

Atelier Van Lieshout: *The CryptoFuturist and The New Tribal Labyrinth*

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Pioneer Works to present the largest-scale exhibition of Atelier Van Lieshout in the United States.

For more than three decades, Atelier Van Lieshout (AVL)—the working name of Rotterdam-based artist Joep van Lieshout’s studio practice—has been known for creating anarchic, large-scale installations that propose hypothetical environments for habitation and industry. AVL was established as an atelier in 1995, to both undermine the artist-as-genius myth, and to place art and utility on equal footing. *The CryptoFuturist and The New Tribal Labyrinth* simultaneously dissects and pays homage to the Industrial Revolution, which AVL posits as the starting point of our current cultural and material wealth.

The exhibition’s centerpiece is *Blast Furnace* (2013), a 40-foot-tall structure which resembles a steel maze of pipes, conveyor elevators, staircases, and mezzanines. Although industrial in form, the sculptural installation’s hypothetical function is inverted by the placement of domestic elements that have also been fabricated by the artist, such as furniture, lamps, and toilets. At the center of this work is a fictional narrative wherein a “New Tribe” of metal workers is so inspired by their desire to return to industry, that they decide to inhabit *Blast Furnace* as their home. AVL thereby sets the stage for the synthesis of man and machine, while referring to replacement of heavy industry by an immaterial, information-led economy. The installation’s placement within Pioneer Works, a former iron works factory adapted into a cultural center, further amplifies its underlying intentions.

In the shadow of *Blast Furnace* are sculptures from AVL’s ongoing series “Crypto-Futurism,” which draws parallels between the Italian Futurists’ nationalist glorification of new technologies, cities and war during the 20th century and emerging fascist tendencies today. The most prominent of these works is *Pendulum Press* (2018), an oversized mechanical clock powered by a swinging pendulum. Attached to a machine press, the installation crushes objects—in some instances, the artist’s own work—at a pre-destined time daily. In this way, *Pendulum Press* is a dramatic and celebratory illustration of AVL breaking with the past, with the “end of everything” ushering in a metaphorical “beginning of everything.” With these machines, AVL deconstructs sustainability with techno-modernist speed, playing a game of nostalgia for bygone political theorems.

Atelier Van Lieshout: *The CryptoFuturist and The New Tribal Labyrinth* is curated by Gabriel Florenz and Natalie Kovacs.

About the Artist

Sculptor, painter and visionary Joep Van Lieshout (b. 1963 in Ravenstein, Germany) was accepted to the Rotterdam Academy of the Arts at sixteen years of age, and has been working solely under the name Atelier Van Lieshout (AVL) since the studio’s founding in 1995. AVL has established a multidisciplinary practice that produces works on the borders between art, design, and architecture. Notable projects have included *AVL-Ville* (2001), an independent state in Rotterdam with its own constitution and currency; *A-Portable* (2001), a floating, reproductive health clinic offering abortions in international waters; *Insect Farm* (2012), an insect farm which addresses future food needs; and *Domestikator* (2015), a lodging-sculpture depicting a man and animal procreating, which was censored by the Louvre and subsequently displayed at the Centre Pompidou. Work by AVL has been exhibited at museums and galleries worldwide, and is in the collections of MoMA, New York; FNAC, Paris; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Prada Foundation, Milan; and Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich.

Pioneer Works is a cultural center dedicated to experimentation, education, and production across disciplines. Through a broad range of educational programs, performances, residencies, and exhibitions, Pioneer Works transcends disciplinary boundaries to foster a community where alternative modes of thought are activated and supported. We strive to make culture accessible to all.

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