

1. DAVID CLAERBOUT FIVE HOURS, FIFTY DAYS, FIFTY YEARS

18.10.2025 - 22.02.2026

Guest curator: Ory Dessau Curators: Christian Mosar, assisted by Charlotte Masse

For his solo exhibition at Konschthal Esch, his first one in Luxembourg, Belgian artist **David Claerbout** (born 1969, lives and works in Antwerp and Berlin) chose the title *Five* Hours, Fifty Days, Fifty Years. Implying the accumulation of time conducted by his practice as if it were scientific research or a life cycle, the title points to **the scope of the exhibition**, which brings together a condensed yet layered selection of both recent and earlier works by the artist. Ranging from experimental cinema and video installations to digital animation and generative moving images, Claerbout's art practice is a relentless exploration of the status, function, and impact of the technical image. However, his works are not entirely devoted to exposing the underlying mechanism of photographic imagery in the digital era, nor are they exclusively determined by the repercussions of its circulation through and between communication systems. Rather, Claerbout's project processes images as a synonym of vision, or more accurately, as a synonym of the diffusion of vision, memory, and hallucination established by and in his practice. Mistaken at times for being an artist celebrating advanced technologies, a high-tech artist, so to speak, Claerbout's primary interest lies in the ways we perceive images on a cognitive-sensorial-neurological level. His motivation is to create what he once named 'the photographic madness' through technical imagery diffusing vision, memory, and hallucination, and to reconcile it with a 'casual, daily, innocent visual perception'.

Claerbout's practice reaches states of madness by destabilising the distinction between stillness and motion (as seen, among other works, in *The Close* [2022]), inside and outside (e.g., in *Breathing Bird* [2012]), real documentation and artificial reconstruction (demonstrated in a work like *Olympia* [*The real time disintegration into ruins of the Berlin Olympic stadium over the course of a thousand years*] [begun 2016]), appropriation and production (e.g., in *Aircraft* [F.A.L.] [2015–2021]), and repetition and difference (as is the case with the work *The pure necessity* [2016]).

Claerbout's ability to transcend and undermine dichotomies and oppositions informs most of his works. The most recent one is *The woodcarver and the forest* (2025), whose second chapter debuts at Konschthal Esch.

2. DAVID CLAERBOUT

David Claerbout (b. 1969) has been developing a unique, selfreflexive approach to the production, presentation, and perception of images since the early 1990s. Claerbout's interest in the merging of the human and the technological (and vice versa) is a thread that underlies his practice, informing his images, films, installations, and drawings.

Claerbout's work has been the subject of many solo exhibitions in leading art institutions in Europe and America, e.g., Wiels in Brussels, Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), and Schaulager in Basel, among other institutions.

3. Exhibited works

Wildfire (meditation on fire)

Wildfire (meditation on fire), 2019–2020 Single-channel video projection, colour, stereo audio, 24 min In collaboration with Musea Brugge Courtesy Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation, on permanent loan to the Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel





Wildfire (meditation on fire) is a 3D rendering simulating a travelling shot of a panning camera hovering across a meadow bordering a forest, and between and over the trees in it. At a certain point the picturesque scene gradually shifts to a muted infernal event when wildfire begins to spread throughout the forest, erasing everything under clouds of smoke and flames rising to the sky. The simulated movement of the camera does not cease in the face of fire, indicating that there was no direct photography (or photographer) involved in the making of the film. The removal of the physical human factor from the making of the film corresponds to its content – a situation in which all life is being eliminated – as well as to the lifeless, non-sensual aspect of the digital technology with which it was produced. It is as if the subject matter of the film dictated its means of production, but also the other way round, derived from it.

Wildfire marks Claerbout's re-evaluation of the camera and the emergence of camera-less forms of image production, introducing his realm of 'dark optics'. Wildfire is a reminder of the climate crisis the world is in, and how the greenhouse effect of heat trapped in the atmosphere, preventing it from escaping into space, is enhanced by manmade enterprises producing additional greenhouse gases that create the conditions for catastrophic wildfires constantly to combust. Though largely ignited as if by itself, a wildfire is not a mere natural disaster, but a culmination of chain reactions accelerated by human activities. It is a phenomenon showing how humanity would eventually annihilate itself.

