

viernulvier

viernulvier

viernulvier

viernulvier

Policy plan 2023-2027

viernulvier

viernulvier

viernulvier

viernulvier



Foreword

- p. 4 **1.1. Overview**
- p. 4 **1.2. Mission, vision & history**
- p. 7 **1.3. Positioning and collaboration**

Operations

- p. 8 **2.1. Inspired by a turbulent world and an arts sector in flux**
- p. 9 **2.2. Toward a collective future**
- p. 10 **2.3. A welcoming meeting place and a lab for development, production, presentation, participation and reflection**

2.3.1. Development

- 2.3.1.1.** Extended platform
- 2.3.1.2.** Nomadic workshop for new makers & spin
- 2.3.1.3.** Music & visual arts
- 2.3.1.4.** Space for summer
- 2.3.1.5.** Home-based residencies

2.3.2. Production

- 2.3.2.1.** Music
- 2.3.2.2.** Performing arts
- 2.3.2.3.** Monument

2.3.3. Presentation

- 2.3.3.1.** Programme structure, festivals & guest curators
- 2.3.3.2.** PERFORMING ARTS
- 2.3.3.3.** MUSIC
- 2.3.3.4.** NIGHTLIFE
- 2.3.3.5.** MONUMENT
- 2.3.3.6.** RESIDENCY
- 2.3.3.7.** TALK
- 2.3.3.8.** FOOD

- p. 24 **INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION**

2.3.4. Participation

- 2.3.4.1.** Maximum accessibility
- 2.3.4.2.** Participation in the composition of the programme
- 2.3.4.3.** Active artistic participation
- 2.3.4.4.** Participation in governance

2.3.5. Reflection

- 2.3.5.1.** For audiences
- 2.3.5.2.** For the professional arts sector
- 2.3.5.3.** At the academic level

Business Management

- p. 30 **3.1. Effective business and financial management**
 - 3.1.1.** General financial policy
 - 3.1.2.** Financing for the building
- p. 31 **3.2. A caring human resources policy**
- p. 34 **3.3. Good governance**
- p. 35 **3.4. More than caring for the monument**

Foreword

1.1. Overview

VIERNULVIER seeks to fulfil its international mission as a Flemish art institution and, to this end, is guided by 15 operational decisions:

- 1 — **Sustainability, social welfare, digitalisation**, the **position of the artist** and **workable work** are taken into account in everything we do.
- 2 — **We're continuing our platform scheme**, making programmes in partnership with cultural and social organisations, knowledge centres and companies.
- 3 — When the running of the new music hall at the Winter Circus is entrusted to VIERNULVIER and Democrazy, we will build an operation **centred on music, visual arts & gaming** and fully support the **Nomadisch Werkplaats voor Nieuwe Meesters** ('Nomadic Workshop for New Masters').
- 4 — In production, we focus on **music**, including our own **label**.
- 5 — We continue to build on the biennial **Ghent International Festival (GIF)**.
- 6 — We choose as **resident artists**: Mette Ingvarstsen, Alexander Vantournhout, La Geste, Joshua Serafin, Meg Stuart, Jozef Wouters and Laura Nsengiyumva.
- 7 — Our programme – as the sum of our own **artistic activities + networking activities + rental activities** – leads to a strong offering, mixed sources of funding and many shoulders carrying our operation.
- 8 — Our programme is divided into seven categories: **performing arts, music, monument, nightlife, resident, talks** and **food**.
- 9 — We focus more on **dance, performance** and **circus**, less on theatre.
- 10 — We are phasing out the literary programme category, but seeking to engage a **spoken & written word** programmer.
- 11 — Our offering is underpinned by **10 festivals** a year, sometimes programmed and produced by ourselves, sometimes (only) hosted by us.
- 12 — We are developing more **line-up driven nightlife events** ourselves, developing a **support policy for new nightlife organisers** and **community-based nightlife coaches**.
- 13 — We're going for **maximum accessibility**, broad **participation in the composition of the programme**, 2 to 4 **participatory projects** (may or may not be part of our European projects) and **participation with regard to cultural governance**.
- 14 — Gouvernement, Bebe Books, Jong Gewei, Black History Month, Mama's Open Mic, Manoeuvre and Platform-K are/remain **organisations-in-residence**.
- 15 — We're developing **coordinated reflective activities** for wider audiences, the arts sector or at the academic level.

These decisions in turn give rise to six **business** and **organisational choices**:

- 1 — We're asking the Flemish Community for a **subsidy increase** for **operational plans (internationalisation!)**, for **communication** and **audience engagement, digitalisation** and **'workable work'**.
- 2 — We're asking the Flemish Community to consider this in the light of the financing of our infrastructure and to **rectify the objective disadvantage with respect to fellow art institutions**.
- 3 — We're applying the agreements as formulated at 'Juist is Juist': **fair practice**.
- 4 — **Well-being, stress and burnout prevention** and **education and training** are the fundamental components of our strategic, **inclusive** human resources policy.
- 5 — We're setting up a **transition process with regard to good governance** and giving further shape to the **Young Board**.
- 6 — We're making our **monument future-proof** and working on the cultural offering at the **Arsenaal site**.

1.2. Mission, history and internal & external review 2017-2022

VIERNULVIER is a central platform in a rich network of artists and organisations from numerous sectors. Inspired by a turbulent world and an arts sector in flux, with a contemporary view of the future, VIERNULVIER strengthens the cross-fertilisation between the arts and the local and global community. We act as a welcoming meeting place and a lab for development, production, presentation, participation and reflection. We build on a history of innovation and societal engagement.

Our mission rests on six pillars: **support, experiment, connect, engage, reflect** and **celebrate** (see www.viernulvier.gent). We elaborate on our vision in the first chapters of our operational plan.

HISTORY — The history of VIERNULVIER (formerly Vooruit) goes back to 1913, when the socialist movement built a cultural centre for the World's Fair. The Vooruit building was the venue for concerts, dance nights, film screenings, union meetings, and more. It housed the activities of socio-cultural associations: a gymnastics club, library and brass band. In the 1960s it began to fall into disrepair. There was hardly any money to organise activities, let alone to maintain the building with its grand café and four halls. In September 1982, a group of young people took the initiative. By 1983 they had already managed to get the monument listed. With youthful swagger and commitment, they created an artistic organisation with an international reputation. In 2007, VIERNULVIER received the Cultural Prize of the Flemish Community for General Cultural Merit and in 2017 was recognised as an official Flemish Arts Institution.¹

An external committee and the team – together with the board – evaluated the first period as an arts institution.

INTERNAL REVIEW 2017-2023 — With 250 stage performances annually, as well as 75 concerts, 80 lectures and debates, 60 literary events and book launches and 115 rental activities – including many nightlife activities – VIERNULVIER hosts a **wide range of activities**. As a cultural hub, we've made the shift from focusing on presentations to fulfilling our mission with regard to development, production, participation and reflection. We support some 280 artists every year in **developing and creating new work**. We've built new studios and established a new focus on supporting artists within the following teams: communication, production, stage technology and building services. This has been met with growing enthusiasm. However, the balance between the various functions remains an area for improvement.

We reach 175,000 visitors a year with the programme – or around **5,450 people a week** – during the cultural season. Add to that the 150,000 visitors to our café and you've got 8,000–9,000 people dropping in every week. A point of pride for us! VIERNULVIER is an arts centre supported greatly by Ghent residents and the culture lovers of Flanders. The challenge of communicating our broad programme to the right audience remains significant. The segmentation of our audience also needs to be refined. There is demand to free up more time for **audience engagement**.

Great strides have been made with regard to participation in the past four years. Making the switch to becoming a **platform** is the biggest of these. This has resulted in the engagement of around 100 organisations (cultural, social, educational, etc.) that co-programme with us. The role of artistic programmer has shifted from one of gatekeeper to one of project developer: one who seeks the roots, values and commitment for a shared programme in continuous dialogue with partners. These collaborations have broadened our audience reach. Complicity! The board and the team evaluates the platform scheme as being very positive and will build on it in the coming years. Essentially what it comes down to is the careful handover of the keys to De Vooruit to a wide diversity of people. Making policy around this and refining a practice around it is our mission. VIERNULVIER frequently receives a lot of questions about this working model, especially from foreign colleagues.

Our **festivals** allow us to put social issues² on the agenda, create a context for less self-explanatory work, issue commissions for the creation of artistic work, bring international audiences to Flanders and involve a wide range of (inter)national partners. We've also measured a broadening of audiences attending the festivals: people are drawn to the theme and discover artistic work as a result.

The team and the board see opportunities in:

- giving a second life to content from performances, debates, etc. in the form of **digital** publications, podcasts, recordings, etc. in collaboration with radio, television, newspapers, magazines, blogs;
- placing a stronger focus on **technology**, including the relevant ethical issues. Knowledge is lacking in this area;
- the growth of our **international performing arts offering**. We are running up against the limits of our financial possibilities (compared to other arts organisations) and the physical limitations of Ghent's venues. Due to being allocated a lower structural subsidy than applied for, in combination with inflation and high energy costs, it is currently not feasible to make up for this shortfall.
- the stronger artistic underpinning of **nightlife concepts**;
- thorough policy with regard to inclusion for members of the public and the team alike;
- an increased focus on exclusion due to poverty, especially in a city where 20% of children grow up in **poverty**.

In 2019, VIERNULVIER founded the Gents Kunstenoverleg and remains committed to Greentrack, the action group on Diversity and Inclusion, and oKo working groups. In this way, we seek to be a booster and a game-changer for a strong Ghent and Flemish arts sector: by **taking care of the local cultural landscape**.

¹ WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE HISTORY OF VIERNULVIER?
Our archive is managed by the Institute of Social History Amsab. In 2013, Kannibaal published Liesbet Nys's book on 100 years of VIERNULVIER. We recently installed the Timewalker in the entrance hall, an interactive wall that allows you to browse through our history in the form of audiovisual fragments.

² Past years' themes: inclusion, decolonisation, Palestine, protest, sexuality, grief and rituals.

In the last policy period, VIERNULVIER raised around 50 per cent of its income itself (through hall rental, catering/hospitality, ticketing) with the other 50 per cent of its income coming from subsidies. We are **financially sound** and this is due to a widely supported budget and cost awareness among those responsible for spending. The Board appreciates the financial policy and accurate reporting.

The growth towards a maximally **horizontal organisational structure** received a lot of attention and is perceived positively by the team. In particular, we see internal communication and transparency, and active cooperation within the multidisciplinary realisation teams as big steps forward and as methods for learning a great deal. VIERNULVIER is a learning organisation, which must continue to develop. We are surveyed by (inter)national actors regarding our operating model. Yet colleagues still suffer burnouts. The workload is high and caring for the team remains a focus. 'Workable work' is therefore a common thread throughout this plan.

We have realised an impressive **restoration and renovation programme**. Those efforts benefited the building but equally the public (a new reception area), the artists (new studios, lodgings, backstage area), as staff (computerised fly system, new kitchen). This puts a heavy financial claim on operations, and is no longer financially sustainable.

Great strides have been made in line with the **cultural governance** code. VIERNULVIER has an involved board with two committees: HR and audit. We established a Young Board, a group of young people who participate at board level. There is demand among staff for an exercise regarding governance models that build further on the horizontality within the staff team. We have been working on this since June 2021.

EXTERNAL REVIEW 2017-2022 — The external evaluation committee³ values VIERNULVIER's achievements as an arts institution.

'The committee wishes to express its emphatic appreciation of and admiration for the achievements made by VIERNULVIER in recent years. Its recognition as an arts institution happened at a time when the organisation was by no means at its strongest. It was not the best starting point from which to make the switch from an essentially presentation-focused venue to an art institution that not only embraces five functions but excels in them internationally as well. In a very short time, VIERNULVIER succeeded not only in developing its new functions, but also in completely rethinking its organisational model and taking a prominent role in the development of local and international discussion platforms in which knowledge- and power-sharing are central. The committee is impressed by the resilience of VIERNULVIER, thanks to which huge strides were made in such a short time.'

The committee values the **'quality, breadth and diversity of the programme'** and notes VIERNULVIER's **consideration** of internal capacities in putting it together. 'It is clear from the annual reports that **audience numbers** are high.' Still, the committee is surprised that knowledge about audience members is limited. It sees a lot of potential in terms of CRM, audience analysis and targeted communication and marketing. 'As far as **development** is concerned, VIERNULVIER has invested mainly in creation infrastructure and the welcoming of artists and organisations in residence.' According to the committee, a major challenge lies in maintaining the physical and financial space to remain fully committed 'to this extremely valuable support for artists and organisations.'

The committee judges that the basic attitude of **'working together'** and **'sharing power'** is strongly integrated into our activities and vision. It sees the Young Board as an 'exemplary model that may serve as an important inspiration for a lot of other organisations'. Looking at participation in the sense of 'taking part', they see that 'despite the strengthened **diversity** on stage, diversity and inclusion could be even stronger with regard to visitor participation'.

'At the local level, VIERNULVIER was a particularly **strong pacesetter for local discussion platforms** in the last policy period. The creation of the Gents Kunstenoverleg, the further development of Greentrack, the working group on Diversity and Inclusion, the Ghent landscape drawing – none would be where they are without VIERNULVIER. On an international level, VIERNULVIER was also (co-)initiator of important networks such as BE PART and INFRA.'

The committee requests consideration regarding the extent to which we can take on a leverage function for producing partners and artists and how we might do so. At the same time, it argues that the fulfilment of the five functions should be realistic: **'You cannot possibly excel in all five functions.'** The committee appreciates VIERNULVIER's **lack of dependency on subsidies**, but expresses concern 'about the extent to which rental income is necessary to continue delivering its own artistic programme and the work and communication pressures this entails.'

