

Kunstinstituut Melly

PRESS RELEASE

Press Release - 27 November 2025

Kunstinstituut Melly announces the Winners of The MELLyS, the Award Celebration honoring art's unseen heroes: Kees Reedijk, Gigi Kraan and The Niteshop (Malique Mohamud)



Kunstinstituut Melly held the inaugural edition of **The MELLyS**, an awards celebration recognizing the often-unseen contributors whose labor, vision, and dedication sustain the arts ecosystem.

Created as part of Kunstinstituut Melly's **35th anniversary** and supported by **Mondriaan Fonds**, **Stichting Stokroos**, and **Erasmusstichting Rotterdam**. Each award carries a **€25,000 prize**, acknowledging three recipients whose craft, documentation, and cultural leadership shape artistic life in Rotterdam and across the Netherlands.

During the celebration, the following winners were announced:

Kees Reedijk received *the Maker Behind the Maker Award* for over two decades of transformative technical collaboration, designing innovative electronic and multimedia systems while providing generous mentorship to artists across the Netherlands.

The *Behind the Lens Award* went to **Gigi Kraan**, whose community-embedded photographic practice advances representation, equity, and self-led storytelling, redefining authorship and the role of the camera as a tool for social change.

The Visionary 010 Award recognized **Malique Mohamud (The Niteshop)** for pioneering a community-driven, migrant-centered vision of Rotterdam's future, using design, research, and street-level knowledge to reshape cultural narratives both on the ground and online.

Proceeds from *The MELLyS* supported Kunstinstituut Melly's 2026 program, including a major retrospective of Moshekwa Langa, ensuring the continuation of socially engaged and experimental art practices.

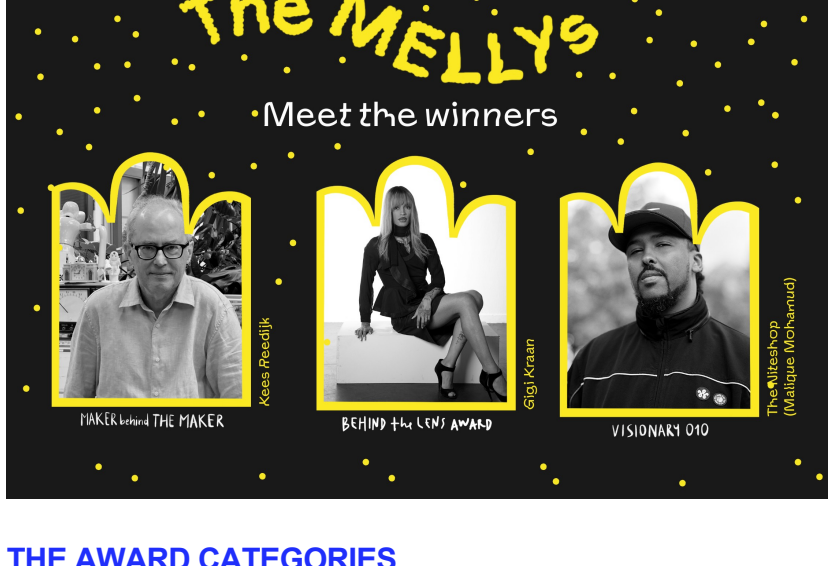
[Learn more about the Winners!](#)



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THE AWARD CATEGORIES

Maker Behind the Maker Award - Winner: Kees Reedijk



Jury: Amira Gad, Charly van Rest, Ron Bernstein
Nominees: Egberth Thomas (InnaVisions), Kees Reedijk, Albert Seubring, Ivo van Stiphout, Victoria Zynwala, Van Tetterode Studio, Clim Schots, Oded Rimon, Nell Donkers, Hannah Rose Whittle, Niels de Bakker, Maya Berkhof, Sotiris de Wit

Initiated by **Mondriaan Fonds** and **awarded 4 times** in the past, this category honors the craftspeople, technicians, and producers who make artistic visions possible.

Kees Reedijk received **the Maker Behind the Maker Award** for over two decades of innovative technical collaboration with artists across the Netherlands, designing custom electronics, software, and multimedia systems that expand the possibilities of installation and media art. Trained in electrical engineering and shaped by work in broadcast studios and at the Rijksakademie, he is equally recognized for his mentorship, generosity, and deep commitment to supporting artistic processes.

