

PRESSRELEASE

## ERIK VAN LIESHOUT G.O.A.T.

28 October 2017 – 23 December 2017

Annet Gelink Gallery proudly presents *G.O.A.T.*, the second solo-show by Erik van Lieshout (1968, Deurne, NL) with the gallery.



Erik van Lieshout, production photo at Kochi Muziris Biennale, 2017, Photo by A. Somakumaran

When invited to the Kochi Muziris Biennale in India, from December 2016 to March 2017, Erik van Lieshout decided to begin with an empty space and a video camera. During the three months he staged, for the duration of the Biennale, he produced the film *G.O.A.T.*, documenting his experience. The gallery space itself is completely altered to host the film and to resemble the Biennale building at the end of Van Lieshout's experiment, becoming a massive immersive walk-through installation. In the Bakery, large and small format collages realized during the event close the cycle of the work.

Erik van Lieshout's practice always investigates the complexity of contemporary issues, looking at them from a radically personal point of view, often forcing their boundaries with a satirical-humorous attitude. With *G.O.A.T.* the artist went a step further. Finding himself in a socio-political reality so different than his own, Van Lieshout starts engaging with the audience, discovering more about India's political conflicts, religious-moral taboos and social disparities.

Complications with the local culture he immersed in become obvious right from the start, when Van Lieshout has to struggle to obtain the permission by the Biennale to receive two goats, with which he plans to share the space. The more the work develops the more problematic it becomes. Collages Van Lieshout is working on during his insightful encounters with the public are seen as blasphemy for their depiction of gods. The situation gets out of hand when authorities remove them without the artist's consent. Most of the collages showcased in the exhibition thus weren't in fact presented at the venue of their creations.

*G.O.A.T.* hence becomes both, a provocative and ironic title, holding multiple layers of meaning. Clearly it links directly to the presence of two goats, being animals with a specific religious and ritualistic connotation. During the process of filmmaking and the resistance it raises, it becomes evident that the artist himself turns into what is called a *scapegoat*, a victim of a bigger and pre-existing tension between the Kochi Muziris Biennale and the state authorities. On the other hand, read as an acronym it means Greatest Of All Times, addressing sarcastically to the white male dominance (Trump was elected just before Van Lieshout went to India): the artist himself could be seen as the insolent colonial, establishing his own Dutch Pavilion in a territorial area, the one of the Biennale, that was historically colonized by the Dutch. In this way, Erik Van Lieshout grows to embody both the victim and the oppressor.

Once more, Erik van Lieshout ventures in the darkest corner of our controversial times, touching the most inconvenient themes while requesting the activation of his audience. The work reaches beyond the space-and-time specific issues: questioning the dilemma between censorship and freedom of art. It demands a more radical approach and awareness.

**Erik van Lieshout** (1968, Deurne) studied at the Academy of Art and design in Hertogenbosch and Ateliers '63 both situated in the Netherlands. His work has been internationally shown, featuring large solo and group exhibitions at the MoMA New York (2017, 2016), the South London Gallery (2017), Hannover Kunstverein (2017), Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels (2016), TENT Rotterdam, Pauluskerk, Rotterdam (2016), Tessaloniki Biennale, Tessaloniki (2015), FRAC - Nord - Pas de Calais, Dunkerque (2014), Center for Contemporary Culture - GCCC, Moscow (2014), Moscow Biennale, Moscow (2013), 55th Venice Biennale, Venice (2013), Colombo Art Biennale, Colombo (2012), Art Unlimited, Basel (2011), Centre d'édition contemporaine, Geneva (2009), The Museum Boijmans van Beunigen, Rotterdam (2006) and many others.