

TALENT PLATFORM 2021

creative industries fund NL
presents design talent 2021



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FOREWORD

CREATING AND COLLECTING ON IMPACT

For many designers who are just starting out, their practice is one of few limitations and many possibilities. It ranges from experimenting and carrying out research, finding interdisciplinary ways of working and searching for possible collaborations, to generating publicity to increase visibility for their work. That requires time and space – time and space that the Creative Industries Fund NL offers every year to a group of young makers and designers in the form of talent development grants. For those selected, receiving this grant often marks an important moment in their personal development. But they must also give something in return. The year that follows is one that revolves around courage, vulnerability, uncertainty and perseverance.

Don Kwaning gives an apt description: 'The fact that I have been given room to struggle was the most valuable thing for me.' His work centres on the potential of plant-based materials. The way you shape a rewarding practice around that is an important question. How you can create the best possible expression of your work is another. In his quest to achieve this, Qasim Arif discovered the value of collaboration over the past year. And he found that when you're working together, you sometimes need to give up a bit of your creative capacity. Cleo Tsw learned that it can be valuable to say more about your work than you would like to – she prefers to leave the interpretation of her work to the viewers. But to do that, sometimes you need to take the first stab at it yourself.

These are just three observations from three of the talented individuals who received support this year. We also captured interesting moments from the other 32 in the written interviews and video portraits we

made. They share stories about their work and development, and between the lines it's clear that they've all been forced to add an extra layer to their work in the last year due to the reality of covid-19: from intimacy to detachment, from collaboration to isolation, and from inspiration to frustration. That's why the Creative Industries Fund NL is especially proud to introduce this group in the Klokgebouw during Dutch Design Week 2021. And of course, we'll offer them an online stage via our Talent Platform which has brought together more than 250 talented designers to date. But we're also pleased to be able to put them in the spotlight in this publication.

Next year, we'll do the same with the largest group ever: 51 young makers and designers will receive a talent development grant. We are delighted to have received extra resources from Minister Van Engelshoven, allowing us to put even more emphasis on talent development during this crisis.

For now, we hope you enjoy the 35 profiles of the extraordinarily talented individuals who were supported this year.

Syb Groeneveld
Executive Director
Creative Industries Fund NL

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INTRODUCTION

TALENT DEVELOPMENT IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Crises often bring out the best in creative thinkers, makers and researchers. Extreme circumstances require a critical, innovative and problem-solving approach – qualities these professionals have been trained in or have learned on the job. However, the health crisis caused by the covid-19 pandemic has taken its toll on the 35 creators and designers who received a Talent Development grant this year as it affected them severely. Imagine you are at the very beginning of your career and the Creative Industries Fund NL offers you a year to accelerate your learning curve with internships abroad, exceptional collaborations, inspiring exhibition and museum visits and specialist consultations. However, your daily life consists of social distancing, lockdowns and travel quarantines.

The class of 2021 has demonstrated tremendous adaptability and combined acute concentration with improvisation and flexibility. Meetings have moved online, and the limited travel options have been used optimally. But above all, through introspection and critical reflection, these young designers and makers have charted a singularly original course unperturbed. Their investigations range from Afrofuturism (Wes Mapes) and medieval paganism (Sophia Bulgakova) to materials research into recyclable glaze (Seok-hyeon Yoon) and plant-based cheese (Philip Kolmann). More than in previous years, the talents have been able to maintain a clear focus. After all, there were hardly any external stimuli and influences.

In short, it was a year in which the world simultaneously stood still and raced ever onwards. It is almost inevitable that these new talents who have evolved in this context are well versed in working under pressure. They are able to cope with constantly changing circumstances and recognise the expectations that society places on their work. Resilience could easily become their signature trait. This fact is again underlined by nominating

no less than two promising Young Designer talents for a Dutch Design Award: Audrey Large and Bodil Ouédraogo. They are ready for a crisis, which is just as well because this pandemic is not the only challenge of our time.

A hopeful sign is that these upcoming talents and their work are entirely in tune with the zeitgeist. They prioritise diversity and equality and seek a critical and unbiased deconstruction and subsequent decolonisation of their fields, be it product design, architecture, fashion, digital media, or anything in between. They question existing power structures and actively pursue an equal and radical inclusivity.

Plurality and polyphony are the starting points for selecting the talents. The scout nights, which the Creative Industries Fund NL launched in 2019, are indispensable in this regard. At these events, makers who may have challenges accessing funds and subsidies – such as the Talent Development Scheme – because they received their education outside of the established pathways and can make a pitch to a jury. This process yields enriching proposals for social inclusion and contributes to professional innovation. Academy-trained designers collaborate with bottom-up initiatives, while self-taught creatives underpin their streetwise visual language with theoretical discourse. Artisanal stained glass designer Funs Jansen researches the Black Archives for his current illustrations. Self-trained filmmaker and Biologist Frances Rompas, applied to Milan's prestigious Instituto Europeo di Design.

The talents fully utilise creativity's empowering capacity. It is not surprising that Viktor Papanek was once again in the spotlight this year, and the old adage 'design for all' has taken on a new meaning. Urgent projects investigate a broad range of social issues and where possible, they draw on personal experiences, such as the incisive projects on autism (Asefeh Tayebani) or burnout (Sydney Rahimtoola). Some talents focus on queer emancipation (Gabriel Fontana, Renee Mes), the problems of the third generation of Moroccan-Dutch heritage (Khalid Amakran), or intersectional identities such as bicultural and queer (JeanPaul Paula). These talents are also rooted in the communities they make central to their work.

This self-evident agency, or ownership, is not a precondition for an engaged professional practice. Commitment and empathic activism are just as important. The political antenna of these emerging talents is finely tuned. For example, Lesia Topolnyk conducted an in-depth study into the architecture of power institutions such as the Kremlin and NATO. After all, understand-

ing how such entities are organised is a prerequisite for redistributing power.

In all the attention paid to individual well-being, we may forget that the Earth is also experiencing a profound health crisis. We can no longer deny climate change. The only question is: to what degree is this the result of human activity? Louis Braddock Clarke has developed his own geological instruments to trace this data down to Earth's deepest layers. At the same time, pragmatic suggestions for change are made; as Jean-François Gauthier demonstrates, planting the right tree in the right place can make all the difference.

The Talent Development Scheme's class of 2021 could appear to be a homogeneous group. Indeed, a juncture of crises has shaped them. However, each talent formulates their own answers or questions. Their practice can no longer be reduced to the usual categories of fashion, product design, architecture and digital. Even designations such as installation, transmedia or interactive do not do justice to their creative authenticity. They hop from one discipline to another with ingenuity and resourcefulness. Arabic calligraphy merges with spatial design (ILLM/Qasim Arif), and migration issues are processed into atonal soundscapes (Andrius Arutiunian). Sometimes, new fields emerge, such as immersive storytelling through a spatial installation, scenography, photography, data research, and political activism (Irakli Sabekia).

Nevertheless, they have one thing in common: they want to play an active role making the necessary social changes, bringing their vigor and empathy with them. The challenges are considerable – there are no ready-made solutions for climate change, a pandemic and growing inequality – and this calls for focus, resilience and ingenuity. Precisely the qualities these talents have acquired in the past year.

Jeroen Junte

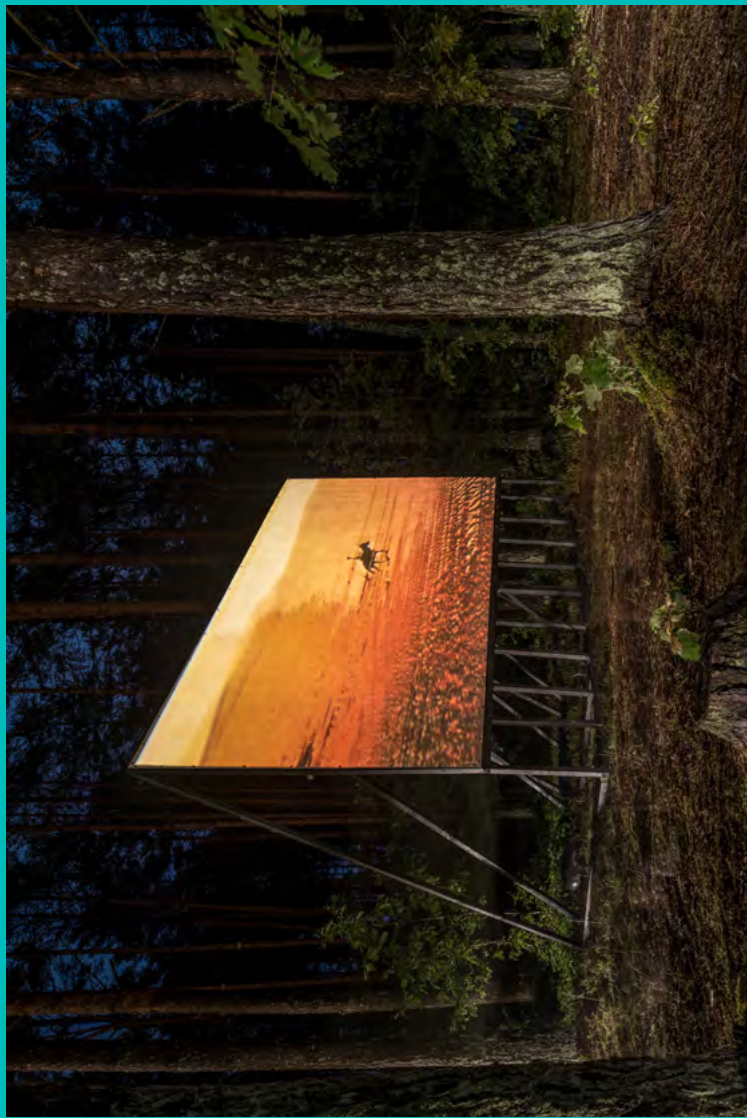


Photo: Tadas Salyga

'Voyages'

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ANDRIUS ARUTIUNIAN

Andrius Arutiunian is a composer and sound artist who received his BA and MA from the Royal Conservatory in The Hague. His hybrid practices include multimedia installations and audiovisual live performances that investigate the cultural and social histories of different, often peripheral communities. In 2017 for example, he researched the Armenian diaspora and disco music by collecting cassette tapes and records from the 1970s and 1980s. Arutiunian then released a limited-edition record, drawing upon the sounds of these sonic artefacts. 'The project examines how people interact with vernaculars, how they express their cultural histories, and the extent to which a periphery can reveal who we are and our place in the world.'

Arutiunian's *The Irresistible Power of Silent Talking* is an audiovisual installation based on the automated system of the iBorderCtrl algorithm. 'This algorithm recognises the facial expressions of migrants entering the European Union. Recognising the necessity for a critical stance towards technology and the political implications of using violent forms of surveillance underpin my work.' In a poetic way, Arutiunian questions the use of technology as a political instrument in migration. 'I am currently conducting research which stems from my fascination with the word "gharib", or "foreigner" in English.' The word originates from Arabic and Farsi and also occurs in Armenian and Greek. It differs from the Western interpretation of a foreigner as "the other" and is more aligned with the idea of belonging to something without being a part of it.'

