



## 2018 Heineken Young Scientists Awards

*Presentation speech by Corien Prins, chair of the jury of the 2018 Heineken Young Scientists Awards*

### **Introduction**

For more than fifty years, ladies and gentlemen, Heineken Prizes have honoured exceptional scientists, all with reputations based on decades of research. Eight years ago, a new prize category was added, to recognise the importance of scientists from younger generations.

The 'Heineken Young Scientists Awards' pay tribute to researchers who, already at a young age, can serve as examples for other young scientists and scholars. The prizes aim to encourage these young talents to keep up the good work, and to hold them up as role models for even younger generations.

That is important, because the world needs young people to help us meet major challenges.

As of this year, the Heineken Young Scientists Awards are awarded in four categories, which span the full breadth of scientific research: the Humanities, the Social Sciences, the Natural Sciences, and the Medical and Biomedical Sciences.

As chair of the jury, it is my privilege to present this year's winners, and to tell you a little bit about their work.

### **Humanities**

Allow me to begin with the Prize for a young researcher in the Humanities.

Our laureate in this category graduated in law and criminology. She earned her PhD with a study on the genesis of Dutch laws on counterterrorism. Today, she is a professor of Law and Society at Leiden University, also affiliated with universities in the United States, Norway, and Canada.

She explores how laws and regulation on the one hand, and political debate and public opinion on the other, affect each other. She studies, for example, how once completely separate areas of law, such as security and migration, have become intertwined. She pinpoints how a fear of outsiders can transform laws or their application, for example through ethnic profiling or in the reception of refugees.

Maartje van der Woude, ladies and gentlemen, is an inspiring, opinionated, highly driven young scientist, who is more than willing to also engage with the general public.

As of this month, she is a visiting scholar at the University of California at Berkeley. That in part is why she cannot join us here today. Her PhD supervisors have been asked to collect the prize in her name. She won't be able to hear us, but let us give her a big applause anyway.

### **Medical and biomedical sciences**

The second Award, ladies and gentlemen, covers the medical and biomedical sciences.

The laureate in this category turned 30 this week, which makes him the youngest award recipient today. He graduated in bio molecular sciences, and earned his PhD for using mass spectrometry to study the hepatitis-B virus. That sounds a lot easier than it was.

Our laureate is not one who likes to take easy, predictable roads. He has shown himself to be highly independent, determined to blaze his own trail. Against his supervisor's recommendation, he moved to Seattle, which worked out very well after all: He published papers in prestigious journals on the structures of various viruses and biological molecules.

Since his return, he has waited to commit himself to one topic or one particular job. Instead, he formed his own company. Using his extraordinary expertise in microscopy and spectrometry, he now engages in collaborations with various universities and start-up companies.

Ladies and gentlemen, the jury was impressed not just by his talent and skills, but also by his free spirit and guts. Please join me in welcoming to the stage Joost Snijder, winner of the Heineken Young Scientists Award in the Medical and Biomedical Sciences.

## **Social Sciences**

The next Award, ladies and gentlemen, covers the Social Sciences.

The laureate in this category graduated in Clinical and Health Psychology, and earned a PhD for research into brain scans of people suffering from anxiety or depression. Today, she expands on that work as a researcher at the University Medical Centre Groningen.

She wants to understand how the brain may make some people vulnerable to disorders such as schizophrenia and major depression. Why are some brains more at risk of developing long-term psychiatric disease?

The jury admires her passion for building bridges and creating new connections. Her research mixes insights from many disciplines, from neuroradiology to clinical psychiatry. She also co-initiated and chairs a group of young researchers from all her university's faculties. By bringing people together, she will help science find new ways forward.

So please welcome, ladies and gentlemen, Marie-José van Tol, winner of the Heineken Young Scientists Award in the Social Sciences.

## **Natural Sciences**

The final Award, ladies and gentlemen, covers the Natural Sciences.

The laureate in this category graduated in geology, the science of the earth's crust. He earned his PhD with a new way to determine the age of rocks deep down in the earth. That knowledge is key to finding how our planet responded to climate change millions of years ago, and how it is doing so today. How much warmer did it get? How did ocean currents change? Which of these caused ice-caps to melt, and ocean levels to go up?

His present research addresses these very questions. This summer, he won a major international grant to help us predict more precisely how much and how fast sea levels will rise. Will our children see the North Sea rise just one meter? Or two? Or even three? When and where will it stop? These are among the most pressing research questions of our time.

The jury, ladies and gentlemen, was impressed by the international recognition this laureate has managed to win. He works at the forefront of global research into crucial parts of climate history. At the same time, he inspires new generations by interacting with the general public.

Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Peter Bijl, winner of the Heineken Young Scientists Award in the Natural Sciences.

## **Conclusion**

Ladies and gentlemen, this concludes the task of the jury. It has been a real privilege to select four excellent winners of Heineken Young Scientists Awards.

What is more, it has been a heartening experience to see dozens of excellent, passionate young scientists being nominated. We could pick just four winners, but many more are already serving as shining examples to future generations.

Let's keep supporting all of them.