'VIERNULVIER is **well managed as a business** and, with **smart architectural interventions** and a **caring restoration**, gives this monument a contemporary use.'

The committee recommends that VIERNULVIER:

- continue to work on **audience engagement and attracting new audiences**, making progress both in terms of **diversity** in audiences and a better understanding of audiences;
- focus more on **securing** and sharing insights generated from activities around reflection;
- continue to work on the development of **lasting relationships with artists**;
- fulfil the five functions in a **realistic** manner;
- continue its commitment to **diversity of audiences, staff and board**.

1.3. Positioning and collaboration

'Positioning and collaboration' could be the subtitle of our policy plan. This drawing illustrates this. It's no coincidence that the first sentence of our mission statement is: VIERNULVIER is a central platform ...



³ Members: **Jade Corbey** (music programmer, Pilar vzw), **Anne Breure** (independent curator and strategic advisor in the performing arts, former director of Veem House for Performance, Amsterdam), **Mathieu Charles** (writer and performance artist, participation officer at Kif Kif), **Leen Gysen** (independent consultant in management support, international marketing communication and strategy development for the creative industry and the arts, former director of communications at Bozar), **Carl Gydé** (general and business director, CAMPO) and **Pascal Cools** (managing director, Flanders District of Creativity, the single point of contact for entrepreneurs in the creative sector).

Operational activities

VIERNULVIER's operational policy plan is structured around the five functions, preceded by a picture of the city and the world.

2.1. Inspired by a turbulent world and an arts sector in flux

It's not possible to opt out of the present times. Ecological chaos, social welfare and digitalisation are issues that impose themselves as absolute top priorities. With the recognition of and funding from the Flemish Community, VIERNULVIER has five years to contribute to a more ecologically sustainable and just society, making use of all its strengths and privileges: a fully committed team, a rich network of partners and artists, a large audience, governments that trust us and an impressive monument with four halls, five rehearsal studios and a large café. The energy, creativity and innovation we bring to this is that of artists. If they are to play their role as the questioners, bridge-builders and imaginers of a new future, and do so with verve, then it must be our priority to safeguard the proper working conditions for artists. This isn't possible if we run ourselves into the ground: workable work is key! The following topics guide us in all our decisions and pop up throughout this plan as hashtags.

#SUSTAINABILITY [#SUST]

As a result of our globalised way of life, a pandemic spread across the planet from which we have not yet recovered. Like the extreme forest fires, recent flooding and drought, corona is part of a larger set of crises that indicate that a deep transformation of our planet is under way. These phenomena are the result of the way we inhabit the earth: a colonial way, with a strategy of expansion, exhaustion of resources and exploitation. We urgently need to change the prevailing relationships and systems, take concrete actions ourselves and, through our programmes, get the widest possible audience on board with this commitment.

Because the operations of VIERNULVIER also have a taxing impact on the environment and climate. We are the revolution (Joseph Beuys) is the name of our Sustainable Action Plan, developed in 2021 by the full team in collaboration with Greentrack and artists Simon Allemeersch, Gosie Vervloessem and Benjamin Verdonck. In it, action points are set out in detail regarding food, mobility, the building, energy consumption, water management, air emissions and policy relating to procurement and equipment. Our Sustainable Action Plan (NL: Duurzaam Actieplan) is on the website and is an integral and prominent part of this policy plan. During the coming policy period, we will also add digital environment as an action point.

#SOCIAL WELFARE [#SW]

Around 50% of all Ghent households are accounted for by single people or single parents. The average age of inner-city residents continues to rise and the risk of isolation is significant. One in five children in Ghent (one in seven in Belgium) grows up in poverty (Kind & Gezin). Although the poverty index has stagnated in recent years, the coming years call for vigilance because of the corona and housing crises, the ageing population and social isolation, and the continuing influx of unskilled migrants from Eastern Europe. It is the responsibility of all employees to see to it that the fight against social inequality and the removal of barriers is structurally embedded in our operations. The solution lies in the sum of specific actions: internal workshops on inclusive communication, active bystander training, a code of conduct, a diversified awards policy, hands-on collaborations with social partners, customised participatory artistic practices, a generous internship policy, an inclusive human resources policy, and more.

#DIGITALISATION [#DIG]

We are living longer lives and are more peaceful and prosperous than ever. Technology has a big part in that. At VIERNULVIER, too, many processes are more efficient than before. Our building management system reduces energy waste. The planning tool Yesplan – which originated at VIERNULVIER and was acquired by Activity Stream in 2022 as a scale-up with 30 employees – optimises our operations. Digital ticketing reduces work at the ticket desk and provides us with more information about visitors. There is still ample opportunity for improvement. For instance, technology can support audiences in their cultural experience: audio induction loops, surtitles (aka supertitles) in chairbacks, floors that convert music into vibrations, staff who can communicate in sign language via an app, speech-to-translated-text that instantaneously translates foreign-language performances into a language of their choice. Augmented reality, virtual reality and multi-sensory experiences are also becoming more lifelike as technology evolves. This creates unimagined artistic possibilities. However, the more we engage with digital applications, the more we are aware that we are installing barriers for digitally illiterate adults as well as young people. Four in ten Ghentians are digitally illiterate. And let's also ask ethical questions. What info do we collect about our customers? Do we continue to boast locally-produced organic food while we simultaneously sponsor child labour with our computers and phones? Why not opt for open software?

#POSITION OF THE ARTIST [#POTA]

Passion doesn't pay (the rent): that was the conclusion of a study by UGent on the socio-economic position of professional artists in Flanders. On average, the median annual earnings for artists are below those of other academically educated workers. Only one in ten professional artists makes a full income from core artistic activities. The majority need income from partners or parents to make ends meet. The relationship between money, income and art(ists) has always been difficult, but this difficulty has only increased in recent years. The performing arts are likewise rapidly transforming into a situation of atypical project-by-project employment, temporary and part-time employment, and unstable situations among freelancers and independents. This was previously the case within the visual arts and music sectors. If VIERNULVIER wants artists and cultural workers to take up their role of driving a sustainable and warm-hearted society, we must do all we can to put an end to this precarity.

#WORKABLE WORK [#WW]

This policy plan exhibits the enthusiasm of a team that actively identifies opportunities and formulates answers to questions from artists, audiences, associations, governments, sponsors, and so on. However, if we don't take care to observe the central importance of each employee's well-being, things are liable to go south. You can read how the activity level is monitored by the multidisciplinary programme team – within which the HR component is crucial – in the section on presentation. When you read our plans in all their abundance, know that:

- we seek to fulfil the five functions in a way that is **realistic**;
- we are **expanding the team** where there are additional tasks or positions where the number of duties has increased;
- everyone at VIERNULVIER who feels the impact of the programme volume may help decide on the agenda: catering/hospitality, production, artistic activities, attendants, housekeeping, stage and building services and communication. At the weekly **intake**, we discuss additional questions for projects (including from our own programmers). Any commitments are entered into consensually;
- we respect an **activity buffer** on Sundays and Mondays, except for activities in the café that do not require technology or production assistance;
- we fall back on **on-site teams** for programmes outside De Vooruit. We are responsible for programme and communication, the host organisation for reception and stage technology;
- as a **platform**, our organisation contributes significantly to workable work. Because of the many collaborations, the realisation rarely rests solely on our shoulders. Partner organisations take on tasks such as event programming, production, business follow-up, communication, and so on;
- the HR coordinator is assisted by six colleagues from other teams who take on an **HR role**. They help provide employment care and have a crucial monitoring function;
- we're working on a **preventive action plan for psychosocial well-being**, including stress and burnout prevention.

See 3.2. a caring human resources policy.

2.2. Toward a collective future

The arts decree rightly focuses on **caring for the cultural landscape**. VIERNULVIER has been active in fulfilling that task in full since 2017. VIERNULVIER is a platform that – thanks to its collaboration with a diverse network of partners – succeeds in developing a broad programme for an equally diverse audience.

Nothing for everyone, something for everybody.

IN ADDITION TO CARING FOR THE LOCAL CULTURAL LANDSCAPE, IN THE COMING YEARS VIERNULVIER WOULD LIKE TO EXPLORE THE IMPACT OF ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES ON DIFFERENT DOMAINS THROUGH LONG-TERM, COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER SECTORS (WELFARE, EDUCATION, ECONOMY, MEDIA, HEALTHCARE, AND MORE). DUE TO THE STRUCTURAL SUBSIDY RECEIVED BEING LOWER THAN THE AMOUNT APPLIED FOR, AND DUE TO INFLATION AND HIGH ENERGY COSTS, THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXTENDED PLATFORM (BUITENDIENST) SCHEME HAS NOT BEEN FEASIBLE.

We would in turn map how the knowledge from those sectors has an impact on the artistic process, its results, the operation of a large arts centre. Think of it as our contribution to **caring for society**.

The political, economic, cultural and social policies we are pursuing today do not seem to match up to the complex and interlinked problems that face us. Climate change and socio-economic inequality cannot be solved with a ready-made solution. For this, we need to roll out a dynamic

systems theory and look for another form of conducting politics. We see art as a foundation of our society, just like education, science, healthcare and agriculture. We want to create a world where the line between art and other domains becomes fluid. In which art functions at its full potential as creative fuel for and connector of all those other foundations [#POTA]. This implies that it becomes everyone's concern to protect and fund the arts. 'Because the arts are the heartbeat and the thermometer, the oracle and the treasury, the memory and the pride of society.' Ernestine Comvalius of Bijlmer Park Theatre.

[NEW] VIERNULVIER believes in **cross-sector artistic developments**. We are convinced that with unusual, but appropriate networking in other domains of society, we will encounter interesting discussions that have impact. This contributes to a unified future, to artistic career development and to a developmental path for VIERNULVIER as an art institution that is less straight-forward but challenging and professional. Above all, it shows a commitment to self-change and reflexivity. It is our response to increased polarisation, our attempt to escape from the echo chambers of social media.

Artists have become part of an army of multi-purpose 'creatives' in the social discourse. In such a context, there is a role for arts organisations in the realisation of positive opportunities that promise societal broadening, by helping to mediate between their partners, but also by building in buffers to protect autonomous artistic practices [#POTA].

We notice on a daily basis that a growing number of artists would like to see this. A lot of artists can attest to a shift in focus: from product to practice, from individual oeuvre to co-creation and from positioning in a discipline to changing contexts and forms. The increasing need among these artists for social impact and relevance legitimises the choice for us to focus our platform scheme on that broadening in the next policy period. We are moving towards an extended platform scheme (NL: buitendienst).

We're building on our 10 years of experience with the City Atelier (NL: Stadsatelier): an investigation of art and society with the city as the artist's studio. Where artists operate as bridge-builders between residents and urban developers such as Ghent's 'neighbourhood directors', traders, associations, politicians, and so on. As part of the City Atelier, there are residencies for artists, scientists, collectives and organisations. They share work with the public: a performance, an installation, exhibitions, an action, a conversation, what have you. In April 2022, at an Assembly with BEPART's international partners (see participation), we will present an 'Atlas' of realisations and impact spanning 10 years of the City Atelier.

[NEW] Until 2027, we are going for a longer-term collaboration – preferably five years – with more strongly delineated partners. It won't be only

the city or neighbourhood that is used as a forum for meeting and collaboration: companies, schools, hospitals, insurance companies are also possibilities. They, too, oversee places that connect people, where social cohesion is strengthened: visitors, customers, employees, neighbours, and so on. After the decline of social clubs, these are places where people learn to appreciate each other in all their diversity [#SW].

An art institution is much more than an artistic organisation. That is, it ideally spreads the artistic values and cultural norms it represents far beyond the boundaries of its own organisation and vicinity. VIERNULVIER does this by connecting with the artistic as well as the adjacent fields of well-being, economy, environment, and so on. From a management point of view that is oriented towards the core business and divesting from ancillary activities such an option may appear problematic. VIERNULVIER, however, is convinced that every art institution must promote and defend its values beyond its own habitat. By forming lasting alliances through the extended platform scheme, we aim to increase symbolic capital, which can be converted into economic value.

VIERNULVIER's internationally recognised artistic excellence provides the clout needed to be successful in this. With this bargaining chip, we negotiate with business leaders, hospital directors, the media, and so on. We use that position as a key to playing a significant role within other social systems as well. In this way we are indeed emphasising our relative position. Do many questions remain unanswered? Certainly.

For a more specific explanation of the extended platform scheme, see development.

2.3. A welcoming meeting place and a lab for development, production, presentation, participation and reflection

The way we contribute to a collective future – while rooted in a turbulent world and arts sector – can be explained through the five functions of the Arts Decree. VIERNULVIER is above all still a presentation venue. The infrastructure is built for that, it's what the public expects. The team's processes and competences have been developed for this as a priority. This is not to say that in the past VIERNULVIER was not engaged in development, participation, production and reflection. However, it is only since 2017 that we have been systematically expanding on the five other functions. This entails training, rethinking and expanding the team, the remodelling of spaces, the development of new networks and methodologies.

Many steps have already been taken. The external committee:

'In a very short time, VIERNULVIER has managed to make progress developing the new functions.' We realise that, compared to our counterparts in the sector, we are well placed to grow toward an equilibrium between the five functions. But back to the external committee: 'A true balance between the five functions would not match the needs or the reality of the field. A **realistic approach** to functions remains the task for the next policy period. You cannot possibly excel in all five functions. The slow processes of participatory projects and engaging and attracting audiences are difficult to synchronise with the rapid succession of activities. The exploratory work of reflection and development may be at odds with the abundance of presentations, especially in combination with networking and hiring activities.'

It is in this tension between possibilities and expectations that we consciously strive for a workable relationship between the functions [#WW].

