

'Time Out', 11-17 June 2009, London/UK

## David Claerbout

★★★★★

**Hauser & Wirth**

Mayfair to Sloane Square

Time and space become dance-performance partners in David Claerbout's theatre of still and moving images. The Belgian artist melds digital and analogue technologies to create films and photographs that agitate the everyday choreography of both. This current series of three long and beautifully crafted films is all about the ear – the wider implications of sound as a tool in the production of time-based reality.

The two-screen work in the main gallery, which follows a man and a woman's very different negotiation of



*'The American Room (1st movement)'*

the same French valley, might be described as something of an endurance test, a tuning-in of the senses to Claerbout's distinctly European film sensibility. In the absence of a formal narrative structure (and half of the audio) one is forced to

identify with the subjects' 'lost' status.

The unlit vault shows the early-morning ritual of a cleaner in a stark modernist villa. In the gloom, every shuffle and wipe of a cloth becomes a significant aural chapter in the tale of an immigrant worker, all but drowned out at the end of the film by an emotional blast of Rachmaninov. Cinematic schmaltz becomes manipulable substance in the upstairs suite via a presidential inauguration-style musical event, shot in the space. Claerbout's plugging of ears and darkening of the picture is not to protect one from difficult content but is instead intended to throw an obstacle between the story and our predefined responses to it. *Rebecca Geldard*