

PRESS RELEASE

IN THE STÄDEL GARDEN: DAVID CLAERBOUT DIE REINE NOTWENDIGKEIT

28 SEPTEMBER TO 23 OCTOBER 2016

Press talk with David Claerbout: Tuesday, 27 September 2016,
11 am
Städel Museum, Städel Garden

Frankfurt am Main, 15 August 2016. In the framework of the “In the Städel Garden” series and as part of the programme offered by Flanders & the Netherlands Guest of Honour at this year’s Frankfurt Book Fair, the Städel Museum will present a work produced by the Belgian artist David Claerbout (b. 1969) especially for this occasion. The film *Die reine Notwendigkeit* (2016) is a surprising adaptation of the animated movie classic *The Jungle Book* of 1967. Claerbout’s one-hour loop turns the sentimental and comical story about dancing, singing, and trumpet-playing jungle animals into a film that has dispensed all ‘humanization’ of the animals – but also its young protagonist Mowgli – and portrays them instead in a manner befitting their species. Baloo, Bagheera and Kaa, whose songs and slapstick acts have been delighting children and adults alike for decades, are now back to being pure bear, panther and python. For *Die reine Notwendigkeit*, the artist painstakingly redrew the frames of Wolfgang Reitherman’s prototype by hand, one by one, and then assembled them to create an entirely new film. Now no more than shadowy outlines, the animals move around before a jungle backdrop. Claerbout alludes to the original only in the work’s title, *Die reine Notwendigkeit*, a reference to Baloo the Bear’s song about the “bare necessities of life”.

The exhibition “David Claerbout. Die reine Notwendigkeit” is being carried out with support from Flanders & the Netherlands Guest of Honour at the Frankfurter Buchmesse 2016, the Government of Flanders and the Städel Gartengesellschaft.

“In the oeuvre he has produced over the past twenty years, David Claerbout has developed fascinating mastery in transforming even the most reductive photographic or filmic postulations – however decelerated, void, or free of all narration they might seem at first sight – into artworks highly complex from the point of view of aesthetics

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and content alike. Over the years, his time-based works have developed a wholly independent and distinctive aesthetic”, observes Martin Engler, head of the Städel’s collection of contemporary art and curator of the show.

Despite the fact that David Claerbout’s *Die reine Notwendigkeit* completely eliminates the narrative of the original, it holds a fascination all its own. It is the viewer’s associations that account for this quality, but also the oddly stiff and jerky movements of animals as strange to us as they are familiar. The ambiguity and incongruity of the protagonists, on whom a human ego was first imposed, only to be deprived of it again in Claerbout’s adaptation, serve to charge the completely eventless film narrative with a suggestive tension virtually impossible to put a finger on.

Rather than telling the story of a little boy abandoned, far from civilization, in the middle of a jungle and in the midst of its fauna, Claerbout’s film loop culminates anew every hour on the hour – somewhat like a clock – in the final scene of the original animated film. It is the moment in which a young girl comes to the edge of the jungle to fetch water. Mowgli is so beguiled by her singing that he leaves his animal wonderworld and is lured back to the order of civilization. “An ending that already didn’t make sense to us back when we were kids”, as Engler comments.

The film, coproduced by the Städel Museum, will be shown throughout the exhibition on a six-by-four-metre LED screen. Generous support from Dr. Mathias Boehringer has made it possible to purchase the work for the Städel collection.

A public conversation between David Claerbout and Martin Engler will take place on the occasion of the show’s opening at 7 pm on Tuesday, 27 September 2016.

David Claerbout

Born in Kortrijk, Belgium in 1969, David Claerbout studied at the Artesis University College in Antwerp and the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten in Amsterdam from 1992 to 1995. He has been honoured with the Will-Grohmann-Preis of the Berlin Akademie der Künste and the Peill-Preis of the Günther-Peill-Stiftung, and is one of the world’s most important contemporary artists. Solo exhibitions of his work have been staged at the Wiener Secession, the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Pinakothek der Moderne and the Lenbachhaus in Munich, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique and the WIELS in Brussels, the De Pont Museum in Tilburg and elsewhere.

The point of departure for Claerbout’s photographic and filmic installations is visual material ranging from historical photographs and reconstructed images to film

recordings shot according to his instructions. In elaborate digital processes he transforms this material into works that blur the boundaries between photography and film. He deconstructs linear temporal progressions, for example, and questions the manner in which stories are told with the aid of pictures.

“In the Städel Garden”

“In the Städel Garden” is an initiative carried out with the support of the Städel Gartengesellschaft. With this series, the Städel Museum pursues the aim of offering its freely accessible garden grounds as a venue for changing installations, performances and events in the area of contemporary art. Since the new presentation of the sculpture collection in the Städel Garden in 2013, the museum's outdoor facilities have frequently served as a setting for performance and installation works by such artists as Adrian Williams (“Watering Hole”, 2013), Adolf Luther (“Architecture as Light and Reflection”, 2013), Erwin Wurm (“One-Minute Sculptures”, 2014) and Franz Erhard Walther (“Walking Pedestals and Places to Stand”, 2014).

DAVID CLAERBOUT. DIE REINE NOTWENDIGKEIT FROM THE “IN THE STÄDEL GARDEN” SERIES

Curator: Dr. Martin Engler, Head of the Contemporary Art Collection

Exhibition dates: 28 September to 23 October 2016

Press talk: Tuesday, 27 September 2016, 11 am

Location: Städel Museum, Schaumainkai 63, 60596 Frankfurt am Main

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Opening hours: Tue, Wed, Sat, Sun + holidays 10 am – 6 pm, Thu + Fri 10 am – 9 pm

Special opening hours: Mon, 3 October, 10 am – 6 pm

The Städel Garden may be visited free of charge.

Social Media: The Städel Museum communicates the exhibition in the social media with the hashtags #Claerbout and #Staedel.

Supported by: Flanders & the Netherlands Guest of Honour at the Frankfurter Buchmesse 2016, the Government of Flanders and the Städel Gartengesellschaft

David Claerbout's *Die reine Notwendigkeit* was made in coproduction with the Städel Museum and with generous support from Dr. Mathias Boehringer.