

# HELLO NON- HUMANS,

LETTER BY  
**ZIPPORA  
ELDERS**  
CURATOR

EDITORIAL LETTERS  
**SEVEN  
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FINGERS**

GRADUATES MENTIONED

- HANNA VALLE
- ANOUK ASSELINEAU
- ANDREA GONZALEZ
- SASHA SERGIENKO
- SELINE DURIER
- VERONICA FAIBIAN
- MARGARET  
MUNCHHEIMER
- SIMPSON TSE
- MORGANE DE KLERIK
- TAL LIBERMAN
- NATALIA JORDANOVA



Dear Jurgen,

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Cc: Anouk Asselineau, Seline Durrer, Veronika Fabian, Andrea Gonzalez, Natalia Jordanova, Morgane de Klerk, Tali Liberman, Margaret Munchheimer, Sasha Sergienko, Simpson Tse, Hanna Valle

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A note from me to you, director to director, following the postponed graduation of the Sandberg students in September 2020. That month also marked your 10 year anniversary as director of the Sandberg Instituut, for which I send my congratulations.

In June I was invited to write a letter to Non-Humans, simultaneously integrating the description of the works-in-progress of eleven selected graduates. And now, as a follow-up, we have been asked to continue the writing after their finals. Reading back, I am fascinated by the level of abstraction that I could allow myself to think in still, last June, considering the vast and daily-changing loads of emotional and institutional labour that followed soon thereafter. It made me wonder ... How are you looking back at this year, Jurgen?

If anything, 2020 is a year in which injustice and inequality came to the surface on so many levels and in so many layers. As a director of an international, public institution for art education: how did you deal with that? And, something I have been asking myself often as well: how do you measure to what extend you are the appropriate person to do so?

The presence of racism and sexism, as well as emotional, physical and sexual violence, sadly is one of the everyday. A question that kept on bugging me these past months: how can we create a safe environment for our students, our artists and designers, to be able to just work.

Just work. It sounds so simple. But apparently it is not.

Have we been failing, as a public sector? Is our government shifting responsibilities to us? What is our agency, where lies our strength, and which work will we do?

Below, in caps, extra notes on the graduation projects. Poetry, still.

Looking forward, stay healthy,

Z.

*You can be tools, you can be dead, you can be unknown to me still. You can exist in my imagination and you can exist outside this world.*

Dear Non-Humans,

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Bcc: Koert van Mensvoort

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Are you familiar with love? In human language it means deep affection. To be honest I think some humans are more capable of loving non-humans than each other. Except, maybe, for those who they consider non-humans while they're actually humans as well. Are you still following me here? It seems that to some, humans become lesser humans when they are threatening our own safety. And safety, another non-human, is a strange thing you know: it doesn't necessarily mean being protected from danger. It means a lot more than that. Things unnecessary even.

I've witnessed humans neglecting love in favor of extended safety, luxury, the familiar. It's twisted. With humans, safety apparently easily turns into greed, and in turn anxiety – all about possessing non-humans. And it gets even more twisted, because one of the non-humans that we're probably most dependent on, we are actually protecting the less: a climate that we humans can survive in. And to make it even worse, that often comes with simultaneously running over other humans that look less similar to ourselves.

My apologies, I'm not sure if any of this is actually of your concern. Many of you non-humans will be better off without us anyway. So let's turn to the non-humans that we *do* value – and even make ourselves. And sometimes such special ones! Humans are currently graduating from art school by making you, and in making

you they're reflecting on your meaning. No taking for granted at all. Isn't that hopeful? Let me give you some examples.

Our current state of saying goodbye to old narratives and realities, while not recognizing new horizons yet, is a recurring topic for several of these artists. For example, the speculative and bodily landscapes of Hanna Valle created strange narratives where labour and fantasy come together. DID THIS IMAGINATION BECOME REAL NOW? Also Anouk Asselineau blurred realities by her immersive recorded story, the *Female Hypnotist*. HOW IS THE HYPNOTIST DOING? In addition Andrea González investigated our material culture in order to produce alternate dream worlds. HAVE WE TURNED INTO VAMPIRES YET? And Sasha Sergienko searched for new romanticism and experiencing true belief: through his colourful, bright works he is encouraging sensory receptivity for events from the past and future. WHAT TO DO WITH PAST AND FUTURE IN A SITUATION WHERE PRESENT IS EVERYTHING? In turn Seline Durrer in her work searches for "slowing up", as a chance to rethink the present. WHAT ARE MESSAGE AND MASSAGE SERVICES TODAY?

