those that commissioned the hoardings, filling up the remaining space. The layout is much the same as the fan club hoardings shown and discussed earlier. Above Vijayakanth, there are two small images of MGR and DMK founder Annadurai. (The latter is often considered the founding father of Tamil politics.) The association with MGR and Annadurai is common practice in Tamil politics, despite the lack of any direct link with these two.

Next, figure 13 shows a poster made for Rajinikanth's birthday in 2002. Just behind this, we can see another poster put up by AIADMK followers. The Rajinikanth birthday poster has been pasted just on top of the other even though it seems that there was enough empty space on the wall. This could be read as a wish to emphasize Rajinikanth's strength, since at that time many of his fans were hoping he would start his own political party.

The other hoardings, posters, and signboards (fig. 14-17) were made for 'ordinary' persons instead of public figures, but follow a similar pattern. Figure 14 shows a hoarding made for a wedding. It is located in a busy street in Puducherry, pointing to the wedding taking place in the neighborhood. The wedding couple is situated in the middle, underneath them their parents in a reverent pose, and at the very bottom the friends or family members that honor the couple by commissioning this hoarding. The groom is most likely an Ajith fan club member, because on the left side the movie star Rajinikanth and Ajith are portrayed. Since Ajith was playing the leading part in a remake of the Rajinikanth movie *Billa* (1980), Ajith fans put Rajinikanth's images next to portraits of Ajith on the hoardings they put up on the occasion of the release of the remake (2007). On the right side, two off-screen images of Ajith and his wife Shalini give the impression that they are personally greeting the wedding couple.¹⁵ Shalini is especially pointedly gazing at the wedding couple. The reference to a public figure is a recurring practice in the case of private and public events. Exhibiting well-known figures suggests proximity, so that accordingly their public status can be transposed to oneself.

¹⁴ The DMDK, started by movie star Vijayakanth, is one of the more recent manifestations of the close relationship between film stardom and politics in Tamil Nadu. Vijayakanth founded the DMDK in 2005 and is considered to be an influential new figure in Tamil Nadu politics. His fan clubs became party cadres but were reopened after 3 years because many fans were unhappy about their position, or lack of it, inside the party structure.

¹⁵ See Pinney 1997 and Gerritsen 2006 on (movie) imagery incorporated in wedding videos and photo albums.

The next poster (fig. 15) conveys birthday wishes to a fellow Rajinikanth fan. The poster was made just before the release of the latest Rajinikanth movie *Sivaji: The Boss* (2007). A movie still showing Rajinikanth in *Sivaji: The Boss* can be seen on the right side, with the celebrated person to whom birthday wishes are expressed on the left. These posters are put up in the area in which the honored person in question lives. Even though they were made in different years, and with trends varying over the years, one can see the similarities between these posters and the poster discussed above made for Rajinikanth's birthday. Both the wedding hoarding and birthday posters show the contributors in a set of smaller photos.

The hoarding on figure 16 announces the first birthday of a young boy. On the left there are two pictures of well-known persons: cine-politician Vijayakanth and movie star Ajith. The father of the boy is most likely a supporter of the DMDK (Vijayakanth's party), and a fan of Ajith's. This hoarding also shows similarities with the preceding ones. The last photo of this set (fig.17) shows two ways of remembering a deceased person. Both the vinyl hoarding and the metal board on this photo are intended to commemorate a deceased young man. The vinyl hoarding was garlanded on the anniversary of his death. What distinguishes this imagery from other forms is that here the commissioners of the memorabilia are not portrayed.



Figure 18. Rajinikanth birthday hoarding by fan club on Kutt Road, a main district junction in Villupuram, 2002 (collection Saktivel).

To return to fan club imagery: the hoarding above (fig.18) shows members of a fan club (at the bottom) and fifteen different stills of Rajinikanth. As mentioned earlier, the act of showing oneself physically close to the image Rajinikanth enhances intimacy and contiguity with him. It allows fans to connect to Rajinikanth by choosing or 'handpicking' various stills of the star. It also allows fans to 'travel' publicly in Rajinikanth's company, much like an artificial backdrop in a portrait, e.g., the Taj Mahal, would allow you to 'travel' there (Pinney 2003). The selection of images is a way of personalizing and distinguishing the hoardings and posters, and thus making them intimate. Fans select images of Rajinikanth that they consider suitable for the purpose; for example, they would mostly look for 'stylish' images of Rajinikanth in case of movie releases. 'Style' is Rajinikanth's trademark: his gimmicks and one-liners have made him incredibly popular and almost everyone mentions his 'style' as a reason for his attractiveness. Such stylish images, popular for hoardings exhibited on the occasion of a movie release, are not always considered suitable for personal events such as weddings and birthdays. The images of Rajinikanth employed there have to be more serious, so people then use 'natural' or off-screen images.

