



CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

**DAVID TRAUTRIMAS:
HABITAT MACHINES**

PHOTO-EYE GALLERY
376-A GARCIA STREET, SANTA FE

Toronto-based photographer David Trautrimas is inspired by the transformation of actual junk into virtual architectural spaces arrived at by the “medium cool”—an ironic term given to the discipline of photography back in the 1970s. Trautrimas is a collagist at the root level, and while his heart may beat faster with the find of some terrific object, he pushes through the found-object allure and onto an odd plateau of indexical musings. His old cake mixers, scales, waffle irons, oilcans, lamps, and coffeepots eventually become the visual foundation for two-dimensional tableaux itching to become animated. However, Trautrimas ends his studio practice with the creation of different series of single, self-contained photographs—but these highly inventive living and industrial spaces are perfect environments for various cinematic plots if you ask me.

What Trautrimas does in his studio he does very carefully and thoughtfully, and the moody ambience of each high-rise or factory is a curious amalgam of humor, fantasies of scale, and obsessive attention to detail. His “post-apocalyptic twilight,” as he calls it, pervades each building situated in an equally pieced-together landscape, although everything appears as a seamless whole and there are no jarring fragments. I was told that the artist used fifteen thousand separate photographs to create the eighteen images in this show. That’s a lot of digital manipulation and yet these images don’t feel at all overworked—they look as if they arrived complete and perfect out of the head of Zeus. It is a treat to see photographs based on labor-intensive, computer-based processes that wind up eclipsing those very processes in favor of the arrived-at vision.

What saves Trautrimas’s works from being a series of one-liners is their coherency of mood, impeccable manufacture, and the wry sensibility embedded in each alteration of the real. This work totters on the brink of the highly probable and the devoutly-to-be-wished-for. In some ways, Western civilization is already there, living in these impersonal but interestingly articulated spaces and structural tours de force.

The artist’s apartment complexes and industrial parks may be futuristic in tone, but they all feel part of the lineage of Jerni Utzon who designed the Sydney Opera House; Eero Saarinen of the TWA Terminal at JFK; Frank Gehry of Guggenheim Bilbao fame; and almost any project by Zaha Hadid. This is part of the intellectual fun that comes with looking at Trautrimas’s work: His photographs begin with a tease and end up with an aura of spiraling beauty. Heads up, you architectural superstars! There is another one in your midst deconstructing your virtuosic capacities for rendering space, light, and volume in this unsettling era of late-capitalism.

—DIANE ARMITAGE

David Trautrimas, *The Measurement District*, archival pigment print, 28" x 42", 2008

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