

**Mark Manders**

*Writing Skiapod*

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, Los Angeles

February 11 – April 8, 2023

**Artist talk:** Mark Manders & Heidi Zuckerman, February 15th, 5pm

**Opening reception:** February 15th, 6-8pm

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is pleased to present Mark Manders: *Writing Skiapod*, on view at the gallery's Los Angeles location from February 11 - April 8, 2023. The artist's fifth solo show with the gallery, this is Manders' first solo exhibition in Los Angeles since his 2010 solo exhibition at the Hammer Museum, which also traveled to the Walker Art Center, the Aspen Museum of Art, and the Dallas Museum of Art.

Throughout his decades long practice, Mark Manders has created an expanding but timeless architectural space whose arrangement is constantly being rebuilt and transformed, rooms populated and reimagined, in an ongoing project that extends beyond the artist's own subjectivity of the present moment. This imagined framework, wherein all of the artist's sculptures and rooms belong, has a non-linear narrative where contradictions co-exist: the ancient and the future, the temporary and the permanent, the beautiful and the grotesque, reality and fantasy. Long interested in language and the written word, each object Manders conceives of can be thought of as words in dialogue, forming abstract sentences. Similar to the words in a dictionary, they are linked together in one moment, frozen in time. Manders gives physical form to a dreamlike psychological space where each object is rendered with subtle alteration of scale and material.

"Painting," less as a practice and more as a concept, a word to be manipulated and subverted, serves as a foundational thread in this exhibition. In *Composition with Two Painted Heads* and *Composition with Painted Head*, the portrait bust reemerges among Manders' essential archetypal forms, but here the object is presented as canvas. The canvas heads are tinted with a sky blue pigment the artist has employed throughout his practice to suggest the sky in a landscape from Vermeer or Mondrian or Van Gogh. In *Painted Head* a head is sandwiched between vertical elements that upon closer inspection are revealed as small stretched canvases. Juxtapositions of objects and materials inherent to an artist's studio are employed in a way that subverts the traditional definition of media, or crosses genres, presenting objects that exist simultaneously as painting, poem, sculpture, and text.

Early in his practice, Manders created his Notional Newspapers, and he has recently completed his project to include every word in the English language—used only once and placed in random order. Rather than using real newspapers in his work, these non-sensical fragments have no connection to a specific place or time. Further, the newspapers' traditional purpose as a carrier of language and meaning is undermined and the material is repeatedly transformed. The newspaper becomes a canvas for paintings, a wedge to angle a sculpture, a pillar set upon baked earth in a landscape, or a stacked into a block beneath the head of a dog-like form. The dog is among the artist's earliest iconic sculptural forms, and as such, the newspaper block serves almost as if a time traveling-device, bringing an image from the distant past into the contemporary moment.

A surreal and immersive installation entitled, *Room with All Existing Words*, gives form to a mythical narrative built from artifacts and source material of intentionally questionable authenticity. In this installation, Manders has constructed an entire narrative and history around the word 'skiapod' (Greek for 'shadow foot'), an ancient creature who uses its giant foot to shelter from the sun. Fascinated by the fact that people once believed these creatures existed, Manders explores the intricacies of the human mind and how it is capable of inventing such fantasies. When entering the room, Manders entire set of Notional Newspapers hangs from the ceiling. Riddled with historical context on the skiapod, the information presented is so well documented it leaves the viewer to question what is true and what is fantasy. Starting with the few known images of this mysterious creature, Manders created numerous

references and art historical links to the mythological figure. By creating this fictional narrative and weaving it into threads of reality, the artists shows how our minds adapt to misleading information.

Inspired by the psychology of fake news and the propaganda created to construct a new reality, Manders has created his own fake Wikipedia page, which can be accessed via QR code in the exhibition or seen here:

<https://www.markmanders.com/wikipedia-skiapode>

Please join Mark Manders and Heidi Zuckerman at 5pm on Wednesday, February 15th for a walkthrough of the exhibition. Heidi Zuckerman is the CEO and Director of the Orange County Museum of Art and Creator and Host of the About Art podcast.

For press inquiries, please contact Thomas Brown, [thomas@thomas-brown.info](mailto:thomas@thomas-brown.info)

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Born in 1968 in Volkel, The Netherlands, Mark Manders currently lives and works in Ronse, Belgium.

Significant solo exhibitions include a 2010 major retrospective at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles which later traveled to the Aspen Art Museum, Colorado, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas through 2012. Other solo presentations include *The Absence of Mark Manders*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan (2021); *Michaël Borremans & Mark Manders: Double Silence*, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan (2020-2021). *The Absence of Mark Manders*, Bonnefanten Museum, Maastricht, Netherlands (2020); *Silent Studio*, Kistefos Museum, Norway (2020); *Mens erger je niet. De keuze van de erfgoedbewakers*, S.M.A.K., Ghent (2016); *Rainbow Caravan*, Aichi Triennale, Aichi, Japan (2016); *Mark Manders: Cose in corso*, Collezione Maramotti in Reggio Emilia, Italy (2014); *Mark Manders*, Centro Galego de Arte Contemporanea in Santiago de Compostela, Spain (2014); *Les études d'ombres*, Carré d'Art - Musée d'art contemporain, Nîmes, France (2012); *Revisions: Mark Manders*, Carrillo Gil Museum of Art, Mexico City (2011); *Two Interconnected Houses*, La Casa Luis Barragán, Mexico City (2011); *The Absence of Mark Manders*, which opened at Kunstverein Hannover, Germany (2007), and traveled to S.M.A.K., Ghent, Kunsthau Zurich, and to Bergen Kunsthall, Norway (2009); Art Institute of Chicago and Renaissance Society, Chicago (2003).

Manders represented the Netherlands in the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013. He has been commissioned to create monumental outdoor projects by the Public Art Fund at the Doris C. Freedman Plaza at Central Park, New York (2019); the Walker Art Center for the museum's Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, Minneapolis (2017); and Rokin Square, Amsterdam (2017). Manders participated in group exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2019); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2019); Fondazione Prada, Milan (2018); Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai (2018); Palace of Versailles, Versailles (2017); WIELS, Brussels (2017);

Louvre, Paris (2015); S.M.A.K., Ghent (2015); Guggenheim Museum, New York (2015); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2014); Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht (2014); 21er Haus, Vienna (2014); The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford (2012); Menil Collection, Houston (2012); David Roberts Arts Foundation, London (2012); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2012); Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2011); DESTE Foundation, Athens (2011); and Kunsthalle Bern (2010), amongst many others.

Mark Manders' work can be found in the permanent collections of the the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Art Institute of Chicago, Philadelphia Museum of Art; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Kunsthau Zürich; and the Pinakothek der Moderne, among others.