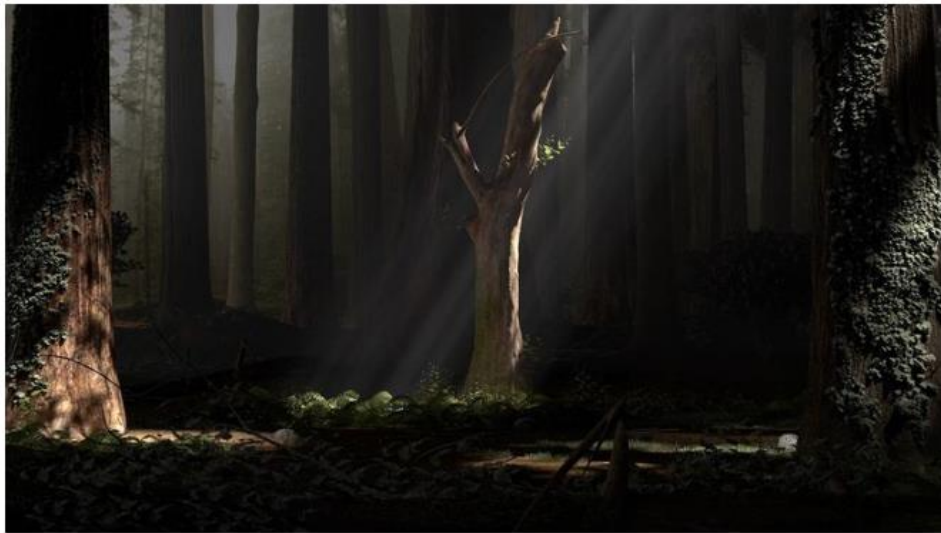


# SEANKELLY

Drnek, Angelika. "Our rapid image culture is frightening, says the important media artist David Claerbout – and is looking for a new relationship between life and time," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, September 19, 2018.

## Neue Zürcher Zeitung



«There is no rest in the moving picture. Not even if it's a movie about an idyllic forest ». David Claerbout: "Travel", 1996-2013, single-channel video, HD animation, stereo sound, 12 min., Video still. (Image: David Claerbout / Sean Kelley / Gallery Rüdiger Schöttle / untilthen / Esther Schipper © 2018, ProLitteris, Zurich)

**Our rapid image culture is  
frightening, says the important  
media artist David Claerbout – and  
is looking for a new relationship  
between life and time**

Photography and film as a reflection of reality are outdated for the Belgian. In his works he relies on calm and deceleration.

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Angelika Drnek  
09/19/2018

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**In your film and photography work you blur the boundaries between the genres, and last but not least you work with the confusion. Can we no longer rely on anything?**

The photography has served as a medium of faith, it remains only as a ritual. As an analogy to reality, it is simply outdated. I'm looking for a new relationship with the picture. Now, with photography, what happened to painting 200 years ago happens. It breaks down into its structures, transforming itself into other possibilities, transforming it into a kind of tableau art, art that consists purely of ideas. Photography has given us immense trust for over 200 years and now it's gone. But now painting can take more territory again (laughs).

**John Cage's play " Organ<sup>2</sup> / ASLSP" is currently performed in the St. Burchardi Church in Halberstadt. The performance should last 639 years. Their video work "Olympia" goes beyond this framework, as the disintegration of the Berlin Olympic Stadium in Berlin is shown in real time over a period of 1000 years.**

In a list of works that would be ranked by duration, I could perhaps reach the top 5 with "Olympia", but time can not be blasted. The nice thing about time is that we want to compare it to pictures. Over time, we do exactly the same thing we do with pictures: we divide them into small atoms and think that we can really measure time. The problem, as I understand it now, is that time in our culture has a purely linear form. All those involved in this culture, including the scientists, should have known better - including Albert Einstein. But they refused to think about it. With the exception of Henri-Louis Bergson, perhaps, but he was just a philosopher, and philosophers are no longer heard. Implementing spatial concepts in time always creates problems. The only thing we really know is that we are getting older. Every question about biological decay is a question about time. And why are these questions asked? Because the phenomenon of time scares us.

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David Claerbout: "Olympia (The Real-Time Disintegration into Ruins of the Berlin Olympic Stadium over the Course of a Thousand Years)", 2016 - 3016, two-channel real-time projection, HD animation, no sound, 1000 years, screenshot. (Image: David Claerbout / Sean Kelley / Gallery Rüdiger Schöttle / untilthen / Esther Schipper © 2018, ProLitteris, Zurich)

**The philosopher Hans Blumenberg said that paradise is paradise because time is infinite there. Paradise thus removes the difference between the lifetime of the individual and the time of the world. Can you give something to this idea?**

Of course, paradise is a question of definition. The common definition comes from a time when humanity was generally terrible and very painful - from day one. Slowly but surely we are getting our paradise now. Immortality is already reached a bit. Today we live three times as long as at the time of the invention of paradise. I also think that looking at people as a purely mechanical part has a liberating aspect. Because I do not need paradise anymore, if I can teleport to another corpus. Meanwhile you can already teleport particles. People admittedly not yet.

**So we need patience?**

A little patience, yes.

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The disappointment really belongs to a garbage heap, as well as the waste of time - like everything that is not used efficiently. Disappointment has an energy value, it is, so to speak, the reverse of energy and of everything that gives life. And the nice thing about the movie, the animated picture, is that it shows an analogy to life, to breathing, to being there. But I'm not trying to disappoint, but rather to change the tension between life, presence and the energy of life - into something that is more process-bound, into something that becomes.



