

## David Claerbout

◀◀ ART GALLERY OF WINDSOR, WINDSOR

Belgian artist David Claerbout's work has received praise for the way in which it explores the relationship between photography and film. Using digital technology, Claerbout makes video projections that combine dynamic still images with film footage of occurrences that remain incidental at best. The two works at AGW, presented in cooperation with Artcite Inc. as part of the Media City Festival of Experimental Film and Video Art, proved to be subtly alluring and intelligently conceived.



DAVID CLAERBOUT *Vietnam, 1967, near Duc Pho (Reconstruction after Hiromishi Mine)* 1998 Video COURTESY GALERIE MICHELINE SZWAJCKER, ANTWERP

*Kindergarten Antonio Sant'Elia, 1932* features an aerial view not unlike those recorded by Moholy-Nagy or Umbo. At first glance one sees only the most obvious details: children playing in a garden, the sun low in the sky, the contrast between the children's white smocks and the long, dark shadows thrown across the paving stones and ground. But, with a little time, one sees that the leaves of two saplings move, as if pushed by a gentle breeze. In the second work, *Vietnam 1967, near Duc Pho (Reconstruction after Hiromishi Mine)*, Claerbout has inserted a black-and-white image of a crashing warplane into a recent colour film of the same location. The plane, partially disintegrated and accompanied by numerous fragments, hovers over a lush, tropical site. The scene darkens, then brightens up again, but, except for the shadow of a cloud that periodically moves across the field and up the hill, there is no movement.

For Claerbout, photography and film are closely related, but miles apart in the way that they express time. Whereas photography either freezes or blurs movement, film, which merely consists of a series of still images, enables the recording of activity in a

more realistic manner. Through his manipulations, Claerbout not only underscores this disparity, but creates scenarios possessing a certain visual tension. This tension arouses one's curiosity and holds the viewer's gaze.

The writer Pierre Mac Orlon believed that photography was the best medium for capturing the "social fantastic" – the extraordinary juxtapositions inherent in day-to-day life. While Claerbout's scenes possess an air of the fantastic, there is also a magical quality to the images that reminds one of the work of another Belgian, the painter René Magritte. Claerbout's monumentally scaled images, though, have an altogether different focus. The initial visual impact of the scenes is undercut by the presence of peripheral activity, and it is this activity that comes to be truly extraordinary.

JOHN R. GAYER

Erratum: The date of *Vietnam 1967, near Duc Pho (Reconstruction after Hiromishi Mine)* is 2001, not 1998 as listed in the caption that accompanies the photo.