

Esther Schipper

Hemispheres

David Claerbout

April 28 – May 28, 2022



David Claerbout, **The Close**, 2022.
Still © David Claerbout

Esther Schipper is pleased to present **Hemispheres**, David Claerbout's first solo exhibition with the gallery, which will open for Gallery Weekend Berlin. On view will be two large-scale video projections: **The Close**, 2022, and **Aircraft (F.A.L.)**, 2015-21. The title of the exhibition refers to the two sides of the brain, which each process information differently, yet complement each other's functions to create consciousness; likewise, the two works presented in the exhibition have disparate themes, but together represent reciprocal parts of Claerbout's practice.

The Close brings together a reconstruction of amateur footage made around 1920 and a digital 3D rendering of that footage. The silent scene, which shows barefoot children in between hurried passers-by in a brick-walled one-way alley—known as a close in English—briefly appears to get stuck during the portrayal of one of the children. As the film focuses on a small child delivering a rare smile into the camera, the apparatus freezes again, this time for an uncomfortably long period. Moments pass until the beginning of a very slow zoom-in on the grainy still frame. Imperceptibly, the grainy celluloid has transitioned into a highly detailed, quasi-technical portrait, objectifying face, eyes and body. As the film freezes and then holds the small child enraptured, zooming in and around it, singing voices set in. The music, a special recording of Arvo Pärt's 2004 acapella composition **Da Pacem Domine** for 24 singers, brings an incantatory quality, and introduces an element of sensorial cohesion to the viewer's desire for an authentic representation of the past. Intended as a short, emotional history of the camera, **The Close** reflects on what Claerbout calls "dark optics": a profound if chaotic recalibration of commonly held beliefs about the image, information and language, which is currently taking place.

The hangar scene depicted in **Aircraft (F.A.L.)** is a hybrid representation that creates the illusion of a photographic reality. The scene was created from a camera recording of an empty factory hall, which was added onto with the aid of an elaborate 3D model. The airplane in **Aircraft (F.A.L.)**, an object designed to overcome gravity, is seen resting on an improvised wooden scaffolding, even as the ability of this structure to support it appears in doubt. The gleaming aircraft looks simultaneously unfinished and redundant. A human presence functions as the viewers' avatar in this phantasmatic space: as two guards sit, shift position, and also circle the plane, their steps echo through the hall, adding a sense of location and direction. In addition, their ennui introduces an element of time passing and, paradoxically, suspense. Familiar with cinematic tropes, the viewer searches for clues and finds glitches: a table that disappears in another view, a missing reflection.

Similarly to the experience of watching **The Close**, David Claerbout plays with our expectations, subtly employing the visual tropes we have learned to associate with different media to destabilize our trust in what we think we are seeing.

Originally trained in painting and drawing, David Claerbout is known for his works using photography, video, digital technology and sound. His practice revolves around the concepts of temporality and duration, images suspended in a tension between stillness and movement, as well as the experience of dilated time and memory. David Claerbout says that he “sculpts in duration. The definition of duration is different from that of time: duration is not an independent state-like time, but an in-between state.” With his large-scale video-based installations, the artist makes the viewer a part of the work: whether by establishing a connection between the projected images on the screen and the audience, or by creating a spatial relationship between the screen itself and the exhibition space, or simply, by allowing a process by which “a single scene can develop into another by the presence of the spectator and a bit of time.”

A parallel exhibition by David Claerbout, titled **Dark Optics**, will be on view at Sean Kelly Gallery in New York from April 27 through June 4, 2022

David Claerbout was born in 1969 in Kortrijk, Belgium. He studied at the National Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp and at the Rijksakademie of Visual Arts in Amsterdam. He lives and works in Antwerp and Berlin.

In 2007, David Claerbout was awarded the Will-Grohmann-Preis of the Berlin Akademie der Künste, and in 2010, he received the Peill-Preis of the Günther-Peill-Stiftung. He participated in the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program from 2002 to 2003.

The artist has exhibited extensively. Selected recent solo exhibitions include: Kunstmuseum Basel | Gegenwart (2020); **David Claerbout**, De Pont Museum, Tilburg (2021); **David Claerbout: Unseen Sound**, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow (2021); **David Claerbout, Olympia**, Samstag Museum of Art, Adelaide (2020) and Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague (2020); **David Claerbout: Laziness of Action**, Kunst Museum Winterthur, Winterthur (2020); **David Claerbout: The Pure Necessity**, Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art, Zuoz (2019–20); **David Claerbout**, Les Abattoirs, Toulouse (2018–19); **David Claerbout**, Kunsthau Bregenz, Bregenz (2018); **David Claerbout**, Talbot Rice Gallery, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh (2018); **Olympia**, Schaulager, Laurent Stiftung, Münchenstein (2017); **David Claerbout: KING and The Pure Necessity**, Pinacoteca de São Paulo, Sao Paulo (2017); **Olympia**, KINDL–Centre for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2016); **Future**, De Pont Museum, Tilburg (2016); and **Die reine Notwendigkeit**, Städel Museum, Frankfurt (2016).

David Claerbout's work is held by following collections: Centre Pompidou, Paris; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; SFMOMA, San Francisco; De Pont Museum, Tilburg; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin; ARC / Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris; MMK–Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; Städel Museum, Frankfurt; Emmanuel Hoffmann Stiftung, Basel; Pinakothek der Moderne, München; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

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