2.3.1. Development

VIERNULVIER grew significantly in its development function over the last policy period. We built a residency platform, converted – with support from FoCI – the adjoining former sweet shop into a rehearsal studio and two open studios for artists, strengthened the production- and stage-technical team so that artists can fall rely on a professional team to guide their artistic practice and, finally, we freed up budgetary funds for artist fees.

A growing number of artists – 236 in 2018, 275 in 2019 and 330 in 2020 – has been given space to work on their artistic research. That's three collectives or bands a day. We continue to support artists in the development of their artistic practice, talent and career. This happens every day in conversations between artists and our artistic team, by making rooms and studios available, sharing business and HR knowledge, inviting (inter)national cultural programmers to be familiarised with the course of their development, paying fees and having artists work with KASK students.⁴

VIERNULVIER strengthens that developmental support with four new policy decisions: the **Nomadic Workshop for New Masters** (NL: Nomadische Werkplaats voor Nieuwe Meesters), the **focus on music, visual arts & games**, support for artists during the summer and international **home-based residencies**. The Extended Platform scheme will be either postponed or scrapped due to financial reasons.

POSTPONED OR SCRAPPED DUE TO INADEQUATE FUNDING

[NEW] 2.3.1.1. The **VIERNULVIER EXTENDED PLATFORM SCHEME** creates a context for artists for whom the point of departure for their practice is based on questions linked to other sectors – see above. We will start with a focus on **healthcare, technology start-ups and scale-ups** and continue our **City Atelier** related to urban life and the public space. Other sectors will be added at a later point. The collaboration always departs from a shared line of enquiry, with artists being the driving force. After

VIERNULVIER's team and that of the partner have been thoroughly acquainted, we then look for open questions informed by the needs of artists, the partner in question and VIERNULVIER. Artists will be selected by a mixed team from VIERNULVIER and the partner, possibly after an open call.

We would go for a balanced five-year partnership, in which the artist, VIERNULVIER and the company/organisation in question strengthen each other: in what they do, financially, in terms of reach and in terms of knowledge of business operations.

	A win for the artist	A win for VIERNULVIER	A win for the partner
primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> input for the development of artistic work context for presentation participants in a participatory practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> input for artistic programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strengthening of the core business
knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> expertise for the development of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> knowledge input regarding technology, HR, building management, business modelling, housekeeping, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> art-driven knowledge VIERNULVIER has expertise in organisational development, communication, restoration, catering/hospitality, audience engagement, HR, etc.
reach, impact & PR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> audience expansion brand awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> audience expansion brand awareness support for the arts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> new customers brand awareness social responsibility
financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fees for development co-production budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> income from venue hire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> new customers new markets

This means that right from the preliminary discussions we look for the development opportunities of the artist, the partner and VIERNULVIER across these four verifiable domains.

In the first few years, we will have methodological and networking support from the platform for arts, science and technology GLUON (gluon.be). Projects between artists, scientists and entrepreneurs will succeed only if we work carefully on the relationship, the methodology and a common development process. GLUON has for years supported fellowships of artists in the R&D departments of companies and fellowships of scientists in artists' studios. Those interactions produce artistic, social and philosophical results, as well as innovative ideas, services and products in non-artistic sectors.

Logically, we can expect the artists to mainly be at work at the locations of the partners. However, we have an open studio available at all times. Those spaces on the street-facing side, connected to the Café, allow us to communicate about the development process and encourage interaction with passers-by – many of them students – in the form of short presentations, lectures, a shared library, blog, podcast, etc.

The artist's fee is paid by the partner, and this fee may or may not be supplemented with the artistic funds of VIERNULVIER. The Extended Platform scheme carries many opportunities for international cooperation with Waag Society Amsterdam, Ars Electronica Linz, V2 Rotterdam, iMAL Brussels and CTM Berlin.

VIERNULVIER is recruiting a full-time employee for the coordination and production tasks relating to the Extended Platform scheme [#WW]. We are also joining forces with Kunstenpunt, where possible in tandem with the sectoral federation or the knowledge centre of the partner

concerned.⁵ As part of their project *Is dat kunst?* ('Is that art?'), Kunstenpunt provides documentation and reporting on VIERNULVIER, the partner and both sectors – important for the artist's learning trajectory – see also the chapter on reflection.

For the Extended Platform scheme, we are continuing the City Atelier project and starting new collaborations with Ghent's Maria Middelaers Hospital [#SW] and game and technology companies in Ghent [#DIG] that will be housed in the renovated Winter Circus from 2023 on. That gives us a large pool of R&D specialists at our fingertips, from companies like In the Pocket, Showpad, TomTom, Larian Studios, IMEC, and others. After evaluation, we will be expanding the Extended Platform scheme to other sectors.

The Extended Platform scheme is touched on again in this plan in relation to communication, HR, good governance and finance.

example: collaborating with a hospital

We launch projects – funded by the hospital – where artists help to promote greater empathy in an increasingly digital healthcare setting. Together with GLUON, we get various experts around the same table: health futurologist Koen Kas, life science companies from Ghent and the research institutes VIB and IMEC (who are going all-in on e-Health). VIERNULVIER poses questions to the hospital with a view to learning about stock control and logistics management: not exactly our strong suit. We offer inspiration with regard to organisational development and communication. We use their intranet to share our programme with their staff or to get performances and concerts into patients' rooms. As part of the collaboration, we stipulate that they rent spaces in De Vooruit for symposia and staff parties for the five years. This reduces the pressure on our colleagues in charge of hall rental.

⁴ Boyzie Cekwana in 2018, Nora Chipaumire in 2019, Tamara Cubas in 2019 and 2021 and Amanda Piña in 2022.

⁵ such as: Kenniscentrum Gezondheidszorg Gent, Federatie voor de Technische Industrie Agoria, Flemish Games Association, and others

2.3.1.2. Nomadic workshop for new masters

Ghent scores above average in terms of the production and presentation of theatre and dance. But there is still work to be done in terms of development. The potential is there: there's a steady stream of artists and theatre scholars graduating from KASK, LUCA and UGent every year.

VIERNULVIER – together with Opera Ballet Vlaanderen, KASK and the City of Ghent – is lending its support to the non-profit Gouvernement's **Nomadic Workshop for New Masters** (NWNM). With their 'inside-outside' position, they create a low-threshold gateway to VIERNULVIER. NWNM cultivates two-way traffic and realises that the support art institutions can offer is significant. The collaboration centred on Benjamin Abel Meirhaeghe – from residencies and small presentations at VIERNULVIER to the co-production A Revue with Opera Ballet – is a textbook example.

NWNM can turn to the network of partners for studios and venues. VIERNULVIER makes a large studio permanently available for this purpose. Preference is given to multidisciplinary and hybrid artists, based on an ongoing dialogue among the partners: such artists may be involved in crossovers between visual art, music, dance, spoken word and theatre. Residents work with funds either from project grants or the artistic budget of Gouvernement or partner organisations. We guarantee fair pay [#POTA]. NWNM ensures there is a dialogue with experts who contribute to the quality of the work's development.⁶ From this also flows an introduction to the field. VIERNULVIER has enjoyed a good collaboration with Gouvernement⁷ since 2016. Like Opera Ballet, VIERNULVIER makes an annual investment of €25,000 in NWNM. There is also support from the City of Ghent (€10,000) and KASK (€5,000). In return, VIERNULVIER is strengthened in the professional fulfilment of its development function and in residency coaching, the threshold is lowered for young creators, new talent can be prospected and an inflow of students is created. It also provides a unique network of arts- and knowledge institutions [#WW].

2.3.1.3. Music, visual arts & games

The Balzaal Sessions. In addition to offering performing artists residencies, since the summer of 2020 – yep, corona – VIERNULVIER has made a greater commitment to music. We're supporting groups by opening up the Balzaal as a sort of salon for musicians. For a week at a time, they are given all the space they need, plus both developmental and technical support for the development of new work. Not to mention a fee. We provide eight residencies per year. The music scene appreciates this greatly. It is unique for a centre such as ours – with expertise in supporting performing artists – to introduce this methodology for musicians. It contributes to the professionalisation of the music sector, especially in terms of fair pay [#POTA]. If the project has the potential to grow into a production, we assist in gaining the interest of co-investors as co-producers and concert venues: Trix, Wilde Westen, STUK, AB, Nona, Kaap and De Grote Post. Those funds are sometimes the basis for a project subsidy application. Internationalising this operation is a task for the coming policy period. We are already collaborating with Rewire Festival in The Hague, Amsterdam's Muziekgebouw and the Brakke Grond Amsterdam, Italy's Santarcangelo, Athen's Onassis Foundation, Berlin's CTM, among others, but this is too fragmentary: we must still develop a policy for this.

Being entrusted with the running of the concert hall in the Winter Circus, VIERNULVIER plans activities centred on **music, visual arts & games**.

Reason 1: **sound begs for visuals.** Think of the work of Ryoji Ikeda, Heleen Blanken, 2F4F, Klein, Pan Daijing, Kevin Martin, Matana Roberts, Jon Hopkins, Emmanuel Biard – or, closer to home, the live digital (cali)graffiti of Hamza Abu Ayyash, the game mash-up of Compact Disk Dummies, Soulwax, among others. New developments within music go hand in hand with the creation of visuals, and sometimes games. We've been working in this area for years now as part of the festival Videodroom in collaboration with Film Fest Gent (see production).

Reason 2: in Flanders, the gaming sector doesn't have its own platform within the artistic field, even though many increasingly see games as a fully-fledged cultural alternative to film and literature. It's no coincidence that the VAF established a Game Fund. Between HoWest's internationally acclaimed course in Digital Arts and Entertainment and Ghent's Larian Studios, **it's clear that the games industry in Flanders is centred on the Kortrijk-Ghent axis.** However, it appears that neither students nor the studios have major commitments to sound as part of game and app development.

Reason 3: starting in 2021, with the opening of the **Winter Circus**, a large community of IT professionals and developers will be working a mere 150 metres from VIERNULVIER. The urban development company SOGent is renovating the building, which dates back to 1885, and creating 4,350m² of workspaces where technology companies will collaborate on solutions to societal challenges. With this move, Ghent is set to compete for recognition as a European city of technology. Together with Democrazy, under the banner of a separate non-profit organisation,

we want to run the new concert hall housed within the Winter Circus (as opposed to the entire Winter Circus). This is a circular space for 500 people – a standing audience – and is set to be operational by the end of 2023.

example: immersive sound, 360° projection & Sound Lab (KASK)

At our request, the concert hall will be equipped with innovative audio and visual technologies. Immersive sound removes the separation between the stage and the audience. It replaces stereophonic imaging with an experience where a sound source can be positioned at virtually any point in the room. We consulting with the company Amptec to equip both the hall and a new Sound Lab belonging to KASK's jazz, pop, classical, composition and production departments with this 360° technology. We have a similar plan with the company Barco, with a view to installing 360° image projection, 6 metres high [#DIG].

Starting in 2024, VIERNULVIER will provide financial, technical and developmental support to artists developing technology-driven work. Examples include Tsar B, Catarina Barbieri, Lorenzo Senni, Amnesia Scanner and Nkisi. We use the Sound Lab at KASK for this purpose. A fibre connection links the lab and the room and allows work to be forwarded for presentation.

In addition to Democrazy, KASK, Barco and Amptec, we established a consortium with RITCS and Le Fresnoy. RITCS has committed to including immersive sound in the curriculum of their professional bachelor in audiovisual arts and stage technology, and will also organise internships. Le Fresnoy (lefresnoy.net), the post-graduate art and audiovisual research centre in Tourcoing, France (less than an hour by train from Ghent!), is deploying the support of its network of students, alumni and international lecturers. Together, we are also monitoring paths to funding within the European Interreg programme. Internationally, we note examples in the cases of Berlin Atonal, Bassiani in Tbilisi and MUTEK in Montreal.

DUE TO THE SUBSIDY RECEIVED BEING LOWER THAN APPLIED FOR, VIERNULVIER CANNOT RECRUIT AN ADDITIONAL RESEARCHER/ PRODUCER WITH KNOWLEDGE OF AND NETWORK CONNECTIONS IN VISUAL ARTS AND GAMES. ADDITIONAL FUNDS FOR ARTISTS' FEES ARE ALSO SCARCE. THIS POLICY PERIOD WILL THEREFORE BE USED TO FIND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR THIS NEW ACTIVITY. THE NUMBER AND SCALE OF PROJECTS WILL DEPEND ON HOW SUCCESSFUL WE ARE IN DOING SO.

2.3.1.4. Space for summer

Public space is increasingly being privatised. Artists who used to be able to make use of vacant buildings without many formalities are faced with temporary-use formats, where creative development serves as to herald the arrival of high-end residential, retail and 'experiential' developments. We investigated whether our spaces are being used to their maximum potential. This proved not to be the case during the summer. Even after accounting for breaks due to maintenance work, we still have usable studios and halls. Since the corona-summer 2020, VIERNULVIER has been handing out keys for 4 weeks at a time to all organisations in residence with us: Gouvernement, Bebe Books, Jong Gewei, Black History Month, Mama's Open Mic, Manoeuvre and Platform-K. They share the spaces and ensure artists can do their work. We provide technical and production support.

Since September 2021, VIERNULVIER no longer programmes within the conventional theatre season, but instead divides the year into three periods: Our Fall (September–January), Our Spring (February–May) and Our Summer (June–August). No winter at VIERNULVIER! The summer will be a season with a focus on development, with partners and artists who need space. They take over the place while much of the regular team have their holidays [#WW].

