

**Nam June Paik Award 2018 - International Media Art Award
of the Arts Foundation North Rhine-Westphalia**

**Andreas Angelidakis, Melanie Bonajo, Antoine Catala,
Hanne Lippard, Sondra Perry
November 10, 2018 – February 3, 2019**

This year, the Kunststiftung NRW is presenting its international media art prize – the Nam June Paik Award – for the ninth time. The Nam June Paik Award specifically honours artists that push boundaries, bridge cultural divides and are transdisciplinary in approach, very much in the spirit of Nam June Paik's pioneering practice. Staged every two years, the competition takes place in conjunction with a designated art institution in North Rhine-Westphalia. As the first Kunstverein in the award's history, the Westfälischer Kunstverein has been selected as project partner and will host the exhibition featuring the five nominated artists.

The nominees have been selected by a panel of experts comprising Kristina Scepanski, Director of the Westfälischer Kunstverein, Hanne Mugaas, Director of the Kunsthall Stavanger in Norway and Anne-Claire Schmitz, founding director of La Loge in Brussels.

The nominees are **Andreas Angelidakis** (b. 1968, GR, lives in Athens), **Melanie Bonajo** (b. 1978, NL, lives in Amsterdam), **Antoine Catala** (b. 1975, F, lives in New York), **Hanne Lippard** (b. 1984, GB, lives in Berlin) and **Sondra Perry** (b. 1986, US, lives in New York).

The Nam June Paik Award includes prize money of 25,000 Euro and will be awarded on 9 November on site in Münster by an international panel of judges comprising Karen Archey, Curator of Contemporary Art and Time-based media, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Mark Beasley, Curator of Media and Performance, Hirshhorn Museum, Washington; Mélanie Bouteloup, Director Bétonsalon – Center for Art and Research, Paris; Katerina Gregos, Curator and writer, Brussels; and Krist Gruijthuijzen, Director, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin.

Parallel at Galerie der Gegenwart:

Tamaki Watanabe and Walter Zurborg
„idle_listening“

Winner Nam June Paik Award National 2016

More information: namjunepaikaward.org

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Nam June Paik Award in cooperation with

**Westfälischer
Kunstverein**

Hanne Lippard's (b. 1984, GB/NO) highly subtle, precise performances and installations utilise the human voice, sound and elegant, poetic texts to great effect. She has placed six black loudspeakers on stands in the foyer of the Westfälischer Kunstverein against the backdrop of its floor-to-ceiling display windows. The speakers project the sound of a female voice – that of the artist herself – either alternately or in synch. Following the sound of the voice, the path leads unerringly into the midst of the speakers. Individual phrases are not tied to a given speaker; they jump about randomly in a circle, sometimes coming from here, sometimes from there. We find ourselves listening to a calm, sonorous, serious voice enunciating a string of evidently free-form, associative thoughts, whereby the speaker hypnotically reiterates what is clearly a key question: “what is a body?” At first, this feels like an essential philosophical question. However, the question is actually probing for a definition of the body, indeed, it is a much more straightforward one about substance and matter. And then we hear a number of suggestions in answer to the question, which in turn refute this seemingly more simple question, transforming it into a game of poetic, intellectual and linguistic formulas. So what is a body (if anything) “... but skin and bones”, “... bits of flesh”, “... but melting butter in the sun of a life long living”, “... but a being of surprises”. This question and answer drill toward the formulation of a philosophical definition dissolves into a serious linguistic game inscribed with personal experience, feelings, perceptions. Yes, a body is more than the sum of skin and bones, bits of flesh. The disembodied speech act issuing from the loudspeakers also throws up various questions for the listeners: where is the body that belongs to the voice? Where does this litany of sentences come from and who is being addressed? Here, too, the very thing absent from the equation is the body. And thus we are drawn into an associative game, which tosses the one-sided questions regarding the body back in our direction. Inasmuch as we are physically right in the middle of the action, we are simultaneously outside it: in front of the window on the outside, the hustle and bustle of everyday city life continues unabated. Lots of different people, i.e. bodies, are moving around in close proximity to us along the pavement, separated only by the windows. Random passersby involuntarily become part of the narrative, they become the viewers' “body”-study objects and, conversely, surrounded by the loudspeaker “mannequins”, we too are on show. Brightly illuminated, we are clearly visible in the foyer as though on display in a kind of shop window for all to see. Heard only by us and not the people (bodies) outside, the disembodied voice is unrelenting. But what is a body? It is essential, the thing that matters – existentially, not virtually. Whilst language rolls forth from the speakers and we are locked in the land of the utterance, we are suddenly confronted by it graphically in the form of a text on the opposite window. Written in capital letters, we read “OUI EU AND EVERYONE WE NO”. When read phonetically, this apparent gibberish immediately makes sense: “we, you and everyone we know”. Here we have a string of personal pronouns – and with them, addressees. And there's simply nowhere to hide when the insistent voice harangues us with its relentless barrage of questions from the speakers: “who will be saved, who will be chosen, who will be sunken, drowned, forgotten”? Pause. Silence.