Oil workers

Oil workers (from the Shell company of Nigeria) returning home from work, caught in torrential rain, 2013 Single-channel video projection, HD animation, colour, silent, endless Courtesy Pinault Collection



A subtle commentary on filmic travelogues, *Oil workers* is a collective portrait of a group of men seeking shelter from monsoon rain. The work zooms out of and into a pool of water forming on a road under a bridge where the group found temporary shelter. The movement from the closely observed pool of water to the group of men and back to the pool of water sheds an unsettling light on the attempt to produce a collective portrait taken from a safe distance amidst an extreme state of things, pointing to the proximity of the real, suppressed reality of the climate crisis, but also to the industrial pollution, the exhaustion of resources, and the exploitation of labour characterising the operations of the Shell Company of Nigeria in particular, and of Corporate Capitalism's ventures in Africa in general.

Aircraft (F.A.L.)

Aircraft (F.A.L.), 2015–2021
Single-channel video projection, black & white, stereo audio, endless
Courtesy the artist and galleries Pedro Cera, Annet Gelink, Sean Kelly, Greta Meert, Esther Schipper, Rüdiger Schöttle



Aircraft (F.A.L.) is a black-and-white single-channel video centred on the motif of a stationary aircraft inside a space simulating an intersection of a hangar, assembly line, maintenance centre, and a military aviation museum. The aircraft in Aircraft (F.A.L.) is many things at the same time, giving the viewer of the work an ambiguous point of view, a temporal disorientation. On the one hand, it looks new, shiny, traceless, and as such, belongs to the present. On the other hand, it looks vintage, denoting (and dissolving) the distance of time from which we observe it. Though indoors, the aircraft is in the air, as if hovering low, yet it does not fly but is suspended on a wooden scaffolding, which appears as an active docking system and also a museal display device. However, the circular panning of the camera around the aircraft sets it in motion, articulating how its shape propels it forward, even at rest, and can evolve, in keeping

The aeroplane in *Aircraft (F.A.L.)* is a re-visualised airlifter processed from an early 1950s black-and-white photograph of an aircraft manufacturing plant in Chicago. It was scanned into a 3D model and then digitally reconstructed with some modifications, e.g. without the original insignia painted on the fuselage, relating it to the U.S. Air Force.

The Stack

The Stack, 2002 Single-channel video projection, colour, silent, 36 min loop Courtesy Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau München



In *The Stack*, a homeless person is sleeping camouflaged, while behind him, the setting rays of the sun glow through an array of concrete pillars. The magnitude of this event stands in sharp contrast with the narrative of the sleeper, who functions as a compositional element within the construction of the image, so that the work indicates and reproduces the avoidance of addressing homelessness as a social problem.

Mantova Pigeon

Mantova Pigeon, 2021
Single-channel video, colour, stereo audio, 5 min 10 sec loop
Courtesy the artist and galleries Pedro Cera, Annet Gelink, Sean Kelly, Greta Meert, Esther Schipper, Rüdiger Schöttle



In the video work *Mantova Pigeon* Claerbout focuses on the figure of a pigeon resting upon the balcony's balustrade of the façade of the Torre dell'Orologio on the Piazza delle Erbe in Mantua, Northern Italy. Surprisingly reminiscent of the posture of Mussolini during his speeches from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia in Rome, the pigeon inverts the order of things. Instead of being perceived through the lens of the human as an anthropomorphic figure, it becomes the lens through which we might perceive the images of the fascist leader on the balcony as an avian figure.

The *Mantova Pigeon* is 'in' the architecture as if it were an organic element in the landscape, reminding us that the distinction between nature and culture, the animal and the human, takes the point of view of human culture.

