

Rotterdam
13th of October 2017

Statement from Joep van Lieshout about the adoption of the Domestikator by the Pompidou

The Louvre's recent decision to cancel the installation of Domestikator in the Tuileries Garden was a disappointing one, not just for me personally, but more broadly in terms of the repercussions for artistic expression and freedom.

I'm very pleased that the Centre Pompidou was able to see beyond the sensationalized interpretations of this work, and offered to present it during FIAC. By exhibiting this work, the institution is not only allowing the public to properly experience its artistic and intrinsic values, but it also opens up a broader discussion about the current challenges and complexities in the relationships between artists, institutions, public, and press – and their subsequent impact on artistic freedom.

Domestikator was always intended to be a catalyst for thought, as it addresses the very serious issue of how humans employ technology – with ingenuity, creativity, sophistication and persistence – to change the world into a “better” place, often domesticating it in the process. In order to push the boundaries of human experience and longevity, we have developed new technologies, like artificial intelligence, genetic manipulation, robotics and industrial farming, which push our ethical borders, without any real understanding of the long term consequences.

I am pleased that visitors to the Pompidou will have the opportunity to experience this work and hope that it generates questions and dialogue around the complexity of the issue of domestication – particularly its inherent hypocrisy, and the disconcerting fact that we are still without any real policy or regulation to govern this increasingly intrepid behavior.

Now, in addition to these meanings, the installation has inadvertently become a catalyst for a conversation about the freedom of expression, which is an urgent topic today. I'd like to express my sincerest gratitude to FIAC, Centre Pompidou, Carpenter's Workshop Gallery, the city of Paris and my studio team for making this installation possible, and to the public who took to various platforms to voice their opposition to its censorship. I'm truly grateful for everyone's support.

Joep van Lieshout, Sculptor and founder of Atelier Van Lieshout
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