

BOSTON

DAVID CLAERBOUT

MIT LIST VISUAL ARTS CENTER

In his first solo show in the US, the Belgian artist David Claerbout does not disappoint. Each of the nine video installations in this meticulously staged exhibition illustrates his decade-long exploration of how images construct our perception of time. The integrity of this rapport is questioned through a visual and temporal language that challenges traditional categorization. By interweaving photography, film, and digital media, and juxtaposing the still and moving image, Claerbout reveals the subtle variations, tensions, and discontinuities that make it so difficult to pin down time's essence. This idea is beautifully materialized in *Kindergarten Antonio Sant'Elia, 1932* (1998), which dissolves the supposed "timelessness" of a vintage black-and-white photograph through digital manipulation. The frozen image of children at play is delicately irritated by Claerbout's modification of the bare saplings in the foreground, which he decorates with verdant foliage and sets in quivering

motion. This kinetic intervention, which he sensually terms a "caress," confounds the "then" and "now" so that they exist simultaneously. Indeed, throughout this exhibition, Claerbout uses his signature "moving still" to represent narration, while also suggesting that time's abstract quality can never be fully captured. In response to this conundrum, he tries to transform contemporary spectatorship: he crafts images that both embrace temporal fragmentation and counter it by eliciting new modes of perceptual absorption. —NUIT BANAI



David Claerbout, *Bordeaux Piece*, 2004. Single-channel, wide-screen video installation, 13 hr 43 min. Courtesy the artist and Yvon Lambert, New York and Paris.