Breathing Bird

Breathing Bird, 2012
Two-channel video on flat screens (19 inches), colour, silent, 30 min loop
Courtesy the artist and galleries Pedro Cera, Annet Gelink, Sean Kelly, Greta Meert, Esther Schipper, Rüdiger Schöttle



For Claerbout, every image is at once inside and outside, an act of internalisation and externalisation. The two-channel video *Breathing Bird* accentuates this interchangeability and simultaneity of poles in his practice. The work consists of two identical lightbox-like flat screens displaying the same scene from two sides. In the scene, two birds of similar size, one lime-green feathered and one ginger-orange feathered, are facing each other on either side of a windowpane. On the left screen, the image is seen from the outside, and on the right screen, from the inside. On the windowpane, the breath of the lime-green bird leaves a small 'stain' of mini frozen droplets on the outer glass surface, which is also seen from the inside and therefore could be ascribed to the ginger orange bird. Despite the different colours of the two birds and the opposite directions of their positions, the images might seem at first glance like reflections of one bird, or an ironic take-off of such reflections.



Cat and Bird in Peace

Cat and Bird in Peace, 1996 [Chat et oiseau en paix]
Single-channel video, monitor installation, colour, silent, 5 min 33 sec loop
Courtesy Cera-collection at M Leuven © the artist



Cat and Bird in Peace is like an experiment featuring a cat and a bird held together in a cage. In contrast to our (human) expectations foreseeing the danger of such cohabitation, the cat does not eat the bird, and the bird is not afraid of the cat, but each ignores the other, due to which the scenery amounts to an anticlimactic old home movie that in different circumstances could have gone viral on Instagram.

The pure necessity

The pure necessity, 2016
Single-channel video projection, 2D animation, colour, stereo audio, 50 min
Courtesy the artist and galleries Pedro Cera, Annet Gelink, Sean Kelly, Greta Meert, Esther Schipper, Rüdiger Schöttle



The pure necessity is grafted onto Walt Disney's 1967 animation film The Jungle Book, which is based on Rudyard Kipling's 1894 book of the same name. Nevertheless, the work does not appropriate Disney's imagery, but to some extent 'restores' it. In Claerbout's version of The Jungle Book, the animals are, again, animals. Claerbout took away the figure of Mowgli and all spoken dialogues and dancing. The animals are no longer humanised, they confront the viewer with a slowed-down, wild reality that is indifferent to the human gaze, like a nature movie. They reappear in their natural form, one could say. The film is devoid of the carnivalesque energy of the original. It features idle boredom, and no exceptional activity or gestures: 'In a way, I wanted to suck the life out of *The Jungle Book* and remove most of the animation, the energy, all the sugar, so to speak. To bring it to a state of exhaustion. I removed all the protein the movie was feeding generations after generations of viewers. I slowed down the rhythm, the tempo of the sequences. The result is uncanny, like looking at a grainy reproduction of something you thought you knew but no longer recognize, something on the verge of defamiliarization.'

The Close

The Close, 2022
Single-channel video projection, black & white, 6-channel surround sound, 15 min
In collaboration with Concertgebouw Brugge and Vlaams Radiokoor
Courtesy the artist and galleries Pedro Cera, Annet Gelink, Sean Kelly, Greta Meert, Esther Schipper, Rüdiger Schöttle



The title of the work denotes a dead-end street, a cul-de-sac. Partly alluding to the city symphony films of the early twentieth century and the neo-realist cinema of the 1940s, the work is based on found footage from the 1920s and a 3D rendering of it. Lacking a focal point or a main protagonist, the silent street scenery shows passersby, a street sweeper, and a group of unattended children of different ages playing around a wheelbarrow that is being pulled. The overall poverty and neglect are evident, lending the film the quality of a social document representing the un- and underrepresented. At one point, after moving between each of the playing children, the film focuses on a specific child, isolating it from the rest and freezing its movement. Then, a gradual close-up begins towards the child's face. As the camera reaches the face, it encircles the child's head 360 degrees. Concurrently, the film's silence is interrupted by a spatial recording of twentyfour singers performing Arvo Pärt's vocal piece *Da Pacem Domine*, forcing the viewer to move around in correlation with the panning camera and the spatial arrangement of the music. The gradual close-up into the frame turns the work's amalgamation of different times into a space extending to, and united with, the architectural exhibition space of the projection.