'A critical stance towards surveillance technology is necessary'

Arutiunian is also involved with music events outside of the regular social or legal norms and rhythms such as night-time raves. 'The periphery is a safe haven for marginalised communities and a way to escape the focus of oppressive systems.' Arutiunian has recently spoken with curators, writers, philosophers and scientists from various disciplines to create a performance which revolves around instrument tuning and its link to alternative sonic realities. 'In the future, I hope to take this collaborative approach through conversations into my practice and develop it into publications about belonging and nocturnal sonic events.'

'The periphery is a safe haven for marginalised communities'

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'Leaving Traces', 2021

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ASEFEH TAYEBANI

'But you don't look autistic'. Asefeh Tayebani heard that sentence many times at the Graduation Show of the Gerrit Rietveld Academy, where she exhibited her graduation project to the press and public in 2018. Less than six months earlier she was diagnosed with autism. 'It's difficult to explain to others what that exactly means', Tayebani says. 'I noticed that what I said was often not understood or believed.' With the project *Precious Burden* she chose to let others feel it. Three wearable accessories let you physically experience what it's like to be hypersensitive in terms of proximity, touch, sound and eye contact. Ever felt a paralyzing shock when someone touches you? Experienced ambient noise as deafening? Or not being able to look someone straight in the eye?

Nevertheless, she kept hearing that one sentence.

It became the title of her next project, which Tayebani started with the support of Creative Industries Fund NL. Soon the online platform butyoudontlookautistic.nl will be launched, specifically for women with autism. 'Almost everything you can find about this disorder is geared towards men', says Tayebani. 'Women often don't get the diagnosis until later in life, I was already thirty. And even then there is a lot of disbelief; after all, you can't see it on the outside.' In the past year she has conducted a lot of research, collected personal stories, and worked together with graphic designer Fallon Does on an autism-friendly web design that does not put off the target group. 'A lot of websites I find difficult to deal with; I tune out when there's too much going on on the screen', says Tayebani. Therefore, in this design extra attention has been paid to an orderly layout, without excessive information overload and bright colors.

Removing stigmas from illnesses and making the invisible visible; these are themes that inform much of Tayebani's work. For example, she conducted material research into healing 'wounds' in materials. After a course in clothing repair, where she learned to darn socks with a needle and thread, to lock frayed edges and repair tears, she decided to apply the same technique to metal. *Leaving Traces* shows copper as you have never seen it before; no smooth, tightly polished surfaces, but sheets with dents, folds, scratches and holes. The visible care with which they have been repaired with copper wire is touching. They were broken, but that is no longer relevant; during the repair process, they have only become more beautiful.

'You don't see it on the outside'

'Almost everything you can find about this disorder is geared towards men'

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'Some Vibrant Things', 2020

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Photo: Pim Tip

AUDREY LARGE

Audrey Large's work oscillates accurately between the digital and the analogue. She doesn't see the computer as a means of reproducing reality, but rather one that produces reality itself. She wants to use digital technology as a tabula rasa where new forms can spontaneously arise. 'I am a designer, but I produce sculptures. I produce files that may become objects. That's where I can make a difference; not so much in making objects, but in shifting the methodology from object design towards making sculptures.' Her design activity focuses on designing files which can be materialised in different ways: digitally as a three-dimensional drawing or tangibly as a 3D printed object.

Over the course of the past year she created work for an exhibition at the Nilufar Gallery in Milan. The show was presented in several different forms. As 'a first chapter', she made an experimental website that allows the viewer to get close to the work's origin: the file. The website shows a floating tangle of irregularly shaped objects that can be pulled apart and viewed from every angle. The objects seem impossible to 'bring to life', but Large has also 3D printed these shapes. For the willing viewer, their functions seem simple – a table or a shelf – because we simply have different expectations of design than of art. 'I use function as a 'sign', says the designer.

Large considers the digital form to be just as 'real' as the printed form. No hierarchy exists between the online presentation and the arrangement of objects in the gallery. The modes of presentation highlight different aspects of her approach and show different materialisations of the files. 'People always see the physical outcome, but that's just one possible manifestation of the file. I always like to ponder the file's potential and materiality.' She pays a lot of attention to the object's perception and its tactile qualities, both digitally and physically. The choices for the design's execution – size, material, colour – are endless. Hence the title of the online part of the exhibition: *Scale to Infinity*.

'The physical outcome is just one possible manifestation of the file'

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'To Blend, Together', 2021

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BODIL OUÉDRAOGO

Designer Bodil Ouédraogo is always busy with the art of 'dressing up', the rules concerning how garments should be worn and the meanings associated with them. Her interest focuses specifically on fashion related to her West African and Northwestern European heritage. She is searching for connections between the garments of these cultures and for ways to integrate them into her own work.

'In Black Culture, there is so much etiquette surrounding fashion that forces you to take up space. This affects me, showing that one should dare to be visible and take pride in that. Consciously positioning yourself, being aware of this and occupying space intrigues me, especially as someone from the African diaspora. I would like to understand all these elements and translate them into the here and the now. How can I reconnect these dots? Indeed, such connections are of great value; 'The more of those connections you find, the bigger your web becomes and the more enriching and grounded your existence, making it more valuable and intimate for me to be who I am.'

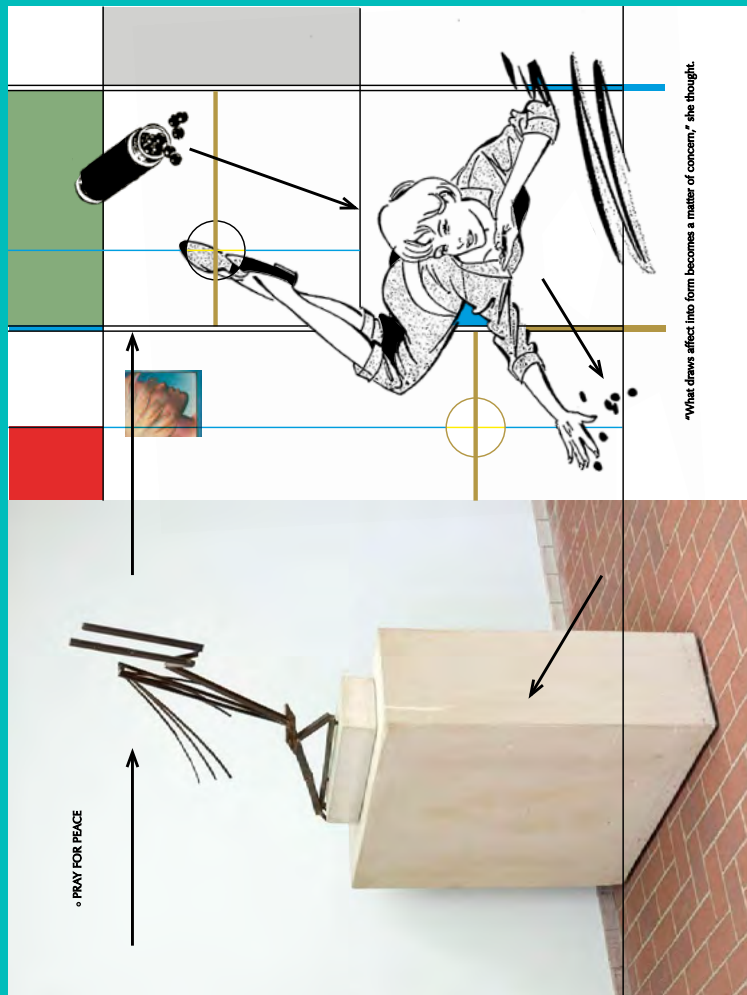
During her Talent Development year, Ouédraogo worked on two projects that she will present during different editions of *Amsterdam Fashion Week*. She based the first presentation on a previously made video tutorial where four models from Burkina-Faso demonstrate how to wear a *grand boubou*; a large, stiff, waxed fabric robe that you have to keep moving in order for it to look good. She then asked a choreographer to create a dance based on this video tutorial. The outcome literally portrays carrying the weight of the heavy *grand boubou* but also the weight you carry as a person of color. The original video is then projected onto the dancers' transparent outfits, designed by Ouédraogo and inspired by the *grand boubou*; thus, completing the circle.

'In Black Culture, there is so much etiquette surrounding fashion that forces you to take up space'

The grand boubou is also the starting point for her second presentation. She has designed a capsule collection in collaboration with clothing brand Patta, where she translates the folds and wrinkles of the wax fabric into a fabric pattern. She plays with the oversized aesthetic characteristics of both the grand boubou and hip-hop fashion. The presentation is an installation – a 'living still life' – in which Ouédraogo places the models within a landscape she has created from African sculptures, influences from 1970s West African photography, and African diaspora streetwear.

'Consciously positioning yourself and being aware of this intrigues me'

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CLEO TSW

A grant from Creative Industries Fund NL allowed graphic designer Cleo Tsw the freedom to create autonomously: alongside her commissioned work, she was given space to be able to take a critical look at the world and how we shape it. 'Designers organize information, that's what design basically is. The way they do this is influenced by everything they have experienced in their lives.' The fact that she herself comes from Singapore, a British colony until 1963, also influences her work, which she calls anti-colonial – but it is much broader than that. It resists imposed frameworks and therefore prefers not to explain too much about the work. The freedom of thought of the maker, the viewer, and the reader, are invaluable to her.

The past year was all about experimentation. Researching, reading, writing, organizing and documenting in an attempt to break free from what we think we know, based on what is presented to us. She made reports in the form of printed quires: loosely folded printed sheets, which, when bundled together make a 32-page book. At the end of this research year, the first quires will be assembled into Off Course 1: a book that plays with words and images. A compilation of seemingly separate fragments challenges the reader to look critically and navigate their own path through the mountain of information we are presented with each day.

'Design is the organizing of information'

The conventions of print are abandoned or used in an alienating way. For example, the book begins not with a preface, but with an associative register, followed by a multifaceted compilation: fragments of statements, passages from books, graphic novels, collages, comics and more. Whoever wants to interpret it faces a challenging task. However, that was exactly the intention; everyone can give their own interpretation and determine their own position. 'I don't like to explain my work too much', says Tsw. 'People can do that themselves. If it were up to me, this text would only say: I made a book.'

'People can explain my work themselves'

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'I sometimes hear that I look at nature as if it were a store,'

DON KWANING

While out on his walks, designer Don Kwaning is always on the lookout for beautiful plants with special colors and new exciting materials. By 'picking and fidgeting' on a piece of pitrus (a common grass-like plant), he discovered that the inside of the stem is a fascinating foamy pith. For his graduation project, he processed this pitrus into twelve different materials: from textile-like fibers that you can use to create yarns, to paper and cardboard, to foam blocks and a light-weight sheet material.