David Claerbout is one of the most important contemporary film and photo artists. "Pure Need / The Pure Necessity", 2016 One-Channel Video, 2-D Animation, Stereo Sound, 50 Min., Video Still. (Image: David Claerbout / Sean Kelley / Rüdiger Schöttle Gallery /> downthen / Esther Schipper © 2018, Pro Litteris, Zurich)

## Something, what will?

Yes. Becoming has a special quality: you are on the way. That almost counts to the category of paradise. You can move in the direction of paradise, but you are not trapped. That explains also works like «Olympia». The view of the National Socialists was unfortunately 100 percent directed to being. A look that has frozen matter. The Nazis understood well how important architecture was to them, because it looks like it's frozen forever. And if something is so frozen, we can look back on our own selfish glory 1000 years later. Pure egoism, the



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opposite of generosity. My little ironic revenge now was that in "Olympia" the plants are the real winners because they slowly but steadily overgrow the building, through an algorithm. You could accuse me of being hypocritical, because I also show this building in its rigidity. Anyway, I think many of our problems result from paralysis. Our visual culture is quite interesting. It is actually a manifesto of torpor. Even if we believe to live in a counterculture. Virtual imagery makes possible a complete elimination of the human body. That's why I see the museums as a great opportunity, because there the images do not have the economic need to move on or to continue to fascinate. Even if we believe to live in a counterculture. Virtual imagery makes possible a complete elimination of the human body. That's why I see the museums as a great opportunity, because there the images do not have the economic need to move on or to continue to fascinate. Even if we believe to live in a counterculture. Virtual imagery makes possible a complete elimination of the human body. That's why I see the museums as a great opportunity, because there the images do not have the economic need to move on or to continue to fascinate.

**The rapid image culture is actually the result of the power of the proletariat. The proletariat, without power over the word, has invented the image so that one can talk to one another.**

**Keyword economic necessity: You are critical of prevailing thoughts such as that of efficiency. What role does time play in this critique?**

One thing we have forgotten: the idea of rest. The Greeks, I think, have meant that rest is the original state. A kind of being that hardly exists. After all, the market is trying to capitalize and colonize all aspects of being. Even the night and thus sleep. A person without sleep is the ideal marketable being. Behind all the pictorial processes of pictorial evolution and innovation, I suspect someone or something that is not planning anything too good with us. I am relatively paranoid in this regard. Of course it's ridiculous to want to take revenge on capitalism. It starts with the problem of defining capitalism. Capitalism, what's that? One could say that capitalism is morally defensible, but

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otherwise? Artists should not believe to be able to oppose capitalism. Incidentally, most of them are so weak anyway that at some point they only want the money.



David Claerbout at the Kunsthaus Bregenz. (Photo: Koos Breukel)

## **Are your works that revolve between digital and analogue also documents of uncertainty?**

The uncertainty is very active, yes, but you have to look for a specific point where it started. Every behavior has to do with uncertainty, we are simply conscious animals. That scares you. But I like to limit myself to the function of photography and its historical significance. Few are aware that photography is in the eye of the storm. It still has a 100 percent political and social

impact, even in our hyperdemocracy, where a snapshot can change a law. The rapid image culture is actually the result of the power of the proletariat. The proletariat, without power over the word, has invented the image so that one can talk to one another. And the picture has proven to be something much faster than the word. The uncertainty lies in this relationship. Because this language unsettles the rulers, it is almost seen as a nuclear threat. With image culture can be no policy.

## **You once hinted that you often and often take an antiposition. Is the objection simple?**

Until the age of 40, I refused to comment on my work. As a young person, I also had difficulty verbalizing things, but I was always "against" them. And I felt that my counterproposals were much stronger than my suggestions. I did not know why. Later, I discovered that I was especially attracted to the bin of concepts.

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## **What did you find in this dustbin?**

The deceleration of time, for example, even if the term is not quite right. Deceleration is simply a negative or alternative version of acceleration. And I do not agree with that, nor with slow motion in the movie. My work does not work in slow motion. The moving picture is 25 or 30 frames per second. Enough to tell the eye that it sees a fluid movement. So if we see a moving picture, we see speed or a futuristic definition of a picture. An image that is faster than us. Animations always go too fast. It seems then that we are always physically too late. There is no rest in the moving picture. Not even if it's a movie about an idyllic forest and everything is soothing - it's not structurally soothing, structurally, it is very fast. These things are gladly forgotten. Also, how physically we look at something quite artificial. I often have difficulties with curators and their handling of video works.

## **How do the curators handle it?**

As if they were something kneadable, something that could be made big or small. They always forget the human being. They always forget that people are intimidated by moving images, because it's just 25 frames per second. It is so obvious. If you do not know these things, you have no power over these phenomena. It is a pity that the exhibition culture is only about illustrations and not about phenomena. That is also the reason why major exhibitions like the Biennale lose their relevance every year.

## **Is not the phenomenological interesting for artists anymore?**

It seems to have become completely uninteresting. Many artists only find interesting what they do with it.



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At the Kunsthaus Bregenz, David Claerbout will be showing video and sound works until October 7th.

## **David Claerbout**

phi. Born in 1969 in Kortrijk, Belgium, David Claerbout studied painting in Antwerp; He lives and works in Antwerp and Berlin. His works have been presented internationally in numerous solo exhibitions, including: Center Pompidou, Paris (2007), St. Gallen Art Museum (2008), Tel Aviv Museum of Art (2012), Vienna Secession (2012), Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main (2012). 2016), Schaulager, Münchenstein / Basel (2017). His work is represented in important public collections worldwide.