

Jury report: 2019 Threshold Award (Drempelprijs) for Autonomous Practices 2019

Jury

- Mitchell Esajas: social entrepreneur, co-founder and chairman of New Urban Collective, co-founder of The Black Archives.
- Jessy Koeiman: curator of Collective Learning at Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, and Willem de Kooning Academy alumna (Lifestyle & Transformation Design), 2017.
- Wapke Feenstra: visual artist, and co-founder of the Myvillages group, together with Kathrin Böhm (UK/DE) and Antje Schiffers (DE).
- Dirk Vis: nonvoting secretary, theory teacher at the WdKA, editor of the literary magazine De Gids, freelance writer.

Exhibition

The jury members – three critical, established and engaged professionals in the field of art – carefully considered the work of seventeen nominated Autonomous Practices graduates. In addition to the given criteria previously applied in selecting the nominees (innovation, problem statement, connection to the WdKA's goals, career opportunities, development opportunities, quality level, theoretical context), the jury also considered the following questions: What constitutes a high-quality autonomous practice? What is the social relevance of the stated problem? Where is the urgency? How does the maker relate to, discuss, and think about their own work? Which next steps is the young artist willing and able to take? How does the project involve the public? What is its emotional impact?

Diversity

The nominated projects covered a broad range of forms and concepts. The visual, technical and professional level of the works was very high, though not all of the oral presentations were equally eloquent, and not all installations equally polished. Generally speaking, the projects provided visitors with a very comfortable experience, which in itself was a good thing, though in some cases a bolder approach would have been more effective. Recurring themes included identity and inclusiveness; reality, surreality and hyperreality; and also more idiosyncratic approaches such as smell and ritual. The chosen media unsurprisingly included many videos and projections, and fortunately also a well-considered use of less predictable formats such as dance and performance.

Lisa Jongejans designs a new approach to rituals of mourning with a surprising and biodegradable funeral product. **Lot Mars** considers stuttering as a dialect, and applies in-depth artistic and linguistic research in order to surprise viewers, readers and listeners with her rich ligatures and letter designs. **Yeltsiny Stroop** reflects upon new forms of photography, which she abstractly implements through performative and object-oriented tactile forms. **Louisa Teichmann** wrote the code and the story for a transparent and intelligent computer game, embodied with equal effectiveness in both the physical and the virtual CGI worlds, as a kind of counter-gamification. **Lila Ullrich** creates a futuristic space that invites repeated viewings of a multi-layered, multilingual film on the topic of white privilege. **Ashley Röttjers** projects an atmospheric film within a drifting installation that emblematically explores a history of blood and soil from multiple perspectives. **Frederike Scheffer** uses dance and music within the media of film in order to make a personal story universally tangible. **Joris de Jong** applies his fascination for the visual

language of children's books, as well as Eastern and Asian animation, in a beautiful video about loneliness. **Benno Lambooi** combines a powerful portrait of a monk with a research of smell, the harmony of the senses, and spirituality. **Robin Lee** combines convincing, highly professional images with wonderfully weird animation layers. **Lus-Marie Winklaar** is at the start of her career as an art educator, currently working with young people who would otherwise not be exposed to artistic practices. **Rosa Meininger** expresses a nostalgic longing through thoughtfully executed studies and powerful photography. **Thijs Mosterman's** erosion machine celebrates the joy of everyday processes, and **Ties Kweekel** impactfully puts together a buffet for the future.

Shortlist

After consulting behind closed doors, the jury singled out three contenders for the award. **Gerston Kronstadt's** project stands out with its striking colour combinations, powerful visual statements, and above all openness. His work is connected to musical and spiritual African American traditions, with an inspiring unplugged free-style performance that effortlessly engages visitors in his creative process. His multi-ethnic and multi-religious work invites us to look, discuss, signify and play. Featuring symbolism from Curaçao implemented in moving, sculptural and hand-drawn images, it is above all the shifts from speech to music and back, unpredictable yet perfectly natural, that literally pull the viewer into the work. With his *Teen Angst* fashion collection, **Mickey Nerrings** conjures up resistance to anti-LGBTQ violence. Inspired by materials from the countryside, the garments he designs evoke contemporary activist scarecrow figures that demand attention for this pressing issue. Mickey's distinctive visual style resonates through every detail, from the stuffing of the garments to the powerful promotional video. The jury was particularly convinced by his original perspective, his open attitude, and his unique mastery of all materials used. This is art you just want to wear. Gay Pride and Rotterdam Pride have already provided engaging contexts for showing his collection more widely.

The winner

After a discussion that once again carefully considered all projects from every perspective, with multiple additions and deletions from the shortlist, in the end the jury's attention unanimously and enthusiastically kept coming back to the same project. This is a performance that will not fail to enchant anyone who happens to walk by. A comprehensive research of sources and an impressive mastery of the chosen visual language, combined with a powerful scenography, dramaturgy and text, allow for a presentation that is as critically challenging as it is aesthetically pleasing. The research of heavy metals necessary for making an iPhone was transformed through the chosen form into something very close and tangible. The maker is clearly fluent in the visual multimedia language of today's internet. The combination of intelligent texts, intriguing filters, virtual constructions and an *on the fly* desktop performance, convincingly invites the viewer to embark on a virtual live journey through the depths of the earth where the valuable metals are found. Perhaps this is what it feels like to be a metal. Even the occasional little glitches seemed to support the content. This work manages to be both mundane and magical, and provides a valuable critical counterpoint to Apple's slick, all-too-familiar presentations. Last but not least, the maker's coherent commentary and her exciting plans for the near future led the jury to decisively award the 2019 Threshold Award for Autonomous Practices to Advertising and Critical Studies graduate **Annemiek Höcker**.