

## JURY REPORT BEST OF GRADUATES 2017

In this tenth edition of the Best of Graduates exhibition, Radek Vana and team Ron Mandos have once again strived to find the most exceptional talent from the many Dutch art academies and bring them together. Is it through the BOG exhibition that we are giving art professionals and enthusiasts another opportunity to explore the selected artists.

In the past decade, the triad of the University of the Arts Utrecht, the Gerrit Rietveld Academy Amsterdam and the Royal Academy of the Arts The Hague, seemed infeasible, however with the exception of the University of the Arts Utrecht, the graduating works in these academies were slightly less exciting as compared to previous years. Consequently, space has been created for the academies outside of these cities to take over. We would like to give special mention to the Rotterdam Willem de Kooning Academy, where artists are challenged to confront their own story with those in the world around them. A good and lively atmosphere prevails in ArteZ Arnhem. With the exception of the VAV- Moving image department at the Rietveld, this year there was surprisingly little video work on display. Compared to last year, the presentation of the academies were a little safer, the large scale, space-filling installation were an exception.

Whilst there was a surprising absence of current societal and global political themes, we have seen many works which represent an honest reflection of identity, individual lives and experiences. Within this, we have observed much reflection on the digital realm, works with various sources of imagery and questions of authorship, that in some cases has been left to computers.

Before we move on to the announcement of the Ron Mandos Young Blood Award, and the Public's Prize, we would like to bring attention to The Ron Mandos Photo Talent Award. This prize has been specially created in order to bring the winner's work to the Art Fair Unseen in September, offering a platform with international audience exposure.

The winner of The Ron Mandos Photo Talent Award 2017 makes carefully constructed photos that are both playful and ingenious, whilst simultaneously alienating and stimulating our perception with surrealistic undertones

The winner is Vytautas Kumža!

In the past 5 weeks, approximately 2500 people have voted for their favourite artist. With a large majority the winner of the Ron Mandos Public's Prize is Joris Strouken with 300 votes!

## RON MANDOS YOUNG BLOOD AWARD 2017

We greatly appreciate all the works of the 17 displayed artists who we were able to welcome during the Best of Graduates. A number of these we would like to give special mention to.

- Joris Strouken, who combines stretcher and canvas into one completed painting Personal Strouken employs space and format to dynamically illustrate personal subjects.
- Anouk van Zwieten prefers to paint on a large format, something that is not self-evident. Zwieten creates fragmented trails of our daily life, caught somewhere in-between figurative scenes and painterly gestures where brush strokes seem to indicate objects.
- In the pursuit of perfection Valentina Gal engages in a study of the sinister drive to find it. The world of inbred and top-trained dogs and their proud owners has been translated to a video and installation which is so perfect, that they almost disappear within it.
- Martin Brandt creates a world using objects that are both threatening and irresistible at the same time. The dirty beauty of the industrial material is laid bare, these effects are strengthened by the juxtaposition with innocent beauty. But how innocent can a rabbit from a garden centre be?
- Esmée van den Akker enjoys the sound of the word Einzelganger but has also made it tangible. The tension between playful, attractive and strangely unpleasant, because loneliness has an existential charge.

Ladies and gentlemen, the winner of the Ron Mandos Young Blood award 2017 is Martin Brandt!