RIETVELD

REVIEW(ED)

Rietveld Review(ed) is an addition to the Graduation Show's peripheral programming. An independent external committee was asked to reflect on the Graduation Show 2022 as a whole and to signal current tendencies and themes within the exhibition. The committee was also asked to select a number of projects by new graduates that support these observations. The reflections and observations have been processed by the Rietveld Academie into this reflection report.

Visual art

While visiting the exhibition this year, committee members entered many childhood bedrooms, met up with long-lost relatives, and found traces of past dreams in almost every room. The theme that seems to appear and reappear across every department is domesticity, with a veil of melancholy. It is a tendency that was already noted by last year's committee but that is even more evident in the works of this generation of graduates. There are references to the pop culture of years past and nostalgia-infused aesthetics throughout. Colors are soft and subdued, like the muted tones of faded bedding or photographs that have been hanging in the sun. Memories, both happy and painful ones, are endlessly retold, relived and recreated – almost as if this year's graduates used their work to process a lived experience, rather than to create something out of nothing. These works, in which the viewer cannot help but be absorbed by the graduates' personal history, evoke a strong feeling of intimacy.

One of the works in which memory and domestic elements are thoroughly explored is that of **ANNA TAMM (VAV – MOVING IMAGE)**. We see the remnants of a dinner that was left just as it was, traces of a spontaneous haircut and haunting images of a dystopian landscape. One can only wonder what happened here and if there was ever a proper goodbye. The party is over – what is left to celebrate for her generation? Apart from the tender and poetic qualities of the overall scene, the committee greatly appreciated the research that must have gone into the making of the ceramics and the way the dirty plates were made to look incredibly realistic.

The domestic domain is also the playing field of **SENAKIRFA ABRAHAM (TXT)**. In her really well-balanced and multi-layered installation, we stumble across something that could be a downscaled room with tarnished wallpaper, glass containers with an intriguing note and the hands of family members. The committee found it an exceptional example of how to tell a personal (hi)story that goes beyond the strictly individual by interweaving it with references to history and poetry and making use of a strong material sensitivity.

"This makes me feel like an intruder – in a good way," said one of the committee members of the work of **SHARAN BALA (FINE ARTS)**. The highly matter-of-fact way sensitive medical information is displayed in her installation stands in sharp contrast with the vulnerable film portrait of the maker herself, who seems to keep an eye on anyone absorbing her personal details. It is another example of a work in which the re-narration of a personal history results in a thought-provoking and confronting experience.

The committee notices that with a majority of the works being inward-looking and focused on the intimate, few works are politically outspoken or seem to make a radical statement. Not necessarily a bad thing, the committee notes, but given all that is happening in today's world it is rather remarkable to see so much humility and modesty in the presentations. The committee can't quite grasp whether this humility is an active refusal to speak out, or if the graduates have given up fighting and are finding solace in more innocent times. Is there a general reluctance to define their position, or are the graduates simply envisioning a world that is more in line with their own desires, trying to control the small number of things they still can control?

With this loss of control in an outside world that seems more chaotic and elusive than ever, more and more graduate students seem to focus on a material-centric approach to making. There is a clear reappreciation of older techniques, organic materials and craftsmanship. It could be related to the collective fatigue of spending the past couple of years with digital devices as our only constant companions, and a desire to return to all that is tangible and real. The graduates are not afraid to show the process, and they don't try to erase their fingerprints. Throughout the whole exhibition, there are examples of works that radiate a sense of artistry and that can only be the fruit of a great devotion to material research, which the committee greatly appreciates. The resulting works are as diverse in material as they are in form.

AYANO KODA (JEWELLERY – LINKING BODIES) used a very simple domestic utensil as a starting point and let this material grow into a whole new world of its own. The installation, in which she stretched out hundreds of metal cleaning sponges into an intriguing site-specific sculpture, perfectly mimicked some sort of organic growth. If you didn't know that it was Koda who crafted this sci-fi-like species, you could very well imagine that it had simply spread on its own. The inside-out egg that accompanies the installation is a fascinating nod to the classic goldsmithing technique of hammering metal into the desired shape.

For **PIM SEM BENJAMIN (VAV – MOVING IMAGE)** the material is audio, and audio only. This outspoken choice resulted in a powerful, open-ended soundscape built out of field recordings, club noise and cinematic sounds. They are interested in "providing a dislocating experience for the listener", in which they absolutely succeed: the work is frightening and overwhelming, causes an almost visceral reaction and completely immerses the listener in Benjamin's world. It gives space to the imagination, but also offers just enough reference points to keep the listener guessing as to what is going on.

Entering the room of **MINJOO CHOI (CERAMICS)**, the visitor is startled by a loud noise, the origin of which is initially unclear. Turning a corner, we witness the explosive act of Choi slamming balls of clay into a partition wall. It is a gesture that, as she told the committee, directly relates to her own mental state, but is also a repetitive, ritualistic exploration of where the act of making ends and the autonomous work begins.

