Willem de Kooning Academy Rotterdam

Drempelprijs Autonomous Practices 2017

Jury's Report

The Jury Drempelprijs Autonomous Practices 2017 included Maziar Afrassiabi (Chairperson, Director Rib), Kris Dittel (Curator/Editor Onomatopee), and Sarah Züst (Prizewinner Autonomous Practices Drempelprijs 2013).

A Drempelprijs comprises laudatory phrases, an air of jubilation, and a commission by the Rotterdam Arts Council. And, yes, there is prize money involved as well – which prompted the jury to ventilate right away their wish to strongly recommend that the Municipality of Rotterdam should raise the annual Drempelprijs amount to ten thousand Euro's, as a considerably more appropriate tribute to the academy's most gifted BA-students in Art and Design. Further, this Jury was decidedly not prepared for unconditionally fitting in the official 2014 awarding scenario. Judging was adjusted to the idioms of the nominees. Instead of granting the sum total of the prize money to one single winner, the Jury found it immensely preferable to have it being split up into three parts: 2000 Euro's for a winner, and two times 1500 Euro's for two ex aequo second-best presentations. So this year, three students will hold our cheque, two female and one male.

The Jury considered sixteen nominations that had been put forward by Willem de Kooning Academy teaching staff. Nominees presented their work in the Graduation Exhibition. The venue was met with keen appreciation from the Jury. Students were offered a generous opportunity to convincingly qualify as dedicated next future's potentials. The Jury would like to stipulate that first impressions were already highly positive. Willem de Kooning Academy is fertile ground indeed for a burgeoning batch of graduates.

Though the 2017 nominees, not surprisingly, confronted the Jury with a wide scope of remarkable approaches, design strategies dominated. Presentations ranged from subversive housing, meticulous archiving, masturbating facilities, soundscapes, sports gear, selfie fashion, an Opera House, a voyeuristic film, an OCD project, humanoid speculations, camera situationism, drone-

reconnoitring, and 3D learning, to an itchy animation, a children's book ('SAAR'), and virtual mapping. They all were promising signs that asked for attentive considering.

On closer inspection, the Jury decided to zoom in on four most daring and original propositions. In doing so, the Jury was led by the conviction that Autonomous Practices should witness to exploratory cogency, timely urgency, and a relentless commitment to the ore of self that lies at the base of every individuated articulation.

The Jury sees individuated articulation as an essential characteristic that allows for a novel reorientation in our post-everything twenty-first century world, where autonomy is no longer a royal prerogative of fine art. Willem de Kooning Academy rightfully insists on an extended exploration of autonomous operations in all kinds of professions that its students are aspiring to exercise. Experimental stamina does wonders here. In view of autonomous perseverance, Willem de Kooning Academy has a bright future ahead.

Only on these premises, it was felt, four nominees could be selected by this Jury as agents epitomizing a persistent astuteness that allows for a self-assured presence, full of the desire to succinctly testifying to the dynamics of their ventures. They give us a glimpse of that sine qua non of all imaginative utterance, a persuasive inner cadence that calls attention for a momentum in the rift between what is going to happen and whatever they would wish to happen. And this artistic determination is the very singularity the Jury wants to value in this years' Threshold Award Autonomous Practices.

Our first candidate, though winner nor second-best, yet deserves special mentioning and public praise. Lisanne Lambregt confronts her audience with experiencing a reality of compulsively repeated acting. Her images are drenched with uncomfortable drama and eerie attractiveness. OCD metamorphoses into a delicate testimony that stubbornly defies the shameful upshot of episodes full of trauma and rebuke. The Jury wants to air its admiration for this sensitive display of understanding and compassion.

Our second-best ex aequo candidates are Judith van der Heiden and Leendert van der Meer. They will be invited to join up with our winner in order to have their share of 1500 Euro's each.

Judith van der Heiden catched the Jury's eyes with an exquisite specimen of 3D engineering. Her suggestive installation invites us to ponder the potential of

artificial learning in the development of iterative processing. Her adventurous 'input-designing' leads us to a fundamental reconsideration of the role of the designer as an authorative producer of artefacts. For the Jury, Judith van der Heiden is the embodiment of that exploratory attitude that puts into perspective the emblematic function of a type of research that will result in truly innovative kinds of evolutionary shaping.

Leendert van de Meer skilfully embedded his cameras in everyday constellations, so as to focus attention on what he would call their situationist dynamics. The Jury was greatly impressed by the analytical denouement of photographic means acting as catalysts to set off new trains of thoughts on control, submissiveness, and exclusion. This spotless presentation breathes a strong will to fundamentally question rituals, customs, and habits. It is plain that Leendert van der Meer is bound to demonstrate ever more exceptional combinations of visual intelligence and very keen skills in observation.

Eventually, however, it appeared that one of our four favorites had succeeded even more convincingly in devoting herself to the autonomy the Jury was eager for detecting in the Autonomous Practices this 2017 class exhibited. The Jury was struck by a speculative design project envisaging an extremely fictional narrative of mass-surveilliance technopower and large-scale data-mining, offering us an assemblage of items – softeware and hardware, text, and imagery – that ingeniuously remind us of constant monitoring and virtual stalking. Personal spheres and cyberspaces interfere in a wondrous topology of a dystopian chart. For all its uncanniness, however, this speculative design project lucidly thrives in playing on gaudy grammatologies of video-gaming and tracking services. If ever a presentation was timely, this is. The Jury Threshold Award Autonomous Practices is highly pleased to award the first prize of this 2017 edition to Ioana Tomici.

Rotterdam, 01-07-17

Jan van Heemst

Secretary to the Jury Threshold Award Autonomous Practices 2017 on behalf of Willem de Kooning Academy Rotterdam