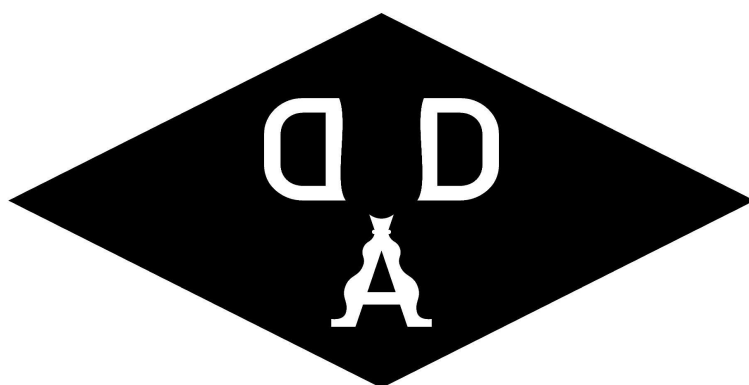




JURY REPORT DDA 2025

***EMERGING TALENT
AWARD***

The Class of 2025: Building the Future of Dutch Design, Together

Dutch Design Awards entered a new chapter-one that embraces a broader, more dynamic view of what design can achieve.

With the Emerging Talent Award, DDA reaffirms that design in the Netherlands is not a fixed discipline but a living ecosystem: one that grows through exchange, reflection, and shared responsibility.

For DDA25, nominations came directly from the wider design community. The open nomination reflects the importance of passing the baton. Dutch designers should continue to see each other, support each other, and keep doors open. Design in the Netherlands thrives through collaboration and mutual recognition.

The Jury: Leading Voices in Design

From these nominations, a jury of leading figures across the Dutch design field gathered to select a group that reflects both the diversity and depth of today's creative practice.

Chaired by Borre Akkersdijk, the DDA25 jury evaluated the work of emerging designers who stand out for their vision, social engagement, or multidisciplinary approach.

Borre Akkersdijk — Jury Chair / Textile Innovator

Textile innovator and founder of BYBORRE®, shaping the dialogue on material, sustainability, and design.

Samir Bantal — Architecture & Society

Architect and director at AMO/OMA, working at the intersection of spatial design, community, and technology.

Sabine Marcelis & Paul Cournet — Design & Architecture (duo)

Artist and designer Sabine Marcelis will be in the jury panel together with her partner Paul Cournet, who is an architect and founder of CLOUD, a multidisciplinary practice working in architecture, research and design.

Johan Kramer — Film & Advertising

Film & advertisement director at Holy Fools, director and co-founder of KesselsKramer, known for socially driven storytelling and cultural impact.

Nathalie van Sasse van Ysselt — Digital Design & Innovation

Creative director based in Los Angeles, specialising in innovative and immersive design, involved with projects such as the Sphere in Las Vegas.

Guillaume Schmidt — Culture & Lifestyle

Co-founder of lifestyle brand Patta, internationally recognised for cultural influence and social engagement.

From all nominees, 15 emerging talents were awarded to an outstanding group of designers and creatives rewriting the rules: an expanded breadth of nominations that show very different directions for the field, and affirms the importance that they get to know each other.

Design as Collective Intelligence

This year's fifteen nominees — the *Class of 2025* — represent a generation of designers who no longer wait for change, they build it. Their practices span storytelling, material research, performance, digital culture, and biological innovation. Yet beyond their differences, the jury saw a shared principle: design as a form of collective intelligence.

They connect disciplines rather than define them. Their work shows how design thinking operates far beyond products: it speaks to systems, to responsibility, and to the way we live together.

As one juror put it: "They're already making change. We're here to amplify what they're doing well."

Design, Activism, and Agency

Across the selection, there's a healthy friction between design and activism. Designers are using their voice to critique systems, build alternatives, and care for communities. Some do this playfully; others poetically.

The jury noted that creativity itself becomes a form of activism: a way to intervene, not just interpret. "Dutch design can be more than just chairs," one juror observed. "It can speak up, open space, and build what's missing."