The ways in which **ANA RESENDE (FINE ARTS)** works with in-between spaces in the building and manipulates her environment with seemingly subtle gestures did not go unnoticed. It is a co-creation with both natural phenomena – water, ice and air – and an old fridge, which is again a household object that was completely taken apart and turned inside out. The resulting work is hard to categorize, but impressive in its ability to highlight processes that happen around us every day and usually remain unnoticed.

Thesis

This year's thesis committee consists of Clara Amaral and Nathalie Hartjes, chaired by Patricia de Vries.

This year's authors have, each in their own way, gathered a motley crew of thinkers, novelists, poets, pop artists and activists, as well as friends, family members and lost loves, to shape their work. These references range from the repetitive beats at sweaty techno parties and one-on-one conversations with friends to the writings of Ursula K. Le Guin and Alexis Pauline Gumbs. The committee noticed that students made deeply personal choices regarding the topics of their work, demonstrating a strong sense of (self) awareness. In doing so, they express a desire to bring personal (hi)stories into play with artistic research, denoting a sharp quality of embodied knowledge.

In ·The First Sun·, **SENAKIRFA ABRAHAM (TXT)** accomplishes building a home for herself through a deep reading of poetry. The poetry she engages with entangles her writing and the relational philosophy that undergirds her work. Through the poem ·Outside· by Audre Lorde, which serves as the backbone of her writing, she opens up relationships with other thinkers, bringing the reader to the work of Edouard Glissant, bell hooks and W.E.B. Du Bois, while exploring different approaches to relationality. Senakirfa offers us a slow, dense piece of writing that is as beautiful as the poetry that inspired it. She embraces opacity and a practice of poiesis that evokes spatial thinking, mapping out a sense of self /space /place. With ·The First Sun·, Senakirfa demonstrates how deep reading can open up an architecture of reflection and invite the reader to roam through this personal space of opacity.

·All the small things· by **LUCÍA VIVES (VAV – MOVING IMAGE)** is a fantastic example of current interest in a speculative writing practice. Their thesis starts with a disclaimer, warning us that it will be a document in which all feelings will be felt, before heading into a delirious exploration of fingerboarding, queer phenomenology, the world of online fora and a romance with Paul B. Preciado. Lucía has flawlessly adopted the guise of fan fiction, and the pages are soaked in desire and wit. Eventually they allow the crush to implode on itself, as crushes often do. The theoretical references Lucía draws on are just as alive and vibrant as the pop and fan cultures they pull in. They never prioritize one over the other, bringing them to life through lived or fantasized (who cares?!) experience. Lucía has spent their time oversharing, and we hope they keep on crushing hard.

With ·Appels & Pears·, **SHARAN BALA (FINE ARTS)** has written an intergenerational dialogue that centres around a conversation with her aunt Rink. It is a retelling of her experiences of being medically treated, at times against her will, due to their diagnosis of testicular feminization. Sharan uses straightforward descriptions that, in their simplicity, give an account of the violence imposed on Sharan's and Rink's bodies. The medicalization of their bodies, and the clinical decisions imposed on both of them, is painful and tragic. Especially the way in which the medical procedures have been explained to them and framed to outsiders surfaces as a great injustice. The two voices are split on the page, from left to right and from right to left. We as readers go from one body to the other, experiencing a strong empathy and feeling profoundly unsettled. This thesis is a great example of how writing can complement a visual practice, exploring roads that give context to the work but might not fit into the work itself.

In all the 21 theses, the graduates demonstrated their research abilities and investigated the contexts of their work thoroughly – often looking back at past(s) that have been wilfully forgotten, silenced or marginalized, and allowing them to thrive in the present to inform the future. The committee is thrilled to see that cynicism didn't find a place in these works of writing. On the contrary: many theses offer speculative ways of imagining a different world, something that is absolutely necessary at this moment in time.

Each publication shows careful consideration regarding material, size and format. This year's theses are a remarkable illustration of how rich and personal the self-publishing landscape can be. Overall, books seem to be back.

Visual art committee members

ÖZGÜR KAR is a visual artist and an alum of Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Sandberg Instituut and Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten.

GABRIELLE KENNEDY is a design journalist and editor-in-chief at DAMN° magazine.

KATIA KRUPENNIKOVA is a curator and art critic based in Amsterdam. She teaches at HKU.

SILVIA MARTES is a visual artist and alum of Gerrit Rietveld Academie and Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten.

BASSE STITTGEN is an artist and designer. In 2017 he founded Studio Basse Stittgen to experiment in, investigate and explore the fields of product-, social- and bio design.

Thesis committee members

CLARA AMARAL is an artist working with text and performance. Her interdisciplinary artistic practice questions what it means to be a reader, to be a writer, and aims to expand existing modes of reading, writing and publishing.

NATHALIE HARTJES is a curator and writer. She studied art history and archaeology (MA, 2004). From 2015 – 2022, she was director of MAMA, a platform for visual culture and young talent in Rotterdam.

PATRICIA DE VRIES is research professor at the Lectorate Art & Public Space (LAPS) at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie.

Colophon

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