A goal for this year is to see if he can further develop any of those materials commercially. This is generally a lengthy and at times frustrating process which can take anywhere from five to ten years. One of the challenges is that the pith cannot yet be removed from the stem mechanically, only by hand. Also, when scaling up, the pitrus that he is able to buy from the Forestry Commission, which is trying to control the lushly growing plant, is not enough. Cultivation will then be required, a whole different story.

In addition to this search, this year Kwaning is also exploring how he wants to shape his practice in the future. What makes him happy is showing the potential of plant-based materials, as an artisan in materials development. But what would be the best way to do this? By developing a discovery into a semi-finished product, which others can then use? Or by turning it into a ready-made interior design? Or more autonomously and conceptually to show the power of a material in a more abstract form? And how does one put their personal stamp on such an experiment?

These are questions Kwaning tries to answer through trial and error, conversations with others and, above all, a lot of thought. 'I think that this grant has ensured that my mind is now fully committed to this struggle. I don't mean that in a negative sense because it is actually positive. The fact that I have been given this space, is incredibly valuable to me.'

'The fact that I have been given this space for struggle, is incredibly valuable to me.'

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FANA RICHTERS

'We from the African Diaspora finally realize that we are our own priority. We take the future in our own hands, with own solutions and visions guided by the spirits of our ancestors. We are constructing new worlds and realities that anticipate possible futures, coinciding with the present and reclaiming the past.' This statement is prominent on the website of fashion designer and interdisciplinary artist Fana Richters.

That she speaks in the we-form is telling: Richters' work is part of a larger movement. For a reason it was included in last year's exhibition *Voices of Fashion* at the Centraal Museum in Utrecht, and it is currently on display in the exhibition *De Gouden Koets* at Amsterdam Museum, which shows not only the restored golden coach – formerly used by the Dutch royal family – but also the discussions that have been held in the past and present about this iconic vehicle.

Richters created an international furor with her afro-futuristic Planet AiRich. The world she creates here is focused on rediscovering and redefining black identity. The characters in her work therefore do not comply with Western ideals of beauty. 'In my work, the power of black identity is a recurring theme. For this I mix elements of contemporary (pop) culture with those of from African histories. Fashion, music and spiritual mythology come together in my work.'

The past year Richters has been working on *The Walking Exhibition*, in which she builds a bridge between the artistic world and the fashion industry. Surrounded by experts and advisers in various fields, including fashion and textiles, she developed a series of suits. A central role is played by her own photography handwriting, which is characterized by collage techniques. According to Richters, sustainability is an indispensable element and she certainly wants to demonstrate this in the design by using the natural plant hemp, among other things. The final product will be presented during a fashion show where Richters wants to become acquainted with a commercial manner of presentation.

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'In my work, the power of black identity is a recurring theme'

'We of the African diaspora finally realize that we are our own priority'



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FRANCES ROMPAS

Frances Rompas studied biology at the University of Utrecht and obtained her Master's in Environmental Sciences at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Her practice combines her academic background as a biologist with moving images and installations, and looks for ways to poetically and visually translate nature's power, balance and dynamics. Her presentations aim to connect the audience through watching, reflecting and experiencing together. These values are also strongly reflected in her activities as a DJ and event organiser in Utrecht.

Rompas's practice includes video portraits that document personal stories told not through words but the intervening moments of intimate glances and silences. She employs a broad visual language, meticulously focusing on composition and the subject's movement therein. Rompas has recently been making a very personal and autobiographical project about her origins. 'I carry out historical research into the landscape where my ancestors lived in Minahasa, also known as Manado, in the Indonesian province of North Sulawesi. I zoom in on the inland villages at the foot of the Soputan volcano. The focus is on Manado's landscape.' Her approach is distinctive compared to other Indonesian diaspora stories that usually emphasize historical elements such as colonial rule and war. 'I approach the project from historical accounts and descriptions of the environment. Feeling and emotion are central to this. I want to have a thorough understanding of my ancestors' landscape.'

'I want to have a thorough understanding of my ancestors' landscape'

Rompas recently presented the first outcome of her autobiographical project in the form of a public sculpture comprising eight-metre-long bamboo sticks anchored in the ground and various audio fragments. Long silk flags, hand-dyed in red, purple and emerald green, dance in the wind on the bamboo. 'Flags are usually a symbol of a country and the mark of a specific place. However, my flags represent a sense of displacement and longing to be somewhere else.' Rompas wants to travel to Indonesia to complete her project with a film tracing the history of her father and ancestors, in order to discover her own story.

'My flags represent a sense of displacement'

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Photo: Charlotte Visser

'Cirrus', 2021

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FRANSJE GIMBRÈRE

'You have to know why you give something a certain colour, shape or materiality'

The human body has always fascinated designer-artist Fransje Gimbrère. How it works, how it behaves and how it relates to its surroundings. She is especially intrigued by the unconscious processes; the things our senses almost imperceptibly register but however still influence our behaviour. 'I think that's a huge part of design. If you want to get something done with your design and bring about a certain experience, you have to know why you give something a certain colour, shape or materiality.'

Gimbrère has used the Talent Development year to delve deeper into these mechanisms. She studied scientific articles on environmental psychology, neuropsychology, the more controversial neuroaesthetics (biological explanations for how we experience beauty), and also biophilic design (design that seeks connection with nature).

In addition, Gimbrère wants to broaden her range of skills, materials and techniques. 'I always start by asking how a technique works. I'm fascinated by a certain look. The material isn't the priority, but I often use materials in an unusual way.' For example, she uses soft textiles for rigid structures or hard metal for drapery. Her designs are often abstract; the application can be completed by others. She also demonstrates alternative ways of how a material can be used. 'Since what I do is so conceptual, for many people it remains difficult to imagine what purpose my designs serve. I feel as if I'm on the boundary of art and design.'

Whereas she used to make her work by hand, she is now forging links with the industry and collaborates with producers in weaving, knitting and braiding. She wants to get a deeper understanding of these industrial processes so that she can better serve her clients. She also wants to think about the possibilities of these techniques and how she can apply them in a different way. The ultimate goal of this year of in-depth development for her is to translate all the acquired knowledge into a design where the scientific background coalesces with an artistic approach.

'I often use materials in an unusual way'

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'Een blokje om', Rodezand, Rotterdam, 2021

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FUNS JANSSEN

To whom does the city belong? This question returns in different guises in the work of Funs Janssen, alias Funzig, the 2021 Rotterdam City Illustrator. His recent work takes on gentrification and continues from his graduation work regarding public urban space. Originally from Limburg, Funzig has lived in the south of Rotterdam for the past ten years, where the recently announced demolition of 524 affordable rental homes has reignited the debate about gentrification's social consequences. 'It's not just in Rotterdam South,' Funzig points out, 'the same thing happens in the city's northerly neighbourhoods, such as Overschie, Krooswijk and Spangen, and also in cities like Amsterdam, London and New York.' Original residents, aided by municipal and government policy, are being pushed out by investors and wealthier new residents.

Funzig decided to archive blocks and neighbourhoods earmarked for demolition or redevelopment, which he does in his own unique way. First he photographs the street and then converts the photographs into a 3D model from which he creates illustrations – his artistic interpretation. Funzigs cityscapes are always nocturnal. 'This allows the lamp posts and car headlights to illuminate things in the city you might possibly miss, making them easier to see.' The images will eventually be collected in a publication alongside recounted experiences of ex-residents and essays by commentators and researchers. Funzig works closely with researcher Hasret Emine who is active in the Amsterdam branch of the political party Bij1. 'I want to give people at least a reminder of the place they had to leave,' Funzig says. At the same time, the publication is also for new residents and policymakers, allowing them to see the effect of gentrification on a city and its residents. 'I'd love to expand this project and see what I can do in other cities where this is happening. I can also imagine that virtual reality will be a way of viewing the 3D models I've made.' To a certain extent, this would allow the city and its history to become available again to people denied access to the city.

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'You can see the city better at night'

'I want to give people at least a reminder of the place they had to leave'



Photo: Iris Rijskamp

'Multiiform', 2019

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'Sport is pre-eminently a normative and often exclusive domain'

GABRIEL FONTANA

To which team do you belong? Who can, and should participate? Who gets the ball? To which dressing room do you have access? In the recent work of social designer and researcher Gabriel Fontana, (team) sports are seen as a metaphor and model for society at large: 'Sports are pre-eminently a normative and often exclusive domain. There are gender-specific rules concerning behaviour and appearance. Moreover, not all bodies are able to participate in every sport.' Fontana observed how social norms are propagated, internalised and reproduced in sports education and decided to investigate and reshape this practice.

'I had people play mixed team sports in silence and saw that girls got the ball more often and felt more at ease because usually it's mainly boys who shout each other's names,' says Fontana. This raised the question of the voice's role in the production and reproduction of social norms. *For the Voice and (Hear)archies* project, Fontana designed a series of sports games that use the voice and listening in a new way.

Fontana, whose father was a sports teacher, works at various art academies and sees education as an extremely political context. The production and reproduction of social norms and identities take place not only during sports education but also in the interiors and design of educational institutes' physical space. His project *Safer Landscapes* responds to this and offers a *Queering Manual*, a practical set of interventions that institutions and teachers can use to disrupt the usual norm-affirming practices and achieve a more inclusive physical context.

Fontana, who works at the intersection of sociology and design, enjoys collaborating with people from different disciplines to broaden his understanding. 'Ultimately,' he says, 'every form of design is inherent in social design.' Design produces and reproduces ideologies. 'It is important to recognise the complexity of the issues you deal with as a designer, and to recognise one's responsibility.'

'Ultimately, every form of design is inherent in social design'

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Photo: Imke Panhuijzen

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INEZ NAOMI CORREA ALVES

Eleven bad-ass women on a bright pink soccer field. Cool, self-confident and proud of their bodies, dressed only in a fashionable bikini made of second-hand soccer shirts. These are the first campaign photos with which Inez Naomi Correa Alves launched her brand Versatile Forever. A year ago, in addition to her design and styling work for established retail and fashion brands, she decided to start her own fashion label from a completely different perspective: Versatile Forever stays well away from fast fashion.

'I became annoyed with practices in the fashion industry', says Correa Alves, who opts for a more social approach. 'I was also keen to combine my strengths as a stylist and designer, to see how I could grow in that role myself.' By transforming second-hand clothes into new collections, she is now raising a counterpoint. In doing so, she took a different approach: instead of working from a pre-developed design, she started at the other end; with the production process. By allowing this to be the guiding principle, creative surprises emerge. For the first release, she thought of tops, which turned into dresses on the mannequin, but ultimately the leftover pieces became the ingredients for the summer premiere. She describes the unconventional making process as 'learning by doing', in which she especially learned how important it is to just start: 'A matter of acting and trusting your own feelings.'

The starting point was a sorting company for second-hand clothing. Correa Alves left there with bags full of old soccer shirts and scarves which she used to make a series with the theme 'team spirit'. In this concept, the benchwarmers – the players who always sit on the bench or are chosen last – are the real winners. The first campaign, *Not Your Soccer Wife*, presents a diverse team of super babes. The price is kept deliberately accessible to a wide audience, but it is far from a standard collection: 'For retail, every jersey has to be exactly the same, but at Versatile every garment is unique, a celebration of diversity. They are one-of-a-kind pieces, but they are still a part of a series.'