The jury highlighted the often-unseen care and expertise that craft-based practitioners bring to the arts and selected Reedijk for his exceptional impact and the community he has nurtured through years of guidance. His recognition is especially meaningful at a time when mentorship and knowledge-sharing in the arts are increasingly undervalued, underscoring the vital role he plays in sustaining the creative ecosystem.

Behind the Lens Award (formerly the Berry Koedam Award) - Winner: Gigi Kraan



Jury: Femke Rotteveel, Marieke Wiegel, Matthew Antezzo
Nominees: Maarten Nauw, Jari Nuno, Chris Becher, Naema Khalif, Gigi Kraan

Formerly **the Berry Koedam Award** and **given 4 times**, this award recognizes photographers and imagemakers whose work documents, shapes, and expands cultural visibility.

Gigi Kraan received **the Behind the Lens Award** for her photographic and multidisciplinary work centered on identity, heritage, and representation. Her nationally recognized projects, including *It Means Everything Because This Is Who I Am*, are created from within the communities she documents, amplifying underrepresented voices and fostering space for self-defined storytelling.

The jury praised her socially engaged, participatory approach, noting how she challenges traditional authorship and transforms photography into a collaborative, empowering practice. By blending art and activism and working in close dialogue with communities, Kraan redefines what it means to work "behind" the camera today.

Visionary 010 Award - Winner: Malique Mohamud (The Niteshop)



Jury: Saskia van Stein, Aruna Vermeulen, Joel Ferdinandus
Nominees: Kamel Verschuren, Virgil Moreno, Jeanne van Heeswijk, Ash Kilmartin, Lukas Simonis, Sharine Rijsenburg, Suze van Bohemen, Chery Salinas, Leana Boven, Samantha Rodrigues, Malique Mohamud & Nacor Martina / The Niteshop

This category, **awarded twice before**, celebrates transformative cultural leadership rooted in the city's communities and creative futures in Rotterdam. **This year "010" was added** to the title to give emphasis to the focus in the Zuid-Holland capital.

The Niteshop, founded by designer and Hip Hop futurist **Malique Mohamud**, received **the Visionary 010 Award** for redefining how migrant culture shapes Rotterdam's future. As a hybrid design and research platform, it turns lived experience and street-level knowledge into tools for city-making through its Schiedamseweg space, community programs, and sharp online presence that makes complex issues accessible.

The jury praised The Niteshop's belief that culture emerges from the neighborhood outward, empowering young and marginalized communities to define the city. Rejecting tokenism, the collective centers migrant culture within Dutch identity, fostering a space where creativity and community meet without hierarchy. Their "street-slang pedagogies" and Cultural Currency Conference reflect a bold commitment to imagining a postcolonial, super-diverse Rotterdam.

ABOUT THE MELLyS AWARD CELEBRATION

The MELLyS reaffirm Kunstinstituut Melly's commitment to championing emerging, underrecognized, and community-centered cultural practices, while honoring the people whose behind-the-scenes labor helps define the Netherlands' artistic landscape.

The evening started within Riet Wijnen's Suitcase Economy and afterwards unfolded with scenography by Loui Meeuwissen, performances by donna Kukama and the Unemployed Airhostesses, a DJ set by Jollyfish during dinner, and moderation by Evita de Roode. This event was possible thanks to the support of Bobby's Gin.

The Physical Awards were designed and created by artist Jabu Arnell. Arnell's practice is marked by experimentation with found materials and dialogic gatherings which unfold as an open research studio.

ABOUT KUNSTINSTITUUT MELLY

Kunstinstituut Melly is Rotterdam's contemporary art and knowledge-sharing institution. Since its founding in 1990, the institution has been committed to presenting and commissioning thought-provoking exhibitions, public programs, and educational initiatives. With a focus on emerging and underrepresented practices, Kunstinstituut Melly provides a vital platform for dialogue and artistic experimentation, rooted in the cultural and social fabric of Rotterdam and connected to international developments.

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Wednesday – Sunday: 11:00 – 18:00
Friday (during Kunstavond): until 21:00

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