

At Home With Meta-Jerk Erik van Lieshout

An irritating Euro artist played by a hopefully not irritating Euro artist

By [Ben Davis](#) Wednesday, Feb 4 2009



Courtesy Maccarone

Details

Erik van Lieshout
Maccarone
630 Greenwich Street
212-431-4977
Through February 21

Dutch painter-filmmaker [Erik van Lieshout](#) spins his art out of being a terrible cultural ambassador for Europe. He plays with the image of the decadent, tortured, self-serious artist baring his soul through his work—think [Georg Baselitz](#), [Arnulf Rainer](#), the Viennese actionists—updating the persona with a predilection for video confessionals and homemade pornography. The centerpiece of "Sex Is Sentimental" at Maccarone, his first solo show in the U.S., is a 21-minute film that opens with the rumples, bespectacled artist in his underwear, whining about how screwing his assistant, [Suzanne Weenick](#), interferes with his art. As time goes on, you realize that this monologue serves as a kind

of sly, self-referential joke—the "art" you are watching is a kind of freewheeling montage about this very sexual and artistic ambivalence.

In what follows, we observe the artist strain to do yoga; sing along badly to [Simon & Garfunkel](#); say cruddy, insensitive things about Weenick (whom we see only in photos, often unflattering ones); paint and then aggressively paint over images of her face; and muse about how he prefers Velázquez to sex. He intersperses his ramblings with childish animated collages, combining Weenick's visage with clippings from skin mags, throwing in a few lewd animations of [Sarah Palin](#) and [Nicolas Sarkozy](#) while he's at it. (The paintings and collages from the film are displayed in a separate room.)

It all has the raw feeling of listening in on someone's therapy. At the same time, it's also a total put-on, with Van Lieshout gleefully acting the part of a braying Euro-trash artiste. Satirical self-scrutiny also indicates a kind of self-loathing, and the film reads as a tragicomic farewell to the idea of the Artist and his Muse—a grim, nihilistic goof on the artistic challenge of saying something intimate in an age of reality TV.