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ATELIER VAN LIESHOUT

Light in the Darkness

Soft opening: 9th of June, 15-21 pm

Exhibition duration: 10th of June – 27th of August, 2022

Opening hours:

June, July: Tue-Fri 12 - 6pm & Sa 11-2 pm,

August: Wed-Fri 12 - 6pm & Sa 11-2 pm.

We live in dark times, with war raging on the EU's border, more refugees than aid organizations can handle, the smouldering threat of Covid returning in a different guise and the climate crisis looming over us. *Joep van Lieshout of Atelier Van Lieshout (AVL)* provides some light as the torchbearer of radical change. As a participant in the current documenta exhibition in Kassel, AVL presents a mobile platform for communal action and critical interaction. The exhibition 'Light in the Darkness' fulfils Van Lieshout's mission to enlighten more literally by presenting a wide selection of lamps.

Joep van Lieshout has been fascinated by lamps ever since AVL started making furniture in the 1990's, always blurring the line between autonomous and applied art while questioning the dogmas of unicity and authorship. Unlike chairs or tables, which always have to meet certain criteria of height, angle and solidity, the construction of lamps is not related to the shape, size or movements of the human body. Which means it can be anything, even an incubator or an operation table. In Van Lieshout's opinion, if it radiates light, it's a lamp.

The lamp's singular functionality proved extremely fruitful creatively, as evidenced by *Light in Darkness*. Van Lieshout does not limit himself to any shape, type or style. Some of his creations might look conventional at first, but have been executed in robust steel or the base and the shade have been turned up side down making the light shine from below and elevating the base to the status of sculpture on a pedestal. The visual language often refers to known AVL themes, such as human anatomy, utilitarian objects necessary for survival and the relentless progression of time.

A special category are the Renegades. They were created as a passionate and somewhat recalcitrant reaction to the fetishistic awe for authenticity in the traditional art world as well as overly regulated design practices that have designers prototype and test new models for years before actually producing them. Van Lieshout is extremely passionate about keeping the wheels of imagination spinning at high speed and his creative drive, fuelled by the hundreds of drawings he makes every week, bulldozers everything in its path. The text on the Manifesto Lamp reads like the recipe for mass-production but can also be interpreted as a call to action: start building, take matters into your own hands and enlighten the world.

Typical of Van Lieshout's work in general, the message of these lamps is hardly unequivocal and straightforward. They may shed light in the darkness, but what they bring to light might not be all good. The masks in *Twins* can refer to both freedom fighters and terrorists. And *The Beginning of Everything* forbodes an inevitable ending. Van Lieshout reminds us that the presence of light always implies darkness. And more disturbingly: the monsters under the bed that hide in shadows and can't be identified as good or evil, are sources of love or inflictors of pain.

These lamps are like the *MAMA Werner* that is now on display at documenta fifteen. It's an armour plated vehicle not unlike the tanks used by Mexican drug cartels or terrorist organizations. It's named after Werner Herzog, the pioneer of New German Cinema who would go to great lengths, even cross moral lines, to transform reality so viewers can witness the 'ecstatic truth', as he calls it. However, in Kassel the *MAMA Werner* is used as a platform for discussions, readings and workshops about climate change, indigenous knowledge and artistic potential for change. Here, it's a force for development, healing and improvement. It goes to show that meanings always depend on intentions and context. It comes down to the light things are presented in.

Atelier Van Lieshout is the studio founded by sculptor, painter and visionary Joep van Lieshout (born 1963, Ravenstein, Netherlands. Lives and works in Rotterdam). After graduating at the Rotterdam Art Academy Van Lieshout quickly rose to fame with projects that travelled between the world of easy-clean design and the non-functional area of art: sculpture and installations, buildings and furniture, utopias and dystopias.

Van Lieshout's works have been included in the Gwangju, Venice, Yokohama, Christchurch, Shanghai and Sa o Paulo biennials. AVL is in part of the permanent collections of public and private institutions such as: FNAC, Paris; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Prada Foundation, Milan; Ludwig Forum, Aachen; Folkwang Museum, Essen; Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich.

Atelier Van Lieshout is internationally represented by Gallery Krinzinger (Austria), Jousse Enterprise/ galerie Philip Jousse (France), OMR (Mexico), Gi o Marconi (Italy), and Carpenters Workshop Gallery (UK, France and USA).