

THE SOUND BARRIER

A DUTCH NATIONAL, MONUMENTAL & EPHEMERAL CITY
ARTWORK BY GEERT-JAN HOBIJN, HAROLD SCHELLINX AND
KEVIN SCHUIT FOR THE 55TH VENICE BIENNALE (JUNE-
NOVEMBER 2013)



About a hundred years ago the Italian Futurists cried out for a total break with our artistic past, in a series of manifestos and controversial (often indeed literally ‘screaming’) artworks. They sketched the outlines for an art of the future, in which artists fully focus on the rendition of the universal dynamics that, in the wake of the industrial revolution and the ongoing mechanization of production and infrastructure in the Western world, dramatically had changed the sound and image of our cities.

This new art was to be modelled after the new world, full of speed, motion, force, violence and simultaneity.

These very same concepts are, a little over a century later, at the heart of **The Sound Barrier**, a monumental Dutch artwork for the leading international biennial art event in Italy, the cradle of Futurism. For the first time in a century, the city of Venice itself will serve as the Dutch pavilion. A 'curator' will, in principle, be superfluous, as **The Sound Barrier** becomes the only, unique, Dutch entry for the 2013 Venice Biennale.

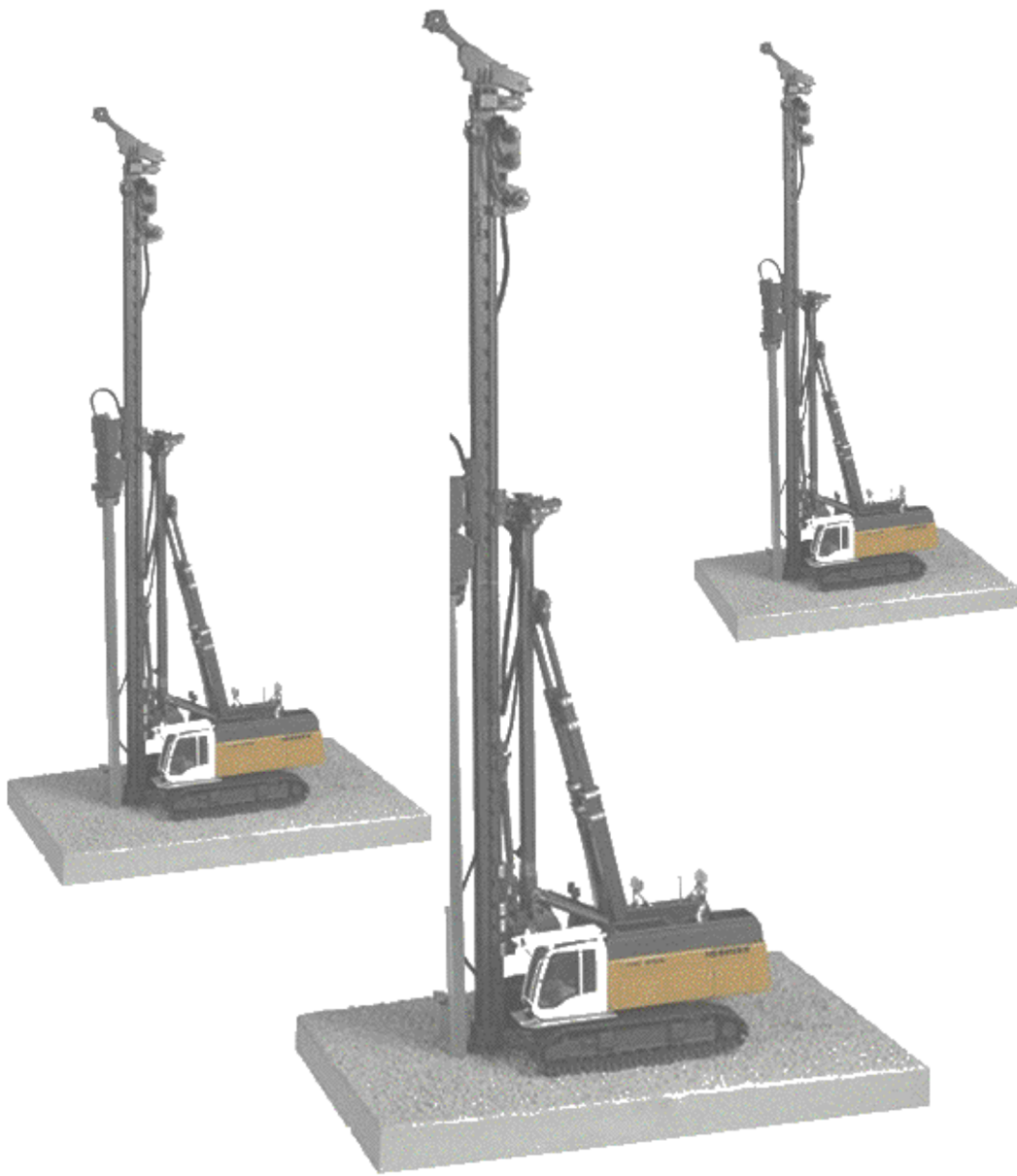
The Sound Barrier is a gift to the world as we know it, a world that, like the city of Venice itself, is quickly sinking into the increasingly unreliable and swampy grounds on which it has been built. We came to lack a proper sense of 'future'. Our image of 'future' has become utterly short-term and fragmented, like the noise on the screen of an analog television set, of which the antenna has been disconnected: we still witness speed, motion, unrest, force, violence and simultaneity, but all form and direction are missing.