'I want to raise a voice of dissent'

The biggest challenge now is scaling up: 'We made these bikinis ourselves and it's still quite difficult as a small start-up brand to get a collection into production.' She is now engaging with several social institutions with sewing workshops. The football bikinis can still be ordered this summer through the Versatile Forever website. And the drop for when autumn approaches is ready to go; dresses made from the same scarves and shirts.

'A matter of acting and trusting your own feelings'

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'Voicing Borders', 2019

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'My work comments on existing systems and structures'

IRAKLI SABEKIA

Artist Irakli Sabekia was born in a Georgian city that now lies in occupied territory. At a young age, he moved to Tbilisi and went on to study medicine. After the 2008 war in South Ossetia, he focused on graphic design, communication and art direction. In 2015, he started studying Man and Leisure (now Studio Urgencies) at the Design Academy in Eindhoven. He graduated with distinction in 2019 with a project regarding the Russian occupation of Georgia. 'My practice invites the viewer to reflect and encourages discussion of the issues my work addresses. Its central theme is the friction between man and system.' Having witnessed the consequences of the occupation of Georgia in the early 1990s, he translates his experiences into methods for tackling subjects. 'The stories of small and large communities subjected to different power systems need to be told. I do this through multimedia installations and interventions. I create artistic interruptions in the functionality of existing systems. In doing so, I use my scientific background to question the instruments of the established power. At its core is the connecting of people through ideas.'

With his interactive installation *Voicing Borders* Sabekia exposes the reality hidden behind the barbed-wire border of Russian-occupied Georgia. Sabekia uses old and new satellite images and a short message in Morse code to map the destruction of 16 villages. An earlier project, the playful public intervention *Ministry of Reasonable Chaos*, comments on the Dutch governance system and the abundance of social control which leaves little room for spontaneity. Together, people can use brightly coloured bricks to build new structures which disrupt the monotonous and sometimes sterile public space.

Sabekia is currently developing *The Archive of Spatial Knowledge*. 'It is an experimental, open-source digital platform, a spatial intervention formed by a collection of censored narratives that are prohibited from being displayed in public space. They're comparable to the stories from the occupied territories of Georgia that are present in the memories of the locals but have been erased from the area.' In the future, Sabekia wants to further develop his artistic practice at the intersection of science and visual arts.

'Stories of communities subjected to different power systems must be told'

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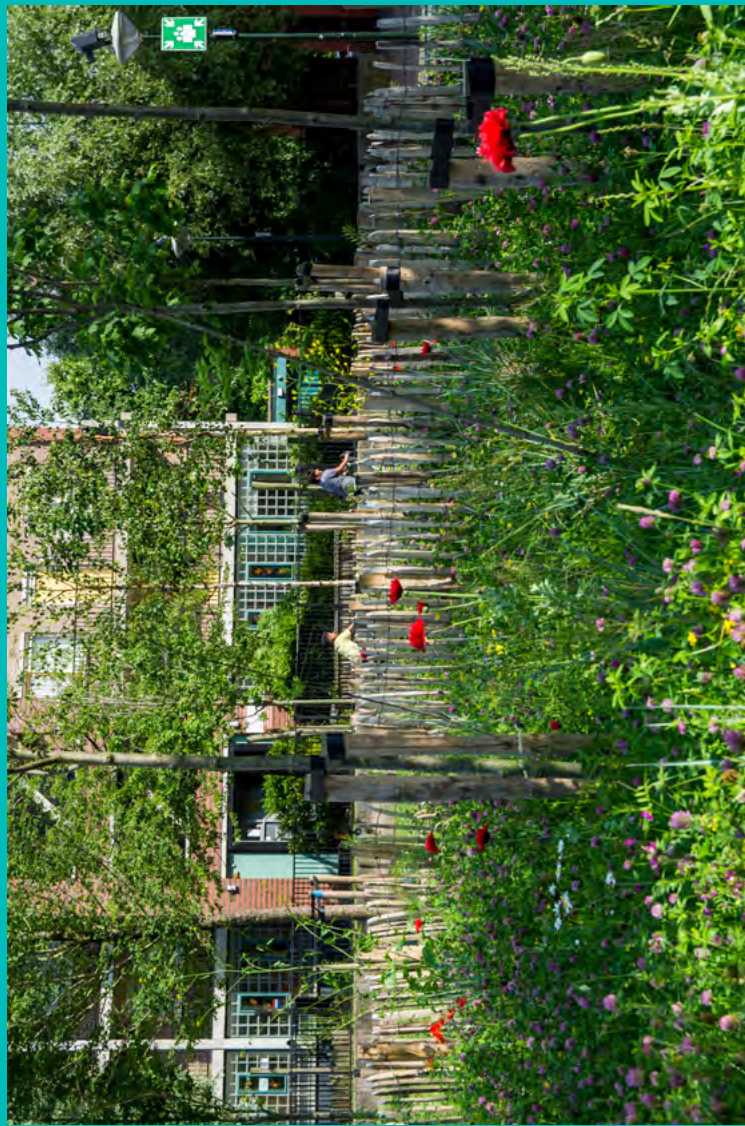


Photo: A. Thevenet

'Stadhuysplein Urban Forest'

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JEAN-FRANÇOIS GAUTHIER

'Trees first' is Jean-François Gauthier's motto when it comes to urban planning. It was also the title of his graduation thesis at the Amsterdam Academy of Architecture, which was awarded the KuiperCompagnons Afstudeerprijs. Instead of trees being the final element in the design of public space, he argues that they should be the starting point. Not just individual trees however, but more in terms of forests. He drew inspiration from the research of forest ecologist Suzanne Simard, who discovered that trees form a community. 'We used to think they were competing with each other, but it turns out they actually work together', says Gauthier. 'Their roots seek contact with each other, one takes care of the other. There is a whole system of mature mother trees that look after the younger growth.' Good news for the life expectancy of urban trees: while single specimens often live only 20 years, that number can increase tenfold if you place them closer together.

'There's a lot of talk about planting more trees in the city, but the crazy thing is that no one really knows how best to do it', says Gauthier. With a grant from Creative Industries Fund NL, he succeeded in giving his graduation research a follow-up with a pilot project on the Slachthuisplein in The Hague. Residents had submitted a request to the municipality for more trees on the square and they needed a specialist to assist them. 'But there aren't really any', says Gauthier: 'You have landscape architects and arborists, but they're not used to communicating with each other.' He saw the project as an opportunity to become a specialist himself; in early 2021, his first layered urban forest began to grow, with birch and rowan trees as the front line, oaks and maples as their slow-growing successors, followed by a protective, nourishing bed of shrubs and herbs.

The lessons learned – such as the importance of this three-layer approach and a method to sustainably enrich the soil – he keeps track of in his journal. He also emphasizes the need for research into 'natural' conditions: 'These vary from location to location. Sometimes the soil, wind and sun are similar to a mountain landscape, sometimes to a canyon, and in the case of the Slachthuisplein to a dune landscape. The chance of success increases significantly if you choose vegetation that thrives in the dunes.' The various scenarios are visualized in artistic collages; these could give municipalities just that little push to join forces with Sylva, Gauthier's company founded this year, towards a city full of green giants.

'Start with a forest,
then the stones'

'Trees do not compete
with each other, they
actually work together'

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JEANPAUL PAULA

In general, there's a fairly strict line between art and fashion. However, for JeanPaul Paula, there's no distinction between the various things he does. Whether he's a photographer, stylist, or art director, it all stems from the same creative impulse – and constantly results in different forms of expression. He's been developing his practice for nearly 20 years, and has worked with some of the world's biggest brands and artists, but his opportunities in the Netherlands have always been quite limited. 'In the past year, I've explicitly decided to take responsibility for my artistry and focused on sustainability. As part of this process, I'm working more with my family,' he says. Following a drastic and dramatic split with them in his late teens – because he is gay – they have recently reconnected. Repairing the relationship is an emotional and in-depth process that requires getting to know each other again. It includes having conversations about their culture and the personal convictions that led to the split and eventual reconciliation.

These conversations form the basis for new types of expression and are related to the experiences and problematic treatment of LGBTQIA+ people in the Curaçaoan and wider Caribbean community. He explains: 'Here, LGBTQIA+ people of colour are continuously murdered by people from their own communities. Many of them – myself included – were kicked out of the house and have no social safety net.' According to Paula, these consequences come from learned behaviour that is passed on and normalised. 'I mainly focus on the Caribbean context, where the aftermath of colonialism, religion and masculinity creates a toxic cocktail of factors that contribute to these deadly excesses.' Along those same lines, Paula questions what it means to be a gay and/or black person in this world, and how it's possible to survive here.

'I have explicitly decided to take responsibility for my artistry'

In addition to photographs, his current research has led to a movie that deals with Paula's personal story and his relationship with his family. It is embedded in an environment that addresses broader cultural considerations. He wants to generate awareness for psychology and mental health within the black community. At the same time, there are other factors at play – for example, people of colour have been made largely invisible within the queer community, and commercial interests can overshadow long-term contributions and representation that have the ability to set an example for future generations. That's why he wants to maximise the visibility of this project and reach the widest possible audience.

'The aftermath of colonialism, religion and masculinity creates a toxic cocktail'

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JOHANNA SEELEMANN



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'Disaster Studios' may sound like a design agency you'd rather avoid. However, in these times of climate emergency, accompanying extreme weather events and a global pandemic, perhaps we should move closer to the disaster and investigate how we can deal with it. This is exactly what Johanna Seelemann has been doing recently, together with the Icelandic risk management expert Uta Reichardt with the Disaster Studios project. It is wrong to assume designing for – and after – the disaster invites extreme functionality and rationality. 'Aesthetics in particular and the irrational offer significant inputs,' says Seelemann. 'Rationality offers no comfort during or after the disaster. And the effectiveness of infographics – frequently used during the corona pandemic – partly depends on their aesthetic quality.' The outcomes of Reichardt's and Seelemann's interdisciplinary project are an online compass that runs on its own solar-powered server and a publication outlining what value art and design has in the context of a crisis.

Seelemann has long been fascinated by adaptability, resilience and change, particularly concerning aesthetics. In her previous work, *Terra Incognita*, she used industrial clay to examine how irrationality and outmodedness affect consumer behaviour. Like the fashion world, the car industry employs deliberate obsolescence to encourage consumption, a process that takes shape first and foremost in clay. 'It is fascinating that a now hyper-technological product, the car, still starts as a clay sculpture!' Seelemann explains. *Terra Incognita* resulted in a series of stable but endlessly adaptable objects made from industrial clay. As the same material is always reused, this playground of aesthetics is suddenly compatible with sustainability.

Seelemann wants to explore further sustainability and changeability within the project *Perpetual Change* (working title), which investigates local material streams and production techniques. 'I want to focus once again on the material as a narrator. Hopefully, this will lead to some thought-provoking collaborations!'

