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Carbonell, Frederica Barrios. "Exhibition Review: David Claerbout's Dark Optics,"
Musée. May 19, 2022.



David Claerbout, Still from *The Close*, 2022, Single channel video projection, black & white, 6 channel surround sound, 15 min, 21 sec. © David Claerbout, Courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly, New York

Celebrated Belgian artist David Claerbout premieres two of his newest films in the U.S. Claerbout's talent on paper accompanies his work in motion pictures and photography. The exhibition takes the viewer through a narrative of time and imagined reality, isolating us from the outside world through a labyrinth of dimly lit rooms where the glowing works are the only focus.

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David Claerbout, Still from *The Close*, 2022, Single channel video projection, black & white, 6 channel surround sound, 15 min, 21 sec. © David Claerbout, Courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly, New York

One of the films, entitled *The Close* (2022), serves as an ode to past eras and the developments of technology. Today, the camera and technology do not hold the same value that they did in the 1920s. The evolution shown in Claerbout's physical film is representative of these meanings that society held for a medium like photography. The excitement and candidness of the personalities in the film are poetic and nostalgic of a time unknown to many. We take advancements in technology for granted; photography is something we interact with on a daily basis, and even art is a delight that is easily available to us with the tap of a screen. The images in Claerbout's film are humbling; we remember there was a time before us when technology was not accessible to everyone, and only the lucky were able to see their likeness printed. The artist recreates a time when photography was reason enough to laugh and appreciate the enchanting powers of a camera. Each drawn representation adds to the ambiance of mere innocence reflected through the images. Through music and clear representations of working-class people shown in the film, Claerbout creates an emotional and insightful collection of images that enlighten the audience about the historical role of the camera in the development of social agency. His use of costuming, visual effects, and musical additions serve the narrative

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spectacularly and create a sort of album of sensory collections that place us in the shoes of one of his subjects.



David Claerbout, *Aircraft (F.A.L.)*, 2015-2021, Single channel video projection, black & white, stereo audio 25 min, 10 sec. © David Claerbout, Courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly, New York

Aircraft (2015-2022) showcases some of Claerbout's different abilities in the realm of photography. The airplane is paraded in an empty hall, and, using an elaborate 3D model, the artist creates a hyper-realistic image of an illusion. At first glance, the image is ordinary: planes are stored in warehouses, and this is what the artist shows us. It is not until closer examination that we notice the fallacies shown to us as reality. Most of the context is cropped from the image, and we are only provided with part of the story. Our eye is drawn to the highly detailed and contrasted airplane, the main focus of each image. With time our eyes adjust and begin to notice the plane's surroundings. The plane is set on a minimalistic stand as though being exhibited, and a security guard watches over it, bringing us back to a museum scene. The aircraft is being renovated or constructed; it shines as though every aspect of it is brand new, and an intricate system of scaffolding supports it, built neatly to brace the plane perfectly. The glowing aircraft is juxtaposed with the setting. While the building is neat and spacious enough to hold the machinery, the costume of the guards and the simple maintenance of the plane allude to the fact that the scenery is outdated. The feeling of unease that the images incite comes from our knowledge that an object of this magnitude and importance would be renovated in a modern establishment.

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Installation view of David Claerbout: *Dark Optics* at Sean Kelly, New York, April 27 - June 4, 2022, Photography: Jason Wyche, New York, Courtesy: Sean Kelly, New York

David Claerbout's *Dark Optics* will be exhibited at the [Sean Kelly gallery](#) at 475 Tenth Avenue in New York from April 27th to June 4, 2022

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Yu Ji

Flesh in Stone – Rema Rema 2112, 2021

concrete, iron armature, soap

Presented by Sadie Coles HQ, Booth D2

I did a studio visit with Yu Ji recently, and was so impressed with the rigor and breadth of her sculpture, created both indoors and out. I love that this work is part of a larger series of bodily forms.



Katherine Bradford

Night Tree, 2021

Acrylic on canvas

Presented by Canada, C1

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I love the palette and sense of mystery within this beautiful painting by Katherine Bradford.



Sam Moyer

Ester, 2021

marble, acrylic on plaster-coated canvas mounted to MDF

\$ 125,000

Presented by Sean Kelly, B18

Sam Moyer's abstractions always entice me—she has an intuitive sense of composition, and is a gifted colorist. The matches she creates between fabric and stone are careful and beautiful.

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Veronika Pausova

Garden, 2022

Oil on canvas

\$ 15,000

Presented by Simone Subal Gallery, C7

This painting is so alluring, while also feeling quite unknowable. I love the contrast between the printed painting style at the top and the beautiful arabesque within the buds at bottom.

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Lynda Benglis

Double Albatross, 2014

handmade paper over chicken wire, coal tempera, encaustic wax with india ink, acrylic

\$ 200,000

Presented by Xavier Hufkens, A7

Looking at this gorgeous stretched paper work by Lynda Benglis brings me immediately to thoughts of the process of its making—the stretching, the bending, the painting. Benglis is one of our most important living artists, and is someone for whom making art is a constant, natural, and necessary endeavor.

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Melvin Edwards

Mozambique, ca. 1974.

Welded steel and powder coating

Presented by Alexander Gray Associates, B10

This bright and bold composition by Melvin Edwards is a gorgeous example of his accomplished body of work, functioning as a drawing in space.

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Nora Lawrence is the Artistic Director and Chief Curator of **Storm King Art Center**. She is currently co-curating a 2023 site-specific commission with Martin Puryear and led Storm King's commission of Sarah Sze's permanent site-specific sculpture, which opened in 2021. Lawrence has developed nearly 20 exhibitions, working with artists including Lynda Benglis, Mark Dion, Rashid Johnson, and Wangechi Mutu. She established Storm King's annual Outlooks program, which invites one artist to realize a temporary site-specific work. Artists include Brandon Ndife, Virginia Overton, Heather Hart, and Elaine Cameron-Weir, among others. Lawrence also co-founded the Shandaken: Storm King residency at Storm King.