Mark Manders (1968) will represent the Netherlands at the 55th International Art Exhibition - la Biennale di Venezia. The Dutch pavilion will showcase Room with Broken Sentence, with Lorenzo Benedetti (1972) as curator. Benedetti and Manders are developing a visually layered event which will dialogue with the architecture of the Rietveld pavilion. The Netherlands are also celebrating the 100th anniversary of Dutch entries, from 1953 onwards in the present pavilion designed by Gerrit Rietveld.

The Dutch entry at the 55th International Art Exhibition is a solo exhibition by one of the Netherlands’ most representative contemporary artists. Mark Manders launched his career in 1986 with a work entitled Self-Portrait as a Building: a floor plan of a building realised with pencils, pens and other writing implements. From this point onwards his art has revolved around the exploration of this inner building. Many of the recurring features in his work are described in these floor plans – as though they were the artist’s DNA whose enigmatic code sparks off his sculptures and installations. Manders had solo exhibitions at the Art Institute Chicago and the Renaissance Society in Chicago, Berkeley Art Museum, the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin, Carillo Gil Museum of Art in Mexico City, and in Musée Carré d’Art in Nîmes amongst others. In 2010 Manders’ first American exhibition tour started in the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles and travelled to the Aspen Museum of Art, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and the Dallas Museum of Art.

Room with Broken Sentence contains elements of Manders’ earlier work while highlighting new steps the artist is taking. The proposed works form a coherent whole, representing the fantastic aspects of his oeuvre: installations, sculptures, offset print on paper and architectural interventions. All works combine a certain mystery with tremendous visual appeal. Manders’ use of materials, in which nothing
is what it seems (epoxy looks like clay, clay becomes brass and brass seems to be wood), enhances this enigmatic visual impact. The larger installations developed specially for the Rietveld pavilion reveal significant new aspects of the artist’s formal and conceptual vocabulary. Turning his back on the frenetic consumerist dynamics of today’s cultural system, Manders withdraws into sculptures that seem to have always been there. His work directly confronts reality and is more than just hermeneutics. Leaving the shelter of the ‘white cube’, it infiltrates, blends into and seeks acknowledgement within a reality close to that of the general public.

The selection of Mark Manders places him in direct confrontation with the magnificent work of the great Dutch architect Gerrit Rietveld, whose Modernist pavilion, built in 1953, is one of the architectural jewels of the Giardini of the Biennale. The result will be a dialogue between two Dutchmen: a Modernist architect and an artist who, a child of his time, sets out to decipher the enigmatic temporal dimension of our age and create a parallel, autonomous one of his own.

Lorenzo Benedetti, since 2008 director of the Art Center De Vleeshal at Middelburg, The Netherlands, is internationally recognized for his inspired presentations. He studied Art history at the University La Sapienza in Rome and attended the Curatorial Training Program at de Appel arts centre in Amsterdam. He was curator in Marta Herford under the direction of Jan Hoet. He is tutor at the Jan van Eyck Academy in Maastricht and writes regularly for exhibition catalogues and art magazines.

Entitled Room with Broken Sentence, a fully illustrated catalogue will accompany the exhibition, with 40 contributions by international writers from Nancy Spector to Saskia Bos. This publication will have an unique character, the large number of contributions creating an interesting multiple perspective on the work of Manders. The catalogue will be published by Roma Publications.

Since 1996, the Mondriaan Fund is responsible for the Dutch entry for the Venice Biennale. For this 55th edition the Mondriaan Fund introduced an open call to curators to submit a brief preliminary plan for this stately event. A specially appointed jury selected the Benedetti and Manders plan from four shortlisted proposals. The jury consisted of Hester Alberdingk Thijm (director of AkzoNobel Art Foundation), Defne Ayas (director of the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam), Jan Debbaut (freelance curator and former director of Van Abbeumuseum in Eindhoven and director of Collections at Tate Museums, London), Rein Wolfs (director of the Bundeskunsthalle Bonn, Germany) and chairperson without a vote Birgit Donker (director Mondriaan Fund).

For further information and images:
International Press Contact:
RP PR, Rhiannon Pickles
+31 (0)615821202 | info@picklespr.com

Contact Dutch press:
Mondriaan Fund, Caroline Soons
t +31 (0)20 523 15 23 | c.soons@mondriaanfonds.nl

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