'I want to focus on the material as a narrator'

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'Rationality offers no comfort during or after the disaster'

JOSSE PYL



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'How we communicate, make agreements, record things and make the absent present using language fascinates me,' says Josse Pyl. By language, Pyl means visual, not necessarily spoken language. Depending on your philosophical position on language, one could say that language always translates: the relationship between language and reality is not one-to-one. Language is not reality, nor is it a literal copy of it. However, a copy is a translation of a piece of reality. And it is precisely this translation that preoccupies Pyl.

His most recent project includes a translation and reinterpretation of his own work. Pyl made frottages of details and installation images of that work. 'When making a frottage, you create a sort of copy of an original with a relief, you put a sheet of paper over a coin, for example, and then you go over it with a piece of chalk.' Pyl has collected these frottages, alongside new work, in a publication scheduled to be released in September by Roma Publications. 'It is not a catalogue of my work', says Pyl, 'but really a work in itself, an object with nothing but images. I have never spent so much time on one thing before.'

Pyl always wanted to make a book as that is an excellent medium for visual language. But in addition to the book, there are now also video works. In the stop-motion video *Inner World Outer World*, as a viewer, you are locked in a mouth. You see a set of teeth from the back in which engravings – reverse relief – slowly emerge. Some details from earlier work and swirling text on molars and incisors. 'A word begins in the stomach. This then breathes it through to the chest and neck, which forms its timbre. Through the vocal cords, where the pitch is determined, it goes into the mouth, where the tongue and teeth provide the final structure, before the word is pushed into the air,' according to Pyl. Video is a new medium in his work, which he views as an enhancement to his practice. 'I can envision this in the future, more frottages and more video which will then hopefully translate back into the next.'

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'How we communicate fascinates me'

'Language is not reality'



'Selma', 2018

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KHALID AMAKRAN

Photographer Khalid Amakran researches the Moroccan-Dutch identity. Millennials are central to his work, he does, however include other generations. 'Dutch society often portrays people with a Moroccan background negatively. Their stories are usually told in a reactive context: after an incident, we are called to account, and we have to defend who "we" are before a talk show audience, so to speak. There seems to be no room for the small, nuanced and everyday narratives.' This negative positioning and perception have gained momentum since the turn of the century. News about Moroccan youths and stigmatising statements by politicians have played a role in this. Amakran wants to take this image and, as a spoken word artist, use language to set a different example. 'I want to find a way to address what this politicisation does to people.'

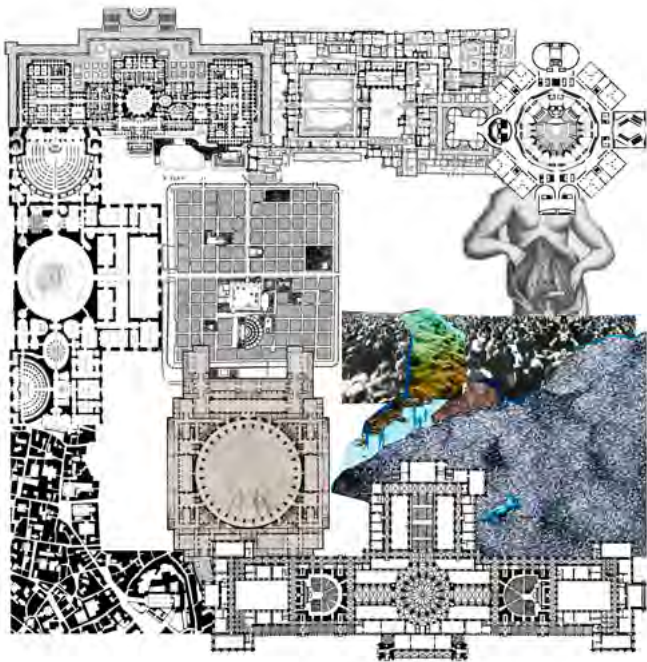
'The message you convey must reach the world as effectively as possible'

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After several years of commissioned work, including a weekly column in *NRC Handelsblad*, he now seeks a more autonomous position. Previously, he mainly focused on people and their environment. Now he wants to consider these elements separately, thus examining an individual's situation while simultaneously paying attention to the influence of one's surroundings. The environment and context in which someone grows up profoundly influences their personal development. 'I am dealing with interpreting sociological systems and giving space to emotional motives.' In this process Amakran does not see photography itself as an end, but as a means to capture the world, analyse it and tell a story. 'I'm not interested in just pretty pictures. The messages and stories you convey should reach the world as effectively as possible.'

He focuses on three generations. Firstly, he concentrates on the parents who mainly came to the Netherlands as 'migrant workers'. There has been little opportunity for them to share their experiences publicly. Amakran also looks at their children, who had to choose between their Moroccan and Dutch cultures. This choice, in which the two are mutually exclusive, plays a vital role in shaping the identity of Moroccan-Dutch millennials. 'It is often said they cannot be completely free and have to hide a part of themselves wherever they are, so they always walk around with a secret.' Amakran wants to shed light on this hidden facet. 'I want to show that there is a shared experience, that there is a group with similar experiences that are therefore also legitimate. In this way I show the third generation that they have a future.'

'I want to show that there is a shared experience'



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LESIA TOPOLNYK

Lesia Topolnyk is an architect who focuses on a broader interpretation of her field. She is interested in the potential of her profession within our constructed reality – not necessarily in building things. 'It's about ideas that take shape during the research and design process which generate new typologies,' she says. For her, it's not enough to shape the world reactively, or in line with what already exists. She explains: 'Although architects are seen as people who design spaces, we also design relationships. Especially in these turbulent political times, it's necessary to look at how the world is designed to understand the larger context in which a project is taking place. I sometimes reflect on major problems at a global level, while other times I focus on the space inside someone's mind.'

Topolnyk grew up in Ukraine, and addressed the situation in Crimea with her final project at the Academy of Architecture in Amsterdam. She created a proposal for a building that consisted primarily of corridors – places where discussions and interactions occur that ultimately have the greatest influence on the decisions being made. Continuous mediation of the situation was central to this concept. The architecture symbolised and supported the mental capacity of those involved. In this endless network of hallways, which reference the agora, visitors could have endless discussions which allowed for a continuous debate; politics is an ongoing conversation. Similarly, her own vision of architecture and her process of research and design focuses on conversation, contributions from different positions, and the involvement of people with a wide range of expertise. She therefore frequently collaborates with people who work in different fields. Because 'you can learn from others and they bring valuable insights and viewpoints...'

'Architects are seen as people who design spaces, but we also design relationships'

Her current research is focused on the various crises humanity is currently facing, with a special interest in political systems and the significance of democracy, including its Greek foundations. She is exploring how this form of government was historically designed and how architecture supported and portrayed it. 'It's about how we can shape change and how we can manage the world better together,' she concludes. Architecture can play a role in that by offering design solutions that support the decision-making process.

'it's about how we can better manage the world, together'

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LOUIS BRADDOCK CLARKE

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Listening is at the heart of designer/researcher Louis Braddock Clarke's work: listening to others and the landscape. He builds instruments that read, index and feel the landscape. Changes in the landscape, such as shifting magnetic values, are converted into sound, making these processes perceptible to humans. 'Much of my work focuses on narratives that lie between art and science, which are usually invisible and quite complex. I try to find creative ways to reveal them, using new technologies.'

'I'm obsessed with collaboration'

Braddock Clarke always returns to the same material: iron ore, the metal that creates magnetic changes in the space around us. For his latest project, he is investigating a location in Greenland where a meteorite landed ten thousand years ago. In addition to a significant magnetic change, it was an event that set in motion many stories among the local population and later colonial rulers (Greenland only regained self-governance in 2008.) Due to the melting of the ice and the land's mineral wealth, enormous geopolitical interests are at play around these coordinates, which, in turn, generate new narratives.

Braddock Clarke has collected small parts of the meteorite sold and distributed around the world through internet auctions. He intends to return these fragments to their exact landing spot. By heating the pieces to a high temperature in situ, the magnetic values, which solidified at the moment the meteor struck, are reset, and they take on the new proportions of that moment and place. All history contained in the stone, especially the colonial, is erased, as it were. The material gets a fresh start from the 'earthly' spot it originates from (though, of course, it originally comes from space) and remains there.

The meteorite's return is in stark contrast to everything else that was taken from this place. This resonates with the locals Braddock Clarke works with, in addition to scientists, engineers, and natural history museums, among others. Since his practice focuses on collaboration, he is uncomfortable that only his name is associated with the Talent Development grant he received. As he explains, 'I'm obsessed with collaboration. For me, the future is about operating within these intensively collaborative dialogue spaces.'

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'A lot of my work focuses on narratives that are quite complex and invisible'



'Liquid Life'

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LUUC SONKE

'I am searching for an answer to what I consider the spatial issue of the 21st century,' says architect Luuc Sonke. And that is: how can we design spaces that challenge users to use them in a more flexible way, analogous to contemporary life? Life has become more and more 'fluid' as a result of on-going digitalization. Boundaries between the public and private, between work and leisure, are blurring. Zoom brings the outside world into the home, the kitchen table becomes a desk. And at the same time, people sit with laptops in a café where they used to go to meet their friends and intimate conversations are held without embarrassment on buses and trains.

While the world is increasingly escaping from the fixed structures of work, church and relationships, the physical context however is lagging behind. Society is much more flexible than the architecture with which we surround ourselves. Sonke investigates this discrepancy and seeks to close the gap. 'Buildings are still designed with predetermined functions. Okay, we have open kitchens nowadays, but architects still draw bedrooms and a living room in a floor plan. Do we still need those definitions?'

His research is an extension of his graduation project at the Academy of Architecture Amsterdam. It is called *Liquid Life*, after a book by sociologist Zygmunt Baumann concerning how life constantly changes. Sonke visited fifteen households to map out how users deal with their private space. He interviewed residents, drew floor plans, noted his observations, using this as a basis to create new models. These models play with a 'free format': you don't know exactly where one space ends and another begins, their function is not yet determined. Instead of walls with doors, pony walls and height differences in the ceiling and floor, challenge users to embrace a more flexible approach.

Over the past year, Sonke has added more and more layers to his research. For example, he now makes 3D scans of indoor and outdoor locations to experiment with. Pieces of our living space that he separates from their context by removing them in the virtual world. A kind of diorama that he makes intuitively which gradually acquires a place in the research. 'I use a 3D scanner to design a carpet with the textures and colors of a public place, yet another way of bringing the public domain into the private sphere.' Notable finds during the process are documented on Sonke's website. Here you won't find a portfolio as you might expect on an architect's site, but a record of a voyage of discovery through liquid space.

'Buildings are still designed with predetermined functions'

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'I want to design spaces that challenge users'



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MARLOU BREULS

Objectification of the body, the most recent work by Marlou Breuls, is an ongoing investigation into the boundaries and possibilities of fashion and her own view on the fashion designer/autonomous artist axis. 'I don't feel the need to make clothes,' says Breuls. 'I want to stretch things, search for boundaries. In contemporary fashion, every element of surprise has disappeared. With my work, I want to bring that back.'

