

‘Samsara’ is a Film That Will Be Whatever You Want

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on September 7, 2012 - 7:32am

- [Arizona](#) [2]
- [Baraka](#) [3]
- [China](#) [4]
- [Chronos](#) [5]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [6]
- [Ladakh](#) [7]
- [Mark Magidson](#) [8]
- [Movie Review](#) [9]
- [Namibia](#) [10]
- [North Korea](#) [11]
- [Oscilloscope Pictures](#) [12]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [13]
- [Ron Fricke](#) [14]
- [Samsara](#) [15]

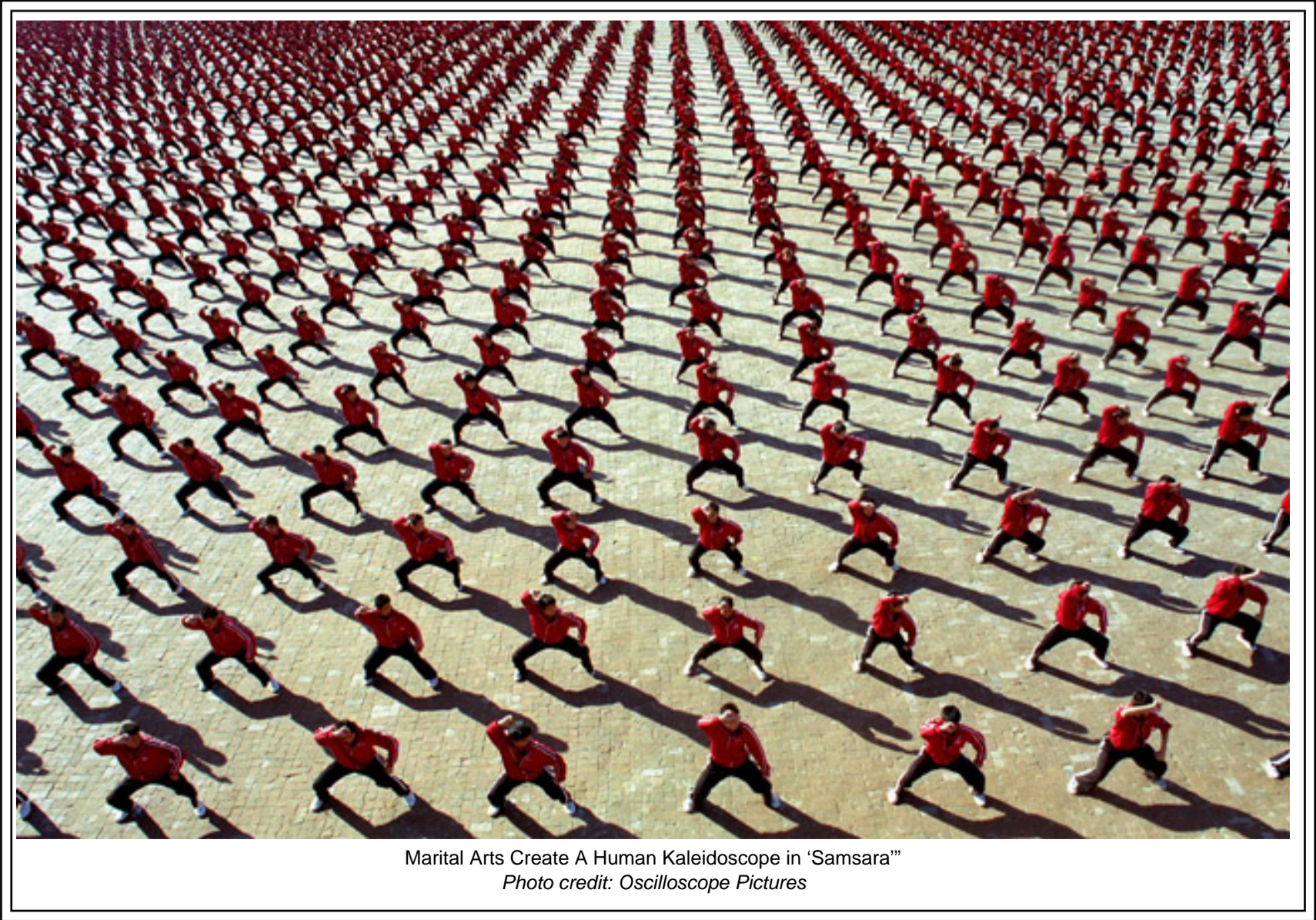


Rating: **4.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – It is revitalizing to take a break from traditional cinema, and the new artistic film “Samsara” is a non-linear quasi-documentary and travelogue that is a parade of images contemplating existence and the beauty around us. Who doesn’t need that tonic of meditation every so often?

