



melanie bonajo 'When the body says Yes'

Dutch Pavilion at the 59th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia Commissioned by the Mondriaan Fund for cultural heritage and visual arts

Address: Chiesetta della Misericordia of Art Events, Campo dell'Abazia, Cannaregio

Press Breakfast: Wednesday, 20 April from 08:45 am. Boat transfers will be offered to the Giardini.

"Feeling is a form of intelligence; thinking through touch." – melanie bonajo



Photo credit: 'Big Spoon', film still from 'When the body says Yes'. Courtesy of the artist.

'When the body says Yes' is a new immersive video installation by melanie bonajo (they / them, lower case), Dutch artist, filmmaker, sexological bodyworker and somatic sex coach and educator. Commissioned by the Mondriaan Fund for the Biennale Arte 2022 (23 April - 27 November), the installation is part of the artist's ongoing research into the current status of intimacy in our increasingly alienating, commodity-driven world. For bonajo, touch can be a powerful remedy for the modern epidemic of loneliness.

About the project, bonajo says: *"Love is not learned in isolation and, if you have felt it, someone else has probably felt it too. We created a collective spell in the form of a pleasure positive camp, an eco-erotic queer eros, celebrating our kin through skinship. A place of productive chaos and care, where we practised touch tutorials, set boundaries, gave and received consent, drank our own poison at the trigger bar, did weird therapies and acknowledged feelings as valid.*

We brought together a group of international gender queer people, where many have a bicultural identity and we expanded on sexuality beyond the western discourse, what our genitals mean to us and others, self-expression as a healing modality, the way our body matrix sends and receives information about closeness and touch, and how that is embodied in different language structures. Do you know the sensational dimensions of your No. How do you feel when your body says Yes?"



'*When the body says Yes*' draws visitors into a sense-altering environment and invites them to reflect on the meaning of touch and intimacy in relation to their own bodies. Immersed in an atmosphere of softness and sensuality – a cushioned refuge from the outside world – they can explore their own 'touch language'.

'*When the body says Yes*' is curated by Orlando Maaïke Gouwenberg, Geir Haraldseth and Soraya Pol, and the scenography is designed in collaboration with Théo Demans.

For the 2022 edition, the Mondriaan Fund has decided to break with tradition and present the Dutch entry at a new location, the Chiesetta della Misericordia of Art Events, a deconsecrated 13th-century church in Cannaregio. The Mondriaan Fund has meanwhile invited Estonia to make use of the Rietveld Pavilion for the current edition.

For more information about the Dutch Pavilion, please visit: dutch-pavilion.com or visit the Dutch Pavilion Instagram page [@dutch.pavilion.venice](https://www.instagram.com/dutch.pavilion.venice).

Notes to editors

For information and images, please contact Emily Saunders: e.saunders@mondriaanfonds.nl / +44 (0) 7914 817 795.

Opening hours: 10 am – 6 pm. Closed on Mondays except 25/4, 30/5, 27/6, 25/7, 15/8, 5/9, 19/9, 31/10, 21/11.

The Mondriaan Fund is the public fund for visual art and cultural heritage in the Netherlands. It enables the plans, projects and programmes of artists, exhibition makers and critics, museums and other art and heritage institutions, and publishers and commissioners. The Mondriaan Fund is responsible for commissioning the Dutch entry to the Venice Biennale. The presentation is financed from the international budget, which the fund receives from the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

***melanie bonajo** (lower case, they/them) is an artist, filmmaker, sexological bodyworker, somatic sex coach and educator, cuddle workshop facilitator and activist. Through their videos, performances, photographs, and installations, they examine current conundrums of co-existence in a crippling capitalist system, and address themes of eroding intimacy and isolation in an increasingly sterile, technological world. They research how technological advances and commodity-based pleasures increase feelings of alienation, removing an individual's sense of belonging. Their works present anti-capitalist methods to reconnect and to explore sexualities, intimacies and feelings. bonajo's experimental documentaries often feature communities living or working on the margins of society, either through illegal means or cultural exclusion, and the paradoxes inherent to ideas of comfort with a strong sense for community, equality and body-politics.

bonajo's recent exhibitions include Shanghai Biennale, China (2020/21); Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Netherlands (2020); Palais de Tokyo, France (performance 2019); Haus der Kunst, Germany (2018); Manifesta 12, Palermo, Italy (2018); Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt (2017); Tate Modern, London, UK (2017); and Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht (2018).