Breuls would rather approach fashion as 'a culture of fabric' than as (the making of) something wearable, hence she started experimenting with extensions of the human body made from a variety of materials. There are also garments dipped in porcelain, a cuddly chair made of furry silicone and a tufted carpet with the 3D silhouette of a woman fused into it. The works can be read as thought experiments: up to what point is something still wearable? When is something still fashion? What actually constitutes fashion? But also: what am I: a fashion designer or an autonomous artist?

To answer these questions and to gain experience in working with different materials and techniques, Breuls realised a number of collaborations with, among others, David Altmeyd, Katie Stout, Branko Popovic & Ronald Schinkelshoek. Some of these have not (yet) taken place (physically) due to covid-19, causing the project to be somewhat delayed.

'I don't feel the need to make clothes.'

'I would have liked to have made more progress in formulating an answer.' At the same time, Breuls admits that the questions she poses with her work may never be conclusively answered. 'It is important to me to keep rediscovering myself. That's why I also like to enter unusual collaborations, both with theaters and large companies.' Constantly reinventing yourself is not always easy: 'As soon as I step outside of fashion, it becomes exciting. What am I doing? Why am I not sticking to what I am capable of? But I also know that I need this tension to be able to take the next step. I don't want to be on autopilot.'

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'As soon as I step outside of fashion, it becomes exciting'



'Vrije vogels'

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'I want to translate illustrations and animation into physical experiences in new ways'

MIRJAM DEBETS

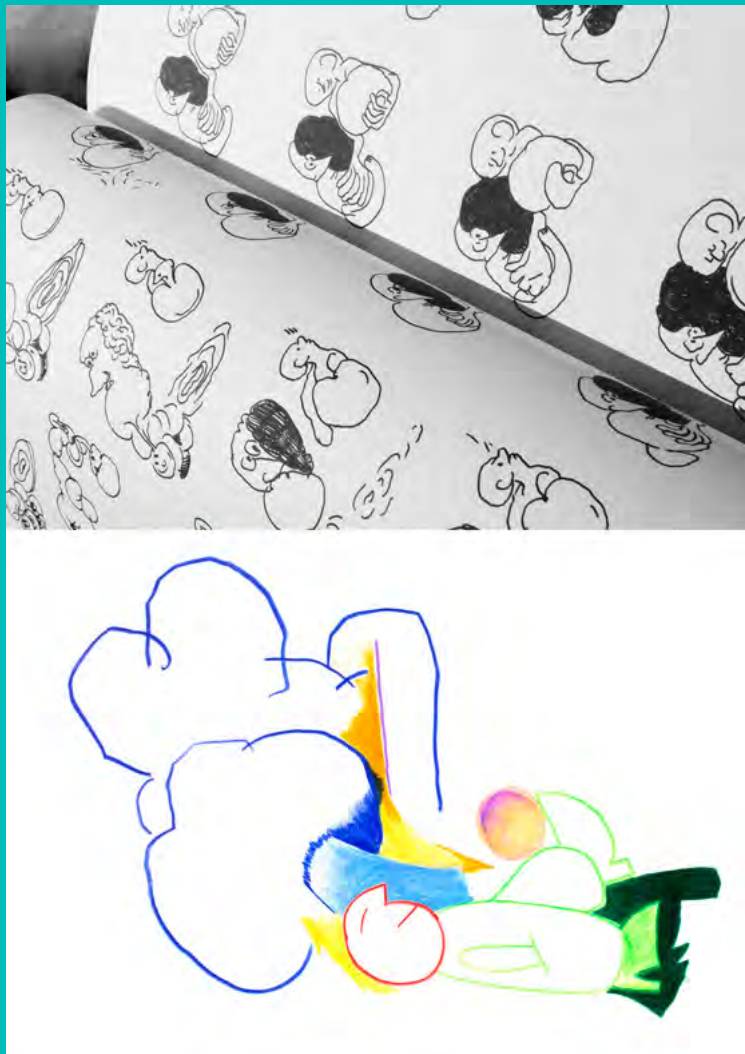
As an animator, VJ and illustrator, Mirjam Debets works at the intersection of moving image, 2D and live performance. She studied animation at the Utrecht School of the Arts (HKU), and was the only student of the 2017 graduating class to complete the degree with live visuals, shown at a concert at De Helling in Utrecht. 'Since then, I've been looking for new, multidisciplinary ways to translate illustrations and animations into physical experiences for an audience. My ideas originate from music or collaborations with musicians, designers and different clients, and result in visuals that are much more free and abstract than what you can achieve with the narrative of an animated film for example.'

'My work is inspired by the convergence of and relationship between people and nature.' From mythical legends, philosophical stories and biological phenomena, fantastical figures and organic shapes come to life in eclectic patterns. Her illustrated world is bursting with unique creatures and meandering plants in bright colours. With a playful approach, Debets shines a poetic light on the history of the world and the way in which humans have been connected to their natural surroundings for centuries. 'The projects I've completed since graduating are extremely varied: from video clips and textile design to animated films, gifs, and a monumental on-site video installation.' Her commissions include an animated trailer to promote the book of the month for television show *De Wereld Draait Door*, animations for a VPRO documentary about the Earth, an opening film for *Klik Amsterdam Animation Festival*, and the introductory film and educational material for *Bes, Small god in ancient Egypt* – an exhibition at the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam.

'In the future, I want to explore new paths within my practice by researching different forms of presentation and their impact on the audience. My primary focus will be immersive experiences and viewer interaction.' For that reason, her upcoming projects will be produced entirely by Debets in collaboration with professionals from other disciplines – from the initial concept to the final product.

'I'm inspired by the relationship between people and nature'

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MORIZ OBERBERGER

Graphic designer and illustrator Moriz Oberberger describes the past year as 'artistically fruitful'. As he likes to work by imposing 'poetic challenges' on himself, he took the time to focus, discover a new working rhythm, and take on a new challenge. 'I try to come up with small, absurd systems for my working method that are labour-intensive, but are humorous and playful at the same time.'

His latest project sits somewhere between a meditative diary and a long animation process. Every day he works on an animation, frame by frame, making at least fifty drawings at a time, the next day picking up where he left off. There is no storyboard; the story develops spontaneously and intuitively, as if you were going for a walk without destination nor goal. As the 20th-century painter Paul Klee put it: 'To draw is to take a line for a walk.' This approach takes drawing itself as its starting point. Sometimes Oberberger follows a line that interests him but there are also defined figures from which small scenes develop; one flows into the other in a potentially infinite manner.

He collates the drawings for the animations (frames) into workbooks, each of which covers two months and is meticulously dated and time stamped. He also consecutively numbers the now thousands of frames. These workbooks make it possible to follow the drawing series in different rhythms. The reader determines the tempo and how the images connect. Oberberger makes these workbooks in small editions and draws on the blank covers, both challenging and questioning the idea of a finished book. He also began writing stories based on the figures and lines that develop in the animations and making stand-alone drawings in coloured pencil. He will exhibit the outcomes, translating various project elements into a multimedia installation featuring sound, drawings and animations.

The Talent Development year also afforded Oberberger time to think about developing, communicating, and distributing his practice more broadly. He is working on a new website and a publication platform. Simply spending more time interacting on social media leads to new contacts and assignments. 'This funding allowed me to be more convincing in what I do and create smoother transitions between assignments and self-initiated projects.'

'I can be more convincing in what I do'

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'I try to come up with small, absurd systems for my working method that are humorous and playful at the same time'



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PHILIPP KOLMANN

Philipp Kolmann is a designer, chef and farmer with a fascination for fermentation. He describes bacteria and fungi as an invisible link between humans, other species, and the land we inhabit. He also sees opportunities to harness them – through food – for a healthier balance on earth. Kolmann is currently working on finding plant-based alternatives to animal products, such as plant-based cheese. This requires more than just finding the right combination of bacteria in a lab, he explains: 'That has everything to do with the connection between product, man and land.' His research into how the dairy industry is woven into the capillaries of our culture is the first step towards an environmentally friendly alternative.

Although cheese currently has an artisanal, honest image, most of the cheese we consume has long since become disconnected from the natural relationship between man and land, according to Kolmann. He therefore wants to stay far away from industrially produced cheese and recently immersed himself in the traditional manual production of raw-milk cheeses. To make cheese at the source, to learn about the process of fermentation and to study the microbes responsible for it, Kolmann left for Switzerland. He not only looked at the microbes in cheese, but he also investigated various fermentation techniques that are used worldwide for products such as yogurt, kefir, miso, soy and butter. He investigated how taste and smell come into existence, how they are determined by local conditions and thus reinforce the identity of a place.

Kolmann: 'With this project I want to restore the symbiotic relationship between man and his immediate environment.'

The next step is to remove dairy products altogether. Vegan cheese is already being made, but it often uses ingredients from Asia, such as coconut milk and cashew nuts from Indonesia. Kolmann wants to discover what locally sourced plant-based ingredients can be used to produce cheese that doesn't involve cow's milk. In September, he will start analyzing local microbiomes in the microbiology lab of the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, and then create a starter culture from them. He will work with different types of grass, beans and lentils, seeds and nuts. 'I'm trying to convert hundreds of years of dairy culture into something else, to which the same value can be attached. The challenge is to create a plant-based substitute that becomes just as entrenched in our culture.'

'You have to know why you give something a certain colour, shape or materiality'

'The challenge is to create a plant-based substitute'

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An ode to a sneaker. And not just any sneaker. This is the Nike Air Max 1. In the 90s, when Qasim Arif was still in elementary school in the Schilderswijk, it was an icon for him and his friends. 'Those shoes were a status symbol; we had to have them, we dreamed about them. You had to save up for them. And once you had them, you had to keep them looking nice. You couldn't play football in them until the novelty had worn off.'

Twenty-five years later he uses this childhood sneaker dream as inspiration for a work of art dedicated to the people in his old neighborhood in The Hague; a 3D printed bronze sneaker constructed of Arabic letters with the text of a song by rapper The Notorious B.I.G. – *It was all a dream* – written in Punjabi. 'This artwork shows different sides of my identity', says Arif. A child of migrants from Pakistan, Muslim, artist, hip-hop head and sports fan, he unites what usually remains separated. *The beauty of Arabic calligraphy with the attitude of hip-hop*, is how he describes his work on his website. For this project Arif decided to take his calligraphy out of the one-dimensional plane and make it tangible, into a sculpture. 'The step from 2D to 3D is an exciting one, also because in Islamic culture it is not common to make sculptures – at least not of people or animals.'

