

## NOMIS Distinguished Scientists Awards 2025 Documentary Film Summer School

### Call for applications

Each year, the Swiss **NOMIS Foundation** awards two or three top international scientists with a considerable grant to conduct foundational research. And each year, they ask four students and starting documentary film makers to create short film portraits of these fascinating personalities, which will be premiered at NOMIS's annual Award Ceremony, in Zürich in October.

**We are looking for ambitious young visual storytellers, who want to join a small team in making intimate film portraits of some of the world's leading scientists.**

The four participants will travel with two seasoned coaches to visit the scientists, meet their co-workers and see some of the most advanced labs at renowned scientific hotspots like Caltech, UCLA, Princeton University, the Max Planck Institute and other top scientific sites in the US, UK and EU.

The NOMIS Award Film Project gives its participants great freedom to experiment and find new visual languages for scientific research while at the same time working on a serious applied commission. By now, 27 talented young creatives have made **21 exciting film portraits** of great scientists, **one of whom** has meanwhile received a Nobel Prize.

Since the start, editor Max Bruinsma and documentary film maker Christian Gropper have coached students and alumni of visual narrative courses in making these short films. For this project, we are specifically inviting creative talents who dare to experiment, to invest time and effort in finding new visual languages for the often abstract themes of foundational scientific research, and who are passionate team players. Of course, we also expect basic camera and editing skills, and a keen interest in science and science communication.

What we offer is a unique and intensive experience, in which the participants will encounter all aspects of documentary film making, from research and preparing interviews, camera handling, filming, sound recording, and directing, to reviewing and editing the material into six-minute documentary gems.

All costs during travels for filming the scientists on location, and travel and lodging during post-production will be covered by the project. In addition, each participant will receive a stipend of € 2.000,-. Participants will be credited in the films and online at NOMIS's Vimeo page, on which the films are collected.

### Key features of the project:

With the experienced guidance of two seasoned experts, editor Max Bruinsma and documentary film maker Christian Gropper, participants will work together in researching the scientists and their fields; they will prepare and conduct two in-depth interviews with each; they will direct, film and edit the interviews; shoot additional B-roll and associative imagery; and edit the portraits, collaborating with sound designers, illustrators and animators.

We expect participants to closely collaborate with each other and the two mentors, and to commit to the program's schedule. As much as it is a master-class and summer school for further professional development, the project is also a serious commission, which demands full availability of the participants during the production phases.

The project consists of three phases:

**1. Preparation:** Researching each scientist, reading (scientific) articles, collecting visual materials (previous interviews, presentations, etc.) and other information to become acquainted with their protagonist, not just as a scientist, but as a personality. During this preparation phase, a short kick-off workshop will be planned around the start of March in Darmstadt, Germany. In four days, the team members will get to know each other, receive guidance in the technical and editorial basics of the project, and collectively shoot and edit a short film portrait. With the exception of the kick-off workshop, most of this phase can be done online. Travels to the workshop location and lodging will be covered by the project.

**2. Filming:** The team will travel to the scientists' work places at research institutes or universities in Europe and/or the USA. We will check out locations for the interviews (at the lab or institute) and at the scientists' homes, prepare and conduct the interviews, and travel around for additional shooting – and some sightseeing. This phase is an intensive and immersive professional experience, in which the team travels together, works, cooks and eats together, usually in well-equipped Airbnb houses near the scientists' locations. Depending on the amount of awards (two or three) and the locations, these travels take about two to three weeks in July. Each team member will be responsible for preparing and directing one interview and shoot, and for doing camera, sound and assistance during the other shoots. All expenses for this phase will be covered by the project.

**3. Post-production:** After a short break, the team reconvenes in August in the project's studio in Darmstadt, Germany, for a month of post-production. In the first week, an audio timeline will be established with the (roughly) edited interview. This timeline of approximately 4.5 minutes will be detailed with B-roll and associative footage, short animations and sound design in the following two weeks. The last week is for color grading, sound mixing, subtitling and corrections. Travels to the post-production location and lodging will be covered by the project.

**Preliminary time schedule for the project:**

December 2024 / January 2025	Participants selection
15.01.2025	Confirmation of participants
End of January	First online meeting of all team members and NOMIS
Beginning of March	4 day kick-off workshop, Gropperfilm studio, Darmstadt
April / May	Announcement of the 2025 Award winners by NOMIS. Research, preparing meetings and travels
Beginning of June	Research workshop (online) and travel arrangements
July	Film shootings on location
August	Post production, presentations and finalizing
04.09.2025	Delivery to NOMIS
16.10.2025	NOMIS Award ceremony, Zürich, Switzerland

**Application guidelines:**

Applicants need to provide the following documentation:

1. A motivation letter detailing why you are keen to join the project, your interest in science communication, and a summary of your experience with film making and editing.
2. A CV with your name, date of birth, nationality, current address, education and current school and or occupation. Please also list skills and level of experience with equipment and software.
3. A portfolio providing an overview of earlier work, with a focus on media productions (video, photography, interactive media). Please provide links to online sources (video and web) and add illustrations of other work.