This is a generation unafraid of complexity. They operate with empathy and clarity; often translating years of research into accessible, human expressions. What earlier generations proposed as provocation, they now implement as method.

Community and Care

Another central theme was community. Many nominees operate as collectives, reclaiming autonomy through shared authorship.

Working together: Whether transforming derelict spaces into cultural laboratories or rethinking how creative work circulates, these designers show that the future of design is plural.

"It's powerful to see people use design to push communities," one juror noted. "Taking over spaces, doing things together, and opening it up; that's where change begins."

Here, collaboration is not a trend but a condition for survival, and for joy. The DDA25 jury recognized this spirit as central to the resilience of Dutch design.

Cross-Pollination and Continuity

The nominees also reflect a long-standing strength of Dutch design: cross-pollination.

In their practices, ideas that have been in motion for years reach new maturity. Experimentation becomes application. Innovation is not only radical but responsible, and where vision is paired with execution.

These designers are shaping a design culture of continuity, one that values care, consistency, and connection over disruption for its own sake.

Class of 2025

Together, these themes come to life through the fifteen designers who form the *Class of 2025*—each offering a different lens on what design can do today.

Amir Zaza

Amir Zaza is a writer and director who skillfully blends personal history with pressing social themes, all with a sharp eye. He is a skilled storyteller who uses his voice to address urgent topics.

Having been trained at the Netherlands Film Academy, Zaza crafts cinematic narratives that immerse the audience in human-centred storytelling, poignant and relevant to the times we are living in.

Through his work, Zaza expands the scope of Dutch design, showing how the use of narrative, empathy, and creativity has the potential to reshape the world we live in.

“People telling the right stories, taking the right stage: that is really important. And Amir is definitely doing that.” - Borre Akkersdijk

Bas Emaus

Bas Emaus is co-founder of JiTiBa, a start-up developing algae-based wastewater treatment systems. Showcasing the potential of biological systems in sustainable urban infrastructure, they’re developing new technology using gel balls with microalgae to purify sewage sludge while recovering valuable resources. It could significantly reduce water pollution in the Netherlands.

As a start-up, JiTiBa Algae Technologies embodies design thinking to approach a non-visible problem that is crucial to the Netherlands. Doing the hard work of getting out of academia and into the real world, they aim to transform waste streams into regenerative solutions.

Emaus illustrates how design in the Netherlands increasingly operates across disciplines — connecting engineering, biology and social innovation to address systemic environmental challenges. With a background in Biomedical Laboratory Research / Biotechnology from HAN University of Applied Sciences, he combines circular biotechnology with environmental design impact.

“True innovation: it is an intriguing yet functional aspect of how to work with natural material to clean the environment, and how design thinking can approach that.” - Nathalie van Sasse van Ysselst.

Espace Aygo

Espace Aygo has created an experimental hub dedicated to creativity: the collective of young artists and designers has repurposed a derelict building in Brussels, from where they operate at a crossroads between design, architecture, and everyday life.

Both roommates and studio-mates, they give shape to everything that surrounds them in a radical collective and domestic experiment. Their space is constantly evolving—entirely DIY, with a raw edge and youthful spirit that defines their work. Together, they create their own whimsical world and are not afraid to stand out.

Through their collaborative practice and focus on community, they demonstrate the power of collectivity and social infrastructure to push the discipline forward.

“Their energy is something we have seen before in the past, but never like that.” - Paul Courmet

Fons de Haan

Fons de Haan is an independent visual artist and filmmaker whose layered aesthetic and experimental style bridge multiple mediums. Moving across experimental video, digital imagery, and performance, he creates atmospheric compositions that shape how a new generation experiences visual culture.

Working with musical artists such as Joost Klein and major festivals as Radius, De Haan operates at the intersection of visual art, design, and product. Behind the stage, he orchestrates the imagery, direction, and visual rhythms that define the worlds around these artists.

