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Images Take on Haunting New Life

By Alan G. Artner
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Josh Azzarella: The artist makes more than 70 years of historical events live again in an unforeseen manner through his hauntingly manipulated photographs and videos on display at the Kavi Gupta Gallery.

The artist has worked with famous images of everything from the death of a militiaman in the Spanish Civil War to protests in Tiananmen Square and the destruction of the World Trade Center. In all cases, he has removed or blurred the central defining incident while in the videos extending time and muting sound.

The result for those who recall the originals is like what an avid listener receives from music once hearing has begun to fail. The mind "fills in" what is missing from what remains. So, absence becomes an asset, allowing the experience of sensation without the boredom of its conveyance.

But what happens with viewers who don't recall the landing on Omaha Beach or Walter Cronkite's announcement of the death of President John F. Kennedy? Presumably they are haunted enough by Azzarella's alterations to catch a whiff of the scenes' momentousness that will lead them back to the originals. Art gives back in direct proportion to how much you bring to it. Just how much is necessary here is yet to be determined.