

Art in America

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EXHIBITION REVIEWS

SAM JURY STEPHEN HALLER

Ethereal, cinematic and literary in their affect, Sam Jury's digitally manipulated portraits and landscapes are infused with a mysterious play of figure, palette and light. The stilled moments she captures result from complex, multi-stepped processes involving staged videos and photography.

Permeated with a glowing energy, an outcome of its layered gestation, the 4-foot-square *A Thousand Pities III* (2007-08) presents the oddly bleary head and shoulders of a woman on a modulated blue background. The composition recalls the painted portraits of a diverse roster—Vermeer, Gerhard Richter, Odd Nerdrum—but this picture was created by projecting images of many people onto a head form painted white. Jury photographs the three-dimensional composite and further modifies it on the computer. Regarding the title, Jury has cited Virginia Woolf, who wrote in *A Room of One's Own*: "It would be a thousand pities if women wrote like men, or lived like men, or looked like men, for if two sexes are quite inadequate, considering the vastness and variety of the world, how should we manage with one only?"



Sam Jury: *Disjecta Membra 6*, 2008, digital print mounted on aluminum, 33 by 62 inches; at Stephen Haller

For other works, Jury stages scenes with figures in ambiguous situations and formidable landscapes. The 33-by-62 inch *Disjecta Membra 6* (2008)—Latin for fragments or scattered parts of a text—positions a single figure, wrapped head-to-toe in what seems to be white bandages, in the middle of an autumnal field. The body is twisted as if suspended or about to fall, and the gnarled trees of a barren orchard recall the dourness of an untended Northern landscape. The entire surface of the photograph is wildly infected with dark specks or shards, which bring to mind swarms of locusts, the fractured parts of a Cornelia Parker installation or dust on film, thereby underscoring the constructed quality of the image. *The Untroubled Blue* (2008), likewise staged and manipulated, shows a brown field under an expansive misty blue sky. A prone, wrapped figure lies near the horizon, solitary, seemingly struggling. In *After-*

land Series 006 (2009), diminutive white-clothed bodies appear in an orderly line, overwhelmed by the vastness of the surrounding nighttime scene. Continuing her orchestration of light, Jury bathes the scene in a cold strong radiance, an operatic effect that might suggest stadium lighting in a sports arena, the figures an assembly of athletes.

The exhibition also included two single-channel video projections that correspond in subject and style to the photographs: a small bandaged figure in an autumnal field and a large head undergoing metamorphosis. The latter, *All Things Being Equal 001* (2009), seemed to pulsate, beating and melting. In her first solo exhibition in New York, this U.K. artist investigated the relationship between photography, video and the history of painting with authoritative results.

—Edward Leffingwell