That present was especially challenged during the semi-lockdown that the virus brought upon us. Veronika Fabian is using jewellery as an intermediary between the self and society and as a mediator of value and identity, exploring the lasting bond that we have with our objects. With this in mind, it is interesting how she noted how working from home really messed up her work-life balance: "Work can be an addiction quite easily." You probably wonder how this affected her bond with and between home objects and work objects? WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LABOUR AND DOMESTIC? Also Margaret Munchheimer – who researches hand work and gestural communication – during lockdown began working in strange, typically unused corners like the laundry room. "I sat there on a stack of blankets, working with wire and pliers creating sculptures." WHERE DO HUMAN CRAFT AND HUMAN HERITAGE TOUCH? And Simpson Tse – who explores notions of affective work – even had the realization that he had never lived with a toilet of

his own: “In the most practical sense, maybe we do not need one! Then again, the last two months has heightened another realization of being privileged enough to be able to gain access to stable accommodation and a certain degree of personal space.” ARE WE UNKNOWINGLY LIVING IN OUR FECES?

Musing about living with your designs, Morgane de Klerk’s developed a bunch of sensitive protectors. “Who is assisting who, nowadays? Is it the object or the user?” Her hybrids between devises and jewellery, are protecting their users from being unwillingly traced or reminding them that devices are essentially tools to benefit from. Indeed wishes to care and be cared for are a tough question for us humans in these days: “I wish to find enough financial stability to be able to have a small family,” she said. “While this is a rather normal wish for a 33 years old woman, the status of creatives is often so precarious that it feels like a luxury to project ourselves in a future in which we could provide and support anyone.” WILL THE PLAGUE PUSH US INTO A POST NATAL-FAMILY ERA?

In general navigating ourselves while being observed and simultaneously observing seems even more of a challenge than before. In his project Tali Liberman unveiled the bias from interfaces that seem neutral by design. *Unrendered Road* traces the road between Jerusalem and Jericho, which would be dismissed by Google Maps. HOW CAN WE FIND SAFETY IN NATURE THAT IS LARGELY RECONFIGURED BY MEN? In turn Natalia Jordanova’s alienating yet attractive sculptural installation is itself developed as an ecosystem of images and signs. She quite hopefully stated about the current tides: “I believe that form is just a possibility, and so if conditions change that form can also transform. Essentially, ideas can not be taken away...” WHAT IS DIRTY ART IN A DIRTY WORLD?

Dear non-humans, you can be divided between the non-humans that were already there (or will enter from elsewhere), and the non-humans that have been created by or due to humans. The latter are often designed. Therefore

I hope you can forgive us for acting so human-centric in basically everything that we do, for foresaking you so often. But believe me: those rare moments when we actually are trying to balance life a bit with beauty, we mean well, and when we do that by simultaneously reflecting upon ourselves, we do too. Indeed such non-human artifacts are made in collaboration with one of my favourite non-humans: imagination.

Likely, as a human, one needs imagination to foresee a future in our imagined linear perception of time. And especially now one needs imagination to genuinely believe that we're living in a fertile and good world. Perhaps imagination will keep us safe – at least in our minds and souls – and make us survive after all.

I don't know. But maybe you do.

In honour of you I am inviting any body viewing these graduation works to blur their biased difference between humans and non-humans. And to give both their equally devoted attention.

Z.

Graduates mentioned:

[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/hanna-valle](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/hanna-valle)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/anouk-asselineau](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/anouk-asselineau)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/andrea-gonzalez](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/andrea-gonzalez)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/sasha-sergienko](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/sasha-sergienko)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/seline-durrer](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/seline-durrer)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/veronika-fabian](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/veronika-fabian)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/margaret-munchheimer](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/margaret-munchheimer)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/simpson-tse](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/simpson-tse)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/morgane-de-klerk](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/morgane-de-klerk)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/tali-liberman](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/tali-liberman)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/natalia-jordanova](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/natalia-jordanova)



Zippora Elders (34) is director of Kunstfort bij Vijfhuizen and cocurator of sonsbeek20-24. Previously she worked a.o. as curator for Foam and as master coordinator at Sandberg Instituut. She holds several advisory positions and regularly writes for Dutch art magazines as well as international platforms and publications.