**Eric LoPresti: Center-Surround**  
Collection CAE2006

**Introduction/Abstract**  
*Center-Surround* by artist Eric LoPresti is a multi-channel video that juxtaposes the intimacy of Aikido hand-to-hand martial arts practice with the impersonal violence of weapons of mass destruction. Comprised of two synchronized videos, a card naming a specific nuclear explosion appears at precisely the same time as an Aikido randori breakfall.

**Biographical Note: Eric LoPresti**  
Eric LoPresti holds a BA in Cognitive Science from the University of Rochester and an MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art. He makes artwork about deserts, nuclear weapons, and color. His paintings and digital works juxtapose abstract elements with representations of the vast landscapes of the American west, tracking cultural representations of conflict and beauty within our transforming ecology. He considers his work to fall into the painterly tradition of the *apocalyptic sublime*, and to explore how our lives are shaped by trauma and aesthetics.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Superbloom* at New Mexico State University (NM), *An Ocean of Light* at Burning in Water (NYC), *Bloom* at Elizabeth Houston Gallery (NYC), Blueprint Paintings at University of Rochester (NY), *No Blue Skies* at Kunsthalle Galapagos (NYC) and *Test Site* at the National Atomic Test Museum, part of the Smithsonian Institution (Las Vegas). A winner of the Faber Birren Foundation Award and the Miami Young Painters Award, LoPresti has been interviewed on international video by Reuters and the Washington Post, and his work has received mentions in *The New York Times*, *Art in America*, *Artforum.com*, *NY Arts*, *ArtLog.com*, *Nature*, *The Denver Post*, *The Seattle Times*, *Vegas Seven Magazine* and the *Village Voice*. He is currently working on Center-Surround, a multi-channel video partially funded by a grant via the Carnegie Corporation, to be shown in 2020 at Koki Arts, Tokyo, Japan. LoPresti lives in Brooklyn and practices aikido at the New York Aikikai.

**Scope and Content**  
*Center-Surround* is a multi-channel video juxtaposing a stream of a multiple-person martial arts practice with an animation of the name and date of every nuclear weapons explosion to date. Looping every two hours, Center-Surround uses the intimacy of hand-to-hand combat to reframe the impersonal violence of weapons of mass destruction.

The first video shows a group of *aikido* practitioners continuously sparring and throwing each other onto mats. They are practicing *randori*, a stylized free-style exercise in which multiple opponents attack in waves. In aikido, a modern martial art that grew out of the post-WWII Japan, the defender avoids brute force and instead respond with movement, creativity and empathy for their opponent. Nonetheless, aikido randori is quite vigorous as each opponent is thrown onto the mat their body makes the distinctive ‘slap’ sound of a *breakfall*.

On the opposing wall, a second video shows a succession of colored cards. Each card marks the name and date a nuclear explosion, starting from the 1945 Trinity Tests, Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings and each of the 2,427 nuclear weapons tests that lead to the present.

The two videos are synchronized such that each card appears precisely at the time of a breakfall in the video. The ‘slap’ sounds propagate through the gallery like a soft thunderclap, while the colored cards infuse the...
gallery with light. Center-Surround loops every two hours, which is how long it takes the performers to represent each detonation as a breakfall.

Expansive in scope and minimal in style, Center-Surround is an empathy-building meditation on the apocalyptic sublime. The juxtaposed videos physically embody a level of violence which is usually experienced in the abstract: world-shattering apocalypse. Using martial artists to metaphorically re-enact the nuclear arms race within a stylized framework, Center-Surround invites viewers to feel, in a small way, each of these terrifying weapons, not as abstractions or cinematic fictions, but as complex interactions between very real human beings. The artist, Eric LoPresti, is a practitioner of the martial art, aikido, and is of American nationality, however, he hopes that his appreciation of the practice can be seen through the artwork.

Materials include concept design drawings, floorplans, computer screen snapshots, production documents, digital images, and press materials.

This archive is currently in process.