In addition, fans search for original images in order to distinguish themselves from other fans and fan clubs. Especially the multitude of hoardings in the public arena requires conspicuous imagery. For the same reason fans also question the sincerity of other fans if their hoarding is just a simple compilation made with no effort. Selvam, whom we met earlier when we looked at the representation of his meeting with Rajinikanth (fig.9), is always searching for original imagery of his hero. He collects magazines and stickers and receives stills from the internet from a friend; he is always on the lookout for original images of his hero. When I met Selvam just before he was getting married, he was proud to tell me that he had found a unique still of Rajinikanth that he was going to use for his wedding invitation. Unfortunately, the image turned out to be less original than it had seemed at first when a former fan club leader of Puducherry, Rajini Shankar, used a similar still for one of his own family events just before Selvam's wedding. Selvam decided to use the image anyway because he possessed this rare still as an 'ordinary' fan, which made it unique.

In the choice of their own photos on public hoardings, fans uphold club hierarchies; for instance fan club presidents and district leaders will always be portrayed closest to the star, and larger than others will. Sizes and positions of the images of contributors depend on internal hierarchy and the amount of their financial contributions. This is most noticeable on the hoardings in figures 12 and 23; the hoarding in figure 18, shows the fan club block leader, though small and difficult to discern, slightly bigger than the others.

Even though the visual landscape is littered with hoardings and one hoarding can hold multiple photos of the various contributors, public visibility is one of the main reasons for fans to make sure they are included on the hoarding. Notwithstanding good intentions, the charity practices fan clubs are involved in nowadays seem to a great extent to be mainly concerned with the fans' own public visibility. Showing the contributors 'preserves identities' (Mines 1996: 12). Visibility and showing one's allegiance is an especially effective way of promoting oneself (Bate 2002).

Several fans I have worked with, particularly in the higher ranks of the fan club, consider fan clubs an effective network, and an opportunity to enhance social mobility and to become active in the political arena – not in statewide politics, as is often suggested in the literature, but mainly in local politics and neighborhood networks. By means of their public practices and loyalty to local 'big men' fans receive benefits that are accessible because of their fan club membership. In this respect one may think of being incorporated in a social network of fans and an alliance to politicians that can provide access to, for instance, hospitals, schools, and registration for particular welfare schemes. Reasons to join a fan club can be politically motivated, as was the case, for example, at the time when Rajinikanth was expected to start a political party. Suddenly, whole crowds of men joined a fan club in the hope the film star would start his own party, which in turn would allow them to start their own political careers. Rajinikanth, however, never did set up his own party, but speculations linger until this day.

The reasons to join a fan club are not always political. Once inside, membership often becomes a means to enhance one's own image or social network. This is, however, not always the case, it should be noted, in fan clubs for younger actors such as Vijay and Ajith. Their members are mostly under 30 and hardly interested in politics. Yet, the Rajinikanth fans described up to this point often do have political agendas, not in the limited sense of 'politics', but rather in the broader sense of 'political' or social alliances. In this way, fan activities can be understood in a much wider context than just party politics. The visibility of fans during public events such as movie releases or social work, is employed "in order to articulate *their own* [emphasis mine] social-political, cultural, and economic aspirations" (Srinivas 2005: 299). Fans' concern with their own aspirations is channeled through, among other things, their conspicuous claiming of the public realm. This visibility comes into play not only in the hoardings, posters, and murals they produce, but also during the social welfare events to which they invite the press (paying them to come) and preferably local politicians. The fan club leaders seem more concerned with showing themselves than with being involved in charity. As the fan club leaders hand over their gifts to the sick and needy the journalists take their snapshots, after which both immediately leave and the 'ordinary' members take over, the activities soon fading away to nothing. In the lower

ranks of the fan club members find recognition either by claiming to receive more respect because of their involvement in social welfare activities, or by just being connected to Rajinikanth through the fan club and the imagery produced along these lines.

The stronger emphasis on self-imagining in the fan club seems to be a recent phenomenon brought on by the digital media by which adding personal photos is now done in an instant. The replacement of the earlier painted cutouts and hoardings with digital ones has created the possibility to put weight on the self-image, rather than only on the movie star to which the image was dedicated. What is more, it also seems to offer a new medium in which to show intimacy and one's connection with the star. In the next part of this essay I will highlight a new trend that has not only transformed the visual landscape, but also had severe consequences for artists.