De Haan’s work does more than play with pop aesthetics—it reframes them. By independently connecting creative fields with intuition, precision, and cultural sensitivity, he influences a generation in ways that corporate studios often attempt but rarely achieve.

“It’s more than aesthetics. His work impacts popular culture, and influences a whole generation.” - Borre Akkersdijk

Hussein Shikha

Hussein Shikha combines digital fabrication and traditional techniques, reinterpreting Southern Iraqi carpets through ornamental geometric patterns and modern iconography. Iraqi and pop culture motifs are embedded in the works, as codes that link traditions to digital connections.

An artist, designer, writer, and researcher, Shikha uses textiles as a medium. It’s almost hard to distinguish whether they are ancient, modern, or futuristic. While referencing classical patterns, they used them to think about what’s happening right now. The diasporic narratives and symbolism spark interest and curiosity, decoding how artifacts acquire new meanings as they move across cultures, yet retain a life containing heritage, memory and community.

"If you know where you come from , you know where you are going." -Guillaume 'Gee' Schmidt

Johanna Seelemann

Johanna Seelemann uncovers the hidden narratives in everyday materials and products. Her work reframes everything non-human—materials, production systems, and ecological cycles—as part of design's broader ecosystem.

Whether crafting compostable furniture from agricultural by-products or developing low-tech irrigation systems for urban trees, Seelemann's work proposes nature-centric and material conscious design methods that benefit the planet rather than brands or markets.

By critically studying materials and their contexts, she bridges research-driven design with idealistic purpose—redefining how we design not just for people, but with the world around us. Her sensitivity to seasonality, change, and decay challenges design's traditional timelines and invites a more regenerative approach.

"A very genuine connection with material knowledge shows her ability to understand the power of design and use it." - Samir Bantal

Joone Joonam

Joone Joonam is an Amsterdam-based label blending cultural memory and sartorial precision into contemporary garment-making. Their outspoken pieces reinterpret historical costume through craft and modern technique, featuring a handcrafted signature seaming that unites culture, history, and expression.

Highlighting overlooked aspects of daily wear, Joone Joonam breathes new life into discarded materials through a critical and poetic approach to heritage. Each collection emerges from deep research, translating historical references into contemporary forms that both honour tradition and embed subtle critique in design "glitches."

With over a decade of experience in the fashion industry, Joone Joonam is now shaping their own collections with uncompromising authenticity—a practice rooted in persistence, love for the craft, and a belief in the emotional power of making.

"Clear talent and craftsmanship: there's instinct and memory, composition and playfulness. And the perseverance of someone who does it out of love." - Borre Akkersdijk

Kurina Sohn

Kurina Sohn blends AI, soft robotics, digital fabrication, and craft heritage to explore realms that transcend the ordinary—from deep-sea lifeforms to brainwaves in meditative states and speculative realities. A multidisciplinary designer and artistic researcher, Sohn moves fluidly between mediums and disciplines, fascinated by the limits of human perception and the possibilities of emerging technologies.

Her sculptures and immersive installations combine scientific precision with poetic imagination, offering fluid and inclusive interpretations of modern realities. Grounded in research, her work bridges new technologies and cultural understanding.

Beyond her solo practice, Sohn co-founded NeeNee Collective (2020), a fluid Asian collective in the collectible-design scene that creates space for shared creativity, dialogue, and cultural exchange through self-initiated exhibitions at Dutch Design Week, Collectible Brussels, and Het Nieuwe Instituut Rotterdam. Together, they imagine a design culture grounded in collaboration and care.

“Embracing the un- known... a vast landscape of possibilities—needs people with vision and taste, and, most importantly, a bigger cause to spark curiosity.” - Guillaume 'Gee' Schmidt

Nanno Simonis

Nanno Simonis is a sonic and visual artist exploring artificiality, distortion, and altered perception through sound, light, and material interplay. His kinetic installations oscillate between calm and unease, creating encounters with elemental presences through movement, water, and reflection.

