

ARTFORUM

Pipo Nguyen-duy

SAM LEE GALLERY

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Ring Around, 2004, chromogenic print, 45 x 60". From the series "East of Eden," 2002-

Pipo Nguyen-duy's sweeping photographic series "East of Eden," 2002-, registers the complex psychological and political anxieties affecting American communities. The rich colors and idealized beauty of Nguyen-duy's landscapes are inspired in part by Hudson River School paintings, but each is distinguished by an unlikely intrusion: a marching band pauses in the forest, a shopping cart rests on the snow. In *Ring Around*, 2004, the Crayola-bright colors of children's clothing pop beneath a leaden sky like colorful bits of refuse, but the children's faces, and most of their bodies, are obscured by long, tramped-on grasses. The mysterious and potentially nightmarish luminosity that characterizes this image pervades Nguyen-duy's works, giving them an otherworldly sensibility. Like other artists who stage their seemingly naturalistic photographs, such as Jeff Wall or Gregory Crewdson, Nguyen-duy dramatizes the everyday. Like the uneasiness he explores, all but the most surreal alterations are difficult to pinpoint, barely grazing the surface of each environment. Nguyen-duy was raised in Vietnam and emigrated to the United States at the age of thirteen; this series draws memories of childhood in a war-torn country as reflected by and refracted through the current climate of uncertainty.

--Annie

Buckley

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