Figure 19. Wall painting for Rajinikanth's birthday made by the late artist Ranjit. At the top, posters for the first anniversary of the artist's death. Puducherry 2008 (photograph by the author).

The Advent of Digital Printing and Vinyl Materials

Figure 19 shows a wall painting by the artist Ranjit for Rajinikanth's birthday, put up in the street where Ranjit used to live. Above this painting there are seven posters pasted on the wall, made by Ranjit's family two years after he committed suicide. It is said by his friends and relatives that he committed suicide after finding himself in a desperate



Figure 20. Cutouts of, from left to right, Vijayakanth, DMK leader Karunanidhi and Rajinikanth, Chennai, date unknown (collection Ranjit).

situation. He felt that he was not being respected and no longer able to live as a cutout and hoarding artist, because of the changing technologies that gained momentum at the beginning of the 21st century. As a fan of Rajinikanth, from early childhood Ranjit had already been interested in making paintings and drawings of the star; while pretending to do his homework he was actually making countless drawings of his hero. After failing school at the age of twelve, he left his parents and headed for Chennai. There, he found shelter with the renowned cutout and billboard artist J.P. Krishna and worked with him for a while. His mother recounts how Ranjit had a hard time in Chennai, often going without food, but that at least he was able to paint. With the advent of digital printing and the popularity of vinyl hoardings, Ranjit lost his job in Chennai. He thought he could pick up his work in Puducherry, his native town, since he figured that changes were not going so fast over there. However, back in Puducherry digital technology caught up with him and soon he was out of work there as well. At first Ranjit firmly refused to change his technique and craft. To him digital work was not art; everyone could copy and paste some images on a computer. However, when his situation was getting more and more desperate he gave in and started to learn computer skills and work with software such as Photoshop. However, he remained depressed, and addressed a highly emotional appeal to the Chief

Minister of Puducherry, asking for help just before he committed suicide. Seeing no future, at the age of 29 Ranjit hung himself in his family's newly constructed house.

The story of Ranjit is almost too dramatic to start with. Unfortunately, it does contain all aspects related to the demise of painted cutouts and hoardings. Around 2004, a radical shift in the urban landscape became visible as all signboards, hoardings, and posters that had first been made by hand now were digitally produced. Many shops exchanged their painted signboards for digital ones, and the cutouts and hand painted boards made by the movie industry, politicians, and fan clubs disappeared in favor of vinyl hoardings.

Since the arrival of cinema in India in 1896, films had been promoted in various ways; newspaper announcements, handbills, and posters to name a few. The 1940s brought a new form of advertisements to the fore; hand-painted billboards and cutouts. The size of the hoardings was slowly increasing more and more, and soon this kind of publicity became focused on politicians as well.¹⁶ It was especially the DMK, a party that had grown rapidly on account of having stage and screen artists in its ranks, that came to make use of the large structures. The party mastered the art of using film for political purposes, and movies made by members were infused with political texts and party propaganda (Baskaran 1996). Posters, wall paintings, and billboards for the party were given the same glamorous appearance as cinema hoardings (Geetha *et.al.* 2007: 83-84). Other parties followed suit and imitated the colorful cinema personae on their hoardings. These signs came to play "a pivotal role in disseminating and regenerating the power of politicians [...]" (Jacob 1997: 140). Cinema hoardings in turn became influenced by the field of politics, and started to focus mainly on the hero instead of the entire cast of a movie (Geetha *et al.* 2007: 84). We have already seen an illustration of this in figure 4, the larger-than-life cutout of Rajinikanth. Three other cutouts are displayed in figure 20. The photo shows three faces of public figures in Tamil Nadu, exhibited on a Chennai road. The cutouts were made by the renowned cutout and billboard artist J.P. Krishna. The faces represent the current Chief Minister and leader of the DMK, Karunanidhi (middle), and the movie stars Vijayakanth (left) and Rajinikanth (right).

Within the political and cinematic play of imagery, fan clubs always had their own imagery made by which to honor their star. This started with MGR fan clubs making handbills and posters announcing their events and movie screenings, and more permanent metal boards announcing their presence within a neighborhood. Artists who were already painting shops' signboards gained momentum by being commissioned to make this kind type fan club imagery. Figure 21 shows such a hand-painted metal board commissioned by a Rajinikanth fan club. Its pattern is similar to that of the board made by the Vijay fan

¹⁶ However, this distinction was not very clear during the years when stars such as MGR came up, who were actively involved in politics.



