

Olympia

David Claerbout: Olympia (The real-time disintegration into ruins of the Berlin Olympic stadium over the course of a thousand years)

01.06.2017 – 22.10.2017

MEDIA RELEASE

***Olympia*, the latest monumental projection by David Claerbout, is showing at Schaulager. A reflection on time and perception, *Olympia* simulates in real time the organic decay of the Olympic Stadium in Berlin. Supplied with current weather data and the exact position of the sun in Berlin, the simulation is conceived to last for the next thousand years.**

The 48-year-old Belgian artist David Claerbout spent several years digitally reconstructing, stone by stone, Berlin's imposing Olympic Stadium. In March 2016 he surrendered it to the natural process of decay, so that his monumental construct has been disintegrating in real time ever since. The simulated aging process has been calculated for the next thousand years – a temporal dimension that far exceeds all human sense of time.

David Claerbout's *Olympia (The real-time disintegration into ruins of the Berlin Olympic stadium over the course of a thousand years)* is a dizzying reflection on time and perception. Comprising two monumental projections, it makes the flow of time an almost palpable experience. While nothing much seems to happen on the superficial level, closer scrutiny reveals the subtle transformation of both the building and its environs. By feeding current weather data and the position of the sun in Berlin into his simulation, moreover, Claerbout is able to place his digitally rendered stadium at the mercy of the elements.

If it is raining in Berlin, it will be raining in Olympia

Visitors to Schaulager, which grants free admission, will be able to immerse themselves in the meditative slowness of a parallel world. And because the latest meteorological and climatic events in Berlin are worked into the simulation, if it is raining in Berlin, it will be raining in Olympia; and if it is snowing there, it will be snowing here, too. The seemingly realistic world of the projection is utterly deserted, however; nor are there any fauna in evidence. The only forces at work in this artificial world are the weather and the growing vegetation, both of which slowly but surely gnaw away at the virtual stadium. "The eternal structure of the stadium becomes the stage for the presence of ephemeral elements such as moving leaves on the floor, growing weeds, fluctuating light, and meteorological changes," writes the art historian Steven Jacobs of the University of Ghent of this latest work by Claerbout.

While the portrait-format projection shows only static images both of the neoclassical complex itself and of details of the floor, the grass, the trees, and the statues of athletes, the larger, landscape-format projection traces the same, dreamy, one-hour-long camera movement around the stadium – an edifice built for roaring, cheering crowds, which here is eerily silent and deserted.

The thousand-year timespan of the project references the Third Reich's claim to a thousand years of dominance, which is the spirit that informed the stadium's inauguration in 1936. Claerbout himself, in other words, understands *Olympia* as an attempt to juxtapose the decline of an ideological construct over time with the biological timescale of nature and the life expectancy of a single human being.

The full moon over Berlin – in Schaulager

Schaulager plans to extend its opening hours so that visitors viewing the projection will have a chance to experience, say, a spectacular sunrise, or the full moon over Berlin and so lose all sense of time and place – at least for a brief while.

David Claerbout has long had close ties to Schaulager and the collection of the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation. He was the guest at an "Artist Talk" at Schaulager back in 2015 and the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation is in possession of no fewer than eight works by him.

For further information about David Claerbout and high-resolution images:

www.schaulager.org/de/medien

Work

David Claerbout

Olympia (The real time disintegration into ruins of the Berlin Olympic stadium over the course of a thousand years), start March 2016

Two-channel real-time projection, colour, silent, HD animation, 1,000 years

Admission free

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