His practice probes the shifting nature of perception—concealed in systems that appear simple but reveal meticulous craft and complexity. By blurring the boundaries between physical and digital experience, Simonis redefines how we perceive space, rhythm, and sensory depth.

Simonis represents a new generation of designers translating material experimentation into poetic experience, expanding the scope of Dutch design toward the intangible and the sensory with great execution.

“Really one of those designers who make me wonder what they do next.” - Sabine Marcelis

Plasticiet (winners)

Plasticiet is a Dutch design and material brand that bridges material innovation and circular design, reimagining waste as durable, expressive, and valuable matter for interiors and architecture. Founded by Marten van Middelkoop and Joost Dingemans, they transform plastic waste into solid surface materials, furniture, and artistic objects with strong sensorial qualities.

Their recycled surface boards—marble-like, resin-like, and richly textured—are handcrafted to a level that demonstrates waste’s potential as a high-end design material. Through painstaking trial and error, Plasticiet achieves consistency and quality that set them apart, creating something precious from recycled sources—materials sought after by legacy brands for far more than sustainability claims.

“A beautiful example of Dutch innovation with an international reach.” - Paul Cournet

Jury statement: “Plasticiet takes something that many people in the discipline do, and raise the bar: they really create something precious from recycled sources. As material innovation, it has enormous creative and commercial potential.”

Sho Ota

Sho Ota is a designer who engages in deep dialogue with material. A former furniture-maker in Japan, he blends craftsmanship and modern design principles with precision, exploring wood grain, texture, and unpolished surfaces in collectible furniture.

Craftsmanship is something to cherish. In a design scene driven by constant innovation, Ota stands apart for his profound material understanding—carving volumes and textures to reveal the natural knots within. His craftsmanship slows time while keeping a keen eye on the future, offering an approach to design that feels both traditional and timelessly new.

“In a world where we go so quickly and make material choices on the sketch, Sho really has a dialogue with the material. He is shaping up to become a future classic.” - Paul Cournet

Studio Futurall

With Studio Futurall, Eva Oosterlaken & Finn Strivens imagine equitable futures together with organisations and communities. They create participatory tools and design experiences that empower citizens, using collective imagination to navigate complex systems. Working from Rotterdam and London expands their possibilities by connecting with diverse communities.

Their studio takes a strong social approach, weaving systems thinking and storytelling into experimental scenarios that explore community agency and change in playful yet actionable ways. Representing a generation focused on empowerment, they carry the voices of the communities they work with empathy—translating inspiration into actual change.

“I’m a fan of their approach to Collective Imagination: it’s all about collaboration, and using design to discover and to do good.” - Johan Kramer

Théophile Blandet

Théophile Blandet bridges craftsmanship and industrial technique, transforming everyday materials into surreal, narrative objects. Innovating through research on materials and production methods, he achieves results that make one wonder what’s really going on. By clashing the precise logic of engineering and production with curiosity, popular culture, and craft, his objects become gateways to material and immaterial futures.

The Rotterdam-based artist-designer exists outside conventional design categories. Both measured and highly experimental, he draws from functionality, abstraction, industry, craft, and culture. Under his hand, materials undergo metamorphosis—challenging expectations and transforming in unexpected, expressive ways.

“There’s nothing quite like his work—it truly triggers something.” - Borre Akkersdijk

Vera van der Burg (winner)

Vera van der Burg is a designer and researcher exploring AI as a tool for self-reflection and creative inquiry. Her work interrogates subjectivity, emotion, and the possibility of slow, intimate modes of machine learning.

Merging design, philosophy, and anthropology, van der Burg uses AI to question what technology means for human experience—turning design into a mirror for introspection. A PhD candidate at TU Delft’s Designing Intelligence Lab, her practice is both personal and universal, using design to tell stories about technology, self-exploration, and their potential to shape the world we live in for the better.

“Blending different backgrounds, not only design, she understands the power and effect of AI on design.” - Samir Bantal

Jury statement: “In a time when technology advances faster than we can comprehend, Vera van der Burg challenges our surrender to it. She highlights what AI reveals about our own self-reflection—reminding us not to let the digital world define who we are.”

