

# Jonas Englert

## Simultaneities



HARLAN LEVEY PROJECTS

January 18 - March 22, 2025

For his first exhibition in Belgium, Jonas Englert presents a series of research-based works (produced between 2015 and 2024), which combine physical objects with still and moving images. Englert investigates human gesture and touch through different methods and processes; each work deals with notions of intertextuality, teleology, and the sublime, unpacking the layers of perception which form our reality. He centers this exploration in the arenas of politics, history and aesthetics. When two political figures touch, their contact becomes the stage of multiple interactions: the symbolic meeting of two parties or states; the image of an event that alters history; the encounter of two minds and the communion of two bodies. Englert searches for these focal points, moments which can be read from a variety of perspectives, from pure sensory perception to complex socio-historical narratives.



View of "Simultaneities", Harlan Levey Projects, Brussels, 2025.

### About Jonas Englert:

Jonas Englert lives and works in Frankfurt. His work reflects social-philosophical phenomena, as well as political and historical narratives and materials through video, diagram, text, and sound. Englert received his Art Diploma from the Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach in 2018. Key exhibitions of his work include: *Looking for Humanity*, Kunstmuseum Magdeburg, Magdeburg (2023); *Palimpseste*, Heussenstamm-Stiftung, Frankfurt/M. (2022); *Things I Think I Want*, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt/M. (2017); *Performing Portraiture*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2015); *Atlas 2013*, Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn (2013); and more. His works are part of the collections of the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C., the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Kunstmuseum Magdeburg. *Simultaneities* is his first solo exhibition in Belgium.

---

### *Circles I & II*, 2019

Inspired by a vision of politicians playing the children's game *Ring Around the Rosie*, to make *Circles I*, Englert spent approximately four years combing global archives for instances of skin-to-skin contact between political figures. The result is a seven-channel video sculpture reminiscent of a political monument. It features found footage of leaders shaking hands and embracing. By deconstructing these moments against the backdrop of world wars and historical events, it transforms them into an intricate web of touch—a choreographed dance of interconnected circles. *Circles II* is the diagrammatic counterpart of *Circles I*: each circle lists names, dates, and meeting places, then connects with the others in an uninterrupted loop of intimate (though very public) physical contact. In contrast to *Circles I*, it adopts a more investigative, data driven approach towards the structural dynamics of political diplomacy. Together, the pieces offer a non-linear approach to facts, a retelling of history and the mediatization of events that guide it. Much like the artist's approach to relational images, these two works were created in conversation, each influencing and changing the direction and outcome of the other.

### *Declaration of Principles*, 2022

*Declaration of Principles* further reflects on the political dimensions of touch in a play of pictorial semiotics. As this polyptych video painting shines into the room like backlit stained glass, Romanesque and Gothic retables come to mind as do Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne* panels. Warburg was primarily concerned with using his *Mnemosyne* Atlas to trace the continuity of visual themes and patterns from antiquity to the present with the hope of offering up a kind of canon. Englert seems more interested in the idea of the atlas as an artistic form as he recontextualizes an image by encircling it with others. The three panels of the triptych dissect the

famous image of Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin shaking hands before the White House for the 1993 Oslo I Accord, with Bill Clinton posing behind them as the benevolent patron of this exchange.

