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Gersht, Ori. "Ori Gersht puts five questions to David Claerbout," *Modern Painters*, May 2009.

MODERN PAINTERS



Ori Gersht puts five questions to David Claerbout.

On a recent visit to the Herzlia Museum in Israel I came across *The Algiers' Sections of a Happy Moment* (2008) by the Belgian artist David Claerbout. Since my work is preoccupied with representing the real and issues of temporality, I was immediately drawn to Claerbout's disorienting scenario, in which a single-channel video projection shows a succession of more than 600 photographs of approximately a dozen Algerians gathered on a rooftop, taken from many different angles. I was mystified by the visual complexity of the piece and impressed that a fleeting event could be so carefully orchestrated and be depicted simultaneously from many different points of view. The convincing appearance of a casual moment suspended in time becomes a canny trigger for a complex and magical visual contemplation on the perception of time. —Ori Gersht

I understand that you were trained as a painter; what caused you to transition to film and photography?

I have been painting and drawing since I was seven, and I must blame the art academy for perpetuating the idea that only painting could be art. That's too heavy for me. I was looking for an art that didn't consist of objects, so I taught myself film and photography.

How are new technologies impacting your work?

Even in the history of painting, art is related to technological devices, but it shouldn't be reduced to those technologies. New possibilities provoke new problems. I like to think that those possibilities do not impose themselves but were invited in. In my work I think of the digital as a platform in which past, present, and future are not distinguishable from one another and instead coexist happily.

In *The Algiers' Sections of a Happy Moment*, I was mesmerized by the meditative pace of the piece and how that slowly revealed a very complex visual strategy. Was this idea of exploring a single moment in time from multiple vantage points inspired by Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty? No, it wasn't, but the relation between the positions of the camera, the group of young men, and the observer are in constant flux. The omnipresent camera increasingly fixes what is ever becoming, and vice versa.

Your "Nightscape Lightbox" series of black landscape photographs are very interesting to me—the images seem on the verge of collapsing.

I wanted to make nightscape photographs that were conditional. They would only reveal themselves at night and ultimately reproduce—in a very artificial way—the

ABOVE: David Claerbout, stills from *The Algiers' Sections of a Happy Moment*, 2008. Video installation, 37 min.
BELOW: Ori Gersht, *Falling Bird*, Untitled 01, 2008. C-print on aluminum, 59 x 47 in.

sensation of silence that comes upon you while you're waiting attentively for your eyes to adapt to darkness.

How do you choose the locations for your films? They seem both arbitrary and enchanting.

It can take years before I find the location I have in mind. Precisely because a location resembles something that one remembers, an idea, it obtains something of both a construct and a real place. In cinema, computer-generated images are interesting: they are a visualization not of existing places but of existing ideas. They bring cinema back to its roots: animation. ♦

Ori Gersht's work is on view in "Flower-Power," at the Villa Giulia Verbania-Centro di Ricerca Arte Attuale, Turin, Italy, from May 23–Oct. 11, and in "Tel Aviv Times," at the Tel Aviv Museum, Israel, through July. David Claerbout has solo shows at Hauser & Wirth, London, from May 22–Aug. 1, the De Pont Museum of Contemporary Art, Tilburg, the Netherlands, through June 28, and at Pinakothek Munich, opening in October.



FROM TOP: STILLS COURTESY DAVID CLAERBOUT AND YON LAMBERT PARIS; NEW YORK: PHOTO COURTESY ORI GERSHT