



Van Lanschot Kempen Art Prize – jury report

The 2019 Van Lanschot Kempen Art Prize has been awarded to Ellen Gallagher. During the selection process, the jury was most impressed with the quality, diversity and originality of her body of work. Her robust engagement with topical issues that affect society particularly appealed. “Everything Ellen creates matters,” the jury said. “We hope that, by winning this prize, Ellen Gallagher will gain greater recognition in the Benelux countries, as she deserves to.”

Ellen Gallagher is one of the most prominent artists of our time. Her work explores Black history and culture, drawing on a poetic vocabulary using a variety of media from painting to film-based installations. Ellen has developed a mythical world, inspired by the tragic history of the Middle Passage; the slave trade route across the Atlantic that saw thousands of Africans perish over the centuries. In her recent work about New Orleans, a city still recovering from the 2005 hurricane that pushed out large swathes of its population, Gallagher explores how twentieth-century urban planning was not only designed to keep racial borders in place but also to subjugate black communities even further.

The jury also praised the collaboration with her partner, Dutch photographer and film artist Edgar Cleijne. Their work de-mythologises by stripping away generally accepted narratives and creating new paths in the same cultural landscape. Some elements invariably return – water, for instance, always puts in an appearance. Together, Gallagher and Cleijne created *Osedax*, a film installation based on the phenomenon of ‘whale fall’ – the scientific term for the carcass of a whale at the bottom of the ocean on which scavengers feast. The artists’ more recent installation *Highway Gothic* is a meditation on the ecological and cultural implications of the Interstate 10 highway that cuts across the Mississippi delta and New Orleans. Both works evoke hypnotic, magical worlds populated with microorganisms and underwater life, and the mythical stories of the African diaspora.

Ellen Gallagher, born 16 December 1965 in Providence, Rhode Island, is an American artist who lives and works in Rotterdam and New York. Her work has been showcased in countless solo and group exhibitions including at the Haus de Kunst in Munich and the Venice Biennale, and features in the permanent collections of many major museums such as the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and Tate Modern in London. Her body of work includes paintings, drawings, collages and films. Ellen has won a range of prizes in the United States, but had not yet been formally recognised for her work in the Benelux region.

About Van Lanschot Kempen

Ever since its foundation in 1737 Van Lanschot Kempen has been committed to doing business with respect for the world around us and with an eye for future generations. We believe that wealth is more than money. Van Lanschot Kempen is also a partner who listens and (pro) actively helps to get more out of personal assets in every aspect. This in relation to everyone's dreams, choices, wishes and views and his personal and social goals. A wealth manager that cares and shows that investments can contribute to a better world.



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About the Van Lanschot Kempen art prize

Art and culture are part of the DNA of Van Lanschot Kempen. The support of art, culture, artists and museums has been the way for us to contribute to the preservation and building of our cultural heritage. A cultural heritage where craftsmanship and mastery are self-evident. Therefore we annually hand out the Van Lanschot Kempen Art Prize to a mid-career artist working in the Benelux. Since the edition of 2018 a jury nominates candidates and selects the winner each year. The jury consists of:

- Mrs. I. de Bruin
- Mrs. D. Carasso
- Mrs. E. Pethick
- Mr. J. van Caldenborgh
- Mr. A. Rüger

The Van Lanschot Kempen art prize (formerly the J.C. van Lanschot prize) was first awarded in 1992. The winning artist in 2019 is rewarded with:

- Prize money of EUR 25.000
- To produce a catalog of the body of work
- An temporary exhibition