

## Jury report FORMAT 2023

FORMAT is Z33's coaching programme for the new generation in the field of design and architecture. A selection of recently graduated designers and architects are given the opportunity to deepen their artistic practice, to realise a new creation and to share their knowledge and networks. After a year of intensive mentoring, there is a group exhibition where all the designs come together. In this learning process, time and space are essential to explore boundaries and unconventional paths. Z33 is that free haven where experimentation, learning and failure come together. With 23 editions to date, more than 200 designers or architects have taken their first professional steps at Z33 as laureates of FORMAT/Toegepast.

For FORMAT 2023, Z33 worked for the first time with a thematic open call for new project proposals around the theme 'living with water'.

Our relationship with water is one of extremes: we are increasingly - simultaneously - faced with water shortages and floods. Furthermore, we use and consume a lot of water without thinking. In addition to our personal water consumption, an enormous amount of water is used by the bio-industry, chemical production, textile manufacturing and housing. The designed world around us is therefore an invisible large consumer of water.

By linking up with the theme of 'living with water', FORMAT fits in with the spring programme of Z33 in 2023. This creates a varied story in the exhibition rooms, combining the view of new and established talent on the same theme.

Z33 received a total of 51 submissions to the open call for FORMAT 2023. The proposals were evaluated by an expert jury, consisting of: Benjamin Claessens (UGent BIOMATH), Petrus Kemme (Flanders Architecture Institute), Christian Oosterlinck (Flanders DC), Heleen Sintobin (laureate FORMAT 2021), Annelies Thoelen (curator Z33), Adinda Van Geystelen (artistic director Z33), Marie van Loon (Architecture Workroom Brussels), Heleen Van Loon (project manager Z33), Lise Van Tendeloo (Designregio Kortrijk) and Marleen Wynants (VUB Crosstalks). The jury selected 19 candidates for a personal interview with Marie van Loon, Annelies Thoelen and Heleen Van Loon. They finally chose 7 laureates, including 3 designer duos. Decisive for the choice were both the quality and diversity of the project proposals and the diverse complementary backgrounds of the laureates, who will work together intensively in the run-up to the group exhibition.

The selected designers and architects are Kurina Sohn (Design Academy Eindhoven), Niveau Zéro Atelier - Mathias Vincent-Palazzi (Sandberg Institute Amsterdam) & Thomas Viers (Rietveld Academy Amsterdam), Juul Prinsen (LUCA Genk product design), The Ironing Board - Marta Rios Pizà & Miguel Parrrra (Design Academy Eindhoven), Sofie Deckers (HEAD Genève), Maud Gerard Goossens (UGent). The graphic identity and scenography for the exhibition of FORMAT 2023 will be developed by Lore Janssens & Joram De Cocker (KASK Ghent).

The laureates convinced the jury with their strong portfolios and a clear vision of how participating in FORMAT will contribute to their artistic growth. The latter is not unimportant: FORMAT is aimed at designers and architects with growth potential who need a development trajectory. The jury judged that there were many profiles among them that had a strong project proposal and/or portfolio, but no question for coaching.

Although the number of entries was lower than in previous FORMAT open calls, the jury felt that the quality of the project proposals submitted was very high. According to the jury, this is due to the central question in the open call, which is clear, topical and at the same time general enough: how can we ensure that we see water as an essential and finite resource with which we must deal sparingly?

Water is anything but a new subject, but its relevance and urgency are felt every day. It is a multi-layered subject, and can therefore be approached from different angles.

Why do I prefer drinking imported mineral water to water from the tap? Who owns the groundwater and who is allowed to extract it? Why is there so little open water that we can enjoy today? What creatures will be living in the plastic soup in the deepest parts of the ocean tomorrow? Can we develop a different relationship with water and see it as our guest? How do we revalue our brooks to slow (water)ways?

From personal to political, from nostalgic to futuristic, from theoretical to practical: it is this diversity of approaches that the jury pursued in its selection of design proposals.

Finally, there was one last decisive selection criterion for the jury, and that was group dynamics. The jury was looking for candidates who have graduated from different design and architecture schools in Flanders and the Meuse-Rhine Euroregion. In this way, they can help each other take new steps, by exchanging references or knowledge about concept development, production techniques, storytelling, .... The desire to share information, insights and contacts with each other and with the public during the course of the project is an important attitude for a FORMAT laureate. In addition, the participants receive personal guidance from a coach. The coaches are not only designers or architects, but also artists or scientists. By promoting the exchange between disciplines, Z33 wants to encourage designers and architects to push their boundaries. This is based on the conviction that societal challenges such as shaping our water consumption call for broad collaborations and creative ideas. The jury is confident that the laureates will make an important contribution to this debate.