

Valérie Boucher runs ArtContest, an annual competition for contemporary art aimed at young Belgian artists, which she founded in 2005 with the help of Betty Lechien.

From very early on, Valérie Boucher wanted to help students who had just left school. At one time, she worked in the family shop, which sold supplies for young artists, near the Ecole des Arts Visuels de La Cambre in Ixelles/Elsene. She saw at first hand how difficult it was for that generation to make headway. So she started a competition for Belgian artists and artists living in Belgium, aged up to 35. Twelve years later, ArtContest is now supported by the Boghossian Foundation; since 2011, the winner of the first prize has been given an individual exhibition at the Musée d'Ixelles/Museum van Elsene.

Since then, Valérie Boucher has followed the competition's artists closely – this is a special feature of ArtContest's philosophy. The very first winner, Jean-Baptiste Bernadet, is now working with the Almine Rech gallery; Pauline M'Barek exhibited in Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum in 2014; and Oriol Vilanova will take over the entire Tàpies Foundation from February to May 2017.

For the past two years, Valérie Boucher has been actively involved in a project that gives ArtContest an opportunity to exhibit its artists in a permanent space, the "Vitrine ArtContest". This is a space in which ArtContest artists are exhibited but in which institutions are also invited to showcase an artist or a curator/collector, who is given carte blanche to present artists, as in the case of Christophe Veys in April 2017. This showcase is located in the Rivoli arcades, where many other up-and-coming galleries also have installations, making ArtContest one of the key actors in breathing new life into the City of Brussels over the past decade.

For six years, Valérie Boucher has also presented a chronicle of contemporary art on Radio Judaïca, once or twice a month, in which she introduces her listeners to initiatives, important venues, and new spaces such as the LMNO gallery, Eric Fabre's Garage Cosmos, Olivier Gevart's Eté 78, the collector Frédéric de Goldschmidt's projects, etc.

In the way that comes naturally to her, Valérie Boucher has developed numerous partnerships to help her exhibit the artists

she hopes to promote, given that a competition doesn't necessarily mean there is a space to show your work. Both in private and in public, Valérie Boucher has thoroughly explored the city in order to give artists their first exhibition space: Galerie Art 22, the Black Box, the Atomium, De Markten, the Centrale Electrique, the ADAM, and, of course, the Musée d'Ixelles.

Valérie Boucher also recognises the advantages of Brussels, which, in addition to its major exhibition spaces, has an attractive range of conference spaces, including those of WIELS, the ISELP, and Jeunesse et Arts Plastiques, which has for decades been dedicated to education through art.