Figure 21. Metal board put up by Rajinikanth fan club. Puducherry 2002 (photograph by the author).

club, shown in figure 2 above. In fact, the two boards were made by the same artists and are also exhibited in the same street in Puducherry. The board in fig. 21 shows two images from a Rajinikanth movie with in the middle some names of fan club members. The signboard is decorated with a garland to celebrate Rajinikanth's birthday.

The artists that made these metal boards and cutouts were commissioned on the basis of their skills. The art of painting cutouts and signboards lies in the copying skills of the artists. They blow up example images and copy them. At the same time, however, the artists try to be original and stand out. Originality here is mostly achieved by the use of colors and the particular technique of painting: "Expertise was marked by his ability to be faithful to an imagined original, even as he adapted and improvised" (Geetha 2007: 109).

At the beginning of the 21st century, the arrival of new digital printing possibilities had serious consequences for the Tamil Nadu landscape that until then had been marked by colorful painted signboards and cutouts. Fan clubs, shops, politicians, almost everyone started to replace hand-made paintings by digital vinyl hoardings displaying photos and digital motifs. The increasing availability and popularity of digital printing technologies was felt sharply by hand painting artists. Most of them were not able to keep pace with the new trend of digital design, and soon lost customers that were attracted by this upcoming fast and cheap medium. As a result, many artists went out of business or were forced to change jobs. Some artists did manage to switch careers and set up their own digital design studios. Yet, most experienced difficulties by this change: fewer customers, the need to contract out their digital orders, and ruthless competition from enterprising others who cleverly anticipated what was coming.

Most artists, whether working in digital design or not, regret the changes that are taking place. Just like Ranjit, they do not appreciate the digital portraits, seeing it as a flat-toned medium, incapable of expressing anything. Looking back with nostalgia on the

hand-painted images, the artists I worked with explained that these pictures do have the capacity to show expressions, whereas photos merely show a person's appearance. This echoes Christopher Pinney's observation that in the Indian context photography is able to capture people's physiognomy but not their inner characters (Pinney 1997). The specific corpothetic aura of painted images is said to be enlivened by the use of colors, props and expressions, revealing and articulating the character played by a movie star (see also MacDougall 1991).

The transformation from hand painting to the digital medium by which these images are now realized also had great consequences for how these images are appropriated by fans. Today, fan clubs virtually do not make any hand-



Figure 22. Cutout piece depicting actor Vijay. Puducherry 2008 (photograph by the author).

painted signboards and cutouts any more. Many fans also consider the disappearance of hand-painted drawings a loss, citing reasons similar to those given by the artists. Considering the loss in value when using photographs instead of hand-painted images, one would not expect digitally produced hoardings to be so popular. However, digital hoardings do have advantages that explain their current use. First of all, they are cheaper and can be made within one day instead of the several days it might have taken an artist to paint his assignment. Fans had to visit the artist several times, discussing and selecting the images of the star they wanted to represent. Now, a patron can just hand over or select the images, and a few hours later the hoarding may be ready. Second, some fans see the digital hoardings as a medium that *does* offer the opportunity to be more creative and personal. It is totally up to the fan which images to use, and how to use them. For example, one's own image can be combined with images of movie stars or politicians, or one can display rare images found on the internet. Most importantly, however, fans favor the new possibility of adding one's own portrait to the image. Whereas the hand-painted boards and cutouts merely mentioned fan club members' names, as we have seen in the case of the fan club boards for Vijay and Rajinikanth (figs. 2 and 21), digital hoardings

offer the possibility to easily insert their photos (see figs. 11,14,18 and 23). In this way, the replacement of painted cutouts by vinyl hoardings has created the opportunity to be closer to the star. At the same time, it resulted in fans' attaching greater importance to being in the public eye.

By saying this I do not want to argue that distinguishing oneself as a fan club member or fan club was not important before the arrival of digital technology. Indeed, choosing an artist and images for the cutouts and signboards was a meticulous process by which one tried to create a hoarding that was different from others. Competition among fans and fan clubs is reflected in the activities carried out for a particular event and the images displayed. By means of imagery, aimed at having the biggest or unique hoardings, fans try to attract the attention of others. With hand-painted images distinctions were emphasized by choosing a well-know artist that could make something unique and conspicuous every time. Using different techniques of painting and using rare expressions all contributed to the attractiveness of the image. Now, with the digital hoardings, the point is to try to find rare images or achieve a special, unusual combination of images that makes an attractive picture to look at.