2.3.1.5. Home-based residencies

Corona blew the international cultural programming out of the water. Foreign artists could no longer travel and cultural programmers gave the freed-up space to local artists. For ecological reasons, international touring was already under pressure. Not only do closed borders mean slim pickings for audiences, it's also hard-hitting for artists with small local 'markets' in African or South American countries, for example. VIERNULVIER supports artists in their own neighbourhoods and cities through the granting of home-based residencies. It is no longer acceptable for cultural programmers to be jetting around the globe looking for new talents and bringing them to Europe without learning more about, and investing in, their commitment to the place they grew up in [#SUST]. To this end, we have been working for five years with the Khashabi Theatre in Haifa and the Panorama Raft Festival in Rio de Janeiro. Each year we support the development of one or two three-month projects from each of these regions. In consultation with the organisation and the artist, we come to an agreement in which we establish a professional working basis. This includes financial, spatial, technical, and production support and network connections. Artists are invited for an online artist talk at the end. The reflection formats Six impossible Things Before Breakfast and Practice Makes Practice (see 2.3.5.2.) are a good context for this. With these four policy decisions, we strengthen our mission with respect to development. Below you can

⁶ Pool of experts: our in-house dramaturge and cultural programmers, as well as Elsemieke Scholte (Toneelhuis), Jozef Wouters (Decoratelier), Bram van Oostveldt (UGent), Pol Heyvaert / Kristof Blom (CAMPO), Nora Mahammed (Het Theaterfestival), Agnes Quackels (Kaaithheater), Amelie Aernoudts (destudio), and others.

⁷ We have co-produced projects such as HOOGTIJ/Laagtij, KONNEKTOR and Night Shift, provided studios for residents, given support regarding HR, and more.

read how this benefits the communication strategy with regard to audiences and professionals, as well as the financial support for artists.

2.3.2. Production

2.3.2.1. Music

We have to make choices [#WW]. Production at VIERNULVIER is focused mainly on music and less so on performing arts. Within that focus, we tend to go for the transmedial and polyphonic.

Eight times a year we put our Balzaal to use as a working / community space for musicians – see development. If that leads to a new production, distribution is possible – starting in 2022 – under the **new label VIERNULVIER Records**. The first release, *The Shedding of Skin*, is the debut LP by Belgian-Iraqi Use Knife and is set for release during Videodroom in October 2022. For the label to gain momentum, a release rate of 2-3 productions a year is the target. For communications, digital sales and production, we're working together with Pieter Dudal of Dauw.

VIERNULVIER Records releases work by musicians who are actively engaged in visual or audiovisual projects. This has commonalities with plans for the Winter Circus and with the festivals Out the Frame and Videodroom. It also means that we choose only those musical projects that fall outside the bounds of the regular circuit – read: the musician's existing label. We are establishing a network of partners to produce these live projects. They will co-produce (residencies, financial and technical support) and guarantee musicians a place within their festivals or concert series: Trix, Wilde Westen, AB, Volta, STUK, De Grote Post, De Studio, among others. Within this policy plan, we are working towards a long-term relationships with a select number of international partners, such as Rewire Festival, De Brakke Grond, Curtas Festival, CTM Festival and Unsound Festival.

VIERNULVIER no longer opts for long-term engagements with musicians as resident artists, as we did previously with Nkisi, Charlotte Adigéry and Roman Hiele. The rhythm of production among musicians cannot be pinned down to a five-year period. It is more interesting to give full support for one entire project: from residency to co-production, performance opportunities and the release of their AV production. This would typically encompass a period of two years.

Performing arts and music intersect when enquiries are made by theatre-makers and choreographers. They come looking for advice and guidance in collaborating with musicians or composers. We're happy to help. Interesting examples include the collaboration between theatre-maker Roland Gunst and Laryssa Kim, and between choreographer Alexander Vantournhout and musicians Ben Bertrand and Andrea Belfi for the performances *Snake Arms* and *Through the Grapevine*. VIERNULVIER was also the go-between for KRANKK and Platform-K's collaboration. If there is space, we provide a co-production budget for that. This can result in musicians finding connections to other disciplines and audiences.

2.3.2.2. Performing arts

The way we define our production remit is centred on performing arts. Reason 1: the past five years have taught us that to fully assume the role of executive producer in performing arts productions requires a substantial increase in the staff team [#WW]: business support, preparing applications, production, technicians, distribution, tour management, and so on. This expansion is neither realistic nor desirable. It would also cut into our presentation remit: we would have to provide 'finishing time' in our halls. In a city with a population growing at a rate of 1,000 residents a year, we don't want to start cutting into our offering. 2: VIERNULVIER believes that a multitude of artist-focused organisations are better placed to sustainably produce the work of performing artists. They have the know-how to respond to a project's unique dynamic. A shift toward more centralisation is detrimental. The international success of the Flemish performing arts is thanks in part to the diversity of small production houses here. Finally, reason 3: Ghent's cultural landscape features more than 100 organisations dedicated to producing theatre, dance or performance in the city. That includes a lot of solid players: 4Hoog, Action Zoo Humain, CAMPO, Cie Cecilia, Irene Wool, Kloppend Hert, KOPERGIETERY, Opera Ballet Vlaanderen, l'hommmm, Larf!, LOD, NTGent, Ontroerend Goed, La Geste and Ultima Thule. Clearly no need for VIERNULVIER to scale up in this area.

VIERNULVIER limits its remit as a **producer** for theatre, dance and performance to 1-3 participatory projects per year that go beyond the classic black-box performance and bring a wide diversity of people to the stage [#SW]. Consider the participatory work *Dominoes* by Station House Opera (09.2019), *Multitud* by Tamara Cubas (11.2019), *All The Sex I've Ever Had* by Mammalian Diving Reflex (12.2019) and *Zon dag kind* in collaboration with *Beyond The Spoken* (07.2021). On the agenda for 2023 is *Bodies of Knowledge* by Sarah Vanhee, a participatory work that calls for new partnerships and methodologies. This is how we make a difference – see participation.

As **co-producers**, we are continuing in our commitment. Together with LOD, we co-produce ten projects a year by mostly project-funded artists whose work flirts with music or movement. In addition to a budget and two weeks of technical 'finishing time', we arrange a series of premiere dates, inviting press and (inter) national programmers. Audience members can attend this work as part of the **10X10** series: 10 shows by 10 makers for €10. This yields an audience brimming with curiosity.⁸ 2023 holds new work by Menzo Kircz and Eleonore Van Godtsenhoven, Carolina Maciel de França, Mercedes Dassy, Rosie Sommers & Micha Goldberg, Silvia Calderoni & Ilenia Caleo, Georgia Nardin and Sophia Rodriguez. Every season, the Leietheater in Deinz presents four creations from 10X10.

In 2023 and 2024, together with Victoria Deluxe, CAMPO, Productiehuis Rotterdam and vzw Touché, we are co-producing Barbara Raes and Beyond the Spoken's project **Rituals of Regret**.

VIERNULVIER is committing its full support to six artists/companies until 2027. Their needs are the basis for our work: 'what can we do for you?'. These **resident artists** are at the heart of the programme and can count on technical, production and financial support. From evaluations with previous resident artists, we know that they appreciate the support in HR, good governance, negotiations with governments, business policy, and so on. We choose artists of international renown or potential, who to realise our decision to focus more strongly on dance and performance, and who are have links with the academic world.

1. Brussels-Danish choreographer and dancer **Mette Ingvarsten** (metteingvarsten.net) graduated from P.A.R.T.S. in 2004. She earned a PhD in choreography at UNIARTS and was artist-in-residence at the Kaaitheater in Brussels and the Volksbühne in Berlin.

- showing and co-producing 'To Come' in 2022 at the Arsenal site (ov), *The Skate Park Piece* (2023-24) and subsequent creations;
- embedding the work in the city: collaboration with Museum Dr. Guislain around use of archival material for 2024 creation and research project with prof. Stalpaert and theatre studies students from UGent;
- exchange of social/societal views;
- financial commitment: co-production, fees for presentation and collaboration with partners from our platform.

2. We're extending our collaboration with Alexander Vantournhout / Not Standing (notstanding.be). At VIERNULVIER, he has produced *Red Haired Men* (2018), *Screws* (2019), *Through the Grapevine* (2020) and *Contre-Jour* (2021). He is an associate artist of le CENTQUATRE in Paris.

- **showing and co-producing** *Foreshadow* (2023), *Reframing* (2024) and subsequent creations;
- **financial:** co-production, fees for presentation and collaboration with partners from our platform.

3. When **les ballets C de la B** and **Kabinet K** decided to start the unique project **La Geste** together, VIERNULVIER was happy to lend it its support.

- showing and co-producing the work of Joke Laureyns and Kwint Manshoven, including *Someone will be missing* in 2023;
- further developing the dance landscape in the city through local anchoring of international artists Andrew Graham (2023: *Parade at the Opera*), Eric Minh Cuong Castaing, Sofiane and Selma Ouissi (2025);
- presenting at least one La Geste supported project per year;
- financial: co-production, fees for presentation and collaboration with partners from our platform.

4. **Joshua Serafin** is a Brussels-Filipino artist who mixes dance, performance and visual art. Serafin attended school at the Philippine High School for the Arts and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. He recently graduated from P.A.R.T.S. and is now pursuing a master's degree at the KASK. His work poses questions about identity, transmigration, queer politics and representation.

- showing and co-producing *Cosmological Gangbang* and subsequent creations;
- administrative follow-up regarding visas and work permits;
- financial: co-production, fees for presentation and collaboration with partners from our platform.

5. **Damaged Goods** (damagedgoods.be) produces the work of **Meg Stuart** and **Jozef Wouters** worldwide. Meg Stuart has an ongoing collaboration with Hebbel am Ufer (Berlin). She won the 2008 Flemish Culture Prize for the Performing Arts, Jozef Wouters in 2019.

- showing and co-producing the creations *The Matter* (2022), *The Alien* (2023), *Mystery School* (2023), *The Dance On Ensemble project* (2024), *COLLIDE/work title* (2025), 2026 creation with Forced Entertainment; Jozef Wouters' Decoratelier provides a pied-à-terre in Brussels for VIERNULVIER-affiliated artists;
- financial: co-production, fees for presentation and collaboration with partners from our platform;
- S.M.A.K., Design Museum, KASK, Platform-K, Gouvernement and UGent.

⁸ In recent years, we co-produced the work of Roland Gunst, buren, Winter Family, Femke Gyselincx, Mohamed Toukabri, Alexia Leysen, Collectief Elan(D), Gorges Ocloo and Benjamin Abel Meirhaeghe.

6. Belgian-Rwandan artist **Laura Nsengiyumva** explores themes of diasporic experience, multiple identity, North-South relations and empathy. She talks about these issues through images and interventions in colonised spaces. Her transcendental view of history is based on human stories that invite us to search for what brings us together. Nsengiyumva is an artistic researcher at KASK.

- **showcasing and co-producing** Queen Nikkolah and future projects;
- **financial:** co-production, fees for presentation and collaboration with partners from our platform.

Further down in this plan, we describe our research into a new form of governance that gives everyone who contributes to the imagining of VIERNULVIER more say. It is our desire to also make resident artists complicit in the strategic decisions made at VIERNULVIER. This commitment is part of the financial agreements we made with each of them. Every year, VIERNULVIER co-produces about 20 artists or companies within the performing arts. For 2023, in addition to our resident artists, this includes Sophia Rodriguez, Begum Erciyas, Carolina Maciel de França, Stef Van Looveren, Eduardo Ripani, Marion Siefert, Georgia Nardin, Haider Al Timimi, Ligia Lewis, and Berlin, among others. We also have six organisations in residence up until 2027 – see participation. Our collaborations with Bebe Books, Platform-K, Black History Month, Mama’s Open Mic, Manoeuvre and Jong Gewei also entail the co-production of their projects.

Every summer, VIERNULVIER partners with a **foreign festival**. In 2022, this will be one of the oldest festivals in **Santarcangelo**, in the north of Italy. In 2023, we head to a partner from the European **BEPART** network. This allows us to present co-productions to an international audience (of cultural programmers).

2.3.2.3. MONUMENT

The new Monument programme category is production-oriented. The possibilities for artistic creations using the VIERNULVIER monument as a subject and context are exciting. We choose to do this in measured doses. A full-fledged Monument programme line would mean an expansion of our team and resources [#WW]. Still, we will go ahead and make Monument a programme category, albeit filled out with music, talks, performing arts, and so on.

Twice in this policy period, we are commissioning an artist to take the building and its fascinating history as the subject of a new work. This could be a concert walk, a performance or a physical intervention. Examples include the murals by Bonom (2018) and Sarah Yu Zeebroek together with Haitham Haddad (2022) on the terrace-facing facade, the tiled floor by Swiss artist Christoph Hefti in the entrance area (2019) and the artistic audio tour Kunst Veredelt (‘Art Ennobles’, 2020) created by Katinka de Jonge. In this way, VIERNULVIER is steadily building a collection for and about this protected monument. For the next policy period, we are choosing to finish the rear facade. Ferdinand Dierkens, the building’s architect, included a pedestal for a statue (that never came to be) and two flagpoles atop the impressive rear facade. VIERNULVIER is writing up two calls to rectify the situation. These permanent interventions will lead to a separate path through the building – see presentation.

2.3.3. Presentation

2.3.3.1. Programme structure, festivals & guest curators

With at least 150 stage performances⁹ a year, plus 110 concerts, 85 talks and debates, 80 nightlife events and 10 festivals, VIERNULVIER is a major presentation hub. And we’d like to keep it that way in the coming years!

Our programme is the sum of our **own artistic activities** as well as **network** and **rental activities**. VIERNULVIER’s cultural programmers are responsible for around 95 performances, 55 concerts and 42 talks / debates, 10 nightlife events and 6 festivals. Over the past five years, the number of network activities has increased. This is the result of our **platform scheme**. Either we ourselves approach partners who could strengthen the programme and publicise it widely, or we engage in projects with people who come knocking on our door and who fit with our values and artistic vision to such an extent that we join them to see what we can do to boost the project: substantively, financially, production-wise or in terms of audience engagement and communication. Then there are also rental activities, which, in addition to having inherent content value, can attract new audiences and supplement our own revenues.