The woodcarver and the forest

The woodcarver and the forest, 2025 Single-channel video projection, colour, stereo audio, approx. 20 hrs In collaboration with Gaasbeek Castle and Konschthal Esch Courtesy the artist and galleries Pedro Cera, Annet Gelink, Sean Kelly, Greta Meert, Esther Schipper, Rüdiger Schöttle



The performative film installation *The woodcarver and the forest* is Claerbout's most recent work, conveying the artist's continuous research into the consequences, contradictions, and paradoxes of the 'return to nature' trends in a cultural landscape of oversaturation and immersive mediation. The work revolves around two figures: one of a solitary woodcarver and another of a forest serving as his limited resource. The woodcarver is a bearded, pale, white man dressed as a lumberjack. He spends his days inside a neo-brutalist villa defined by a glazed floor-to-ceiling window wall facing the forest. From dusk to dawn, his sole, ceaseless activity is carving wooden spoons out of the forest's tree logs. However, we do not see him felling trees, cutting them into logs, and carrying them inside. He does not approach the outside but sits behind the window's glass screen, carving. The window is also a video screen, blocking off, protecting from, and filtering the world behind it. The film constantly shifts between the inside and the outside, tracing the hardly discernible depletion of the forest and the processing of its trees into wooden spoons, until it is cleared. The work presents three days, in three different timespans, each time one day, in the course of which the forest is cleared as logs are processed into wooden spoons.





KONSCHTHAL ESCH

Olympia

Olympia (The real time disintegration into ruins of the Berlin Olympic stadium over the course of a thousand years), begun 2016
Single-channel real-time projection, colour, silent, 1000 years
With support from VAF Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds
Courtesy Collection M HKA / Collection Flemish Community



Olympia is a computer-based reconstruction of Berlin's Olympic Stadium, originally designed by Werner March for the 1936 Olympic Games. The work transmits a real-time picture of the place without the assistance of a camera, but through a translation of real-time data about the weather, the position of the sun, the amount of light, the percentage of humidity in the air, and the conditions of the vegetation on the premises, at any given moment. The work is programmed to last for a thousand years, and it continues unabated even when not on display. To process the collected data, Claerbout employs a 3D computer graphics game engine enabling real-time rendering. The reliance on a game engine fits the object of the work – a stadium for sports games – and remoulds Claerbout's role in parameters of gaming moves. Olympia not only exploits digital technologies of image generation, but its form also reflects the digital era, the age of live streaming by and through communication networks and devices, of input/output, of simulations detached from objects, and of modifiable images. Olympia's reconstruction of the Olympic Stadium is spectral. It revisualises the site through geographically precise photographic scans of the stadium as an unattended, desolate, and unmaintained location.

Backwards Growing Tree

Backwards Growing Tree, 2023
Single-channel video projection, colour, stereo audio, 5 years
Courtesy the artist and galleries Pedro Cera, Annet Gelink, Sean Kelly, Greta Meert, Esther Schipper, Rüdiger Schöttle



Backwards Growing Tree is a digital rendering of a solitary tree in the countryside near Salsomaggiore Terme in the Italian province of Parma. Meticulously crafted by hand, the tree is observed over a period of 5 years.

In an endeavour to defy the unidirectional flow of time, *Backwards Growing Tree* acts as a mirror. Much like the reflection in a looking glass, the natural processes in the work are reversed.

As underlined by the artist, in *Backwards Growing Tree* 'the fundamental laws of nature remain impervious to this temporal inversion: whether the wind is blowing in reverse or forward, whether rain falls up or down, and whether clouds progress backward or forward, our perception remains unaltered, demanding a deeper, more contemplative engagement with the artwork. It is only by observing *Backwards Growing Tree* over time that we can truly grasp an intimate understanding of it, resonating with the rhythmic cadence of our own breathing bodies.'

Sunrise

Sunrise, 2009 Single-channel video projection, colour, stereo audio, 18 min Courtesy De Pont Museum, Tilburg, The Netherlands



In the early hours of the morning, when it is still dark outside, a maid sets to work getting the house ready for a new day. Once finished with her task, she leaves the quiet house whose occupants have not yet woken, closes the door and rides off on her bicycle. To the sounds of Rachmaninov's song *Vocalise*, she heads into the early morning sunlight.