Do we still need to ask why “what is a body?” is a question of life and death that affects us all?

Antoine Catala (b. 1975, F) is interested in forms of human communication, the relationship between words, images and objects, as well as the changes that these conventions have undergone as a result of new technology and attendant modes of communication. Catala has devised a life-size, walkable rebus for the exhibition at the Westfälischer Kunstverein. Whereas Internet search engines generate an endless stream of images for a particular search item, the classical rebus operates according to the opposite principle: one picture is assigned to a word. Catala uses this to demonstrate the fragility of these attributions of word and picture and thus meanings with his reading of “The Heart Atrophies”. Four objects represent the components of this sentence – both in their literal meaning and also their phonetic ambiguity. The verb atrophy is thus dissected into the letter “A” and the plural noun “trophies” (wholly apposite in view of an awards exhibition!). Catala also infuses the installation with his fascination for synthetic, media-based emotions geared to a consumerist agenda. Emotions and emotionality – another genuinely human characteristic – have long since become vehicles for advertising for many firms and corporations. Each element in “The Heart Atrophies” addresses one of four overall areas of life in which, according to Catala, emotionality plays a particular role: architecture (“The”), advertising (“Heart”), science (“A”) and fashion (“Trophies”). The curved typeface “The” is embedded in a set-up, which is reminiscent of a pub but also recalls other generic public places, such as fast-food restaurants or Starbucks-style coffee shops. Finely nuanced, these places are intended to create specific moods and evoke emotions. A series of constantly-changing holograms materialise in a Plexiglas hood on a human scale resembling the diverse array of images that a Google image search might generate for the term “heart”, ranging from the functional, medical variants to cartoon-like emojis. We use emoticons or emojis to simulate and give short-hand form to an external expression of our emotions – similar to the way the advertising industry operates. Also the hypnotic, fascinating flickering of the holograms, another illusion, refers to techniques deployed by advertising to corral our attention and then simulate and boost emotions. Although emotionality is not something we would normally attribute to science, here too, Catala effectively forges a connection between man and machine. With the aid of a pump, a silicon letter “A” moves about unpredictably and clumsily, repeatedly inflating and deflating. The pneumatic properties clearly suggest the act of inhaling and exhaling and the material make-up of silicon recalls human skin. Three identical woollen sweaters with trophy motifs worked into the knitting pattern have been untidily draped across the floor as though in a teenager's bedroom. Knitting is traditionally thought of as a handcraft, but in this instance the sweaters have been made on a knitting machine, which also turns out to have its imperfections, as each sweater has the same fault. How does an object actually obtain its value? Catala also reflects the questions relating to meaning and significance – and therefore also emotionality – that can arise from the care and attention apportioned an object – not least from the perspective of an artist and thus also a producer of emotions.

Sondra Perry (b. 1986, US) engages with the construct of *Blackness* in her videos, sculptures and installations. Often based on her own experience, she probes the representation, narratives and ideas surrounding black American identities and their life worlds. Her particular focus is upon the connection between new technology and the representation and concomitant (self-)assurance of identities through them. The widespread use of a specific wall paint in her installations since 2016 is an example of this: Rosco Chroma Key Blue. This paint was used in the post-production of the film and video in order to create a temporary background against which individual figures could be isolated and into which virtual backdrops could be inserted. Similarly, Perry has also created a non-place of this kind in her multi-part installation “IT’S IN THE GAME ‘17” at the Westfälischer Kunstverein, placing two modular, black metal stands with it. These stands turn out to be so-called Spalding Universal Shot Trainers, that is to say, a proprietary apparatus designed to simulate the human body, or more precisely, the body of an opponent during basketball training. However, the nucleus of the installation is a sixteen-minute-long video, which is shown on a suspended monitor in one corner of the room and which features both the artist and her twin brother, Sandy. We learn here that when Sandy was playing basketball for Georgia State University in the most important division of the three college basketball major leagues, the rights to his own image, his actual physical appearance and all the attendant data from the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) fixtures were sold to the computer games manufacturer EA Sports for all NCAA games played during the 2009 and 2010 seasons respectively. This took place without his knowledge, his agreement or, indeed, any remuneration. Based on this episode, Sondra Perry’s video raises the question regarding rights in the digital domain, or more precisely, the rights of digital bodies and thus representations and images of actual identities.