A **multidisciplinary programme team** monitors the balance between these three programme segments. In addition, every week during an **intake meeting**, everyone who feels the impact of including new activities in our calendar – programmers, stage technicians, housekeeping, production, communication and catering/hospitality – decide together which requests we accept and which place they will have in our programme [#WW]. The external evaluation committee on this: ‘The committee is happy to hear that the calendar comprises three components (artistic activities, rental, network) based on a compass in which the

mission, network, budget and time & space are the guiding factors. That the voice of housekeeping team is equal to the voice of the engineering or artistic team in deciding whether certain activities can go ahead points to the concern for internal workload capacity that VIERNULVIER seeks to demonstrate.’

In the coming years, we are not going for a growth in the number of presentations. The following diagram gives an idea of a standard year:

	Artistic activities		Network		Rental	
performing arts	56 presentations	30 Theaterzaal 4 Opera 16 Minard 16 Domzaal (completing 10x10)	7 presentations	7 Theaterzaal	14 presentations	12 Live Comedy 2 Open options
	1 festival	Smells Like Circus, among others Ghent International Festival	1 festival	Theatre festival, among others		
	20 co-presentations	CAMPO Bijloke Wonderland Opera Company Cecilia Campus Atelier Santarcangelo LOD				
talks	30 presentations	8 Uitgelezen in Theaterzaal 2 Open options Theaterzaal 4 Toestanden in Balzaal 2 Open options in Balzaal 4 Six impossible things 10 Artist talks	32 presentations	25 Foyer Theaterzaal 1 Concertzaal 2 Theaterzaal 2 Domzaal 2 Balzaal	3 presentations	2 Theaterzaal 1 Focus
	8 online	8 Uitgelezen	4 focus	1 Nacht van de Vrijdenker 1 Binnenkoppers 1 Open options		
	1 focus					
music	29 presentations	12 Videoroom concerts 13 Artist presentations 14 Open options	42 presentations	5 Balzaal 5 Concertzaal 32 via Democracy — 20 concertzaal — 10 Balzaal — 2 Theaterzaal	11 presentations	5 Theaterzaal 1 Balzaal 5 Concertzaal
	33 co-presentations	2 De Koer 10 Theresia 15 Democracy 1 Boomtown 5 Miry				
	2 festivals	Out the Frame Videoroom	2 festivals	Desertfest Dunk!festival		

⁹ Small participatory performances of the kind that may play 30 times during a festival, for example, may drive up this number and explain the sometimes higher figures in our annual reports.

	Artistic activities		Network		Rental	
food	8 presentations	4 Majolica Sessions 4 Balzaal				
nightlife	8 presentations	2 Closing parties for festivals 3 Open format 1 Radio Ruit 1 Proeftuin 1 Stimular			60 presentations	45 Concertzaal – 11 Nasty Monday – 10 Lucky Lemon – 13 students – 11 parties 15 Balzaal
mix	2 focus	1 Black History Month 1 Open option	1 focus	1 Festive of Equality		
private			10 private	5 Balzaal 5 Foyer Theaterzaal	14 private	4 Balzaal 4 Foyer Theaterzaal 4 Concert hall 2 Theaterzaal

From now on the presentations of VIERNULVIER will proceed in line with the rhythm of **autumn, spring and summer**, under the banner of around **10 festivals** a year that we either programme ourselves or host. This too has a big impact on work volume [#WW]. Festivals allow us to speed up or slow down. They create contexts for less self-evident formats, entice people to become acquainted with new artistic work, challenge us to work with changing partners and allow us to give artists a voice in the public debate.¹⁰

These themed festivals remain a part of our programme. Some are recurring festivals, while others are one-offs. An example of a recurring festival (and one of our own) is **OPENBARE WERKEN**, which connects artists – some of them from our City Atelier – with the city and its inhabitants in the public spaces in and around Ghent's Zuid neighbourhood. There will be a third edition of **Women and Children First** [own festival] in spring 2023. The festival will take modern witchcraft as its subject. Part of the Breaking the Spell network, the festival is co-funded by the Kulturstiftung des Bundes and produces and presents work by Agata Siniarska, Kate McIntosh, Begum Erciyas, Samara Hersch, Lina Majdalanie, Ivana Müller and Sarah Vanhee.

We have learned a lot about working with **international guest curators**. Their presence is necessary to create a programme that connects with our team and the Flemish arts field. As for festivals from 2023 onward, we are holding talks with Keith ZingaKing (Munich), Róise Goan (Dublin/London), Jay Pather (Cape Town) and Brian Lobel (London).

VIERNULVIER has programme categories: **performing arts, music, monument, nightlife, resident, talks and food**.

2.3.3.2. PERFORMING ARTS

In consultation with our colleagues in Ghent, in the coming years we will be putting more emphasis on **dance, performance** and **circus** and less on theatre. We also have big plans to pave the way for **spoken word** and **text on stage**.

De VIERNULVIER has been a prominent venue for **dance** since the late 1990s. At Theo Van Rompay's farewell as deputy director of P.A.R.T.S., he stated that no theatre worked more, or more broadly, with P.A.R.T.S. alumni than VIERNULVIER. An anecdote, sure, but one with heft. Still, Ghent is not a city of dance. Few professional companies are active and receptive venues are also limited: all the more reason for us to make a commitment to dance.

Our decision to embrace **circus** grew out of the network we have had since 2015 from organising Smells Like Circus. Ghent is known internationally as a circus city. The Halfvasterfoor ('Mid-Lent Fair'), the equestrian society Le Cercle Equestre, the Hippodrome and the Winter Circus form the historical basis of circus life in Flanders. Many famous circus directors and performers have sprung from Ghent and the city remains a home and a

centre of professional activity for many contemporary circus artists. The Flemish support centre for circus is based out of Ghent, as is social history museum Huis van Alijn, which presents a large heritage collection documenting Belgium's circus history. Circusplaneet, Miramiro and KASK also continue to put Ghent on the European circus map. Every two years, these players join forces to organise Smells Like Circus under the coordination of VIERNULVIER and Miramiro. We also programme about three major circus shows a year.

Artistic work acquires meaning within frames of reference that are co-determined by art centres. They (we!) define the aesthetics or artistic codes for making and understanding art. We could stand to be more aware of this power. Many artists are leaving mainstream art spaces behind to develop new practices. They set their own agenda by, for example, linking their local diaspora with historical and geopolitical dynamics. **Spoken word** is an art form centred on recitation. It is an umbrella term for poetry intended to be recited. Hip-hop-related art forms such as **rap** and **beatbox** are come under this banner, as do **comedy** and **storytelling**. A building like De Vooruit with its stages, studios, a café and plenty of main and side entrances has all the space needed for this. Even just within our own team, such boundary-questioning work leads to reflection on our frames of reference. Bringing this 'benign provocation' to a wider audience is a nice challenge. To this end, in October 2021 VIERNULVIER strengthened its programme team with Sarah Bekambo. A slam poet herself, she previously worked for Urban Woorden in Leuven and as a programmer at deSingel. Voem, Slam Aleikum, Vermeylenfonds and De Stroaete are our partners.

Our **stage programme** combines young work by Belgian (see 10X10) and international creators with the work of mid-career artists. We programme for our own Theaterzaal (cap. 620), our Domzaal (200) and for the Minard Theatre (217/291), as well as the occasional activity for places like the LOD studio or the Arsenal site. Whenever possible, VIERNULVIER goes for a series of two to four performances. Under the current model, it is financially more interesting for Flemish performing artists to produce than to perform, even though they would like to do so more often. When it comes to presentations, they are mostly hired only for the day of the show. Avoiding one-off shows is our answer to that [#POTA].

A BUDGET INCREASE FOR MORE INTERNATIONAL PERFORMING ARTS WORK WAS NOT HONOURED, PUTTING SIGNIFICANT PRESSURE ON THE COMMITMENT BELOW.

There has been a scarcity of major (inter)national performing arts work in the past years. This is due to our limited artistic budget and infrastructure constraints in Ghent. The growth of that budget is crucial. VIERNULVIER must be internationally relevant as an art institution. This is also a challenge for the city to address. After all, after affordable housing, cultural and nightlife offerings are the most important settlement factor for young people. The Ghent housing market is so overheated that young people are moving away to Ostend, Kortrijk, Deinze, where the cultural offering has gained in quality. If Ghent does not want the average age of its population to continue rising, projects such as the Arsenal site (3,4) and a new venue for major (international) work are important. The Flemish arts landscape

also stands to benefit from stronger alliances with international companies and co-producers. We are in support of a study by the City of Ghent, IDEA Consult and the Gents Kunstenoverleg concerning the need, set-up and financing of a new hall. It is already clear that it should be a shared space.

In the short term, we are using the Opera's larger performance area. However, availability is limited and its limited audience capacity (650) means profitability is in turn limited. We agreed that for the period up until July 2025 – when the hall will close for renovations – we will have the hall at our disposal three times a year for three days for works by Romeo Castellucci, Florentina Holzinger, Martin Zimmermann or Marlene Monteiro Freitas, for example. We also present a larger dance performance every year at the Leitheater in Deinze: in 2023 Mette Ingvartsen, in 2024 François Chaignaud. The Arsenal site can serve as a venue for site-specific work.

In addition to the co-presentations during Ghent International Festival and Smells Like Circus, VIERNULVIER takes care of cross-selling and communication for four to six larger performances from NTGent's programme. We collaborate with CAMPO to present big projects like Camping Sunset in Ghent (Stef Van Looveren in 2023) and with KOPERGIETERY we support performances made by children for adult audiences, including new productions by Ontroerend Goed and L'Amicale de Production.

VIERNULVIER, Cie Cecilia and CAMPO are creating a Ghent platform for the presentation of **text-based theatre**. Cie Cecilia is a leader in the presentation of established and cutting-edge text-based theatre at their venue The Expedition and at Minard. VIERNULVIER and CAMPO will join as partners for special and larger projects. By doing so, we guarantee the presence of Flemish text theatre in a city without a cultural centre in the typical sense. Theatre also features in the programme of NTGent, Minard, Capitole and KOPERGIETERY.

Every two years, we co-produce and present a production by **Theatre Antigone**. In 2024, this will be Havoc by Haider Al-Timimi. For other productions, we serve as the bridge to local partners such as Cie Cecilia and Minard. Additionally, we select, co-produce and present one creation every year as part of 10X10. In 2023, this will be Edoardo Ripani's 'La Montagne'. VIERNULVIER and Antigone are also joining forces in support of Jong Gewei, one of our organisations-in-residence – see participation. Cie Cecilia is also a regular 10X10 partner.

VIERNULVIER is extending its partnership with **Africalia** until 2026 (africalia.be), and is thus boosted financially and in terms of content, enabling the presentation of artists from the African diaspora and the connection of these artists with the Ghent scene of artists, students and members of the public.

¹⁰ In recent years our festivals looked at gender, sexuality and privilege during Women and Children First (2019 and 2020) and With Pleasure (2019), at decolonisation during Same Same but Different (2019), at rituals during Amen & Beyond (2019) and at activism, public space and urban life during Openbare Werken (2018 and 2021), The Palestinian Connection (2018) and The May Events (2018).

The following mix of innovation and tradition is what we seek to present in the coming years:

- **Performing arts:** Daniel Linehan, Motus, Eric Ming Cuong Castaing, Andrew Graham, Romeo Castellucci, Amanda Piña, Nadia Beugré, Rosana Cade & Ivor McAskill, Sophia Rodriguez, Begum Erciyas, Simon Senn, François Chaignaud, Lia Rodrigues, Alice Ripoll, Juan Dominguez, Marco Torrice, Peaches, Nach, Marion Siéfert, Ana Pi, Rosas, Peeping Tom, Ultima Vez, Meg Stuart, Jozef Wouters, Stef Van Looveren, Ontroerend Goed, Femke Gyselinck, Radouan Mriziga, Marlene Monteiro Freitas, Trajal Harrell, Nora Chipaumire, El Conde de Torrefiel, Bruno Beltrao, Bashar Murkus, Alessandro Sciarroni, Berlin, Anna Rispoli, SPIN, Benjamin Abel Meirhaeghe, Tamara Cubas, Ligia Lewis, Jan Martens, Florentina Holzinger, La Horde/Ballet National de Marseille, Nomcebisi Moyikwa, Mamela Nyamza, Joshua Serafin, Giorgia Ohanesian Nardin, Lisbeth Gruwez, Mohamed Toukabri, laGeste, Anna Rispoli, Kate McIntosh, Barbara Raes/Beyond the Spoken, among others.
- **Circus:** Alexander Vantourhout, There There Company, Side-Show Cie, Cie Un Loup pour l'Homme, Arno Ferrera, Elena Zanzu, Camille Paycha, Ballet Acrobatique de Tanger, Phia Ménard/Cie Non Nova, Mardulier & Deprez, Jakobe Geens & Margot Janssens, Mélissa Von Vépy, Kurt Demey, Cie XY, Tsihaka Harrivel, Chloé Moglia, Cie EaEo, Collectif Malunés, Martin Zimmermann, PDF-Portés de Femmes, Grensgeval, Fouad Nafilli, Stanley Ollivier, among others
- **Spoken word:** Lisette Ma Neza, Mama's Open Mic, Koleka Putuma, Athena Farrokhzad, Pelumi Adejumo, Hind Eljadid, among others.

