

DAVID CLAERBOUT

Repose

September 10 – October 24, 2026
Esther Schipper, Berlin

Esther Schipper



David Claerbout, *The woodcarver and the forest*, 2025
Single channel video installation

Esther Schipper Berlin is pleased to present a solo exhibition by David Claerbout, the artist's second with the gallery. Under the title *Repose*, the exhibition presents four works shown for the first time in Berlin: *The woodcarver and the forest*, 2025, *Birdcage*, 2023, *Backwards Growing Tree*, 2023, and *Eagle Eye*, 2026. Alongside the videos, a number of works on paper will be exhibited.

All films on view explore our relationship to nature and the way we have learned to see the world around us. In *The woodcarver and the forest* we watch a woodcarver whittling down wooden blocks to create one spoon after another; the act appears almost meditative, until we realize every gesture comes at a cost: outside his window, the forest is slowly being reduced to the objects he creates. The lush gardens of a stately home portrayed in *Birdcage* become the site of a violent eruption, shifting the scene (and viewer) from apparent peace to a state of tension and fear. In *Eagle Eye*, a bald eagle lies awake but immobilized on an operating table, reversing our familiar association of the eagle as a symbol of strength. *Backwards Growing Tree* portrays a solitary tree in the Italian countryside,

digitally reconstructed and observed over five years. By reversing its natural growth, Claerbout disrupts our sense of time. *Repose* continues the artist's long-standing engagement with time and duration. Three of the works – *Eagle eye*, *The woodcarver and the forest* and *Backwards Growing Tree* – unfold over several hours or even several years. These extreme durations introduce a real-time component, aligning the passage of film time with that of the visitor. In doing so, Claerbout brings film time closer to biological time: time that unfolds at the pace of living processes and largely escapes our notice. It is an uneventful, psychologically inefficient film time, one that offers little for the eye to grasp and runs counter to our visual culture, which conditions us to seek constant stimulation and reward.

The drawings on view all relate to the video works. An integral part of Claerbout's practice, each of the artist's projects is accompanied by a small number of drawings that function as a mix of preparatory studies, notes from the production process, and more conceptual reflections. They are not simply sketches for the films, but a way of thinking through them, translating the complexity and temporality of

the video works onto paper through light and color studies and techniques of sequencing and montage.

Rather than partaking in a romanticized idea of nature, the exhibition questions our way of seeing the world around us. Inverting the standard order of what catches our attention and what is considered background, the artist has us focus on what usually remains peripheral or tuned out in human vision. Instead of concentrating on a single event, the viewer experiences multiple processes at once. Thus, Claerbout's works challenge the single, fixed gaze of the camera and approximate a way of seeing that is more attuned to our being in the world and our physiology: human perception is never singular, but emerges through contesting sensations perceived by two eyes, two ears, and two hemispheres, resulting in countless impressions which together offer multiple ways of encountering the world.

Brought into conversation in a darkened space, *Repose* invites us to contemplate scenes of both destruction and regeneration, potential danger and enduring beauty. Claerbout's works draw on new technologies to create the effect of hyperreality, a theme that has characterized the artist's oeuvre long before digital and AI-generated images became ubiquitous. His images suggest an awareness of their status as representations, alerting viewers to the uncertain boundaries between the technical and the organic, between artifice and nature. Our perception, to Claerbout, lives at the intersection of these realms, in the constant negotiation of what we see and what we believe.

David Claerbout was born in 1969 in Kortrijk, Belgium. He studied at the National Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp and at the Rijksakademie of Visual Arts in Amsterdam. He lives and works in Antwerp and Berlin.

The artist has exhibited extensively. Selected solo exhibitions include: *Flow of Time* (with Zhou Tao), The Cloud Collection, Nanjing (2025); *Five Hours, Fifty Days, Fifty Years*, Kunschthal Esch, Luxemburg (2025); *At the window*, Kasteel van Gaasbeek, Gaasbeek (2025); *David Claerbout. spring, slowly*, Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris (2025); *David Claerbout: Backwards Growing Tree*, Centraal Museum, Utrecht (2024); *David Claerbout, Meditation in Peace. Meditation in Pieces*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei City (2023); *David Claerbout: The Close*, Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee (2022); *David Claerbout*, De Pont Museum, Tilburg (2021); *David Claerbout: Unseen Sound*, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow (2021); *David Claerbout*, Olympia, Samstag Museum of Art, Adelaide (2020) and Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague (2020); *David Claerbout: Laziness of Action*, Kunst Museum Winterthur, Winterthur (2020); *David Claerbout: The Pure Necessity*, Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art, Zuoz (2019); *David Claerbout*, Les Abattoirs, Toulouse (2018); *David Claerbout*, Kunsthau Bregenz, Bregenz (2018); *David Claerbout*, Talbot Rice Gallery, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh (2018); *Olympia*, Schaulager, Münchenstein (2017); *David Claerbout: KING and The Pure Necessity*, Pinacoteca de São Paulo, São Paulo (2017); *Olympia*, KINDL - Centre for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2016); *Future*, De Pont Museum, Tilburg (2016); and *Die reine Notwendigkeit*, Städel Museum, Frankfurt (2016).

His work is held in the following public collections: Centre Pompidou, Paris; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; SFMOMA, San Francisco; The Cloud Collection, Nanjing; De Pont Museum, Tilburg; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Hamburger Bahnhof - Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart, Berlin; ARC / Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris; MMK - Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; Städel Museum, Frankfurt; Emmanuel Hoffmann Stiftung, Basel; M HKA - Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, Antwerp; Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; MACAM - Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Lisbon; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

