

David Cotterrell: Postcards from Herrick (v)

Date: 14th August 2009

Materials:

35mm Kodak Ektapro Carousel Projector, Kodak Dimmer Unit, Digitally printed transparency film, HD Projector, Reversa Eclipse Rear-Projection screen.

An experimental montage of analogue and digital projection.

On my second visit to Afghanistan, I traveled free of military escort via the UN to the north of the country and, unlike higher-value NGO personnel, was able to travel relatively autonomously on foot and by taxi through civilian areas. The contrast in view was enormous. Helmand (where I lived with the forces) and the Panjshir cannot be easily compared Afghanistan is a tribal and fragmented country with radically different levels of risk evident across its geography. However common elements were visible, in the nature of perimeters and boundaries installed to protect varying communities from the threats posed by one another.

There are two specific frameworks that remain pertinent for me: the limitation of perspective achieved through the vehicles and structures developed to protect fragile bodies from ordinance, and the proliferation of artificial barriers to divide landscapes and communities. For me, it was striking that within a single geographic location, the mode of arrival and symbolic references to community allegiance provided a robust and limiting set of parameters defining the nature and scope of my observational position.

These two conflicting views of a challenged and transitional landscape were combined in an attempt to articulate and contextualise the subject of my gaze, specifically the theatrical aesthetics of military trauma care and the disorientating banality of the transition from conflict to domestic aftermath experienced by casualties. It is interesting to compare the vast horizons of contested landscapes with the narrow frames that restrict views during conflict. During my second, civilian trip to Afghanistan, my peripheral vision was struggling to comprehend the majesty of an environment that had previously been so contained and restricted by defensive frames.

Postcards from Herrick schematically records the clichéd templates that affect the visual containment of experience in environments where communities view each other from behind armor and barriers. The project involves the juxtaposition of a 35mm slideshow of silhouetted viewing frames, continuously looping on a carousel, partially obscuring timebased documentation of landscape. The superimposition of the aesthetic frames of war (derived from the photographic record of my initial visit) continually shift the contextual reading of the landscape beyond. The work reveals the dominance of apertures, but in so doing, renders the vista itself uncertain.



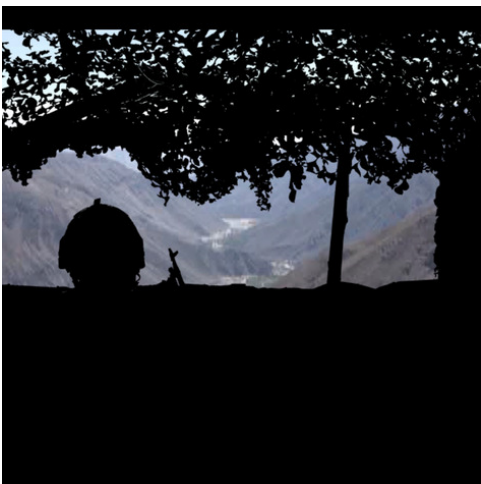
Postcards from Herrick (video still, detail) Credit: © David Cotterrell (2013)



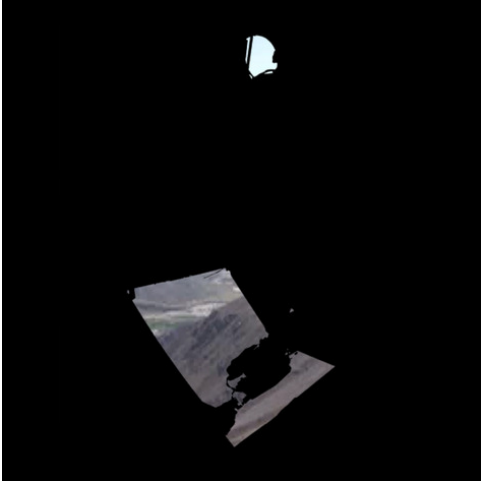
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