

Atelier Van Lieshout

Atelier Van Lieshout (AVL) is the internationally recognized studio and workshop of Dutch artist Joep van Lieshout. Initially working as a solo artist, he started out producing objects in bright coloured polyester - the material that would become his trademark - since the early eighties. In 1995 he founded Atelier Van Lieshout, leading a group of like-minded individuals in his search for creative and aesthetic solutions.

Atelier Van Lieshout produces objects that balance on the boundary between art, architecture and design, encompassing sculpture and installations, buildings and furniture, utopias and dystopias. Recurring themes in the work of AVL are power, politics and autarky, as well as a fascination for life, its creation and its end in death. With this body of work, both autonomous and commissioned, AVL has attained international recognition. Over the past 25 years, AVL has had exhibitions at major art institutions and collections worldwide.

One of Atelier Van Lieshout's most well-known projects is AVL-Ville, the establishment of a cultural free state in Rotterdam's harbours in 2001. While AVL-Ville existed for one year, it drew a lot of attention and publicity, as it set out to provoke and inspire creativity. This was followed by the Sportopia/Disciplinator, installations made of ready-made, non-design materials, exploring physical and mental excitement, the Organs series, and the Technocrat, a closed circuit of food, alcohol, excrement and energy, with humans as the cogwheel that generates the necessary materials.

Recent projects include SlaveCity from 2005, which can be described as a sinister dystopia. Morale, values, ethics, aesthetics, food, energy, economics, organization, management and market are turned upside-down, mixed and reformulated and designed into a city of 200.000 inhabitants. Each day, the inhabitants work in office jobs for seven hours, and in the fields or inside a workshop for seven hours, before being allowed three hours of relaxation. Subsequently they sleep for seven hours. SlaveCity is very rational, efficient and profitable. It is also the first 'zero energy' city; a green town, recycling everything, not wasting any of the world's resources, and completely self-sufficient.

Cradle to Cradle, a mixed media installation from 2009, is a self-sufficient system to recycle humans. This ecological design shows the production system that emulates nature's model to recycle. The elderly, the handicapped and the diseased, as well as bad-tasting people, will be recycled in the biogas digester. Healthy, non-intelligent people will be recycled in the meat processing factory. Young and very healthy people will be able to take part in the organ transplant program.

Our most recent works reflect on the possible end of civilisation as we know it. In our extremely advanced and complex society over-consumption and limited raw materials play a crucial role. Once supplies are exhausted society will see a harshening of relations between people and increased survival instinct, changes which will lead to an emergence of various new cultures in the near future. AVL wants to raise the question whether such radical changes, which are coupled with violence but which may also lead to a new improved society, are good or bad.

These ideas are reflected on in The New Tribal Labyrinth, a new project in which recurring themes like work organization, power structures and revolution are connected with the theme of autarky, a proposal for a new world order. The New Tribal Labyrinth envisages an alternative society, inhabited by an imaginary tribe. The new 'Gesamtkunstwerk' focuses on the three main pillars of this tribal society, farming, industry and ritual objects.