VIERNULVIER organises three recurring performing-arts festivals:

- **Smells Like Circus** [own festival] injects the world of circus with a healthy dose of innovation and excitement. Every two years (2022, 2024, 2026), this five-day festival offers circus professionals and general audiences a combination of exceptional national and international work, workshops and debates. VIERNULVIER takes the lead together with Miramiro and works on a long-term basis with CAMPO, KOPERGIETERY, Circusplaneet, KASK (The Circus Dialogues Continued) and Circuscentrum.

A BUDGET INCREASE FOR MORE INTERNATIONAL PERFORMING ARTS WORK WAS NOT HONOURED, PUTTING PRESSURE ON THE COMMITMENT BELOW.

[NEW] Ghent International Festival (GIF) [own festival] represents the joined forces of VIERNULVIER, Opera Ballet Vlaanderen, SMAK, NTGent, KOPERGIETERY and CAMPO. The festival presents work that goes beyond the ordinary. It focuses on a super-diverse urban context and come 2024 – when it will be moving to April – it will be based on the

public domain. The core of the programme consists of new works tailored to the city by Belgian and international makers. This biennial had its first edition in January 2022. GIF targets young audiences and will be part of Ghent European Youth Capital 2024. It aims to become a festival of European renown in the run-up to Ghent's candidacy for European Capital of Culture 2030. The programme is created by programmers from all our core partners. Funding is provided from their own resources, supplemented by sponsorship and a contribution from the city marketing fund.¹¹

- **At Het Theaterfestival** [hosted festival] (theatrefestival.be) audiences and professionals meet to select a jury. Its location alternates between Kaaitheater, deSingel and De Vooruit. The next editions to take place in Ghent will be in September of 2022 and 2025. While De Vooruit will be the heart of these Ghent editions, the theatre fest also descends on pretty much all of the city's theatre venues: NTGent, CAMPO, KOPERGIETERY, De Kazematten, Compagnie Cecilia, and more. As a leading partner of the festival, VIERNULVIER looks forward to the upcoming editions led by Nora Mohammed, including input from neighbourhood juries.

Rather a focus than a festival: VIERNULVIER participates in **Black History Month** each year with dance, slam, music and nightlife. De Vooruit will be the base of operations in Ghent for the organisation behind this nationwide initiative.

During the summer, our own halls and studios are mainly used for development and production. We play our part in strengthening the cultural-landscape by co-programming with various partners: for example, in 2023 at **Bijloke Wonderland**, – the festival in which De Bijloke and LOD take the lead – and internationally or as co-presenters at foreign festivals such as **Santarcangelo Festival**, **Festival de Marseille** or at the venues of BEPART network partners – see participation.

2.3.3.3. MUSIC

Ghent has many musical registers in its command. The title Unesco Creative City of Music is recognition of that. In Ghent's multitude of concerts, our music programme is only relevant when it is complementary. VIERNULVIER plays the role of a connecting and supporting platform for **contemporary and experimental music**, not bound by genre, convention or location. This yields an eclectic mix of genres and audiences united by their artistic progressiveness. Most artists – whether Belgian or international – are performers who take risks and are susceptible to falling into the cracks between genres. Many are on the fringe of the mainstream, yet they still bring

in a large and diverse audience of people who are less served by the club circuit. VIERNULVIER focuses on artists with strong links to performance art, visual art, video and transversal work, who challenge the status quo by developing new approaches to presentation. There is a strong tradition of electronic music that exists between the dance floor and the art school. We are also a place that programmes new, non-West European artists who are not part of the circuit of so-called world music. Since 2017, we have aimed for gender-equal programming for festivals, residencies and presentations, and we are in constant dialogue with partners about this.

VIERNULVIER itself programmes around 60 concerts a year – some of which being the result of residencies, some part of a concert series or festival.

Ruiskamer is one such concert series in collaboration with the Conservatorium's MIRY Concert Hall. The collaboration clearly reflected in the programme: MIRY draws on its network with respect to (contemporary) classical music, while VIERNULVIER serves as the bridge to the contemporary experimental scene. Each evening, an alumnus provides an intervention of some kind. From organ improvisations to meditative ambient to contrary avant-garde: the world of Ruiskamer knows few boundaries.

With the **Left Waves** series, we and Democrazy are planting seeds for our future programme at the Winter Circus. Left Waves focuses on electronic music and ambient. We also continue to collaborate with **De Koer**, a lively venue in the heart of the Brugse Poort neighbourhood. There, we put together small-scale concerts featuring emerging artists who are less served by large venues [co-presentations #WW].

Theresia, which makes use of a vacant 1644 monastery in the heart of the city, is rather a generous summer concept than a concert series. In August and September, VIERNULVIER programmes ten concerts in the overgrown courtyard garden together with cultural platform Monterey and Democrazy. The performers are selected from Ghent's artistic scene, complemented by emerging (inter)national names, from dream pop to flamenco, electronica, and ambient. Its capacity is 200 people. After a flying start in summer 2021, there will be another edition in 2022. After that, the monastery will be assigned a new use, allowing us to move to another 'temporary use location' [co-presentations #WW].

Four **festivals** serve to drive up the momentum of our music programme:

- **Out the Frame** [own festival] explores the expanding universe of hip-hop. It's growing from a one-day to a two-day festival, and it's getting an outdoor summer edition, too. In spring, the festival opens on a Friday with larger concerts held in the Concertzaal. Then, on the Saturday, acts play the stages of De Vooruit's surprising front wing. We're collaborating with All Eyes on Hip Hop and strengthening the festival through our new spoken word programme category. During the Ghent Festivities, Out the Frame will take over the Boomtown stage for one night. VIERNULVIER receives international attention with Out the Frame. The Quietus: 'The inaugural Out the Frame Festival is a lesson in female power, Belgian hip hop and Afrofuturistic capabilities.' Building on this strength, in 2024 we will develop Out the Frame into the festival that – in early February, after the exam period – presents new work with a link to technology. The hall below the Winter Circus, equipped with 360° sound and image, will be the place for audiovisual productions and nightlife activities, while the stages at De Vooruit will be alive with talks, installations and performances. That Berlin's CTM festival takes place during the same period is no coincidence. Film Fest Gent is Belgium's largest international film festival and, offering the perfect context and partner for **Videodroom** [own festival], where live music and film play leapfrog. This festival mostly comprises commissioned creations that VIERNULVIER (co-)produces.¹² International interest in Videodroom is growing, with projects also increasingly finding a second life on domestic and foreign stages. In this way we are growing our network of co-producers with the addition of film festivals that support soundtrack projects, such as in Curtas in Portugal or Lausanne in Switzerland, and festivals like Rewire (the Netherlands) or Unsound (Poland), which experiment with multimedia projects.
- **Desertfest** [hosted festival] is the annual three-day rendezvous for (heavy) rock, psycho, stoner and doom. After previous annual engagements in London and Berlin and a new edition in New York, the Antwerp editions at Trix were such a hit that a second Belgian venue is being added: De Vooruit. In October 2021 the festival was limited to one day in Ghent. Starting in 2022, we are going for a full weekend festival. Trix and VIERNULVIER mark their collaboration with an annual joint production that premieres at the festival in both Ghent and Antwerp. In '21, we chose guitar hero Rodrigo Fuentealba (50 Foot Combo, La Gauche) in combo with Ghent-based video and electronica artist Rien Coorevits. Post-rock festival **Dunk!Festival** [hosted festival] is moving from Zottegem to Ghent. Starting in May
- 2022 the annual festival will take advantage of De Vooruit's strengths as an indoor, multi-stage festival venue. This is a strength that we will continue to build on and that will no doubt be further strengthened by the venue in the Winter Circus from 2023 onwards. VIERNULVIER also contributes a production of its own to Dunk!Festival. In 2022, that will be the AV production of American artist Lingua Ignota.

¹¹ In 2022, GIF presents work by Johannes Müller & Philine Rinnert, Alain Platel, Frank Van Laecke and Steven Prensels, Ehsan Hemat, Mohamed Toukabri, Kim Noble, Michelle Gurevich, and more. The whole city is the stage: The platform is the city. The city is the platform.

¹² Past editions have included new work by Thurston Moore, GAIKA, Kevin Richard Martin, Condor Gruppe, Earth, Steve Gunn, Moor Mother and Mica Levi, among others.

For many years now, **Democracy** has been fulfilled its role as our main partner for pop and rock. This collaboration has been extended to 2027 and is a textbook example of our platform scheme in action. Democracy organises 30-35 evenings in the Concertzaal, Balzaal or Theaterzaal. They are given reserved dates. Democracy bears final responsibility for content and financials and works with VIERNULVIER for the technology, ticketing and communication side of things. Priority tasks include attracting internationally renowned artists and setting up an audience-focused operation with respect to Belgian talent. We also working with Democracy for Record Store Day, Left Waves and the Theresia summer stage. We will also partner with them for the programming and running of the new Winter Circus hall.

Limited exclusivity. We believe it is important to strengthen the concert landscape broadly by also collaborating with **Busker, MCLX, Kontzert** and **Metadrone**. Furthermore, our halls are available to rent by international concert promoters such as **Greenhouse Talent, Rumoer** and **Live Nation**.

2.3.3.4. NIGHTLIFE

In recent years, there has been a certain tension between the city and the nightlife sector. That nervous energy pops up everywhere. The common thread is the perception that nightlife activities are not viewed positively and supported. In 2020, a structured dialogue was established between the city and the nightlife sector, co-led by VIERNULVIER. This resulted in the appointment of a 'nightlife coach' and an action plan. VIERNULVIER is one of the nine sector representatives in the Ghent nightlife council, alongside experts on sustainability, drugs (prevention), safety (fire brigade and police), tourism and inclusion. With this, the City of Ghent recognises that a vibrant nightlife is part of the city's DNA, that it attracts tourists and young people, provides employment and is an important factor for foreign workers deciding whether to come and work for Ghent-based companies. For us, strengthening our nightlife programme category is not just a means of improving our range of activities, it's also about helping to create a city-wide dynamic nightlife climate. Maintaining the local cultural landscape.

Nightlife is an underused strength of VIERNULVIER. Located in the student district, we have a reputation when it comes to nightlife culture. This contributes to the perception of VIERNULVIER and – as proved by UGent's 2019 audience survey – serves as an entry point for many young people. The fact that our audiences for theatre, dance, debates and concerts are younger than many of the people who work here is no doubt a result of this.

VIERNULVIER became too dependent on a couple of external organisers for its nightlife events. For the past 20 years, nightlife events at De Vooruit have been far removed from our artistic programme. We are setting out to change that with three policy decisions. We are developing **our own line-up-driven nightlife events**, especially as part of festivals and at the Winter Circus. To this end, we are drawing on top international yet less commercial talent: DJs, performance artists and electronica acts. We are working with sponsor Alken-Maes¹³ to develop a **support policy for new organisers**, which aims to provide them with a budget and coaching for their artistic programme. And we're coaching **community-based** nightlife organisers from, for example, the African diaspora, the LGBTQ+ community, among others, so that our activities go even further toward reflecting the diversity of Ghent.

2.3.3.5. MONUMENT

'People, we work in a crazy-awesome building!,' remarked one of our youngest colleagues during the internal evaluation. In the chapter on production, we already described the potential for an artistic programme with the Vooruit monument as its subject and catalyst. But we are also taking steps in the area of heritage presentation. Over the past few years, we developed a permanent digital installation for the entrance area. This **Timewalker** allows you to browse through the history of VIERNULVIER going back to 1913. On it you can discover images of the building, learn about VIERNULVIER's social commitment and revisit certain highlights from past programmes: rehearsal footage of Ten Oorlog, footage of Nirvana's iconic concert here, the first LGBT+ parties, I Love Techno, and so on. The Timewalker contains photos and films from the archives of VRT, AVS, Amsab and Erfgoed Vlaanderen and was shortlisted for the 2021 Henry Van De Velde Awards in the digitisation category.

We are expanding the Timewalker with a **pocket archive**. This involves collecting videos and quotes that visitors share about VIERNULVIER on social media. These will be added to the Timewalker. In this way, visitors can take in the stories that were written and told at De Vooruit yesterday [#DIG]. This is in line with the methodology of UNESCO convention regarding intangible heritage, which encourages heritage making from a large group of practitioners. Ghent's **city guides** include the Timewalker in their city tours.

An internal realisation team set out to deepen and broaden the range of **tours** we offer ourselves. In addition to historical tours, we are working on tours about artists' permanent interventions, about contemporary architec-

ture, the technical machinery of the theatre, and sustainability. We're aiming for 35 tours a year, including one regular tour a month on a Sunday, tours on Open Monument Day and Heritage Day and an extensive range of tours during the Ghent Festivities. On top of that, we provide 40 tours a year at the request of schools, associations and companies. We also plan tours during school hours in consultation with OKAN schools (OKAN = onthaalklassen voor anderstalige nieuwkomers / 'welcome classes for non-native newcomers'). Their need for an introduction to basic Dutch and to Ghent's history is greater than their need for a theatre ticket.

We're aiming for a budget-neutral model, with the cost of guided tours being reimbursed by visitors. We are exploring whether volunteers can play a more prominent role in expanding our activities relating to tangible and intangible heritage. There is potential in this, we feel.

In 2024, VIERNULVIER – together with partners worldwide – will apply to UNESCO to be recognised as a **World Heritage Site**, see infrastructure. Once the nomination has been submitted, it will be necessary to create a more extensive cultural-touristic offering as well as policy for the further presentation of the monument. If additional funds are needed for this, VIERNULVIER will seek to find them on the private market or via tourism subsidies.

