ERIK VAN LIJESHOUT: THREE SOCIAL WORKS
7 APR - 11 JUN 2017
Erik van Lieshout’s work explores themes often rooted in his experience of living and working in the Netherlands but nevertheless relevant to contemporary experience across Europe and beyond. For his solo show at the South London Gallery, Van Lieshout brings together works that draw on socio-political observations, marginalised identities and the role of the artist in society. An immersive architectural environment houses three video works characterised by an absurdist sense of humour and provocative questioning of the role of art and artists in society. All three works feature Van Lieshout, whose actions and statements blur performance with reality, dead-pan humour with utmost sincerity, and ambiguity of meaning with a sometimes disorienting directness.

The Basement (2014), commissioned for the European biennial of contemporary art Manifesta 10 in St. Petersburg, documents Van Lieshout’s quest to improve the quality of life for the cats in the Hermitage Museum where there is a 200 year tradition of keeping cats in the basement to catch the mice. A short film documents his efforts as he cleans and paints their home, designs Modernist-inspired scratching posts, creates new climbing towers and installs artworks for their enjoyment. Interviews with the museum director, staff and the volunteers who look after the cats present a variety of perspectives on the situation, and the film is screened at the end of a make-shift tunnel daubed with photocopies of cats, drawings and collages of political and other figures, and statements such as “What is a museum? A ‘shrine’ or a factory?” and “Free is boring. Problems we need”.

Janus (2012) is a 50 minute film screened within a net-curtained, Dutch-interior inspired wooden structure which is in stark contrast to the fashionable interiors depicted in the large-scale reproductions which line the gallery walls. It explores issues of class and social hierarchy through the story of a recently deceased man whose collection of art and cats, drawings and collages of political and other figures, and statements such as “What is a museum? A ‘shrine’ or a factory?” and “Free is boring. Problems we need”.

Discomfort and unease characterise much of Van Lieshout’s work, and to view Ego (2013), the third film in the exhibition, visitors have to sit on a steep, carpet-covered slope. This is the most intimate of the works in the show and focuses on Van Lieshout’s family members, almost all of whom are involved in social work. Van Lieshout compares his own art practice with the social work of his family, accompanying them on their daily visits to clients and patients in an exploration of the relationship between selfless acts, individual ambition and collective needs, ultimately asking whether art can make a positive difference to people’s lives.

The exhibition is supported by the Mondriaan Fund and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.


**LIST OF WORKS**

1. **The Basement**, 2014
   - HD film, colour, sound
   - 18 mins
   - Wood, carpet, photocopies
   - Commissioned by Manifesta 10, St. Petersburg with the support of Mondriaan Fund and Outset, the Netherlands
   -Courtesy Maureen Paley, London

2. **Janus**, 2012
   - HD film, colour, sound
   - 50 mins
   - Wood, carpet, lace curtains
   - Exhibition Tours
   - Daily, 1pm & Last Fridays, 7pm, Free
   - Join the SLG’s gallery assistants for an informal, drop-in tour of the current exhibitions.
   - Booking for most events is essential, book online or call 020 7703 6120.
   - Join our network of Fans today and pay less for tickets: southlondongallery.org/fans

   **ACCOMPANYING EVENTS**

   - **Erik van Lieshout in Conversation with Adrian Searle**
     - Thu 1 Jun, 7pm, £5/£3 conc, Clore Studio
     - Erik van Lieshout discusses his current SLG exhibition and past projects with art writer and critic Adrian Searle.

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   - **Photography is permitted in the galleries. Please be aware that the video Ego momentarily contains flashing lights.**

   - **T @SLG_artupdates**
   - **F South London Gallery**
   - **www.southlondongallery.org/ErikvanLieshout**

   - **ALK SHOWING AT THE SLG**

   - **Alicia Reyes McNamara: Nowhere Else**
     - Until 31 July 2017
     - First Floor Galleries, Free

   **S L G**

   - South London Gallery, 65–67 Peckham Road, London SE5 8UH
   - 020 7703 6120 mail@southlondongallery.org
   - www.southlondongallery.org

   - South London Gallery is a registered charity no.312160. It is registered as company no.04720002 (SLG Trustee Ltd)


   - Acknowledgements: SLG: Design by Studio Astill; SLG: Website designed by Studio Astill.


   - Photo: Studio Astill. © Erik van Lieshout

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Erik van Lieshout

7 APR – 11 JUN 2017

South London Gallery

Born in Deurne, The Netherlands in 1968, Erik van Lieshout contains flashing lights.
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