

Starry, Starry Night

by John Daquino

to: Night**Group Exhibition****Bertha and Karl Leubsdorf Art Gallery****68th Street & Lexington Avenue, West****Building Lobby, New York, NY 10021****September 25, 2008 - December 6, 2008**

In addition to the blockbuster exhibit currently at MOMA, curator

Joachim Pissarro, along with Hunter MA students Mara Hoberman and Julia Moreno, organized a companion show to his *Van Gogh and the Colors of the Night* that plays off our beloved Dutch Post-Impressionist's fascination with the night. *To: Night - Contemporary Representations of the Night* fills both Hunter's sprawling [Times Square Gallery](#) and the college's more elegant, midtown exhibition space, with works by over 40 international contemporary artists.

The show divides into a number of subcategories that explore a different interpretation of the night theme, ranging from the celestial to the menacing. Highlights include Thomas Ruff's large-scale photographs printed from appropriated scientific astrological imagery that, in the hands of Ruff, pits age-old romanticism against German photo-conceptualism. Another heavyweight of contemporary photography, Gregory Crewdson, also has one of his iconic photographs on view at the 68th street space. *Untitled (Penitent Girl)* depicts an enigmatic suburban drama à la David Lynch where a young woman in her underwear stands on the front lawn illuminated by her mother's car headlights, who looks disappointed and embarrassed by her daughter's erratic behavior.

Across town, in the Times Square Gallery, the tone is apocalyptic. The photographs of Juliane Eirich turn objects common to popular daytime beach destinations into desolate, haunting structures. In one of these panoramic images, we see an elevated lifeguard hut bearing a sign that reads "no lifeguard on duty," which normally does not carry much significance, but due to the emptiness of the scene and the darkness of the night, becomes a forecast of doom. In yet another haunting series of photographs, David Claerbout's work explores the mysteries of night, but in a way that I have never seen done before. In one of the many rooms in the Times Square Gallery, Claerbout built a room sealed of ambient light that houses four transparencies mounted on lightboxes. Once your eyes adjust to the total darkness, these vignettes of highway vegetation and woodland terrain feel more like ephemeral memories and less like tangible art objects.

However, not everything is darkness and gloom at the [Times Square Gallery](#). Not to miss is a video by Laurent Grasso that fills the space with a sensuous orange end-of-the-day glow, and an installation of hundreds of tiny beds positioned on the floor in a spiraling vortex, made by the New York artist, Susan Graham.



Images: Gregory Crewdson, *Untitled Penitent Girl*; Thomas Ruff, *Untitled*. Courtesy Hunter College.

Posted by [John Daquino](#) on 10/26/08

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