

WdKA Bachelor Research Award 2020 Jury Statement

The jury appreciated the broad diversity of approaches to artistic and design research, which range from applied and material approaches to speculative and performative research. It was impressed by the dedication and thoroughness students put into their work. The projects reviewed demonstrate high quality research. The jury noticed that the level of research of WdKA's Bachelor graduation projects has, so far, increased every year. This year, the graduation theses stood out with an exceptionally good level of writing and engaging storytelling, which makes many of them almost ready for publication. That said, the WdKA Research Award is not a thesis award, but an award for all parts of a graduation project, writing and the art/design project, as one artistic research effort. A special compliment goes to all 14 nominated students for being able to overcome the constraints imposed by the pandemic, without compromising on the quality of their work.

The third prize of the WdKA Research Award goes to Lot Bordeaux for *You Don't Have to Be Afraid (Only Alert)*, her graduation project about aging and women in their fifties. This is an urgent and relevant subject matter, done as research where Lot acted from an embodied position. She uses her skills as an illustrator to portray the women who participated in her project in images that do not replicate normative modes of representation. This way, her project creates a new space, and new agency – not only for these women in particular, but for non-normative bodies in general.

The second prize goes to Sarafina van Ast for their project *[24:30]*. Sarafina's research amounts to a proposal for writing in non-binary ways. It is based upon thorough and informed readings of relevant literature and theory in the field, including postcolonial feminism and queer theory. While this is part of a larger conversation and art practice, Sarafina develops it with inner urgency, from a fully embodied position, and with a high amount of precision and consequence in the decisions they made in this project. These amount to an original standpoint that embodies current feminist theory and can lay the groundwork for a new form of publishing. The jury appreciates the risk Sarafina took as an artist in avoiding visual representation in order to do justice to their subject matter and leave visual imagination up to the audience.

As the winner of the first prize, the jury picked Stella Shi for her project *Formation of a New Order: Story of Pass_Permit*. Her research is focused on a small piece of paper that now regulates daily life in China and exists in countless makeshift forms and variations, the residential pass-permit. The project consists of a collection of these pieces of papers and their organization as information, in a very precise, high-quality visual research work, mapping a situation that is constantly shifting. The permit papers are identified as signs for a paradigm of how power is organized in a space. With her project, Stella demonstrates how to pick a current topic and contextualize it in such a way that it creates new insight, adding new points even to something that everybody is talking about. Her project encourages viewers to look critically and ask the question: What and how will impact the pandemic us in the long-term, how will it change our society? Not only is this an urgent inquiry, but the jury was also impressed by the quality of the presentation of the research.

In addition to the prize winners, the jury wants to give a honorary mention to the graduation project *Nordsjøen Dike* of Veerle van Herk. Her research demonstrated a very high level of commitment to an urgent subject matter: future scenarios for the Netherlands in a time of climate change and rising sea levels. With her short film, Veerle demonstrated her ability, as a visual creator, to help instigate a public debate that is currently still lacking. Her research is an excellent example of an artistic research practice with close affinities to journalistic work.