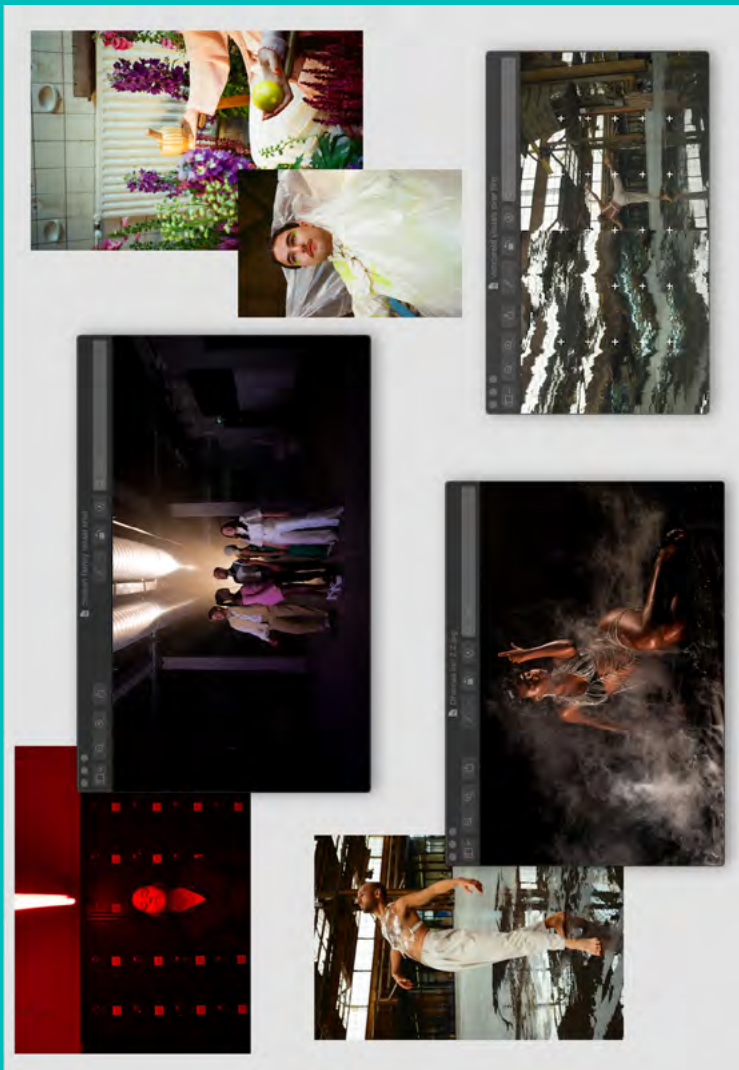
'I was already experimenting a lot with depth in my letters,' says Arif, 'I decided to really bring that depth in now.' To do so, he not only took a course in sneaker design, but also dove into the world of 3D printing. 'With the end product in mind, I decided to master the skills needed to realize it. However, during this process, I discovered that I should seek collaborations to fulfil my dream. That was quite the eye opener, I always did everything myself.'

Together with a 3D-designer Arif is now busy with sampling: they make rough prints to see what is feasible in terms of material and shape. 'It's new for me to sometimes have to give up something creative because of the limitations of technology. We are still searching for the right formula.'

'I want to bring art closer to people'

'It's new for me to sometimes have to give up something creative'

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RENEE MES

Renee Mes is a multidisciplinary designer who studied at the Design Academy Eindhoven, where she focused on a critical analysis of the way in which our living environment is designed. 'Our designed living environment sets conditions, directs movement and offers possibilities for use which are established based on how an object is presented. The considerations that ultimately determine the potential of an object and what it represents in terms of use are rooted in design questions. They relate to our society and what it requires, but also what it rejects,' she explains.

Mes points out that most design is focused on able-bodied heteronormativity. Because of this, part of the population, and their way of being, moving and living is not adequately supported. With her designs, Mes makes us aware of the prevailing status quo, while at the same time going against the norm and normalisation of this approach. She does this in a playful way, often supported by colourful designs. This makes her work inviting, allowing people to become acquainted with the issues she is raising.

'Most design is focused on able-bodied heteronormativity' 'By playing with a familiar visual language and using it in new ways, new stories and possibilities are created'. Mes also questions the significance of objects with her project 'A Queer Anthology – visual stories from a chosen family', which is not about the nuclear family of a father, a mother, a son and a daughter, but rather families composed of people who are not related by blood. 'They choose to live together and might have different types of connections and relationships, and live logically in a way that deviates from the heteronormative.' In the project, Mes collaborates with Queer People of Colour (QPOC) and people with a bicultural background. In five videos, using objects that represent them, the subjects are asked what their surroundings could look like and are invited to actually design a space where they can tell their story to viewers, on their own terms. By breaking down stereotypes and focusing on visibility and social acceptance, Mes is committed to making our living environment more accessible, particularly for racialised and queer bodies, free from heteronormative expectations.

'By playing with familiar visual language, new stories and possibilities are created'

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‘As a designer I try to show possibilities’

SEOK-HYEON YOON

Sustainability is paramount in the work of Seok-hyeon Yoon. Mankind must take care of his environment, but unfortunately, many industrial production processes and products do not follow this credo. Even if a product is natural by origin, it is often not circular, due to later processing in the production process. Ceramics are manufactured from a natural material (clay) and are therefore in principle reusable – fired clay can be incorporated into new clay as a chamotte. Ceramics however are glazed: ‘Because the two components, glaze and clay, fuse together in the kiln, it is impossible to separate them anymore and reuse the materials,’ says Yoon. He went in search of an alternative to glaze and found it in his own cultural heritage. Traditionally, in countries such as Korea, Japan and China, people use a resin from the lacquer tree to finish materials ranging from wood and metal to even paper. The resinous lacquer does not need to be fired at a high temperature, it adheres extremely well to a variety of surfaces and is heat and water resistant. In his materials research, Yoon discovered that this lacquer evaporates at very high temperatures. Only the earthenware surface then remains and is therefore recyclable. However, it is not yet a real alternative to glaze because of the labor-intensive process of harvesting and processing the resin and the high cost of this finishing technique. ‘I do find that frustrating sometimes,’ says Yoon. ‘As a designer, I try to show possibilities, but more often than not the business model becomes a challenge.’ At the same time, Yoon is aware that perhaps it is of great value to show the possibilities of thinking about materials and their use in a different, less conventional way.

‘Exploring the potential of materials,’ says Yoon, ‘that’s what’s most important to me.’ He is now also working on other alternatives to glazing – based on food waste, for example. Moreover, by having intensively studied ceramic production, Yoon now knows that porcelain actually does not need a glaze at all: ‘It is watertight by itself’. Such an insight opens up new avenues of thought. Yoon’s extensive research into ceramics and alternative finishing techniques will eventually be presented in a solo exhibition at Keramikmuseum Prinsessenhof.

‘Exploring the potential of materials, that’s what’s most important to me’

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"SOME **THINGS** YOU
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LISTEN TO AND THEY
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66

SHERIDA KUFFOUR

'[...] Indians and half-breeds. Absolute savages [...] no communication whatsoever with the civilized world. Still preserve their repulsive habits and customs.' This is how the 'Savages' are described in the dystopian classic *Brave New World* (1932) by the English author Aldous Huxley. For Sherida Kuffour, this work was the inspiration for her project *Brave New Lit*.

Kuffour moved to the United Kingdom from the Netherlands at a young age and learned the language by reading English literature. In her current practice as a graphic designer and writer, she is concerned with the question of what is the best way to deal with literature? Kuffour approaches this question not only as a reader but also as a designer and writer of text. 'The first time I read Huxley, I didn't like it one bit. I was struck by the stereotypical and colonial description of the Savages and, moreover, I had trouble with his literary style.' On a recent rereading of *Brave New World* and the accompanying foreword by Canadian author Margaret Atwood (known to most as the author of *The Handmaid's Tale*),

'The first time I read Huxley, I didn't like it one bit'

Kuffour noticed the influence of the paratext – the context of a text in the broadest sense – on the reception of the text. 'When I learned more about the time in which the work was written and the events in the author's personal life, my perception of the text changed', says Kuffour. This inspired her to design a literary playground; an online environment which should enable the most complete reading possible of a text. Text and paratext are present simultaneously and are enriched with images and audio, resulting in a multi-sensory reading experience. The reader is invited to continuously interact with the text, which is no longer a static entity to which one relates individually, but an organic meeting place. With her work, Kuffour raises crucial questions such as: what is reading? To whom is reading accessible? How can reading change from an individual and elitist activity – books are expensive! – into an inclusive, communal and multi-sensory experience?

'I want to make the reading of a text as complete as possible'

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'Inevitably Blue', 2019

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SOPHIA BULGAKOVA

Sophia Bulgakova studied sculpture in Kyiv, Ukraine, before studying photography and time-based media at the University of the Arts in London, followed by a BA in ArtScience at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague. In 2019 she graduated with the participatory performance *Inevitably Blue*, in which the viewer sits masked on a swing in the middle of space and is pushed back and forth by a performer. This approach to challenging the senses of perception and observation allows participants to experience the space based solely on colour and their thoughts. They temporarily feel what it is like to float through an environment that consists only of colour and space.

'Personalised perception and the way in which specific memories define individuals are central to my practice.' Her immersive works combine sensory deprivation and the stimuli of sensory experience. She investigates how you can understand yourself by relating to a particular environment and the corresponding impact of colour. During a residency in the summer of 2020, Bulgakova developed *MINDSCAPES*, an augmented reality filter for Instagram that depicts memories of places that are no longer accessible, such as the occupied zone in Kyiv. 'For this, I organised workshops with people from the area who shared their memories of different places.'

Bulgakova is currently researching paganism, magical ancient traditions and rituals from different cultures, and their relationship with contemporary technology. 'Being aware of the climate and nature underscores this research that investigates how technology connects to the natural world.' Through a combination of virtual reality, spoken word storytelling and performance, Bulgakova will create an interactive experience which explores the local traditions and rituals of the location where she exhibits the work. She will also work on the German coastline in collaboration with schools and scientists. This art project aims to raise awareness of climate conservation, bird migration and marine life in this area. 'My ambition is to continue this emphasis on collaboration through large-scale projects and productions with hybrid media. I will focus on both anthropological research and perceptive psychology. My origins and motivations keep pushing me to build bridges between Eastern Europe and the Netherlands.'

'I keep trying to build bridges between Eastern Europe and the Netherlands'

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'Perception and the way memories define individuals are important in my practice'



STEFANO MURGIA

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From a young age, sound artist Stefano Murgia enjoyed attending concerts. Due to his height however, he spent most of his time looking at the backs of the audience. 'That's one of the reasons why I started thinking about how music is presented and perceived,' says Stefano. After studying engineering, Murgia went on to pursue an ArtScience bachelor's at the Royal Academy of Art (KABK) in The Hague. He graduated in 2017 with an experimental research project titled *Acoustics Based on Volume: Aluminium*, a sound installation consisting of a cube, a sphere and a tetrahedron made of aluminium. Together, the objects form a new type of instrument – each with its own sound. With the help of electronics, the three shapes can be transformed into acoustic reverb chambers. After he graduated, the performative installation was exhibited throughout Europe at exhibitions and festivals such as the *Amsterdam Dance Event*, *Prototyp Festival* in Brno and *Spektrum* in Berlin.

