

Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle

David Claerbout

The Close

Mar 18 – May 7, 2022

Opening: Thursday, Mar 17, 2022, 6–8 pm

The artist is present.



David Claerbout, *The Close*, 2022, (Still) b/w single-channel video projection with 6-channel surround sound, Edition of 7
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Time and its perception are central to David Claerbout's artistic practice. Since the mid-1990s, he has been examining the lines between still and moving images, between analog and digital visuals—and he does so again in his latest video work, "The Close".

"The Close" unites a reconstruction of amateur footage from circa 1920 with a digital 3D playback of these sequences. The 1920s were the time of so-called city symphonies, which marked the entry of the movie camera into daily life, showing the budding metropolises in gleefully experimental snippets. Conceived as a short emotional history of the camera, "The Close" reflects what Claerbout has termed "dark optics": a profound, if chaotic, contemporary recalibration of our shared convictions in terms of images, information, and language.

The silent scene opens on a damp morning; diffuse light hits a narrow alley, a residential road without through traffic, modestly dressed passersby are scuttling along, and barefooted kids are playing in a corner. Some stop and look at the camera. Two kids emerge with increasing clarity, until the camera pauses in the depiction of one of them, pulling the little boy into focus and portraying him: capturing his smile, inching closer, eventually circling him and visualizing him digitally, even his bare feet. This creates a portrait of incredible reality in the viewer's eye, migrating from celluloid to the digital realm, as if past and present coalesced. The blurry celluloid's grainy still has now transformed into a highly detailed digital image whose hyperrealistic appearance may even provide glimpses into the future. Going hand in hand with these changes in the analog resolution is the subtle onset of sound. From the background, distant voices slowly build into the song "Da pacem Domine". Arvo Pärt's 2004 choral composition percolates our ears, while we look at the boy's portrait up close. The notes the choir carries over prolonged periods of time pair well with the visuals; the listener is invariably pulled into the hypnotic texture the voices create. The visual element merges with the auditive to create an indescribable unit, a masterpiece for the senses. With this work, David Claerbout has managed to forge a sensory cohesion of the familiar and the new, as if he wanted to question whether we can still trust our senses in light of the omnipresent effects of virtualization. (I. Lohaus)

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