



PRIX DE ROME

Jury Report Prix de Rome 2015

The Prix de Rome was introduced in 1808 by King Louis Napoleon as an incentive prize for young artists and architects. Since then the prize has undergone several revisions, but it remains the only Dutch national prize aimed at discovering and promoting young and talented artists. The prize also owes its importance to the fact that it allows for the production and presentation of new work by all the candidates selected by the jury for a five-month work period and an exhibition in the Appel arts centre.

The jury is very appreciative of the fact that the prize gives artists the opportunity to undertake new work. It was impressed by the four presentations that the nominees, in collaboration with their coaches and the team from the Appel arts centre, arranged and finished in an impeccable and professional manner. The jury also noted that the presentations, although completely different in set-up and elaboration, have in common that they all raise current social issues, while not immediately giving away their own position. They require time, attention, concentration and an open-minded attitude on the part of the viewer and, thanks to their multi-layered quality, continue to excite and challenge. As such, the output of this edition of the Prix de Rome mirrors the way art reflects on topical matters, as well as on the topicality of art.

The intelligent show by the Foundland Collective sketches various scenarios concerning the complex puzzle of the conflict in Syria, seen through the eyes of a recent refugee from Syria, the father of Foundland member Ghalia Elsrakbi, who, in his current home in Cairo absorbs and digests every scrap of information about his homeland. The jury admired the fresh, playful and bright presentation of a heavy and dark narrative through an effective use of elements from visual art, graphic design, popular culture and video clips. Foundland also managed to maintain a sense of ambiguity, so that visitors are unsure whether they are looking at a neutral or (politically) biased presentation.

In her performance, Hedwig Houben confronts an independent 'I' with 'the other' in the shape of a car made from plasticine. During the exhibition period several other performers will undergo the same confrontation. Houben thereby involves herself in a topical debate about identity and authenticity: everyone is unique, everyone is an artist, everything is art. The jury was touched by Houben's vulnerable position as performer, by the way she manages to combine the universal with the personal, and the precisely thought-out performance style. In addition, she creates a spectacular image that resonates, both physically and on film, and offers a wealth of layers.

Christian Nyampeta created a wonderful public interior: after the visitor has hung up her coat she can immerse herself in a video installation, study an open archive or simply go and work at a massive table. The jury was impressed by the rich world of ideas unfolded by Nyampeta, ranging from philosophy and architecture to mathematics and music. The ambitious show is a spirited offer to help explore the role that rhythm and harmony play in the design of our society, rather than defining that role for the visitor. In doing so, Nyampeta reveals his social engagement with a pressing issue.

Magali Reus presented five new works reminiscent of large inflated padlocks – alienating, beguiling and aloof at the same time. The striking combination of these everyday, but here quasi-anthropomorphic objects with the architecture of the space, helps the viewer to enter into a dialogue with it and to conquer the physical space. The jury was intrigued by the cryptic but beautiful idiosyncrasy of the objects: the references to digital reality remain fragmented and the mysterious materiality of the objects raises more questions than can be answered.

The high quality of the presentations, and the stimulating conversations the jury had with the artists while touring the exhibition, made the task of arriving at a final decision extremely complicated. In its deliberations, the jury considered not just the presentation of the newly produced work, but also its place in the artist's oeuvre to date, and its promise for the future.

Although all the nominees embraced experiment and all the presentations make one curious about what they will do next, there was one whose recent development made a deep impression on the jury. This artist is purposefully and collectedly pursuing a new course, making clear choices and translating them into a stimulating presentation that is simultaneously formal and personal and gradually opens up to the visitor.

The Prix de Rome 2015 is awarded to Magali Reus.

Pernille Albrethsen (freelance critic, author and curator)

Jan van de Pavert (artist and recipient of the 1987 award)

Beatrix Ruf (Director of Stedelijk Museum)

Francesco Stocchi (curator of modern and contemporary art at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen)

Roy Villevoeye (artist)

Birgit Donker, chair (Director of Mondriaan Fund)

Written by Joost Vrieler (Mondriaan Fund)