

Jury report
GRA Awards
2020



Applied Arts

The jury members for applied arts this year were the designers Farida Sedoc and Duran Lantink.

The jury felt the combination of nature and technology to be particularly striking in this graduation show. Many students are manipulating natural and technological processes and giving them their own twist. Notable themes this year are environmental and identity politics.

The jury wishes to give honourable mentions to the whole designLAB department. Almost all the students have created their own world, offering visitors a total experience. The jury was impressed by the amount of work produced and pleased to see that many have made good use of Rietveld Academie's numerous workshops.

The jury feels that the following three nominees have produced works that are strong conceptually as well as visually. They created work from their core, not to please anyone, but to make sense of the world.

DOGtime Unstable Media

Winner

It is admirable that Eric van Zuilen is a software developer who, for the past five years, has dedicated his evenings to art as a part-time student. The jury found his work with algorithmic processes highly convincing. Compared to other artists working with technology, Van Zuilen is going one step further, beyond trends. The jury liked the way that he included the errors made by the algorithm itself in the work. The whole presentation was well thought out: it was developed to perfection and visually really strong.

Eric van Zuilen

Fashion

The jury feels it is important that fashion is contemporary, but Irene Ha's work is not only that; it is also futuristic. On top of this, it is aesthetically extremely exciting. Her collection is complete and bountiful, and it is both conceptually and visually strong. Her presentation showed not only her graduation project, but also work from previous years. It reveals that she has had a clear visual language of her own from the start of her education. The jury appreciates that she thinks ahead and has already opened up her own webshop.

Irene Ha

Winner

Simon Marsiglia invites the public to become part of his fantasy story. Using fiction as a strategy to make objects, he convincingly creates a world of his own. Fantasy these days is often set in a digital world, but Marsiglia gives his story tangibility. The jury felt that it is striking that what starts with drawings opens up a world of new objects, collaborations and new types of conversation. These new conversations show us that fantasy stories can stimulate our thinking about where we are going in the world.

Simon Marsiglia

Winner

designLAB

The jury has selected three exceptional nominees from almost 70 students in this category. For the jury, it does not feel right to select one winner from these three very different students from three different departments of equal quality. The jury has therefore decided not to announce a single winner, so the three nominees will share the GRA Award this year.

Thesis

This year, the thesis prize jury members were visual artist Wineke van Muiswinkel, writer and art critic Roos van der Lint, and Rietveld Academie professor of art and public space Jeroen Boomgaard.

The jury is deeply impressed by the high level of the submitted theses. They are all extremely well written and demonstrate thorough research. It was interesting to see that many of the theses touch upon urgent societal themes. The jury was especially gripped by the personality and boldness that often shine through them.

WAV - moving image

Matilda Kenttä is fascinated by gossip and the female tongue. The jury describes her thesis *A Mouth Has More Flesh Than a Butterfly Can Carry* as informative, attractive and powerful, and it has introduced the members to a new narrative about the topic of gossip and feminism. The thesis is well balanced, and it beautifully weaves together Matilda's personal motivations and the historical background. The jury finds her approach highly original, especially the way she combines the subject and method of the thesis. The fact that she credits her co-authors wins extra praise.

Matilda Kenttä

Johannes' thesis *Something Utterly Common* is a sturdy read. It leans heavily on assumptions and theories, but it also contains a lot of self-reflection. The jury was especially taken with how his perspective was turned around completely by a field trip in Italy, making way for new views. An observant attitude is important for all researchers, and Johannes has shown how exciting and sometimes surprising this sort of journey can be. The jury is curious to know how this experience will affect his art practice.

Johannes Reitsigt

In the thesis *"Big chop"*, Hair-raising stories on Colonial Ghosts and Floating Identities Clémence Hilaire shares her rich research on black culture and history through "the wear and care" of natural hair. With this as a common thread, she has found a beautiful way to unravel and contextualize an urgent topic, while connecting it to a broad theoretical framework and to the art world. The jury was really impressed by this gripping, informative and well-edited thesis. It was the writer's aim to take the reader on a journey through histories and to open up perspectives, and she has achieved just that.

Clémence Hilaire

In only 22 pages, Clémence succeeds in transmitting some wonderfully rich research on black culture and history while engaging the reader to broaden their horizons. Her thesis is a showcase of eloquent thinking and elegant criticality that is so often missing in the debate the world finds itself engaged in today. This gifted writer and artist has a unique voice. Clémence Hilaire is an erudite agent of change and she has the talent to invite and seduce others to join her. That is truly impressive. Congratulations Clémence.

Autonomous Arts

The autonomous arts jury members this year were artists Femke Herregraven and Charl Landreug.

In general, the jury is impressed with the quality of the works of 2020's graduates. In some installations, however, the jury would like to have seen a sharper selection of exhibited works. Some graduates showed too much, perhaps out of fear that one work was not enough or maybe they felt a need to show all their hard work during self-quarantine. Often, several additions detracted from a work that would have been brilliant on its own.

Before moving on to the nominees, the jury would like to give brief honourable mentions to the following students: Mads Sørensen from Fine Arts and Tomas Dudley Baker de Castro Feijó from Photography.

The jury considers it important that what an artist says and what they make, the (personal) story and the image, are in sync. This is convincingly expressed in the following nominees.

The jury is impressed with the way that Alexis Stephenson gives shape to a certain anxiety in her assemblages with ceramics. In her work, the jury recognises a sensitive and vulnerable way of giving shape to many questions in trying to define her relationship with art, ceramics and the world. Every placement of every object gives meaning to the whole and is proof of a strong intuition. Alexis clearly understands the space she is working in, and the jury looks forward to seeing what she does when she has a whole exhibition space to herself.

Fine Arts

In her installation, Nomin Zezegmaa shows a future fitting for the 21st century: a future in which location, heritage and future are not necessarily located or set in the same space. While many of us are still trying to find words and images for this future, in Nomin's work it is already self-evident. She uses her family history as a material, and she runs with it, thus unleashing herself from any straitjacket. The jury also sees this freedom from expectations in the way she deals with writing, book printing and sculpture within the installation.

Nomin Zezegmaa

Winner

The level of sophistication in Mayis Rukek's film installation is impressive. The overall quality of this bachelor student's work would befit a master's level. The jury feels it is a sign of professionalism that Mayis has surrounded himself with the right people (set designers, actors) to produce his film. The balance of his aesthetic dreamlike scenes with political messages, regarding EU border politics for instance, comes across with a certain absurdity that the jury appreciated. The wall opposite the screen shows his own tarot deck, which is inclusive, non-binary and non-hierarchical. It is part of the film, but it is also a new world that can lead to exciting new projects that the jury looks forward to.

Mayis Rukek

WAV - moving image

Alexis Stephenson

Ceramics