Filmmakers Ron Fricke and Mark Magidson are expanding on concepts explored in their previous films “Baraka” and “Chronos,” which also explore non-linear imagery. This film goes all over the world over five years, but mostly focuses on the humanity that strives within it. With the time-lapse view of ordinary events, personhood is reduced to a primal state, one of tribes and animalistic movements. The rhythms and the soundtrack are reflective of these images and create a soothing visual symphony for virtually all the senses.

The film begins with a series of close-ups, faces in compose. There is suddenly movement, dancing and then a series of subjects and images that are from all over the world. 25 countries were visited to view workplaces, rituals, religions and always the mask of the close-up human face. The landscapes, matched movements and wonder of human interaction with their environment is well highlighted. The word “Samsara” also defines the film, it is Sanskrit meaning ‘cyclic existence.’



The film is also fascinated with synchronization, such as humans working together to form visual elements as a multiple fan-like representation of arms or a precise military-like martial arts ceremony with thousands of participants moving the same way. The time-lapse photography of a Muslim prayer service takes on the look of a ant colony – the rhythms of cooperation and scheduling are so precise, that from far away the prayer service looks like a living organism. “Samsara” is whatever you want it to be.

Non-Linear films are always a challenge, but “Samsara” is less of one because in a sense it does have a subject – the interaction of humans on the landscape of our world. Simple close-ups of the early influences of civilization, the ruins of complex buildings, showcase both the amazing abilities of the human brain and the limited moment the actual humans of these civilizations have to make their mark on the atmosphere of time and space. This is also emphasized in modern life, as days seems to blend into one another while the concrete city stares mutely upon its prey.

The rituals of personhood are also highlighted, mostly through the patient elements of religion and worship. There are stark close-ups of people going through water baptism – their various reactions are both poignant and expository regarding the absurdity of such a ceremony. Asian monks are shown building a mosaic of colored sand, bit-by-bit, an incredible sight once it is finished. Afterward as it fades, again the randomness of our short time on this earth is perpetuated. The cycles of human existence are contained in grains of sand.

Mechanization is another overriding theme. In an Asian country, there is a whole process shown for delivering chicken to hungry mouths – the caging of the birds, their slaughter, the rows of carcasses on a conveyor belt and the packaging to keep it clean for the consumer. It is the food chain in the modern world, and yet the notion of that chain – the sacrifice of so-called lower forms of life to satisfy human consumption – is postulated in a way as to ponder the futility of it all.



One of the Baptism Rituals in ‘Samsara’
Photo credit: Oscilloscope Pictures

This is but a snapshot of the hundreds of images within “Samsara.” Another wondrous quality of the film is that any one of those images might pop out for each individual audience member, as if it were a fingerprint of the map within sensory perception. What might thrill one person can bore another or the tiniest window into something unexpected can literally change a perspective. This is the power of the filmmakers’ vision, and their practiced inventiveness is a gift to random meditation.

Make sure you seek a theater that has top projection facilities (rare these days) to get the full emotional content of the film. Sit back, and let the eye and ear candy wash over you, cleansing as in the ritual of baptism, but offering no borders or limitations – only the infinite universe of the imagination.

“Samsara” continues its limited release in Chicago on September 7th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring the imagery perspective and direction of filmmakers Ron Fricke and Mark Magidson. Rated “PG-13”



[16]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [17]
Senior Staff Writer
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [16]

Source URL (retrieved on *Apr 17 2024 - 6:29pm*):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/19838/samara-is-a-film-that-will-be-whatever-you-want>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/arizona>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/baraka>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/china>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/chronos>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/ladakh>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/mark-magidson>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/namibia>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/north-korea>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/oscilloscope-pictures>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/patrick-mcdonald>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/ron-fricke>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/samsara>
- [16] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>