Entropy finds itself at a sheer maximum.

The only way is down...

This calls for drastic measures.

It is why at the heart of **The Sound Barrier** there are three piledrivers, as a tripartite and very Dutch symbol for a world that would be well advised to stick its head out of the murky waters, by starting to build, and no longer abort.



On the San Marco Square, the very heart of Venice, the three pile drivers perform a score of complicated rhythmic patterns, that, with sophisticated coordination, leave nothing to chance.

As a symbol of continuity and a musical pedal, the complex rhythms of the pile drivers are accompanied by the deep roaring bass of a two-bladed Dutch army helicopter which, after an elegantly choreographed entrance, will circle above the pile driving machines for the duration of each performance (which will last about forty minutes).



As a symbol of the simultaneous and coordinated vigor that ultimately will overcome any physical limit whatsoever, two Dutch F-16 fighter jets are deployed, which, at a specific climactic point in the composition, will break the sound barrier, right above San Marco Square.



In previous times of economic crisis, of lack of perspective and social hardship, artists worldwide, also in the Netherlands, conclusively showed that a 'do-it-yourself' attitude can move mountains. **The Sound Barrier** limits this attitude not to a social and artistic substrate, but takes it to a broad national level.

Although the objective material costs necessary for its realization, make **The Sound Barrier** among the most expensive artworks ever produced, national solidarity, cooperation and committent assure that the real costs will be negligible.

The Dutch construction industry, that in recent years repeatedly came into disrepute, will seize this unique opportunity to polish its tattered image by sponsoring the necessary equipment and manpower.

The Dutch armed forces dispose of far more than the relatively moderate flying force that is required. As with several other national events and celebrations, the helicopter and F16 fighter jets will, modulo some administrative formalities at a ministerial level, be made available for the realization of this very special and important Dutch artistic presentation in an international context, at no additional costs.

The pilots, flight controllers and pile driver controllers will, at rehearsals and performances, be the performing artists. Indeed. As we know since many decades, anyone can be an artist.

Through its unique combination of left and right wing hobbies, **The Sound Barrier** will lay a solid basis for a renewed and profound sense of National Unity in the Netherlands.

The Sound Barrier is a challenge for every single one of us.

To underline these efforts and their special interest, the national premiere of the work will take place in the spring of 2013, on the Museumplein in Amsterdam, right next to the reopened Stedelijk Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art.

From that point onwards, the future will be crystal clear.

Amsterdam, June 1st 2012