Hirshhorn Presents “Black Box: Gerco de Ruijter”

Animation of Imagery Sourced from Google Earth Extends Dutch Landscape Tradition

Best known for bird’s-eye-view landscape photography, Gerco de Ruijter (Dutch, b. Vianen, 1961; lives and works in Rotterdam) mined Google Earth for the images he montaged into his stop-frame animation “CROPS” (2012). The hypnotic four-minute video work opens in the Hirshhorn’s Black Box space Aug. 12.

De Ruijter’s still photography has been distinguished by the various devices he has deployed to launch his camera aloft, including an elongated fishing rod, which he customized with a timer, and a kite, which he operated by transmitter. The resulting vistas, devoid of both people and horizon lines, make actual locations read as simultaneously “real” and abstract, a perspective also pursued in “CROPS.”

Where in the past de Ruijter has organized his photographs into series by carefully selecting from among the pictures shot by his own lens, for “CROPS” he repurposed “found” views recorded by aerial cameras for Google Earth. Each image is of one of the countless center-pivot irrigation plots that dot the American southwest. These de Ruijter cropped and oriented to fit a fixed geometric template—a circle circumscribed within a square—then sequenced into an animation.

More than 1000 pictures make up the rush of imagery, the colors shifting with the seasons and the types of crops planted. The irrigation machinery appears as a clocklike “hand,” and its clockwise movement segments the plots into various swaths. The diversity of effects produced within a rigidly prescribed format is emphasized with a shuffling, stuttering electronic score by Michel Banabila.

Outside the “CROPS” installation hangs “Contact Sheet #2 (time)” (2012), de Ruijter’s inkjet print of a grid devised from select still frames from the video.
De Ruijter has said, “What is similar in my work and that of abstract geometrical painters is foremost that we do not dish up a story or a deeper meaning. The viewer sees nothing but the image itself.” At the same time, the artist is extending the tradition of Dutch landscape painting by training his eye on the natural world not as wilderness but as it is cultivated by human endeavor.

**About Black Box**

Since 2005, Black Box has featured work by emerging and established artists and artist collectives, including Francis Alÿs, Ori Gersht, Phoebe Greenberg, Jesper Just, Ali Kazma, Kimsooja, Takeshi Murata, Rivane Neuenschwander, Hans Op de Beeck, Semiconductor, Superflex and Guido van der Werve, among others. The artists represent a broad range of nations and approaches to new media. Black Box is organized by associate curator Kelly Gordon.

**Related Programs**

The Hirshhorn offers a range of interactive educational experiences designed to engage people of all interest levels in contemporary art; consult [hirshhorn.si.edu](http://hirshhorn.si.edu) for a complete schedule. Artists and other experts address works on view in a regular series of Friday Gallery Talks. On Friday, Sept. 20, at 12:30 p.m. in the Ring Auditorium, “CROPS” scorer Banabila performs an ambient music set. Also available on the website is the museum’s archive of podcasts, which makes gallery walk-throughs and interviews with artists accessible internationally.

**About the Hirshhorn**

The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the Smithsonian Institution’s museum of international modern and contemporary art, has nearly 12,000 paintings, sculptures, photographs, mixed-media installations, works on paper and new media works in its collection. The Hirshhorn presents varied exhibitions and offers an array of public programs that explore modern and contemporary art. Located at Independence Avenue and Seventh Street S.W., the museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (except Dec. 25). Admission to the galleries and special programs is free. For more information about exhibitions and events, please visit [hirshhorn.si.edu](http://hirshhorn.si.edu). Follow the Hirshhorn on Facebook at facebook.com/hirshhorn and on Twitter at twitter.com/hirshhorn. To request accessibility services, please contact Kristy Maruca at [marucak@si.edu](mailto:marucak@si.edu) or (202) 633-2796, preferably two weeks in advance.

# # #