'While the entire first part of the film is set in darkness,' states Claerbout, 'it is possible to distinguish the contours of actions and architecture in simple geometric compositions, a feature allowed by the minimalist manner in which the house was built. The camera is using the architecture's functionalism to "imprison" the choreography of the maid's movements in between surfaces and lines, a dominant form throughout the entire first part of the film. *Sunrise* leaves us with conflicting feelings about "the end" of the film. Although filmed as a classical end sequence it feels like a beginning.'

Bordeaux Piece

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Bordeaux Piece, 2004
Single-channel video projection, colour, dual mono over speakers, 13 hrs 43 min
Courtesy Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris
The work was acquired in 2005 by the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris.



'With Bordeaux Piece,' states Claerbout, 'I have for the first time written dialogues, with the help of the actor Josse de Pauw, who plays the role of the father. Each shot lasts between two and three minutes, and there are seven shots forming the story, a bit like in a fiction short. The plot did not matter to me; I needed a succession of photographs, quickly seen situations, and I chose the story of Le Mépris [Contempt] by Jean-Luc Godard. It could have been a different story. I wanted a fairly tense dramatic action evoked by very flat dialogue. I filmed it so that it doesn't really work. This is how I proceeded; we filmed each shot from 5:30 am, just as there is light enough to see, until 10 pm, just after dusk, when you can no longer see anything. The filming took place between mid-July and mid-August. We took exactly the same shot every ten minutes as the light changed over a single day, 70 shots a day in all. Then I edited all the scenes of the story filmed at 5:30; then those filmed ten minutes later, and so on. In the final edit the script is enacted 70 times, identically each time, and each time in a constant light: a light that corresponds to the same time of day, but that is taken from different days. The film lasts 13 hours 43 minutes. Thus with Bordeaux Piece I didn't make any attempt to extend or reinterpret the field of cinematographic fiction. I pretended to make a short, a work of fiction, and an edit against a background structured by light. This "background" gradually moves to the forefront, and cancels out the story, the opposite of what happens in the cinema. It is the light that organizes everything. You may be interested in the story the first time, perhaps the second, but it is already becoming a kind of rather disappointing canvas, a motif lending rhythm to the real issue in Bordeaux Piece, which is to give form to duration by means of natural light.'

Press kit

Travel

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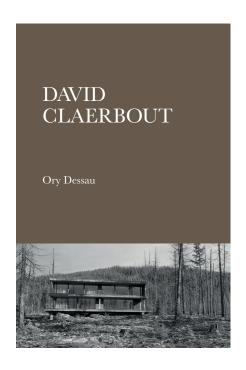
Travel, 1996-2013 Single-channel video, HD animation, colour, stereo audio, 12 min Courtesy Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris



According to Claerbout, the idea for this work dates back to 1996, 'when I became interested in relaxation music, especially music used for medical purposes. The source for *Travel* was a work titled Relaxation profonde composed in the mid-1980s by Éric Breton, whose therapeutic music reduces stress by gradually slowing down the rhythm, ultimately inducing sleep monophony (droning sound), from which the patient is woken up with a lighter sound and exits the state of relaxation accompanied by something like an ascending finale. One might expect the images that this music produces to be highly predictable. After all, if sleep is the purpose of the music, surprises would be counterproductive. And yet, while the visual part of the film follows the audio part like a servant, there is something about the end of the film that discreetly disobeys the ascending finale in the music. It is as if an uplifting and a depressing finale co-exist, with not the slightest conflict in sight, nevertheless preventing a conclusion of the film.'

Press kit

L PUBLICATION



DAVID CLAERBOUT

Text Ory Dessau Ed. Christian Mosar Cologne 2025

David Claerbout is one of today's leading artists working with moving images. His artistic practice is less a celebration of high technology and rather a probing inquiry into perception and how images are experienced on a cognitive and sensorial level. In this book, curator, author, and Claerbout expert Ory Dessau highlights the scope of Claerbout's artistic practice and thinking and presents an in-depth analysis of the works featured in the solo exhibition *Five Hours*, *Fifty Days*, *Fifty Years* at Konschthal Esch (Luxembourg), on view October 2025 to February 2026. This book provides a valuable introduction to a moving, complex and extraordinary oeuvre.

13,5 x 20 cm. 160 p. with 39 photos (17 in colour), clothbound – English and German.

