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Netherlands Taps CATPC Collective and Renzo Martens for Venice Pavilion

By News Desk

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Matthieu Kasiama Kilapi, Ced'art Tamasala, Renzo Martens, Hicham Khalidi, and Lisette Mbuku Kimpala. Photo: Koos_Breukel.

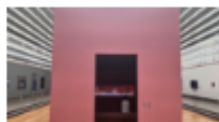
Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise (CATPC), a collective of plantation workers from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Dutch artist Renzo Martens will represent the Netherlands at the Sixtieth Venice Biennale, which will take place April 20–November 24, 2024. The Dutch pavilion is being organized by Hicham Kalidi, director of the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht.

CATPC have been connected with Martens since 2014, two years after he founded the Institute for Human Activities (IHA) at KASK/School of Arts of University College Ghent, Belgium. Through the IHA, Martens established an artists' colony on a on a onetime Unilever plantation in the Congolese rain forest, near the small town of Lusanga. There he launched an initiative—one that has frequently raised questions in relation to issues of gentrification and ethics—aimed at providing former plantation workers with arts training so that they might earn a living wage. The members of CATPC include farmer-artists, artists, and ecologists; they have exhibited work, which often centers around the locally grown cacao bean, at New York's SculptureCenter, the Biennale of Sydney, and the Dak'Art Biennale in Senegal.

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Martens's and CATPC's contribution to the Venice Biennale will take as one of its themes reparations. The artists' presentation at the Dutch pavilion will be mirrored by one at White Cube, the OMA–designed gallery that is part of the Lusanga International Research Centre for Art and Economic Inequality, which occupies the IHA-owned former plantation.

“The opportunity to now pair a white cube on a plantation with one at the summit of the art world allows for a direct look into these two worlds and into the inequalities between them,” said CATPC member Ced’art Tamasala.

“Meaningful and sincere reflections will be produced from these different, but related, realities coming together. Through this presentation, we will come to the final stage of our collective journey into truths that deserve to be shared.”