



**ERIK VAN LIESHOUT:
THREE SOCIAL WORKS
7 APR - 11 JUN 2017**

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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 disarming 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 bric-a-brac was acquired by Van Lieshout and almost sold to Rotterdam Museum until cuts in state support for the arts under the right-wing government meant the sale had to be cancelled. Van Lieshout interviews the man's family and friends in the neighbourhood of Rotterdam-Zuid where the social housing was designed by the architect J. J. P. Oud whose work Van Lieshout greatly admires. He questions Janus's relations and neighbours about the political role of artists in society, compares artists to bacteria and makes provocative statements about 'ordinary people'. Van Lieshout appears in the film but also hires an actor to play him which lends an additional ironic twist to a film which is as much disconcerting as funny.

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.

With thanks to Maureen Paley, London and Galerie Guido W. Baudach, Berlin; Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam; Anton Kern Gallery, New York.



Kingdom of the Netherlands

Artist biography

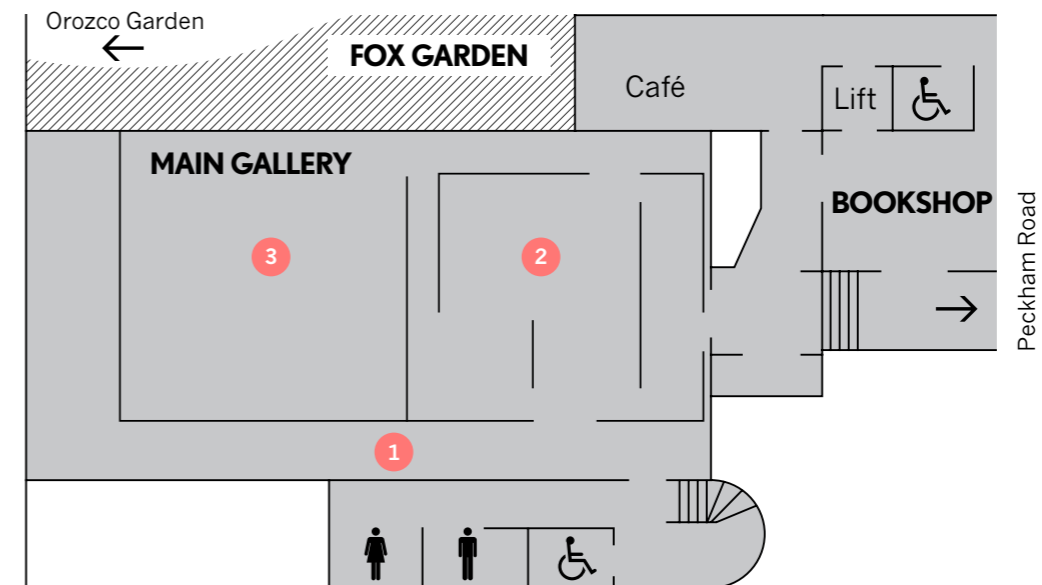
Born in Deurne, The Netherlands in 1968, Erik van Lieshout lives and works in Rotterdam. Previous solo exhibitions include *The Show Must Ego On*, WIELS, Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels, 2016; *Delegierte Performance* for WWTBD, Marien Jongewaard at Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, 2013; *Commission*, MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, 2012; *Erik makes Happy*, BAWAG Contemporary, Vienna, 2011; *How Can I Help You*, Hayward Gallery Project Space, London, 2011; *Im Netz*, Ludwig Museum, Cologne, 2009; *Homeland Security*, Projekt am Museumsplatz, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich, 2007 and *Guantánamo Baywatch*, Hammer Projects, Hammer Museum, UCLA, Los Angeles, 2007.

Recent group exhibitions include *Drawing | The Bottom Line*, Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent, Belgium, 2015; *Political Populism*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Austria, 2015; *Celebrate Life!*, Kunst historisches Museum Vienna, Austria, 2015; *Manifesta 10*, The European Biennial of Contemporary Art, St. Petersburg, 2014; *The Encyclopedic Palace*, 55th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, 2013 and *Point de Vue*, Stedelijk Museum, Den Bosch, 2012.

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

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www.southlondongallery.org/ErikvanLieshout

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

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London,
Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam and
Galerie Guido W. Baudach, Berlin

3. *Ego*, 2013
HD film, colour, sound
25 mins
Wood, carpet

Courtesy Maureen Paley, London,
Annet Gelink Gallery Amsterdam,
Galerie Guido W. Baudach, Berlin
and Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna

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.

Exhibition Tours

Daily, 1pm & Last Fridays, 7pm, Free

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drop-in tour of the current exhibitions.

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SLG

South London Gallery,
65–67 Peckham Road, London SE5 8UH
020 7703 6120 mail@southlondongallery.org
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Cover image: Erik van Lieshout, *The Basement*, installation view at the South London Gallery, 2017. HD film, colour, sound, 18 mins. Wood, carpet, photocopies. Courtesy the artist and Maureen Paley, London. Photo Andy Stagg.
Back cover image: Erik van Lieshout, *Untitled*, 2012. Mixed media on paper. Part of *Ministry of Subculture*, 2012. Collection de Bruin-Heijn. Photo Jhoeko. © Erik van Lieshout

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**SOCIAL
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EXHIBITION