All documentation needs to be sent as PDF to:

**[nomis@mbed.nl](mailto:nomis@mbed.nl)** and **[info@gropperfilm.de](mailto:info@gropperfilm.de)**

Large files can be sent via **Wetransfer** to the same addresses.

## Coaches' biographies

### **Christian Gropper**

Born 1962 in Marburg, Germany

Christian Gropper studied Design, Visual Communication and History at Technische Universität Darmstadt before establishing himself as documentary filmmaker, book author, lecturer, and film- and TV producer. In 1997 he founded **Gropperfilm**, his production company for documentaries, broadcast formats, corporate and institutional films.

In his 25 years as a film maker and producer, Christian has delivered more than 60 feature length documentary films to European broadcast stations and made dozens of video productions for companies and institutions. From 2005 - 2011 he held a Lectureship at the TU Darmstadt, Department of Film and Media Studies. He has been a freelance journalist for politics and history at public broadcasters ARD, ZDF and Arte since 2005, and is a regular Middle East correspondent for ARD since 2010.

Christian received several nominations and awards for his work:

Grimme Preis, Nominierung 2002  
Bundespreis „Gesicht zeigen!“ 2005  
Deutscher Wirtschaftsfilmpreis 2011  
Hessischer Fernsehpreis 2016

### **Gropperfilm GmbH**

For 25 years, Gropperfilm has been realizing ambitious documentaries, lively reports and corporate films for broadcasters, public institutions and enterprises.

Gropperfilm works with its own very extensive 4K broadcast camera technology, professional sound and lighting equipment and a large video editing studio with state-of-the-art technology for post-production. Our teams consist of several permanent employees as well as national and international freelancers with many years of experience.

Our clients: ARD, ZDF, Arte, Phoenix, Deutsche Welle, Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Bayerischer Rundfunk, Hessischer Rundfunk, Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, Südwestrundfunk Bundesland Hessen, Stadt Darmstadt, BMW AG, Bayer AG, Merck AG, Junghans Uhrenfabrik, Volksfürsorge, Capvis AG, Jung von Matt, Sparkasse, Hessenagentur, Bauverein AG.

Selected broadcasts:

**Aus Asche und Trümmern - Neue Perspektiven über die Darmstädter Brandnacht**  
ARD-Dokus, 2024

**Zeitenwende - Zurück zum Kalten Krieg?**  
ARD-History-Film, 2022

## Coaches' biographies

### Max Bruinsma

Born 1956 in Groningen, the Netherlands

Max Bruinsma studied graphic design at St. Joost Academy in Breda and history of art, architecture and design at Groningen and Amsterdam Universities.

Since 1984 he has published extensively on art, design, new media and visual culture in a wide range of magazines and other publications world-wide. Among his books are *Deep Sites* (2003), an early overview of innovative design for the web, and *Design for the Good Society* (2015), the closing publication of five Utrecht Manifest biennials on Social Design, held between 2005 and 2015. His most recent publication is **Gert Dumbar - Gentleman Maverick of Dutch Design**, (2024) a monograph on Studio Dumbar and its namesake, one of the leading graphic design agencies in the Netherlands of the past half century.

See [maxbruinsma.nl](http://maxbruinsma.nl) for a generous selection of his articles.

Max was Editor in Chief of *Eye*, the London based international review of graphic design (1997-2000) and Editor in Chief and Publisher of *Items*, the Dutch journal of design (2008-2013). In 2010-2011, he was also founding editor of *Iridescent*, the peer-reviewed online journal of design research initiated by ICOGRADA, the international organization of graphic design institutes (now icoD).

Max has extended international experience as teacher at art, design and media schools and has lectured world-wide. Next to many engagements as visiting professor and workshop leader, he was core tutor at Master Graphic Design, St. Joost Academy of Art and Design, Breda (2011-2015), founding course director at Master Editorial Design, HKU Graduate School, University of the Arts Utrecht (2013-2015), Core tutor and thesis advisor at MIARD, Master Interior Architecture - Research and Design, Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam (2013-2019) and core tutor transmedia storytelling at Camera Arts, Lucerne School of Art and Design, Lucerne, Switzerland (2015-2021).

In a previous life, he was music editor and radio and television program maker for the Dutch broadcaster VPRO (1984-1997).

In 2005 Max was honored with the **Pierre Bayle Prize**, the Dutch oeuvre prize for cultural criticism.

### **MBED** (Max Bruinsma Editorial Design)

The agency's name reflects the basic tenet of Max's professional practice: as 'editorialist,' he considers himself embedded in a wide variety of project teams, ranging from editing and organizing books, magazines and websites to exhibitions, radio and television productions and (trans)media projects in the widest sense thinkable. Working closely together with seasoned as well as fledgling media makers, Max warrants consistency of editorial structure and narrative flow within experimental media practices.