2.3.3.6. RESIDENT

The fact that VIERNULVIER is also a research and development centre for the arts is not sufficiently known. We are convinced that sharing this knowledge can help engage audiences who are less excited by seeing an end result than by seeing the societal, dramaturgical and technical research that goes into a production. We notice this interest among students, professors and businesspeople. With UGent and VOKA being our closest neighbours, there is a wealth of potential that, if tapped, could contribute to enhancing the quality of our residencies and establishing art as a challenging scientific and entrepreneurial domain.

Our residency activities deserve an active **editorial element**. Directed by the programming, audience engagement and communications team, people would be put to work communicating about and reflecting on the work made at VIERNULVIER. To this end, we are building a network of freelance journalists, theatre scholars and storytellers [#WW]. The result would be blogs and podcasts that find their audience through sites and social media platforms. Another direct result would be that this provides valuable material for the artists whose work is being documented. It strengthens the awareness of their name and helps them find (inter)national co-producers and venues at which to perform.

2.3.3.7. TALKS

We're making **Toestanden** into our main debate series on social issues [#SW #SUST] and organising it as a commons: organisations and individuals can join the editorial board based on a shared vision text. VIERNULVIER coordinates the editorial team and collaborates with Victoria Deluxe, Masereelfonds, Voem, Oikos, Graffiti vzw, ABVV and ACV Gent-Eeklo as permanent partners. Themes are determined together, speakers sought and artists engaged. Toestanden will take place four times in 2023 and has ambitions to become a regular event from 2024 on, with monthly occurrences, just like Uitgelezen.

Since 2003, VIERNULVIER has developed distinctive literary programming that introduced new literary formats such as **Uitgelezen**. With the arrival of the new city library, De Krook, literature has received more attention in the city. This allows VIERNULVIER to re-assess and focus on an on a different area of literature: spoken word. A group of slam poets, fiction actors and new literary organisers are giving Uitgelezen a makeover. In addition, every year we co-programme the **Amnesty International Chair**, the **Etienne Vermeersch Chair**, events of **Mama's Open Mic**, **Café Apache** and **CDO / Stadsacademie**.

Not to mention two festivals:

- The philosophy festival **Nacht van de Vrijdenker** [hosted festival]: (Inter)national speakers discuss pressing issues, spread across four – sold-out – halls. In 2021, we experimented with an online opening night, which allowed us to extend the discussion to include international luminaries.¹⁴ In the coming years, we will continue this research into hybrid formats [#DIG]. VIERNULVIER, with organiser Geuzenhuis, is part of the editorial team putting together the programme.
- **Festival van de Gelijkheid** [hosted festival] is more than just talks. It also comprises documentaries, concerts, workshops, poetry, theatre and performance. Welcoming around 16,000 visitors, for four days the Festival makes use of every nook and cranny of our building. It also descends on locations across the city, as well as its public spaces. VIERNULVIER uses the festival as a context for the work of performing artists.¹⁵ The festival is organised by Curieus vzw [#SW].

¹⁴ On the online programme in 2021 were: one of the founders of the field of evolutionary psychology David M. Buss, American historian of science Alice Dreger and Harvard professor Steven Pinker.

¹⁵ We have done this with the work of Ontroerend Goed, Kloppend Hert and Tamara Cubas.

¹³ part of our 2021–2025 contract

2.3.3.8. FOOD

VIERNULVIER has long pioneered the use of local, ecological and fair-trade (LEF) products. Translating this message to harder-to-reach social groups, both advantaged and disadvantaged, is more important than being the most radical in the class. With Food as a programme line, we assume a role in reducing food illiteracy. Food is an extraordinarily powerful medium for collectively and sustainably changing our thinking and actions. We organise (international) lectures, info sessions, workshops, fellowships and artistic projects for hospitality clients, audiences, staff and artists. Following previous experiments, over the next five years we will continue to develop this programme category together with social, scientific and educational partners such as GLUON, Voem(Veggie=Halal), Ghent University Museum, vzw Hwaiting, Forum Stadslandbouw, Green Deen vzw, Stadsacademie/CDO, UGent and Apache [#SUST].

example: the Majolica Food Sessions

Started in autumn 2021. Target audience: young people standing at the hob for the first time. We inspire them, in a playful way, to take a critical look at their meals. We invite chefs, artists (most recently Lennert Coorevits of Compact Disk Dummies), farmers, activists and scientists who are envisioning solutions to bring about radical change in the area of food and nutrition. The beating heart of this initiative is the new kitchen in De Vooruit.

Those shaping our Food programme include artists such as Fiona Hallinan, Samah Hijawi, Gosie Vervloesem and Thomas Bellinck. After a residency period, they intervene in various programmes with an artistic-culinary contribution. In the past, we experimented with this during With Pleasure and Women and Children First, among others.

With GLUON (see also Extended Platform), we are organising part of the **fellowship programme Hungry Cities**. This invites artists and ICT experts to collaborate with the studios of Rem Koolhaas, Carlo Ratti and Olafur Eliasson. They explore how digital technologies can make the food chain more transparent from farm to fork and how we can connect all stakeholders in that food chain. KAAP, Z33, Pilar and the Flanders Marine Institute are also getting involved. You can read about the methodology, project phases and funding in the partnership agreement. [#DIG]

See the staff/human resources section to read about how our Food activities are also the **engine for a training and social employment project**.

INCLUSIVE

Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is organising the party together. Ghent is a majority-minority city. The white, educated, straight, middle-class perspective is one of an urban minority. This has been pushing VIERNULVIER to make fundamental changes for some time. We are supported in this by the Vuurgroep van Diversiteit & Inclusie Gent, the city's civic integration service, Zuidpoort, and receive coaching and training in international good practices from Contact Theatre (Manchester), Battersea Arts Centre (London) and Mounir Samuel (the Netherlands). They confront us with VIERNULVIER's unconscious norms that determine how and with whom we work, and challenge us to make a diversity of perspectives the norm. This is being done on four fronts simultaneously: **programme, audiences, staff** (see 3.2) and **governance** (3.3): learning by doing, with measurable objectives.

Programme

- **ownership** is key: our **platform scheme** puts a diversity of people in **charge** of programming (2.3.4.2);
- inclusion is an ongoing focus in discussions with **network and rental partners**;
- we programme less far in advance, leaving **open slots** for differently organised artists;
- **Bebe Books, Jong Gewei, Black History Month, Mama's Open Mic, Manoeuvre** and **Platform-K** operate out of De Vooruit (2.3.4.3);
- our **artistic team**, with at least one international member and two members from non-Western cultural backgrounds, ensure a fair balance;
- we embrace new genres such as **nightlife** (2.3.3.4), **spoken word** (2.3.3.2) and **games** (2.3.1.3);
- we are working more and more **outside the confines of our building**¹⁶: VIERNULVIER works both within and beyond the walls of De Vooruit!

Audiences

- **ownership** is key: a diversity of programme makers generates a diverse audience;
- **accessibility** (2.3.4.1) and active participation (2.3.4.3);
- **sustainable collaboration** with people with disabilities, newcomers to Ghent, hospital employees, entrepreneurs, people experiencing poverty, and others;

¹⁶ A new name for our operation, distinct from the building name, underlines this point.

THE 1 FTE EXTENSION FOR AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT WAS SCRAPPED FOR BUDGETARY REASONS
— more time for **audience engagement**: extension by 1 FTE;

- detect gaps through **audience research** and **CRM policy**.

Improving awareness of needs and seeking out different means of connection remains an ongoing task.

COMMUNICATION

With inclusion and sustainability as guiding principles, VIERNULVIER's approach to attracting new audiences consists not of one line of communication but of **several strategic lines of communication** that distinguish between:

- **branding**: translating VIERNULVIER's values and standards into a (visual) brand identity;
- **marketing**: promoting our activities through VIERNULVIER as a platform and our PR and press activities.

We're sticking to our baseline: **Nothing for everyone, something for everybody**. VIERNULVIER is targeted at everyone, just not all at once. With seven programme categories, our offering is eclectic and **target group-specific**. With each activity, we re-assess what the correct communication and **media mix**¹⁷ could be in order to reach audiences. The many partners with whom we create our programme help us in this. For example, no one knows the international hip-hop audience better than All Eyes On Hip Hop, with whom we organise Out the Frame. Communication at VIERNULVIER is a **continual search for the different personas** (or target audiences) and the **partners who connect with them**. We target a regional, Flemish or international audience:

- **regional**: programme categories theatre, residents, food, monument and talk
- **Flemish/Northern France/Zeland**: programme categories dance, circus, music, performance,
- spoken word and nightlife
- **international**: sub-brands Videodroom, Out the Frame, Women and Children First, Ghent International
- Festival

Due to the broad scope of the of programme, the communications team focuses more on **automated marketing, targeted advertising strategy, dynamic email** and **website** and a better **CRM policy** linked to thorough **audience research**. UGent's 2019 audience survey, for example, shows that VIERNULVIER's range of activities is perceived as 'progressive' (5.69 out of 7), 'contemporary' (5.59), 'professional' (5.58), 'societally engaged' (5.58), 'multifaceted' (5.52) and 'of high quality' (5.53). Descriptors that score lower include 'cheap' (4.2), 'for broad audiences' (4.56) and 'international' (4.7).

During the height of the corona pandemic, three members of the communications team left VIERNULVIER. In replacing them we brought on people with strong digital and data-driven skills.

We reach 175,000 visitors a year with our programme which amounts to an occupancy rate of above 80%. We see an expansion mainly through **digitalisation** of our range of activities and through programmes taking place during the **summer**.

You can find our vision for communication in appendix 2.

2.3.4. Participation

Our large audience reach is a blessing and a pitfall. Our 325,000 annual visitors (including café patrons), may hinder us in identifying the people for whom VIERNULVIER is not yet meaningful. Since 2017, VIERNULVIER has been developing and applying a vision, concepts and processes that contribute to the active participation in and confrontation with art. We called on two experts to write an action plan. This culminated in the appointment of an **audience and participation officer**, making her their point of contact for external parties such as In-Gent, OKAN, local service centres, community workers, neighbourhood police, Enchanté, and the like [#SW].

A **permanent realisation team** – comprised of colleagues from the artistic team, communication, catering/hospitality, building and stage technology – convenes six times a year to elaborate and evaluate participation initiatives. The guide in this is the **social model**. This defines how organisations maintain

¹⁷ Our audience gets information about our range of activities via Facebook (42.8%), website (35.5%), posters (28%), brochures (17.7%), newsletter (17.1%), flyers (15%) and radio (11.1%) – source: UGent audience survey, 2019.

barriers that deny a potential participant access: an overly wordy website, an inaccessible building, an uninformed reception officer, a pitch-dark room, and so on. Within the social model, one assumes that someone may have a disability, but that it only becomes a limitation for them when society creates barriers and fails to provide equal opportunities. It advocates for an inclusive society that adapts to people with disabilities. We examine these limitations broadly: in terms of mobility, chronic health conditions and learning disabilities, but also people in poverty, single-parent families and informal carers.

In consultation with these underrepresented communities, we identified VIERNULVIER's barriers to participation and we remedy them wherever possible. This is an ongoing work, for which we still need the next policy period. There is much to learn, including from our UK-based partner Touretteshero (touretteshero.com). They 'celebrate the humour and creativity of people with Tourette's syndrome' and advise us on participation and inclusion.

VIERNULVIER's participation policy surfs on four waves: we work toward maximum **accessibility**; we allow many to participate in **putting together the programme**; we encourage **active artistic participation**; and we explore new **forms of participation centred on cultural governance**.

2.3.4.1. Maximum accessibility

We involve experts by experience in assessing participation barriers: people who are blind, people who are deaf, people from the queer community, newcomers to Ghent who don't speak the language, among others. We establish breakthroughs with them, which we realise by means of **adapting the building, training or specific programmes**. A number of investments have been made (lowered Ticket Desk, gender-inclusive toilets, tactile paving tiles in the footpath, etc.), are in progress (intercom and videophone, signage, lift to Theaterzaal stage, etc.) or are in the planning stages (audio system for people who are hearing impaired, new lift to the Domzaal, improved access to the Concertzaal, sanitary facilities of the Balzaal and Domzaal, etc.). The expertise centre Inter is helping us in this area. We provide ongoing **training** such as inclusive communication workshops and bystander training for colleagues who may come into contact with undesirable behaviour. We developed a **code of conduct** as a guide.

We aspire to having 6 to 10 **relaxed performances** per season. With this concept, we especially welcome anyone who finds standard theatre conventions difficult to conform to. During a relaxed performance, the hall light does not go out completely. Spectators are allowed to make sounds and movements. You can go to the toilet during the performance and latecomers are still welcome. All artists are involved in deciding whether or not to open their performance, debate, concert as a relaxed performance and the audience is informed in advance. Partner organisations Iktic, Onze Nieuwe Wereld and Sterkmakers in Autisme are present in the hall and provide feedback. We receive coaching from British role models like Battersea Arts Centre, Touretteshero, Every Brain (Ali Wilson), among others. That this is being emulated by others within the Flemish arts sector is evident from the many questions we receive. Check out the video at www.viernulvier.gent.

To increase the accessibility of our Café, we collaborate with the network of friendly traders **Enchanté**. In the past 3 years, 7,000 **pending coffees or soups** were served to people in need. We are exploring whether we can also use this generous method for free tickets to performances and concerts [#SW].

If the Café is to live up to its reputation of being 'the city's living room', we need to keep social issues in focus. Just under half of all Ghent households are accounted for by single people or single parents. The challenge is to devote more attention to facilitating encounters and connection for vulnerable people. We get requests for thé dansants (tea parties with daytime dancing) in the Café, for special social meet-up concepts and for the use of our spaces for sessions focused on mental well-being. Be our guests!

