

SEANKELLY

DAVID CLAERBOUT: *LIGHT/WORK*

MARCH 19 – APRIL 30, 2016

OPENING RECEPTION: FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 6-8PM



Sean Kelly is delighted to present a major one-person exhibition by Belgium-based artist David Claerbout. *LIGHT/WORK* will present an overview of Claerbout's recent film works—from his seminal work *Travel* to his newest piece *Olympia* — alongside a new group of rarely exhibited drawings. This will be Claerbout's first exhibition with the gallery and his first solo exhibition in New York since 2008. An opening reception will take place on Friday, March 18, from 6:00 to 8:00pm, the artist will be present.

One of the most innovative and acclaimed artists working in the realm of moving images today, David Claerbout's oeuvre exists at the intersection of photography, film and digital

technology. Fusing together the past, present and future into stunning moments of temporal elasticity, his works present profound and moving philosophical contemplations on our perception of time and reality, memory and experience, truth and fiction.

LIGHT/WORK will feature *Oil Workers (from the Shell company of Nigeria) returning home from work, caught in torrential rain* (2013), a video work meticulously reconstructed from a small photograph found on the Internet of workers taking shelter from monsoon rains under a bridge. The image appears straightforward until one notices that the viewpoint is slowly rotating around the men in three-dimensional space, whilst the picture remains still. As the focus of the image shifts from the men to the water and back again, so do the psychological implications of the work. The longer one looks, the more the men appear to be stuck, literally and metaphorically. Of the work, Claerbout has said, "Of all the manifestations of time, waiting is one of the most difficult, because it implies being unproductive. The price tag attached to minutes, hours and days makes time expensive. Yet duration can only be free when it is unproductive. Drought, conflict and poverty surround Africa like a cloud of flies, determining the picture we have of a continent. It is rarely portrayed as wet. In this piece however, water is the starting point for a picture about the oil industry."

The exhibition will also present *KING (after Alfred Wertheimer's 1956 portrait of a young man named Elvis Presley)*, 2015-2016, a silent, black and white projection based on Alfred Wertheimer's iconic 1956 photograph of Elvis Presley, taken at a time that marks Presley's transition from ordinary citizen to superstardom and when photography was still believed to be a mirror of truth. In this three-dimensional video animation of a two-dimensional photograph, Elvis's body has been digitally reconstructed in the round, built from hundreds of fragments of original photographs of the star. In a technique similar to that employed in *Oil Workers*, the vantage point moves in and around the figures and their environment, whilst the scene itself remains still. The work allows us an intimate, albeit artificial, closeness to one of the world's most charismatic and worshipped figures.

KING is a reflection on the manufactured image, using technology to recreate a casual, authentic moment in the most controlled and calculated way.

A focal point of the exhibition will be Claerbout's newest work, *Olympia (the real time disintegration into ruins of the Berlin Olympic stadium over the course of a thousand years)*, which will be on view for the very first time as part of this installation. Utilizing a similar technology to that used in the engineering of video games, Claerbout has created a parallel, virtual world centered on Berlin's Olympic stadium—originally constructed by architects Werner and Walter March in 1936 as a physical symbol of Hitler's thousand year Reich. In this work, Claerbout has meticulously reproduced a replica of the stadium and its environs, exactly as it exists now; every stone, tree, weed, etc. corresponds with the actual location of the structure in Berlin, but with one very important exception – it is a landscape devoid of people and human intervention. Through this piece, nature will be allowed to take its course in real-time, affected by the real atmospheric conditions unfolding around the stadium in Berlin. Beginning at the opening reception and continuing for the next thousand years (programmed for the next fifty years, at present), this monumental stadium, a supposedly indestructible physical manifestation of the Third Reich, will slowly disintegrate into ruin.

David Claerbout studied at the Nationaal Hoger Instituut voor Schone Kunsten in Antwerp from 1992 to 1995 and participated in the DAAD: Berlin Artists-in-Residence program from 2002 to 2003. His work is included in major public collections worldwide, including: Centre Georges Pompidou Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, France; The Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany; The Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis and many others. He has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions internationally, including: Marabouparken Konsthall, Sundbybert, Sweden (2015); Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam (2014); Kunsthalle Mainz, Mainz, Germany (2013); Secession, Vienna, Austria (2012); The Tel Aviv Museum, Tel Aviv, Israel (2012); SFMOMA, San Francisco (2011); WIELS, Brussels, Belgium (2011); The De Pont museum of contemporary art, Tilburg, The Netherlands (2009); Pompidou Center, Paris, France (2007); The Kunstmuseum, St. Gallen, Switzerland (2008); and The Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands (2005).

David Claerbout: Drawings and Studies, a comprehensive overview of Claerbout's drawings created over a period of two decades, co-published by Sean Kelly and Hatje Cantz Verlag with an introduction text by Christian Viveros-Fauné, will be available for purchase at the gallery during the exhibition.

Sean Kelly would like to thank Epson for its generous support of the exhibition.



Image: David Claerbout, *KING (after Alfred Wertheimer's 1956 portrait of a young man named Elvis Presley)*, 2015-2016, single channel video projection, silent, HD animation, 10 min. © David Claerbout, Courtesy of Sean Kelly, NY.

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Gallery hours are Tuesday through Friday from 11am until 6pm and Saturday from 10am until 6pm.