We see sequences from the video game, scenes from the digital locker room and on court action with avatars of the college students. Meanwhile, Sandy is talking about his former teammates, their quirks and individual aspects, their character traits, indeed, the very qualities that cannot be conveyed in digital renderings, but which make up the humanity, the identity of a given individual. The avatar revolves like an exhibition object in the locker room and can be examined from all sides. The twins’ tour of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, for which Sondra used a handycam to film both of them, follows on formally and thematically from this. Different sequences of the video, also particularly at the beginning, are crossfaded with bluescreen 3D-models of museum artefacts, which rotate to reveal different aspects and are presented to the viewers in the same way as the college students in the video game. Inside the Met, the Perrys view art from Africa and Oceania, subsequently establishing an analogy between objects that were acquired in dubious and questionable circumstances, the legal status of which is in many cases similarly unresolved, and Sandy’s experience. Perry’s video squarely confronts such practices of appropriation and capitalisation and places them to good effect in an historical context via aspects of exoticism, otherness and transference into the digital sphere.

Andreas Angelidakis' (b. 1968, GR) work amalgamates fine art and architecture. His home city of Athens, its traditions, history, archaeology and myths form a central frame of reference his work. Ruins and reconstructions, historical remnants and residues, architectural fictions are recurrent themes in his oeuvre.

The work "VESSEL" on display here, which he has been developing since 2016, combines architecture, sculpture and video. Angelidakis has erected a kind of archaeological scaffold, a room made out of building-site planks in the exhibition space, part of which is covered with a gigantic black sheet. Strange miniature buildings revolve on three consoles: hybrid amphora, which are actually part of the archaeological reconstruction of Greek history, are seeming fused with the small buildings. The fantastical forms revolve like archaeological specimens on their plinths and, illuminated with colourful lights, look like kitschy bric-à-brac. A video presents different aspects and reconstructions of buildings – rather like accompanying educational material from a museum and, like this one, complete with a musical score. The subtitles impart information about the history of clay vessels in ancient Greece as browser interfaces and Facebook timelines are faded in. Thus, Angelidakis forges a connection between ancient clay vessels and our modern digital media, between architecture and the contemporary users of social media. In ancient Greece, vessels were used to transport goods of all kinds. At the same time they provided a canvas for the telling of stories. Adorned with depictions of mythological figures or scenes from everyday life, these vessels travelled the world far and wide. These "travelling monitors" function in the video as an analogy for today's ubiquitous social media platforms, such as Instagram, YouTube and Facebook. Angelidakis also posits another connection between the ancient past and today's world in the shape of the prominent Greek philosopher Diogenes of Sinope, one of the founders of Cynicism, who espoused a simple, isolated, self-sufficient lifestyle without a fixed abode, voluntarily living the life of an indigent and who also lived in a tub. He had effectively chosen a vessel as a dwelling. Diogenes actively practised his philosophical insights and theories by presenting them verbally in public. For Angelidakis, this attitude – oscillating between self-staging and simultaneous isolation – also casts a light on the behaviour of social media users when they publicly disseminate details of their fabulous lives from the sanctity of their homes (vessels) and broadcast their opinions to the world from their cocoons.

In her films and videos, the Dutch artist **Melanie Bonajo** (b. 1978, NL) focuses on people who fall outside the norms governing the broad middle section of society. By sheer virtue of their advanced ages, the protagonists in her work “Progress vs. Regress” from 2016 tend to fall by the wayside when it comes to society's frame of reference.

