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What to See in New York Art Galleries Right Now

Yukultji Napangati's multilayered cartographic canvases; Erik van Lieshout's show, awash in beer; and "The World According to ...," a group show anchored by a David Hockney video installation.

By MARTHA SCHWENDENER MARCH 1, 2019

Erik van Lieshout

Through March 9. Anton Kern, 16 East 55th Street, Manhattan; 212-367-9663, antonkerngallery.com.

Last year Erik van Lieshout won the Dr. A.H. Heineken Prize for Art, which is given to midcareer Dutch artists and comes with an award of 100,000 euros (about \$114,000). Shortly thereafter, everything headed south. But like any prize-worthy artist, he managed to pull himself together, finding inspiration in his ordeal. The resulting work is now on view at Anton Kern.



Installation view of Erik van Lieshout's show "BEER." Its centerpiece is a film that covers a lot of ground in 36 minutes. Credit: Thomas Mueller

The centerpiece of the show is "BEER" (2019), a film that covers a lot of ground in 36 minutes. There are scandals involving female prostitutes promoting Heineken beer in African countries, and a Heineken executive's supposed affair with one of the women; Mr. van Lieshout's negative comments about Heineken that went viral; ruminations on colonialism, gentrification, failure and aging; and Mr. van Lieshout discussing his plans to build a pharmacy in Tanzania with some of the prize money. The show is, naturally, awash in beer (in the video, Mr. van Lieshout dons goggles and dunks his head in a vat of beer), despite the fact that he has been sober for nearly a decade.

Screened in a rickety cardboard theater painted bright Heineken-green, the show's packing-tape aesthetic mirrors the work of Thomas Hirschhorn, another artist-provocateur. References to other similar figures abound: Joseph Beuys, Martin Kippenberger, Jan Dibbets and Marcel Duchamp. Rippling below these allusions is the question: Can artists still be social critics, tricksters and renegades when they're accepting corporate money? And beneath that is another, more universal question: Is this the twilight of idols, the last gasp of Great White Men dominating art and life? ("I turn life into art," Mr. van Lieshout says in the film, "except mine is not lofty.")

The exhibition, which also includes paintings and drawings, hints at a global changing of the guard. Although the film's denouement, which includes footage of Mr. van Lieshout agreeably accepting the Heineken Prize, argues otherwise.

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