

Jury Report: 2020 Threshold Award (Drempelprijs) for Autonomous Practices

Jury

Simone da Silva: director of gallery and centre for culture heritage DIG IT UP, and an expert in the field of film and journalism

Alireza Abbasy: curator, writer; co-founder and editor of Sarmad Platform

Angelica Falkeling: visual artist, seamstress, costume designer; runs Emotional Channel webshop, and is a co-founder of the queer art and community space Tender Center Rotterdam

Nominated projects

The members of this year's jury carefully assessed the fifteen nominated graduate students within the Autonomous Practices department. This year's nominees showed an incredible diversity, energy and creative quality within their projects. Also, the projects covered a broad range of forms: from illustration, digital craft and product design to film, performance, textile and art installations.

Recurring themes included (cultural) identity, postcolonialism, gender, and the challenges of the Anthropocene, but also more distinctive themes such as the dream world, death and decay, and the social implications of public spaces.

The quality of the works, as well as the dedication and effort that the students put into their final graduation projects and presentations, truly impressed the jury. This made the jury's job of selecting projects for the shortlist, and finally a winner, very difficult. Generally speaking, the jury has a great deal of confidence in the future development and success of these students and their work, and they would love to see more from these promising young artists in the future.

Criteria

Besides the given criteria that were used in the process of selecting the nominated projects (quality level, theoretical context, innovation, problem statement, connection to the WdKA's goals, career and development opportunities), the jury also focused on translation from concept to form, ethical urgency, position as an artist, cooperation with others, and social relevance and impact.

Shortlist

After carefully and elaborately discussing all projects, the jury selected three contenders for the award.

Rens van Strien's project *Raheem on a Sterling* addresses institutional racism within the world of media and sports. With his work, Rens contributes to the reclamation of white-dominated space by giving the English-Jamaican football player Raheem Sterling recognition for his inspiring performance as an advocate for anti-racism. The project successfully fights the racist stereotypes in the media portrayal of young black athletes like Raheem Sterling, by transforming and reframing negative representation by media outlets into something positive and inspiring.

By addressing and transforming Raheem Sterling's negative media portrayal, Rens presented a valuable approach to tackle issues related to identity, racism, and money. His work is highly original, creative, and socially relevant. This project beautifully and politically meshes pedagogy with art. Through the use of social media, newspapers, paper-making workshops and photography, Rens created a highly valuable and impactful project that also involves community building. He demonstrated an impressive and mature ability to connect and cooperate with others, in particular with the young kids from London.

The creative output turned out to be very polished in the way it articulates Rens's research and problem statement. All steps within the research and making process were well thought through and carefully considered. The future development plans of the project were slightly unclear to the jury, as well as the

context and setting in which he wishes to present his outputs. However, there is no doubt that his choice of subject is original, intriguing and ambitious. The jury was truly impressed by the way he turned this research into such an inspiring and engaging project.

Nicky Vollebregt has translated a research of materials, that explores the concept of emotional durability, into artistic output of very high quality. Her project *Uncover* offers a new approach to implementing sustainability into product design.

Nicky has been able to find these gaps for exploration in the art of textiles and the field of product design. She used a unique method to tackle issues regarding overconsumption and sustainability by improving the relationship between consumers and products. By designing textiles that are meant to visually transform over time as they are used, worn and exposed to daylight, she invites us to an alternative way of perceiving the durability of textiles.

Her research process, as well as her own positioning with regard to the work, truly impressed the jury. With her research she taps into the use of colours and their origins, which is incredibly important in a society in need for sustainability. Therefore her project scores high in terms of ethical urgency.

The jury sees a great deal of potential for future development, but is also curious how this project could potentially have a bigger social impact, since the product as presented now is very exclusive. The project is mostly carried out as a one-person work, and the jury wonders how future cooperation with others will look like.

Nicky communicated her project very well. The jury feels like Nicky could just go and pitch anywhere, and people will listen. That quality can immensely benefit the future development and potential upscaling of her project. Additionally, her level of personal motivation, her dedication, and the effort and time spent on the research and the final project, truly stood out.

Winner

Younes Laaguidi's documentary, *Grapefruit for Breakfast*, addresses contemporary issues of high social relevance in a time of increased borders and travel impossibilities. The documentary follows the life of a young Moroccan man, Samir, who was raised by a German missionary and now tells Younes about his dreams. Samir does not identify with the Moroccans around him, finding instead salvation in writing and performing German poetry, through which he escapes reality with the help of fantasy and a romanticization of Western culture. The way Younes addressed this theme of romanticizing Western culture, in such a personal and unique way, really touched and impressed the jury.

There seems to be a special bond between Younes and Samir, that goes beyond filmmaker and subject. This gives the film a unique and intimate feeling, as Younes connected with his subject so well. The story of Samir is such an interesting and unique one, and Younes truly managed to give an insight into Samir's world with this documentary. Still, Younes keeps himself and his own opinion almost completely out of the picture, and even though this has led to a rather neutral poetic tone in the film, the fragility of Samir's dreams, thinking, and humour can be sensed throughout the work.

The documentary includes strong film work and is very well edited. Through the beautiful, stylized shots, the attention of the viewer is constantly drawn to the film and its story. The use of sound is also of very high quality and supports the visuals excellently.

It would be very valuable to continue developing this project, as it tells such an important story. The film is so professional and well-made, that the jury thinks this film would be very suitable for various film festivals. The project's unique character and substantial potential for future development has led the jury to decisively award the 2020 Threshold Award for Autonomous Practices to Audio-Visual Design and Critical Studies graduate **Younes Laaguidi**.