ISBN: 978-3-75330-940-8

Price: 28 euros

5. EXHIBITION FRAMEWORK PROGRAM

Every Thursday | 6:30 – 7:15 pm | **Regular Guided Tour**

On David Claerbout's exhibition | DE/LU - FR - EN (depending on date) | Free, no registration required

Every Sunday | 3:00 - 3:45 pm | Regular Guided Tour

On David Claerbout's exhibition | DE/LU - FR - EN (depending on date) | Free, no registration required

25.10 - 23.11.2025 | 11:00 am - 5:00 pm | **Walk-in Workshop**

Flip the Frame - Flipbook Workshop | Ongoing sessions depending on availability | LU/FR/DE/EN

08:11:2025 | 4:00 - 5:00 pm | **Tour in Motion - Kids**

(8-12 years, without adults) | Exploring Time Through the Body | With Serge Daniel Kaboré | FR *

09.11.2025 | 4:00 - 5:00 pm | **Tour in Motion - Family**

(6-12 years, child/adult pairs) | Exploring Time Through the Body | With Serge Daniel Kaboré | FR *

23.11.2025 | 3:00 - 5:00 pm | Art Talk | Five Hours, Fifty Days, Fifty Years: David Claerbout

Suspended Time: The Becoming of the Image in David Claerbout

At Luxembourg Art Week | With David Claerbout, Ory Dessau, Christian Mosar | EN

06-07:12:2025 | 2:00 - 6:00 pm | **Masterclass**

Recording, Processing, Projecting | With Léa Giordano | FR/EN *

06-07:12:2025 | 9:00 am - 1:00 pm | **Teacher Training**

Recording, Processing, Projecting | **With Léa Giordano** | LU | in collaboration with IFEN

28.12.2025 | 4:00 - 5:00 pm | **Tour in Motion - Kids**

(8–12 years) | Exploring Time Through the Body | With Serge Daniel Kaboré | FR *

03.01.2026 | 9:00 am-12:00 pm / 2:00-5:00 pm | **Kids Workshop**

(9-12/6-8 years) Capturing Time Through Photography | **With Neckel Scholtus** | LU (FR/DE/EN mediation possible) *

04.01.2026 | 4:00 - 5:00 pm | **Tour in Motion - Family**

(6-12 years) | Exploring Time Through the Body | With Serge Daniel Kaboré | FR *

10.01.2026 | 10:00 am - 12:00 pm | **Teacher Training**

Sculpting Sound - Sound Effects Workshop | With Lampros Tsaganas | DE | in collaboration with IFEN *

11.01.2026 | 10:00 am - 12:00 pm | **Family Workshop**

Sculpting Sound – Sound Effects Workshop | **With Lampros Tsaganas** | DE (FR/LU/EN mediation possible) *

22.01.2026 | 6:00 - 11:00 pm | Takeover Thursday | by Mnemozine *

24.01.2026 | 10:00 am-12:30 pm & 2:00-4:30 pm | **Teacher Training**

Manual Timelapse | With Léa Giordano | Lu | In collaboration with IFEN *

25.01.2026 | 10:00 am-12:30 pm & 2:00-4:30 pm | **Teens Workshop**

(12-15 years) Manual Timelapse | With Léa Giordano | FR/EN *

 $06.02.2026\,|\,10:\!00\,am$ – $12:\!00\,pm\,|\,$ Masterclass for Young Artists and Students *

With David Claerbout

07.02.2026 | 9:30 am - 6:00 pm | **David Claerbout and the Thinking Image | Symposium on the work of David Claerbout |** organized by Ory Dessau and Christian Mosar *

22.02.2026 | 11:00 am - 6:00 pm | **Walk-in Workshop**

Editing Found Footage | With Léa Giordano | LU/FR/DE/EN

*subscription required

Find the full programme at konschthal.lu

(Please note that dates are subject to change)

All press kits can be downloaded at: konschthal.lu/presse

All visuals from this kit are available upon request. Photos © David Claerbout

Photos of the exhibition will be available upon request starting from 24.10.

PRESS CONTACT

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Free entrance

WED11:00 - 18:00

THU 11:00 - 20:00

FRI/SAT/SUN 11:00 - 18:00

MON/TUE closed