

Linda Malherbe to receive the Visionary Award

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The Visionary Award honors people who are improving the artistic environment and culture sector in Rotterdam. This is one of three awards that Kunstinstituut Melly launched in 2020, each involving a unique focus. Supported by various foundations, this awards program was designed to celebrate the institution's thirtieth anniversary by honoring its ecosystem over time.

Kunstinstituut Melly is pleased to announce that **Linda Malherbe** (1969) is the winner of the *Visionary Award*. Malherbe is most known for her work at Verhalenhuis Belvédère in Rotterdam-Katendrecht, an institution she co-founded, and of which she is a curator and member of the board of directors. She will receive a cash gift of €5,000 in a festive ceremony held at Kunstinstituut Melly on [March 16, 2023](#).

Malherbe was selected for this award through a nomination and jury process overseen by Kunstinstituut Melly. Nominations were made in 2022 by a group of arts professionals, policymakers, and cultural producers in the Netherlands. Their nominations were reviewed and discussed early this year by an external jury.

The jury members were **Christina Li**, an Amsterdam-based independent curator; **Cye Wong Loi-Sing**, creative director of Brand New Guys, with offices based in Rotterdam, and; **Florian Cramer**, research professor at Willem de Kooning Academy in Rotterdam. Their meeting was chaired by Kunstinstituut Melly's director, **Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy**.

About her work at Verhalenhuis Belvédère, the jury said that "Linda opens doors. She is not a gatekeeper." The institution's mission is to connect people with each other and with the city through art, culture, and personal stories. The jury argued that the emphasis she has given to storytelling at her institution has fostered public awareness of the city's complex history. "She uses storytelling as a tool for both healing social wounds and creating a sense of belonging."

The jury stated that "An award for Malherbe is also a recognition to the communities she has convened. Together, they have given voice to the stories of Rotterdammers; given sense to the narratives of its different Diasporas, whether these stem from other parts of the Netherlands or from oceans away."

Malherbe was nominated for the award by Kees Weeda, who has been an active cultural manager for decades and remains a leading voice in all matters concerning Rotterdam's arts sector. Weeda made a compelling case for Malherbe's candidacy. Writing about Malherbe, he stated that her work is of "essential significance for the social and cultural life of Rotterdam." The jury also especially appreciated that "Malherbe has a strong conviction to find Rotterdam's beauty in its diverse textures, its rough edges, and its everyday polyphony."

About Linda Malherbe

Linda Malherbe (Rotterdam, 1969) works as a social and cultural designer. She is the initiator and curator of many participatory exhibitions, publications and programs. Together with photographer Joop Reijngoud and social geographer Els Desmet, she founded Verhalenhuis Belvédère in 2013, a new kind of meeting place and platform for culture and heritage-makers, that fosters interconnectivity in the city through contemporary storytelling. Verhalenhuis was inspired by and is based in the socio-historical location of Rotterdam-Katendrecht. Here, many people and communities are heard, made visible and are enabled to connect to each other. They previously published *The Magic of Verhalenhuis Rotterdam* (Reinwardt Academy, 2019) and they received the Laurenspenning Rotterdam award.

About Kunstinstituut Melly

Kunstinstituut Melly, formerly known as Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, opened to the public in 1990. Our new name came into effect on 27 January 2021. Since our foundation, we have worked with hundreds of artists to present exhibitions and programs of contemporary art. With our new name, 2021 saw the beginning of a new institutional phase, too. Central to this is working with an ecosystem-based framework, where artistic innovation, collaboration, partnerships, and public engagement are at the heart of our program.

About the Visionary Award

The *Visionary Award* is unique. It honors a person who is paving the way toward an improved artistic environment and cultural sector in Rotterdam. This award is made possible through a partnership between Kunstinstituut Melly and Stichting Droom en Daad. In 2023, the institution presents the second edition of this award. In the first edition, celebrated in 2021, **Aruna Vermeulen** was the awardee.

The *Visionary Award* is one of three awards designed, in principle, to celebrate Kunstinstituut Melly's thirtieth anniversary by simultaneously celebrating the contributions of those who make its cultural ecosystem so vibrant. [Click here](#) to learn more about Kunstinstituut Melly's awards program.

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