Willem de Haan (winner)

Willem de Haan is a Dutch artist whose sculptural interventions reframe public spaces through uncanny props and scenarios. By inserting artificial elements into familiar settings, he humorously exposes the fragility of social systems, memory, and collective imagination.

De Haan’s work merges humour and critique with a strong sense of storytelling—balancing sweetness, irony, and deep reflection with powerful execution. Through the range of his work, he plays with historic and future narratives, building on them critically. His practice reveals how humour can act as a disarming yet potent language for addressing pressing issues such as climate change and cultural identity.

“Humour is a way in: it is a diplomatic language for design, that gives enjoyment to people, yet can be super critical. This is present in his work, whether it’s a critique of society, climate change or something else.” - Samir Bantal

Jury statement: “Willem de Haan has an extensive range, and the capacity to convey the message he puts forward effectively and disarmingly. De Haan carries on brilliantly the tradition associated with Dutch design, characterised by a strong artistic view and an idea that can be critical, and humorous, coming together with a great craft.”

Future-Makers of 2025

From this year’s Class of 2025, the jury selected three winners who embody the breadth of Dutch design today. Vera van der Burg, Willem de Haan, and Marten van Middelkoop & Joost Dingemans of Plasticiet were honoured during the Dutch Design Awards ceremony on Saturday, 18 October, presented by Jury Chair Borre Akkersdijk.

Together, they represent three distinct frontiers of design: from material innovation and spatial storytelling to the poetic use of artificial intelligence.

“Among an outstanding group of nominees, these three stand out in their fields,” Akkersdijk reflected. “Each brings versatility, pushing their own limits and those of design itself. They’re makers who keep challenging themselves to create remarkable work, and there’s no doubt they’ll continue to surprise us.”

Each award comes with a €10,000 prize and a tailored talent-development programme, an investment in the next chapter of their practice, and in the evolving story of Dutch design.

The Platform, Not the Podium

The jury approached the Emerging Talent Award not as a competition, but as a platform for access and exchange. As Jury Chair Borre Akkersdijk explained:

“It’s not only about recognition or cash — though that can make all the difference — but about creating a network. A step into Dutch design’s professional ecosystem, and a chance to build a healthier foundation for emerging talent.”

This spirit of openness reshapes what the award stands for. Through the Class of 2025, DDA is building a living platform that invites dialogue between generations, between designers and institutions, and across disciplines. Recognition becomes the beginning, not the end, to create a healthy ecosystem for emerging talent.

Workshops, mentorship, and exposure create continuity. This is not a prize that ends at the stage, but a step into a shared future for the discipline.

Evolving the Field

If past decades were defined by experimentation, DDA25 builds on that spirit of care, consistency, and connection, deepening what Dutch design has long stood for. Many of the conversations shaping design today (circularity, digital ethics, cultural identity, ecological repair) have long histories. This new generation advances them with renewed clarity and care.

The jury reflected that the question “*What is design?*” has never been more open. What’s certain is that it can keep strengthening through contact with other disciplines as it repositions.

A Living Legacy

The DDA25 Emerging Talent cohort stands as both reflection and projection: a portrait of design today, and a proposition for what comes next. They show that the Dutch design ethos, critical, curious, and collaborative, remains alive and constantly evolving.

Through them, Dutch design’s legacy becomes a living system: one that questions itself, opens doors for others, and insists that the design of the future must also design the conditions for it to exist.

With this edition, DDA also looks ahead: toward a more connected and open design community in the Netherlands, where generations continue to inspire one another. Emerging talent is not only about newcomers, but also about designers who keep reinventing themselves throughout their careers. Sometimes for the first time, sometimes again and again.

DDA stands for *emerging design*: a platform for those who dare to evolve, to build bridges, and to keep the conversation about design alive and moving forward. “*We’re here to amplify what they’re already doing well — and to keep the conversation moving.*”