



Jury Report Prix de Rome 2025

Starting in 2024, the Prix de Rome jury visited a large number of exhibitions in search of candidates for the Prix de Rome 2025. They particularly sought artists capable of giving fresh impetus to the visual arts within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, thereby contributing to the development of the field. The four nominees each received a production budget to create new work specifically for this exhibition. When determining the winner of the Prix de Rome Visual Arts 2025, the jury considers these new works alongside the artists' existing oeuvres.

The jury notes that each of the nominees has drawn on a personal sense of connectedness to explore different subjects. For some, this manifests as an engagement with formative pasts; for others, as a reflection on contemporary social dynamics. In their work, they offer nuanced perspectives on universal themes such as spirituality or postcolonial relations, or reveal new ways of looking at neglected narratives or histories.

Fiona Lutjenhuis presents an enchanting immersive installation featuring painted panels, a soundscape, a doll's house and a tear-off calendar, all centred on a fairy tale of her own invention about the cosmic interplay between the small and the infinite. Kevin Osepa offers a contemporary interpretation of the Ocho Dia mourning ritual through an installation filled with personal objects, handmade dolls and a film. With his minimalist installation composed of cotton bales, works on paper and documentation of his working process, Thierry Oussou probes how structures of dominance have arisen through colonial histories, as well as in labour processes in today's economy. Through her video installation and monumental sculpture, Buhlebezwe Siwani draws attention to the lack of historical awareness in the Netherlands regarding its deep-rooted colonial ties with South Africa.

The jury observes that the four nominees have produced work on an impressive scale and acknowledges the considerable effort they have invested. The result is an exceptionally vibrant edition of the Prix de Rome, with works rich in meticulously executed detail. The strong sense of movement in the works animates the exhibition space. The jury further notes that, despite the gravity of the themes addressed, there is a striking sense of freedom in how the artists approach their practice and how they position themselves in relation to art history: they move lightly through references, movements, materials and symbolism in ways that excite and inspire.

Fiona Lutjenhuis

The Shell of Life tells the fairy tale of the homeless snail (St)Eve. Through this narrative, Fiona Lutjenhuis weaves together the personal and the spiritual with a larger story about the universe and infinity. The installation showcases a distinctive, refined painterly approach, spanning multiple spatial dimensions, alongside sparkling texts in which fact and fiction intertwine. The jury notes that Lutjenhuis has created a magnificent installation: a bold gesture that convinces. It marks an intriguing shift in her practice: on the one hand, she is expanding her studio environment by entering into more collaborations; on the other, she is now articulating a broader story about her own inner world. Thanks in part to the self-penned fairy tale, she adds a rich new chapter to her own autobiography. The jury welcomes this development. Lutjenhuis' work remains recognizable and entirely original, yet this new direction gives it a fresh and daring continuation.

Kevin Osepa

Lusgarda explores individual and collective mourning, as well as the preservation of a tradition on the verge of fading away. Drawing on archival sources on Ocho Dia, Kevin Osepa has created an immersive experience that carries a kaleidoscope of layers of meaning. Some codes reveal themselves immediately, while others remain concealed. The jury believes that the inexplicable element is one of the work's greatest strengths. With his contemporary interpretation of Ocho Dia, Osepa has created a deeply personal work that simultaneously speaks to universal emotions surrounding grief and the erosion of traditions. The jury sees a work that is expansive, cohesive and dramatic. Through the use of everyday household objects, handmade dolls and a powerful film, the audience is drawn into an alternative reality. Osepa does not shy away from exuberant emotion or physicality.



Thierry Oussou

The Grain That Salted the Sea is an arresting installation that demands attention for the often-overlooked labour carried out in both Benin and in the Netherlands. The jury commends the optimism with which Thierry Oussou approaches his work, as well as his ambition to reach not only museum visitors but also audiences beyond the institution's walls. It also praises how Oussou weaves together a range of narratives while simultaneously making a monumental statement. Despite the risk that the abundance of diplomatic, social and art-historical references could blur the work's focus, the jury commends his strong sense of autonomy and personal conviction.

Buhlebezwe Siwani

The jury notes that *iNkanuko, 1652* is a multifaceted work that brings a range of voices to the fore concerning the deeply-rooted colonial ties between South Africa and the Netherlands. Buhlebezwe Siwani uses the symbol of the Dutch flag to guide the audience towards personal reflection on this history. She gives space to multiple speakers who invite us to confront the (post)colonial reality. The jury is struck by the contemplative and almost journalistic approach of the work, especially in relation to Siwani's earlier practice, and recognizes an opportunity for further exploration. The plurality of voices within the work, along with the doubt and nuance that emerges from them, prevents the piece from becoming didactic or one-sided. The jury notes that it is a courageous and powerful gesture that Siwani uses this platform to address this history explicitly, while at the same time allowing room for uncertainty regarding her own perspective.

Conclusion

The jury presents the Prix de Rome Visual Arts 2025 to Kevin Osepa for his overwhelming and moving installation. *Lusgarda* is a vibrant work that elevates both the recognizable and the concealed to a higher poetic level. The jury sees an artist with a highly distinctive visual language who has developed rapidly in both terms of narrative and expression, and continues to surpass himself. In *Lusgarda*, all elements intertwine. Like a director, the artist empowers his collaborators, revalues a culture, and simultaneously delivers a work of great technical refinement while remaining true to his own narrative. The jury believes that with this work, and his strongly developed oeuvre, Osepa can stand alongside artists of international stature and represents a major promise for the future.

The jury for the Prix de Rome Visual Arts 2025 comprises Colin Huizing (Director of the Chabot Museum), Imara Limon (Chief Curator at the Amsterdam Museum), Rita Ouédraogo (co-founder and Curator at Buro Stedelijk, researcher and writer), Wilma Sütö (Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Dordrechts Museum), Joep Vossebeld (Curator at Odapark Venray and writer) and Eelco van der Lingen (Director of the Mondriaan Fonds) as Chair. Because Rita Ouédraogo is presenting a project together with Kevin Osepa at Buro Stedelijk concurrently with the Prix de Rome 2025 exhibition, she did not participate in the final assessment.