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Centenarians don't exactly play a crucial role in the capitalist value system. As a result of their diminished and diminishing “vital capacity”, they are both economically and culturally irrelevant. The film focuses upon the myth of progress, which has been emblazoned on the banners of meritocratic society since the Enlightenment. To this day it moulds our attitudes toward work, money, time and our emotions. Like many of Bonajo's videos, “Progress vs. Regress” utilises – both formally and artistically – different levels of presentation and reflection. Thus, documentary elements and reportage are blended with other completely different methods derived from graphic and digital media. For example, while film sequences are running, Internet browsers or social media platforms, desktop backgrounds and cursors pop up next to or on top of one another. These different visual levels – which are repeatedly assigned, pointedly and almost ironically, the acoustic sounds of mobile, messenger and computer notifications – suggest the presence of a participating user in the room who is also watching the film, screening it and even interrupting it. Thus, Bonajo is departing markedly from the customary documentary format, even if in this case, as is true in almost all of her other videos, the central focus is upon people, their faces, voices and stories. Not unlike a DJ, she mixes different sources, media and screens levels, but dispenses with inherent hierarchies when she alternates between or simultaneously fuses the serious and the silly, private and public, documentation and staging, real space and bluescreen, production and reception. In many places the video shows the nuts and bolts of its own manufacture. The aspect of production is not a thematic preserve of the film itself, but this meta level is also reflected in and constitutive of the immersive spatial installation into which the video has been embedded. The blue strips on the walls demarcate the scope of the film and take on the dimensions of its projection surface. The specific shade of blue has been borrowed from the bluescreen – another technical achievement: it is used in films, as is the case here, to “free up” figures, for example, and reposition them in front of virtual backgrounds. Foregoing the moment of illusion created by this box of tricks, Bonajo simply shows these levels several times, thereby opening it up as a humorous commentary. This network of relationships both within and outside the film promotes orientation but at the time it overtaxes the viewer. Ultimately, this turns our attention self-reflexively onto our own modern-day consumption of media. Bonajo's inclination toward her protagonists is tangible, humour and wit actively channelling constructivist finesse and human interest into a subtle dynamic.

Tamaki Watanabe and Walter Zurborg (b. 1974, JP and b. 1980, DE) are winners of the Nam June Paik Awards National 2016. Apart from € 15,000 in prize-money, the award also comes with an opportunity to show new work two years after the actual competition. The National Award entered its final phase with the conferment of the prize in 2016 and so now here in the Galerie der Gegenwart, Tamaki Watanabe and Walter Zurborg have the chance to show the fruits of their experimental work that prize money has helped to fund.

Their installation “idle_listening” comprises four enigmatic kinetic sculptures that busily move around and emit sounds. “Idle” is the operative word here: the general activity of these small experiments is meant to be understood as lazy, unproductive and not really useful. In other words, despite the seemingly tireless movement of the objects, they serve no productive purpose, there is no actual aim or result.

As is the case with the majority of Watanabe and Zurborg's works, the process commences with found materials that can be combined without the need to disguise them or unify their form any further. Thus, we recognise old tape recorders, bent sheets of aluminium, guitar strings and all manner of small electronic components. Watanabe and Zurborg have manipulated their tape recorders in such a way that the rotational force is transferred to a staff which acts as a conduit for this movement, producing a sound beneath the tin canopy. The artists have also modified the speakers in the tape recorders to amplify and distort the sound simultaneously. The cabling in the room indicates that two of the “machines” are coupled together: one sculpture effectively plays the sounds made by the other.

At once reminiscent of Dada-style assemblages, one cannot help smiling when observing another object as it mischievously lifts up the corner of a rubber mat only to drop it once more, over and over again. Here too: a denouement, a system devoid of any productive sense or meaning. Thomas Niemeyer compared Tamaki Watanabe and Walter Zurborg to inventors in the classical sense. It is a nice image in which both visible enthusiasm and a devotion bordering on the obsessional clearly resonate.

Of course, one can also have an abstract take on these works, inasmuch as they can be read as a metaphor for several other systems and connections in our world, which, in many cases, also seem to be caught up in a state of (mindless) bustle and busyness with no escape from their useless productivity.

Public Programme:

Münster Lecture with Cory Arcangel

(Nam June Paik Award 2014 - Nominee)

at the Kunstakademie Münster, Leonardo-Campus 2, 48149 Münster
Tuesday, 6 November 2018 at 6 pm

Exhibition walkthrough with the artists

Saturday, 10 November at 11 am

At the Westfälischer Kunstverein

Nam June Paik Videoscreening

A cooperation with the Filmclub Münster

At the Schloßtheater, Melchersstraße 81, 48149 Münster
Sunday, 2 December at 11 am

Guided Tours with Kristina Scepanski

Sunday, 9 December at noon

Friday, 11 January at 6 pm

Thursday, 31 January at 6 pm

Location: Westfälischer Kunstverein

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Opening hours:
Tue-Sun 11 am-7 pm

Admission: 4 €,
Concessions 2 €,
Members: free
admission