

ART

**ONE OF THE MOST** endearing works of this Washington season takes a notably dry form of contemporary art and brings it alive.

"Instruction-set art" (asleep yet?) typically sets up a few rules for constructing a work, then follows through to see what they produce. That used to mean defining the direction of a certain number of drawn lines or the colors they were to be drawn in, then letting rip within that straitjacket. Francis Alys, a Belgian artist based in Mexico City, is showing a video in the Hirshhorn's Black Box film space that humanizes that approach. Alys began with 64 of Britain's ceremonial Coldstream Guards (the ones who look like they're wearing two-foot-tall bear-fur erasers on their heads). He then taped them as they separately marched around London's financial district, obeying rules Alys had set for how to form a troop when they encountered other guards. The result is visually absorbing, but also funny and poignant, as the beefy soldiers come to have all the self-determination of your average windup toy.

— Blake Gopnik

At the Hirshhorn Museum, Seventh Street and Independence Avenue SW. Through Aug. 14. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Free. Call 202-633-1000 or visit [www.hirshhorn.si.edu](http://www.hirshhorn.si.edu).



BY FRANCIS ALYS — THE HIRSHHORN MUSEUM

Belgian artist Francis Alys set up the rules and watched as Britain's Coldstream Guards carried them out in London's financial district. The poignant video can be seen in the Hirshhorn's Black Box space, through Aug. 14.