JURY REPORT
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MARCO GERRIS

JOHANNES VERMEER PRIJS 2025

Foto: Michel Schnater

Marco Gerris
Laureate Johannes Vermeer Award 2025
Jury Report

Since 2009, the Johannes Vermeer Award has been presented annually to an artist residing and/or working within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. With this prestigious state award for the arts, the Dutch government seeks to recognise and celebrate exceptional artistic talent. Each laureate displays outstanding artistry and contributes significantly to their fields as well as to society at large. The award may be conferred upon artists from all disciplines.

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science, Gouke Moes, is advised in the selection of the laureate by an independent jury. The members of this jury are experts in their respective fields, who, in their deliberations, give careful consideration to the range and diversity of artistic disciplines. In choosing the recipient of the Johannes Vermeer Award 2025, the jury has taken into account, among other factors, the laureate's pioneering artistic vision and the profound social impact of his oeuvre, which continues to inspire new generations. This multifaceted and authentic artist, with an impressive international career, operates at the intersection of multiple disciplines and stands as a true innovator. The jury has unanimously selected Marco Gerris as the winner of the Johannes Vermeer Award 2025.

Choreographer and dance theatre director Marco Gerris receives the award in recognition of his groundbreaking work, in which he fuses dance, urban sports, theatre, and other disciplines in an entirely distinctive manner. Through his productions, Gerris has for decades reached large and diverse audiences - often introducing new generations to the world of dance - and has become, in the view of the jury, a major source of inspiration and a pioneer of dance theatre in the Netherlands.

Drawing on his background and ambitions as a dancer, skater, and actor, Gerris founded the ISH Dance Collective (ISH). Over the past 25 years, this collective has evolved into a nationally and internationally acclaimed company. As its artistic director and driving force, Gerris continually seeks inspiration in the movement language of the streets, upon which he builds in innovative ways. He has brought contemporary art forms such as hip-hop dance, freestyle, breakdance, vogue and other urban arts to the stage. Moreover, through collaborations with established artists and companies from the worlds of classical music and ballet, he breaks through conventional boundaries to achieve extraordinary artistic results.

With unrelenting energy and curiosity, Gerris has created an impressive and wide-ranging body of work, for which he was awarded the Cultural Fund Prize in 2020. In

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2024, his production *Rhythm & Flow* received the Zwaan (VSCD Dance Prize) for the most impressive dance production of the year. Together with ISH, Gerris has realised numerous acclaimed productions, including *Elements of Freestyle* (2017), *ISH* (2000), and *Hiphop Circus* (2025). His co-productions with Amsterdam Sinfonietta (*The Barren Land* 2022), Jakop Ahlbom Company (*Knock-Out*, 2021), Dutch National Ballet (*Narnia*, 2015; GRIMM, 2018; *Dorian*, 2023), *Silbersee* (*MonteverdISH – A Hiphop Breakdance Opera*, 2011), and most recently the season opening of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, have all been widely praised.

From Australia (Sydney Opera House, Townsville Civic Theatre, Brisbane Festival) to Finland (Tampere Theatre Festival), and from Taiwan (National Taichung Theatre) to New York, where he appeared as early as 2006 with *4-ISH* at the New Victory Theatre, Gerris's work consistently plays to full houses. His performances attract a broad and diverse audience, who often recognise themselves with enthusiasm in his creations. Marco Gerris captures the spirit of our time and translates it into a compelling theatrical form. Through his experimental and multidisciplinary approach, and through his many collaborations, he fuses the universal artistic language and energy of dance and movement into unexpected combinations, transforming the stage into a dynamic arena open to all.

Marco Gerris was born in 1975 in the Philippines and grew up in Belgium. His youth was marked by a wide range of interests: he practised gymnastics and judo, and he also played the violin and saxophone. He received his training at the Herman Teirlinck Drama School, the Higher Institute for Dance Pedagogy, and the Open Living Theatre, all located in Antwerp. Around the age of twenty, Gerris settled in the Netherlands, where he continued to develop as a dancer, skater, and actor. He became Dutch Champion in Freestyle Skating and performed in productions such as the musical *Endless* and in works by the dance company AYA. In Amsterdam's Vondelpark, he built a network of friends and performers from various disciplines. These encounters led, in 2000, to the founding of his own company called the ISH Dance Collective (ISH). He derived the name from the English suffix –ish, meaning "-like" or "somewhat", referring to the hybrid style in which elements of hip-hop dance and urban sports converge on the theatre stage.

As an artist and catalyst, Gerris brings oxygen and positive energy into the Dutch cultural landscape. In his pursuit of artistic adventure and multidisciplinary exchange, he consistently pushes boundaries, unites different worlds, and has become both an icon and an inspiration. He draws continuous inspiration from everything around him, and in his work invites others to explore and deepen the idiom of their own art form. Through this collective process of discovery, new artistic forms and achievements emerge, both within the theatre and beyond. Gerris integrates everyone and everything, merging them into something new, with a social impact that transcends the conventional boundaries of movement arts. And he never stops.

Through the ISH Academy, Gerris - together with the ISH team - inspires and guides children and young adults in discovering and developing their creativity, talents, and individuality. Through a dedicated talent programme, he continues to support emerging artists and performers in their artistic and professional growth.

It is the first time that the Johannes Vermeer Award is being presented to an artist from the field of dance. For decades, the Netherlands has enjoyed a flourishing and diverse dance culture, with internationally acclaimed companies, distinctive choreographers, and a passionate amateur community. Dance knows no language barriers and represents an ideal performing art for international exchange. The jury's choice

therefore also acknowledges the vital position of this art form within the Dutch cultural landscape.

This personal award is bestowed upon Marco Gerris in recognition of his artistry and craftsmanship. His versatility, and the way in which he pursues his passions, make him a truly unique artist, intrinsically driven, perpetually curious, and ahead of his time. In the conviction that his productions will continue to captivate and move audiences, and that his artistic leadership and vision will go on to inspire, stimulate, and unite, the jury is proud to confer the Johannes Vermeer Award 2025 upon Marco Gerris.

The jury of the Johannes Vermeer Award 2025 consists of Marise Voskens (Chair), Ted Brandsen, Margot Dijkgraaf, Natasja Kensmil (Laureate 2021), and Bas Kosters.