

David Claerbout

Glow

October 5 – December 22, 2023

Madrid

Pedro Cera is pleased to inaugurate the new space of the gallery in Madrid with the solo exhibition of David Claerbout, a second presentation of the artist's work with the gallery.

Introducing *Birdcage*, 2023, the latest video of the artist, premiered in the exhibition alongside *The Close*, 2022, *Glow* continues Claerbout's investigation into *Dark Optics*, addressing themes such as sensorial fragmentation, optical truth, and virtual image-making.

Evoking a sense of quiet intensity and latent energy, *Glow*, the exhibition title, suggests a state of anticipation and recollection. *Birdcage*, a 1h 36min. film, which depicts an explosion, a disturbing image of violence and grief, is instead portrayed as a meditative experience, where the slow camera movement serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, it is a material study of shattered elements, while on the other hand, a contemplative experience of a picturesque garden. Life and death, beauty and destruction walk hand in hand. The slow camera movement unveils flowers in bloom, eclipsed by the red hues of light from a nearby explosion. Panic switches for peace.

Similarly, to *Wildfire*, 2021 (the first of Claerbout's engagements with the destructive yet painterly beauty of fire), also here the silent blast is captured with a long and muted shot, placing the viewer in a conflicting position of visually appreciating a scene of destruction. Categories such as reality and artificiality are rendered obsolete. The idea of reality reproduction (through the lens) is replaced by digital renderings, leaving us with an inherently abstract image, an illusion of an image, an artificial reverie.

The gradual alienation of the lens-based image is scrutinized further in *The Close*, 2022, a short and melancholic history of the camera. Set in a 1920s setting, a period of camera's integration into public life, the video is based on reconstructed amateur footage and 3D renderings of that footage. By focusing on the transition from the familiar camera image to its digital counterpart, *The Close* underscores the sensorial fragmentation and the unreliable and chaotic effects of virtualization, emphasized further by the vocal composition of Arvo Pärt's *Da Pacem Domine*. Characteristic for a (early) cinema aesthetic, the work questions the role of memory in visual perception, looking at the ways it guides our attention and expectation, tools indispensable for the buildup of tension.

Pedro Cera
25 years

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The immaterial and artificial nature of the image is emphasized further by two groups of works on paper, also part of the exhibition. Made during the production period of both videos, their material and painterly character serve as a metaphor on the nature of the digital image, which rather than a reproduction of reality is a subjective (digital) construction of it.

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David Claerbout has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions internationally, including Taipei Fine Arts Museum; Kunst Museum, Winterthur; Gallery Rudolfinum, Prague; Garage LAB, Moscow; Kunsthau Bregenz; Schaulager, Basel; MNAC, Barcelona; Städel Museum, Frankfurt; KINDL, Berlin, Marabouparken Konsthall, Sundbybert, Sweden; Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam; Kunsthalle Mainz, Mainz, Germany; Secession, Vienna, Austria; Tel Aviv Museum, Tel Aviv, Israel; Parasol unit, London; SFMOMA, San Francisco; WIELS, Brussels, Belgium; The De Pont museum of contemporary art, Tilburg, The Netherlands and; Pompidou Center, Paris, France; The Kunstmuseum, St. Gallen, Switzerland; The Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands; and CGAC (Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea) Santiago de Compostela, Spain. His work is represented in major public collections worldwide.