Recently, Murgia has reflected on his way of working and, inspired by acoustics (the science of sound) has come up with a method for starting future projects. 'I use the order in which the sound arises from its source via the medium/route to the receiver as my starting point, and I repeatedly ask myself these questions: where and in what kind of space is this sound art located? And how does the audience perceive it?' After graduating, Murgia has continued to investigate acoustics and spatial compositions, using (among other things) homemade instruments and synthesizers.

Murgia is currently researching street canyons and sonic architecture, and the role that sound can play in them. Street canyons, also known as urban canyons, are places in a city where the wind is amplified by tall buildings in the surrounding area. Together with two scientists from TU Delft who specialise in architecture and aerodynamics, he is developing a new sculpture intended for a public space that focuses on the difference between wind and sound. 'The goal of this project is to make an unpleasant location with strong wind more pleasant by installing sound sculptures. Sound and wind are both movements of air; sound vibrates air, whereas wind relocates air.' This concept makes Murgia wonder how he can transform sound and wind into each other without losing energy. 'In the future, I dream of setting up a record label focused on sound art, as well as creating a physical place where people who are interested in sound can come together and experiment – from artists and philosophers to scientists.'

'How does the audience perceive sound?'

'Sound and wind are both movements of air'

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'Human Rainbow'

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SYDNEY RAHIMTOOLA

Sydney Rahimtoola is interested in ways in which we can work on (greater) social equality and a complete, continuous visual representation of marginalised groups. She approaches this topic using her background in photography and with the understanding that throughout history, this medium has had a problematic relationship with the politics of representation. She explains: 'As a medium, photography is complicit in constructing the image of 'the other'. There is little room for the personal history of communities of colour. It's precisely these personal histories however, folklore and personal mythologies that inform and provide representation that people of colour can relate to, and gives them a sense of history in which they can determine their own place.'

Using her personal experience, Rahimtoola investigates how structures within society influence her (living) environment and immediate family. She bases her research mainly on informal and unofficial knowledge that isn't available to everyone. It's a situation that's familiar to communities of colour – you have to know the right people to access information. She says: 'That's also an important reason why friends and family play a prominent role in my work. I make my work with and about them. This time, once again, my starting point is a personal narrative: my uncle's struggles with his mental health.'

Currently, she is specifically focusing on the psychedelic renaissance, i.e the use of psychedelics for personal well-being – including microdosing and cleansing rituals. 'The knowledge regarding the use of psychedelics often comes from indigenous or other communities of colour. However, it's now mainly being used for the well-being of white people and enriching the western world – the colonial, imperial and capitalist structures. That includes self-improvement and self-care to make life more pleasant; but the communities where this expertise originates often don't have the opportunity to benefit themselves. In fact, they barely have access to basic healthcare or other services that many people take for granted.' Rahimtoola is now working to find a suitable way to visualise the significance and far-reaching implications the psychedelic renaissance can have on society, its structures and her own family. It will include a film loosely inspired by her uncle's story.

'My starting point is a personal narrative'

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'As a medium, photography is complicit in constructing the image of "the other".'



THOM BINDELS

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'With one foot on the dredging boat and the other in the world of design', that's how research designer Thom Bindels describes his practice. After graduating, he put his energy into a foundation that aims to facilitate locally produced anti-erosion structures made of cardboard for developing countries. An enjoyable, but also rational and practical process. Now it's time for something new in addition to that ongoing project. 'I want to finally start playing again like I did in the academy. Is that possible? Can I earn money in this way? Would I be able to do a similar project that also adds value for myself?'

Bindel still focuses on the same subject: researching the human relationship with its environment. 'What I have actually discovered is that my field of work is always related to farming, to the agricultural sector, nature conservation or area management. Why is that? Maybe a kind of stewardship? It's a kind of sense of responsibility for your environment and how you relate to it.'

This year Bindels' interests led to the development of a location-based podcast. He collects the stories of people who have a connection to a particular landscape: because something is going to happen in the future that they are excited about, or just because of the history of a place or its ecological uniqueness. By letting others listen to their stories on the spot, Bindels aims to make more people feel an affinity with the location as according to him that's where the solution lies.

In addition to the stories, Bindels will mark the starting point of the sound walks with a landscape intervention, which he makes himself using ingredients that are present on-site.

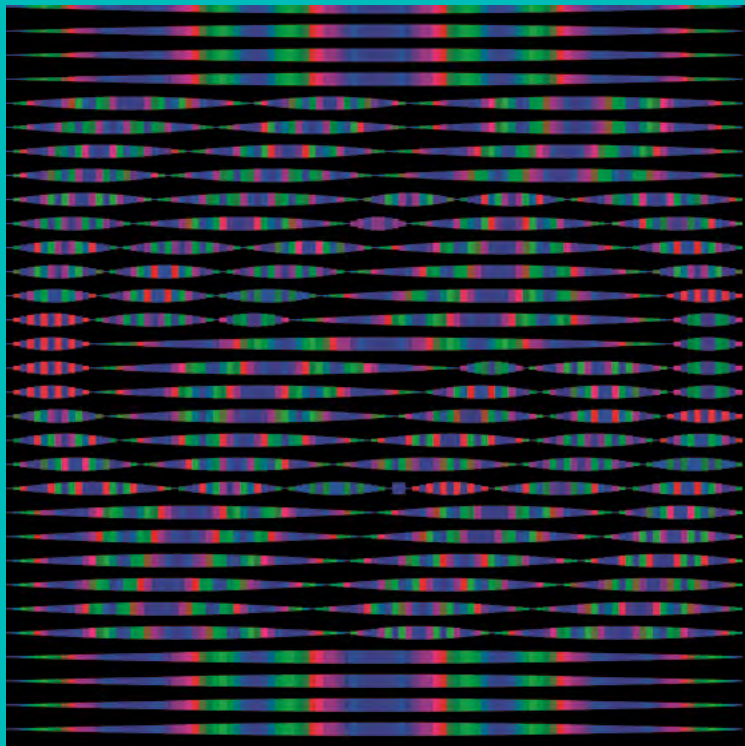
For example, a two-meter-high storage area for dredged-up silt in the shape of a beehive and constructed from reeds. For Bindels, this elevation in the landscape is also a welcome poetic interruption, a drop of variation in the monoculture of the flat polder. At the same time, it is a play on the typically Dutch engineering mentality: after all, everything around us is designed in the Netherlands, including nature.

This manufacturability is the core of his research. In which way can this be a force for good? What kind of impact are you able to make, and how do we learn to do this in symbiosis? These are big questions that he asks himself, but that is exactly what Bindels likes. If he knew the answer in advance, he wouldn't have to start.

'It's a kind of sense of responsibility for your environment and how you relate to it'

'What kind of impact are you able to make, and how do we learn to do this in symbiosis?'

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VERA VAN DE SEYP

As a creative coder and graphic designer, Vera van de Seyp moves between the digital domain and applied forms – from hacked knitting machines and generative artwork to modular fonts, homemade computers and playful websites. Openness, accessibility and knowledge sharing are important values in her practice. In 2016, Van de Seyp graduated from the Royal Academy of Art (KABK) in The Hague with a degree in Graphic Design. Her passion for computer science and artificial intelligence ensured she continued her education at Leiden University, where she completed a master's in Media Technology in 2020.

'For my graduation product, I researched how a generative agnostic network – a model in which two neural networks compete against each other to create new output – could be used to design album covers. I used a training dataset based on 150,000 existing album covers from the open-source community of Discogs, a music website. The result was a massive selection of hypnotic generative designs for non-existent albums.'

Based on her own experience with open-source platforms and code, where developers share information to build on the work of others, Van de Seyp wants to bring about change in her chosen field. For example, she is part of the Freelance Female Developers network, and recently co-organised a hackathon in cooperation with Creative Coding Utrecht. 'In my opinion, the creative sector is still a male-dominated world, especially when it comes to creative coding. By organising free online workshops for female-identifying and gender-nonconforming artists, designers and other interested parties, I'm hopefully lowering the barrier to entry, and offering a stepping stone into this sector.'

Completely in line with the philosophy of open-source technology – free access to source code for everyone – Van der Seyp both enters into collaborations and encourages them with her initiatives. 'I will publish all of the code I have written myself, including the do-it-yourself tutorials, online. I hope to make it an accessible place for new designers.' In the future, Van de Seyp wants to continue organising workshops and become part of the international creative coder and developer communities by participating in a residency or fellowship outside the Netherlands.

'I want to use open source to create change'

'In my opinion, the creative sector is still a male-dominated world'

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WES MAPES

Value and (re)evaluation play a central role in the practice of Wes Mapes. His visual language and use of materials have both a symbolic and metaphorical significance. With these materials, which often come from the construction sector, he references the fact that the entire world has been built by Black people. In the time of slavery, it was their work that provided Europe's wealth, they were the ones who built the New World, and in postcolonial times, their labor that was used to restart the economy. Recognition of this history falls dramatically short. It goes beyond just color – it also touches on contemporary class structures and socioeconomic status. Mapes explains: 'Consider how unequal work and working conditions are valued: blue-collar workers physically exerting themselves in uncomfortable conditions earn less than white-collar workers.'

'There's so much more to know than what is taught at school'

Mapes transforms the aesthetics of these circumstances (such as scaffolding) into installations that provide space for himself and others. He frequently collaborates with fellow artists. For example, he's part of the Pillars of Autumn collective (together with Tobi Balogun, Walter Götsch and Dion Rosina) and hosts a radio program together with Marcel van den Berg. Nothing happens alone – everything requires input from others, and this is how communities of like-minded individuals arise who help and support each other. Here there's also a reference to Black life, where families and communities are essential for survival.

With the building materials he uses, Mapes also wants to demonstrate that you can create something of value out of the most basic materials. It's an idea that goes back to how people all over the world manage to live in the most desolate conditions with minimal resources. 'My work is raw, rugged and scrappy,' he says. 'It's like soul food. You don't use the fanciest ingredients, but the end result is delicious. From an artistic perspective, I draw parallels in the use of materials and the attitudes of people like David Hammons, Mark Bradford, Jean Michel Basquiat and Sam Gilleam.'

Mapes also applies his approach, expertise, and way of being to an educational context. He regularly teaches at different departments of the Rietveld Academie. For example, with his *Deconstructivist Dumpster Dive* he introduced students to the value of reusing found materials and the inventiveness and creativity that requires. He also teaches them alternative interpretations of world history, taking a pan-African view that employs a different linearity and network of knowledge transfer. Origins and routes follow different paths, and there's so much more to know than what is taught at school.

'My work is raw, rugged and scrappy'

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COLOPHON

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What does it mean to be given the space to focus on artistic and professional growth for an entire year? Creative Industries Fund NL offers talented up-and-coming designers that very opportunity every year with the Talent Development Grant Programme.

With the Talent Platform, the Fund aims to give these design talents an extra boost in visibility. Get to know the 2021 recipients in this publication, and get an overview of all those supported in the past at talent.stimuleringsfonds.nl/en.

For more information about the Talent Development Grant Programme, visit stimuleringsfonds.nl.