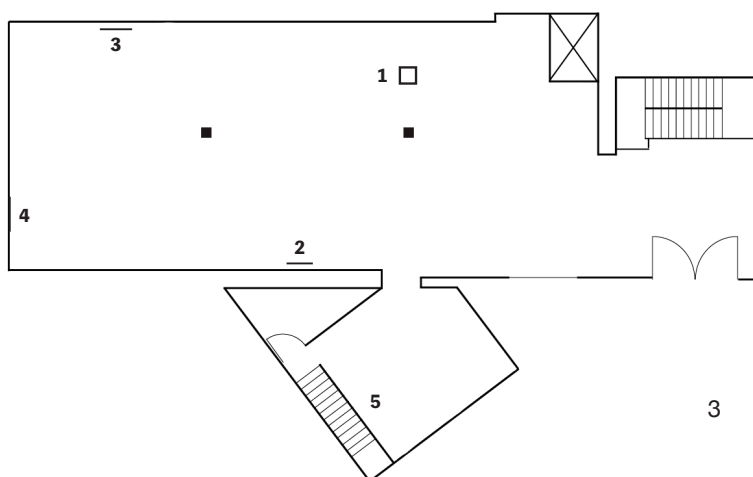
Englert deconstructs these gestures, which were consciously staged for the cameras to instantaneously create a historical image. He juxtaposes still and moving footage of the moment with visual references, from an Assyrian bas-relief to Renaissance paintings. For example, Clinton's position echoes Caravaggio's *Incredulity of St. Thomas* (1600), where touch signifies belief, and Lavinia Fontana's *Noli me Tangere* (1581), where touch is denied. Historical and political symbols of commitment and unity are brought forward, drawing parallels to moments like the French Tennis Court Oath of 1789, the Swiss Rütli Schwur myth, and Benjamin West's *Penn's Treaty* (1770s), which features a peace agreement between William Penn and Native American leaders. These moments are contrasted with an implied danger: on the lower left is the 25th US President William McKinley, whose assassin shot him while shaking his hand. His inclusion here refers to the potential violence of a handshake, the betrayal of the trust implied by the gesture. Through this multi-faceted approach, Clinton's posture is revealed as both a symbol of diplomacy, and an act of colonial power dynamics.

## Song of None, 2024

With his most recent work, *Song of None*, Englert returns to the realm of sensation, arranging found footage in a three-channel installation based on harmonies of form and color. The images come from various scientific and institutional archives: aerial views, spatial probes, bacteria and cells multiplying under the gaze of the microscope. *Song of None* questions the human desire to see and touch, an urge so strong that we've developed machines, sensory prosthetics that extend our reach ever further, and banks to store these memories of sight. Some of these seeing-devices will outlive us; Englert leaves us to wonder what will become of the image, when there is no body left to perceive it.

## Praeludium, 2015

The earliest work on view, *Praeludium*, is a sensual approach to the subject of perception, oscillating between photography and moving image. The two-channel video installation features the face and hands of a performer, playing Bach's prelude in F minor from *The Well Tempered Clavier*. The image and sound are slowed almost to a standstill, and the organ is invisible under the player's hands. The music is barely audible, but it's still perceptible in low-frequency and infrasound waves, which are felt in the body of the viewer as much as they are heard.



Exhibition walkthrough with the artist

### 1 *Circles I*, 2019

7-channel video installation, found footage, 4:3, mute  
260 x 47 x 43,5 cm  
102 3/8 x 18 1/2 x 17 1/8 in  
Edition of 7 plus 2 artist's proof

### 2 *Circles II*, 2019

Diagram, lightbox, 7 silk-screen films  
87 x 87 x 10 cm  
34 1/4 x 34 1/4 in  
Edition of 7 plus 2 artist's proofs

### 3 *Declaration of Principles*, 2022

Video object, polyptych, mixed media, found footage, mute, var. LED technologies,  
birch wood, acryl, Duratrans  
149,3 x 127,5 x 9,5 cm  
58 3/4 x 50 1/4 x 3 3/4 in  
Edition of 5 plus 2 artist's proofs

### 4 *Song of None*, 2024

3 channel video, found footage, 4:3, mute  
Edition of 7 plus 2 artist's proofs

### 5 *Praeludium*, 2015

Video/sound installation, 2-channel, 16:9, b/w, 87 minutes, loop  
Technical solution PRAE\_T55: 2 screens (LED, 55", 16:9, QM55C), 7 media players,  
headphones, 12V and 5V power supply  
Edition of 5 plus 2 artist's proofs