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Jury report for the Dutch entry in the 2017 Venice Biennale

12 May 2016, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Present

Birgit Donker (Chair), Lorenzo Benedetti, Nathalie Hartjes, Aernout Mik, Mirjam Westen, Joost Vrieler (Secretary).

Selection

The jury's choice of entries for its shortlist was upheld by the rich nature of the five meticulously prepared proposals, complemented with the artist-curator teams' lively and illuminating presentations. As was the case with the previous two editions of the open call for Biennale, the plans formed a multifaceted reflection of the energy, topicality and diversity of the visual arts in the Netherlands and beyond.

The presentation prepared by Jennifer Tee, Nina Folkersma and Hilde de Bruijn builds on the artist's recent retrospective *The Soul in Limbo* at the Cobra Museum, which dealt with the individual's liminal position as a result of the fluidity of identity and how it is experienced. The proposed monumental-scale spatial installation will be combined with new sculptural works and performances, in a continuation of Tee's widely-recognised existing practice. The jury recognises a new step in Tee's oeuvre with the role of performances developed in partnership with choreographer Nicole Beutler. There is a clear synergy between both curators and the artist, and the jury appreciates the Cobra Museum's broad support for the project. If Tee is selected for the 2017 Biennale, the Rietveld Pavilion will offer a different experience every moment of the day, as well as constantly change in visual terms as a result of the installation's exploratory character.

Erik van Lieshout and Francesco Stocchi have developed a plan to transform the Rietveld Pavilion into a permanently operational film set, which Van Lieshout will use for an integral re-filming – together with the visitors to the Biennale – of Bertolucci's *Novecento*. This production will not shy away from social issues like populism, power, fascism and freedom: visitors are encouraged to discuss the significance of the scene that is being recorded at the time of their visit. Van Lieshout can constantly be found in the pavilion during shooting. The final version of the film – a critical caricature of the original – will only become available for viewing in the last two weeks of the exhibition period. In this plan, the jury recognises an attempt on Van Lieshout's part to assign the audience a more prominent role in his work. If the jury were to choose Van Lieshout's entry, the Rietveld Pavilion would be given an entirely new purpose – serving as a production space rather than an exhibition venue. Visitors would experience a crossover between a utopian workshop and a reality show.

For a number of years now, Renzo Martens has concentrated on building up his Institute for Human Activities in Lusanga in DR Congo. Through his activities, Martens wishes to draw attention to the hypocrisy of socially-engaged art, and at the same time offer an alternative. He achieves this by not only exhibiting this engaged art at the location it deals with, but also by actually returning the value created by this art to its place of origin rather than New York, Paris or Venice. Together with curators Charles Esche, Els Roelandt and Charles Tumba, Martens plans to transform the Rietveld Pavilion into an 'animated' place that – together with a monumental chocolate sculpture, a film installation, infographics and Congolese hosts – aims to change the mechanisms of the global art world, while maintain direct contact with a satellite pavilion in DR Congo. The jury is enthusiastic about how Martens and his curators work together, appreciates the unconditional support shown by Van Abbemuseum and admires the passion shown by everyone involved. It believes the layered exhibitions will stimulate social involvement and

critical reflection and will not fail to touch the visitor's heart. As such, the Rietveld Pavilion can make a unique contribution to the Biennale that manages to transcend the purely symbolic.

Together with Maaike Gouwenberg and Emma Panza, artist Melanie Bonajo intends to turn the Rietveld Pavilion into a lively platform that brings the theme 'rage' into sharp focus via female artists' practice and work. Bonajo will be making five new films in partnership with Zhana Ivanova, Dafna Maimon, Shana Moulton, Ieva Miseviciute and Valentina Desideri that deal with anger, amazement or bemusement in response to topical issues like sex, ecology and death. The jury is impressed by the idiosyncrasy of the proposal and the collaboration between the curators and the artist. If Melanie Bonajo is selected for the entry, the Rietveld Pavilion will play a key role in the thoughts and actions of members of a variety of urban subcultures across the planet. It is quite likely that other projects will spontaneously be linked to the themes and activities that are dealt with in and around the pavilion. As such, the Dutch entry would reflect how a young generation maintains its interrelations, deals with information and adds its own imaginative layer.

Notwithstanding its appreciation for the four aforementioned plans, when asked to recommend an entry for the Dutch pavilion during the 2017 Venice Biennale, the jury arrives at a definite and unanimous endorsement of the proposal developed by Wendelien van Oldenborgh in partnership with Lucy Cotter.

For a number of years now, Van Oldenborgh's work has focused on themes with a pronounced social relevance – a focus that has earned the artist widespread acclaim. Together with Lucy Cotter, Van Oldenborgh wants to give the Rietveld Pavilion centre stage as an architectural manifestation of specific ideologies and as a location for symbolic national exchanges. She will be examining to which extent the ideology that at one time underlay the pavilion's construction proves relevant to our own times through a spatial disruption of the building's transparent and harmonious volumes. Van Oldenborgh will be developing three new film works that shed light on underexposed parts of the Netherlands' recent post-colonial history – periods that, in the artist's view, are important to take on board in the development of a new national sense of identity. According to the jury members, Van Oldenborgh's proposal connects intimately with the spirit of the times, as well as enabling the artist to share a number of unique stories. In addition, they appreciate the prominent role played by the dramatic element in the film works, allowing viewers to observe a new development in the artist's oeuvre. For Van Oldenborgh, the Biennale entry forms a unique opportunity to present her contribution to the Netherlands' postcolonial discourse on a leading international platform: valuable new input in a *discours* that is generally dominated by Anglophone and French perspectives.

The jury decides to select this plan. Ultimately, its choice for Van Oldenborgh and Cotter's proposal is based on a carefully weighed assessment of the quality of the artist's body of work, the curator's strong reputation, the added value of the present collaboration between the artist and the curator, and the relevance and freshness of the proposal.

Subsequent stages in the procedure

The Mondriaan Fund will be contacting the curators on Thursday 19 May to inform them of the jury's decision. The official announcement follows on Friday, 20 May 2016. The selected curator and artist will be invited to finalise the project plan, the team and the project budget in consultation with the Mondriaan Fund.