Figure 23. Recent cutout for DMK leader and present Chief Minister Karunanidhi. Cuddalore 2006 or 2007 (collection Muthu, Puducherry).

Adding one's own image makes it possible for the public to recognize who is responsible for a particular hoarding. Receiving recognition for showing one's dedication to Rajinikanth is one of the reasons to display hoardings. Most fans I have spoken to perceive this as an important part of being a fan club member. This is a way of mediating the fan club as a collective. Portraying photos of individual fan club members, however, is also a way of communicating their personal dedication to the star. Last, but surely not least, images of hoardings, posters, activities and the like are supposed to be send to the All India Rajinikanth fan club, based in Chennai. This headquarters is considered the intermediary between fans and Rajinikanth, and selects local leaders throughout

Tamil Nadu on the basis of the activities they undertake: persons that noticeably have done much for the fan club. The 'evidence' on which

the All India Rajinikanth club bases its decision is said to be the images fans send of their activities. Therefore, being in the eye of other fans, fan club officials, and a wider audience could produce recognition and alliances – in one’s own vicinity, within the neighborhood, among the fan clubs, in the political field, and lastly by Rajinikanth.

Epilogue

The above cutout (fig. 23), showing Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Karunanidhi, was recently on view in the town of Cuddalore. After the digitally produced vinyl hoardings annexed the Tamil landscape hand-painted ones are now sporadically seen again. Concluding from this image the DMK party that agitated against the ‘cutout culture’ in the 1990s now seems to be in the vanguard of reinventing this same culture. Hand-painted boards have now become a means of distinguishing oneself from the digital hoardings, which are perceived to be all alike.



Figure 24. Artist Boopathy next to his original cutout. Puducherry 2008 (photograph by the author).



Figure 25. Hoarding for B. Siva art service. Puducherry 2008 (photographs by the author).

Another recent trend is the use of hand paintings displayed on digital hoardings, or using digital photos in hand-painted cutouts. The artist Boopathy, for example, who lost a great part of his income as a result of the arrival of the digital printing technology, replaced the cutout in front of his shop by a digital representation of this same cutout. Figure 24 shows Boopathy in his shop, next to his original cutout, and figure 25 depicts his new vinyl hoarding. Boopathy explained that he replaced the cutout by a vinyl hoarding because the latter attracts more customers. What is noteworthy here, however, is that he did not update his merchandise: even the digital hoarding lists products such as cinema slides and cutouts that are hardly made anymore.



Figure 26. Fan club banner for Rajinikanth, including one digitally 'painted' image of the star. Puducherry 2007 (photograph by the author).

Figure 26 shows a vinyl hoarding commissioned by a Rajinikanth fan club in Puducherry. The image of Rajinikanth on the left side is a recent trend: even though it is a photo of Rajinikanth, the colors and strokes resemble hand painting. The image of Rajinikanth on the right is a photo, even though this one is uniform in color. On this hoarding the paint strokes have been Photoshop-generated through a filter effect. Puducherry-based artist Kumar is now also making digital hoardings by adding photos of his paintings to digital images. During the release of Rajinikanth's *Sivaji: The Boss* these hoardings turned out to be a great success. It was the possibility of combining digital photos and hand-painted images that made the hoardings attractive, mostly because these could thus be distinguished from the numerous others.

At the same time public imagery itself is under discussion in Tamil Nadu. Political leader Ramadoss (PMK party) is agitating heavily against the use of hoardings in Tamil Nadu and has strictly instructed his party members not to employ this kind of publicity. Present Chief Minister Karunanidhi has also started to criticize the excessive use of this type of imagery. A former scriptwriter who used movies as propaganda vehicle for his party in the past and currently widely portrayed on hoardings throughout the state, this same Karunanidhi recently called for a limit on the number of hoardings. He instructed

his party members to avoid using publicity and in particular his own image. Up to now, his party members have seemed unwilling to comply with his request. Karunanidhi is now also implementing stricter rules on the use of hoardings. The entire city of Chennai was recently stripped of its gigantic commercial, political, and cinematic hoardings for some time.

The question now remains whether these developments herald a new period in which retrospectively hand paintings become attractive again. Or will the 'cutout culture' and 'hoarding culture' in Tamil Nadu slowly collapse? Despite their ephemeral character, hoardings – in no matter what form – have been a distinguishing and efficacious feature in the Tamil Nadu public arena. As we have seen, fans do communicate and consolidate their relation with Rajinikanth through this imagery whether displayed on vinyl or on hand-painted boards. The changes in the visual landscape are yet to be seen.

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