2.3.4.2. Participation in programme composition

Every year at VIERNULVIER, dozens of people are included in the task of creating the programme: Jürgen from Festival van de Gelijkheid, Heleen from Black Speaks Back, Willem from All Eyes on Hip Hop, Elli from Mama's Open Mic, members of Voem (Association for the Development and Emancipation of Muslims), and others. VIERNULVIER provides support where necessary: financial, artistic, production, communication, logistical, and so on. Our **platform scheme** puts a large and varying group of people in the driver's seat and is our main 'participation machine'. VIERNULVIER's programmers recognise the expertise in others and become coaches rather than gatekeepers: 'we de-mandate ourselves'. That trust and professional framing allows people to grow. In doing so, we are building a **strong ecosystem of organisers and cultural entrepreneurs**. All these programme-makers also tap into their network of volunteers and mobilise their audiences. More and more, the results of this cooperative programming methodology are also being seen in other places in the city – see our summer programme and plans for the Arsenaal site.

example? From 2023, **Bebe Books** (bebebooks.be) will be an organisation-in-residence. This collective of visual artists and graphic designers curate LGBTQ+ friendly events and support artists. Bebe's mission is to build a safe space where fun, art and education come together. They are working on a concept to turn the Candy Shop's window display into a gallery, the smallest gay bar in the world, a sauna or cocktail room.

2.3.4.3. Active artistic participation

The line between audience and creator is blurring. Professional theatremakers and musicians are now creating new work where active participation is essential. Every year, VIERNULVIER produces two to four participatory art projects. Quality over quantity – see production. We conduct interviews with creators regarding content, we handle recruitment, set up guidance for participants, arrange rehearsals and guarantee a professional presentation. Very labour intensive! For recruitment – often done through open calls – and collaboration on the content, we fall back on our network of schools, community workers and youth and welfare organisations [#SW].

For long-term goals relating to participation, we collaborate with Platform-K, Jong Gewei and Manoeuvre, all of which will remain (or become) organisations-in-residence until 2027.

Platform-K (platform-k.be) explores how dancers with disabilities can have a fundamental influence on contemporary dance. Platform-K is expanding its flow-through programme for advanced dancers from their permanent studio in De Vooruit. There they organise classes and workshops two and half days a week. They also host artists-in-residence there, who work with their dancers. Every two years, this leads to a production that tours (inter)nationally.¹⁸ Femke Gyselincx is making Change of Plans with the dancers of Platform-K. VIERNULVIER is co-producing, making its halls and technical team available, and organising the premiere run in April 2023, which may or may not take place within a reinforcing festival context like Women and Children First. Platform-K has its offices in De Vooruit, which allows them to readily knock on the door for any questions they may have about financial management, technical issues, governance, and so on.

Jong Gewei (jonggewei.be), an initiative of Kloppend Hert, brings the diversity of Ghent's streets to the stage. They look for young talents who are thinking about pursuing (higher) art education. They work towards a presentation during fortnightly Sunday workshops, based out of the safe environment of their studio at VIERNULVIER or Bij' De Vieze Gasten. These working weeks are complemented by master classes in collaboration with KASK's drama department. They also perform at De Vooruit during the summer. VIERNULVIER fears that the corona crisis will make employment in the cultural sector less attractive, which will reduce the inflow of young people from migrant backgrounds. This only increases the urgency of projects like Jong Gewei. In 2026, VIERNULVIER will also be hosting and co-producing their festival FEST.

MANOEUVRE IS LOSING ITS STRUCTURAL SUBSIDY FROM THE FLEMISH COMMUNITY FOR THE YEARS 2023-2027. THE COLLABORATION WITH VIERNULVIER WILL THEREFORE TAKE DIFFERENT FORMS FROM THOSE DESCRIBED HERE. WE DO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THEIR WORK WHERE WE CAN.

[NEW] As an arts venue at the intersection of art, craft and diversity, **Manoeuvre** (manoeuvre.org) is looking to tell a new story about living side by side in a super-diverse region. Their participants are dynamic

and diverse, with interchangeable roles between makers-in-residence, audience members, participants and local residents. Manoeuvre is a permanent partner within the European project BEPART and the **Tot in de Stad** network.¹⁹ Manoeuvre is in residence at VIERNULVIER twice a year for three weeks at a time. Here they work on performative work for the public space. To conclude each residency, they share their work-in-progress in anticipation of a presentation at the OPENBARE WERKEN festival, which connects artists with the city and its inhabitants.

International developments around participation are inspiring. VIERNULVIER is active in two **European projects**: BE PART and INFRA, and in September 2021 submitted a Creative Europe application for the project CTM.

BEPART is a critical and practical research project exploring power dynamics, collective policy structures and the role of the audience and the public space within participatory art practices. We exchange knowledge and practices with nine European partners²⁰ and artists. We organise 'city residencies' for local and international artists.²¹ ATLAS was established within the context of BEPART. ATLAS is an **artistic and social lab** that brings together a fluid collective of artists, thinkers, cultural workers and non-human actors. This practice consists of **a book of mappings and a multimedia happening**. As part of ATLAS, experiments are conducted centred on collective living and working, on both an artistic and a business level. These experiments involve the organisation of study circles and collective city residencies. We will present ATLAS at BEPART's final symposium in Riga in late 2023.

Together with four partners,²² VIERNULVIER is working on the four-year European project **Cultural Transformation Movement (CTM)**. We are joining forces to produce and tour artistic productions of underrep-

¹⁸ In 2018 this was Common Ground by Benjamin Vandewalle and in 2020 The Goldberg Variations by Michiel Vandevelde, which was selected for Het Theaterfestival.

¹⁹ TOT IN DE STAD is a Ghent network that develops artistic practices to do with urban contexts. The partners involved are VIERNULVIER, de Koer, Kunsthal Gent, Manoeuvre, Jong Gewei, KASK and LUCA School of Arts

²⁰ Festival De Marseille, Santarcangelo Festival, Kiasma Helsinki, Homo Novus Riga, Cork Midsummer Festival, Dream City Tunis, Arts Admin London, Scottish Sculpture Workshop Lumsden and City Of Women Ljubljana.

²¹ Vincen Beeckman, Katinka Dejonge, The Post Film Collective, Samah Hijawi, Chris Rotsaert, Manoeuvre, School of Love, Sarah Vanhee, Fiona Hallinan, Leentje Vandenbussche, May Abnet, Lieselot Siddiki, Andy Sarfo, Jaco Sette, Michiel Soete, An Verstraete, Valentina Medda, among others.

²² Zó Centro Culture Contemporanee (Italy), Brunnen Passage (Austria), Izolyatsia (Ukraine) and Trans Europe Halles (Sweden).

resented communities. CTM strengthens the diversity of artistic productions and distribution in the partner centres, provokes transformations towards greater social justice, connects a new generation of cultural leaders from underrepresented communities internationally, strengthens movements for social justice in the European cultural sector and shares good practices. On the agenda are transnational shows, residencies, mentorship programmes, workshops and four conferences in which we also share expertise with the Flemish cultural sector. The EU approved this project in 2022. [#SW #POTA].

FOR FINANCIAL REASONS, THIS PARTICIPATION CHALLENGE IS ON HOLD.

Another participation challenge? Making a group of people complicit in the development and production work that artists do in the VIERNULVIER studios. We're taking inspiration from BUDA's Compañeros scheme and

building a community of people who are asked to view the work-in-progress of resident artists and give kind-hearted critical feedback. This creates opportunities for artists to see how their work goes down with a wider audience than just the programmers and allows people to grow in analysing artistic work. The methodical structure is borrowed from BUDA and DasArts.

2.3.4.4. Governance participation

VIERNULVIER also wants to see its horizontal organisational form – see human resources – translated into its governing bodies. We are not blinded by representation in governance, but rather question its structures and decision-making processes above all. Art can only really become a participatory space when there is openness to redistribute power (structures) and to give citizens every opportunity to help shape policy. In that respect, participation is subject to trial and error, to ongoing dialogue. A mixed working group composed of staff, board and Young Board members has been working on this since June 2021.

Inspired by the Contact Theatre in Manchester, VIERNULVIER commissioned Astrid Jans, a Cultural Management (JA) student, to explore possibilities for the creation of a **Young Board**. We put out a call to young people with an appetite to claim a place at the heart of VIERNULVIER's decision-making process. 134 young people, a group as diverse as the city, applied. In early 2021, a young board of twelve people was formed to spend a year and a half exploring how to give proper space to new practices in the governance of an arts institution. The Young Board meets on a monthly basis and discusses strategic points in the presence of one or more coordinators and two board members. Three members of the Young Board, alternating according to expertise, participate in the meetings of the board, the general meeting, the HR and audit committee and the working group plotting out the transition of the board. Astrid Jans is evaluating this process and working on a roadmap, to be ready for autumn 2022, with scenarios for future operations – see good governance.

2.3.5. Reflection

Talks is one of our seven programme categories. These reflections have a strong societal – read social and ecological – focus and do not fall under the function of reflection, but rather under presentation. The reflection function concerns 'the realisation, stimulation and making accessible of reflection and the criticism of art'. To this end, VIERNULVIER is developing a policy with three levels: an accessible level for a wider audience, a level aimed at the professional arts sector and finally an academic level. The formats are concise and neatly defined. To give this more space would require dedicated staff. Here we do not choose the path of growth [#WW].

2.3.5.1. For audiences

Rather than a multitude of scattered initiatives, we opt for three formats. Four times a year at 8:30am, usually as part of a festival, we treat the audience to coffee, pastries and discussions with artists and experts: **Six Impossible Things Before Breakfast**. They reveal their sources of inspiration: film clips, books, scientific research, and so on, and go deeper into the how and why of their work.

We frequently organise **artist talks** with makers in the studio. These are supervised by our programmers or dramaturge. If it's book-related, it takes place in our Café.

2.3.5.2. For the professional art sector

At the local level, VIERNULVIER has been a pacesetter for local **discussion platforms**: the founding of the Gents Kunstenoverleg, the further development of Greentrack, the Diversity and Inclusion working group, the Landschapstekening Kunsten Gent. VIERNULVIER maintains its responsibility as an arts institution, encouraging and facilitating collaborations that contribute to a stronger landscape of arts and culture. We also remain committed to **organisational** (maximum horizontality) **and governance-related innovations** (Young Board, the VIERNULVIER parliament) and share dos and don'ts with the (inter)national arts sector. To this end, we are working with expert Maarten Soete. Together, we host delegations from both within Belgium and abroad. After introductions and explanations, Maarten gets to down work with them, asking: what's in it for them?

DUE TO THE EXTENDED PLATFORM BEING SCRAPPED, THIS REFLECTION SECTION WILL NOT BE DEVELOPED EITHER.

[NEW] We are working with Kunstenpunt on reflections relating to the Extended Platform scheme. Within their core theme of 'Is it art?', Kunstenpunt asks questions about quality – what is considered to be of quality, by whom, and on what grounds? – and about diversity of voices: how to

organise the diversity of voices in art and what place do conversations about quality or expertise have in this? They do this through public discussions, writing assignments and sector meetings. To accommodate the growing diversity of voices in the arts, they want to arrive at frameworks and tools for policy, as well as for artistic juries, programmers, curators and committees. Their confirmation letter states that the Extended Platform scheme will be their subject of research and reflection.

During the 2024 edition of during Smells Like Circus, VIERNULVIER will hold a **future-focused international congress for circus professionals**, organised together with Circuscentrum and Circostrada (the European Network for contemporary circus and outdoor arts). The results of the European project Circus without Circus will be highlighted.

Practice Makes Practices aims to strip artistic practices of their mystery. What are some methods for getting from idea to form? What is the political background behind artistic choices? We are forming a think tank of artists and cultural workers. In spring 2022, they will design experimental formats based on the above questions. These could be conversations or, even better, spaces that are created, physical practices, podcasts, interviews that can be requested via QR codes on our menu, and so on. After an evaluation, we will distil a format from this that will return as of 2023. Practice Makes Practice is a project by VIERNULVIER in collaboration with P.A.R.T.S. and rekto:verso.

2.3.5.3. At the academic level

The Circus Dialogues (continued) is the research project led by dramaturge Bauke Lievens, which has been active at KASK for eight years now. In 2020, she received the Ultima circus prize for her work as a circus thinker. The next step entails the exploration of sustainability in the circus landscape. VIERNULVIER invests €5,000 annually in this research, hosts a research residency each year and presents (intermediate) conclusions during Smells Like Circus.

VIERNULVIER has signed on for a collaboration of five academic years (September 2022–June 2027) with UGent's research centre S:PAM (**Studies in Performing Arts & Media**) and its departments of art history, musicology and theatre studies. Each semester, we jointly select one artist to explore an artistic research question together with students. They have five days to do so, either intensively or spread over a twelve-week period. Students then extract the value of this reflection by translating the process into a specific output. UGent provides a grand for each artist, as well as spaces for working and presentation. VIERNULVIER reaches out to artists, serves as a coach to artists and students and shares the process and results with professionals.

Business management

3.1. Effective business and financial management

3.1.1. General financial policy

VIERNULVIER's operations draw on **mixed funding sources**: 50% revenue from ticket sales, catering/hospitality, hall rental and sponsorship, 50% from subsidies and project funding. With the newly allocated amount, this changes to 44.3% / 55.7%.

OWN REVENUE — Our platform scheme generates a lot of income that is not visible in our revenue account. Partners do work for activities at VIERNULVIER and absorb the costs themselves. We would like to understand through research what this means in terms of additional artistic budget and labour. The consequence, in any case, is that **ticket revenues** from the activities of network and rental partners – which are significant – also do not appear in our figures, or only partially.

We anticipate total ticket revenues of €486,350. For in-house programming, we keep prices low [#SW] or free. This also explains the low ticket revenues relative to the number of activities. We often do ticket sales for third parties for a handling fee.

VIERNULVIER receives €432,600 from **sponsorship**. We work with long-term sponsors and materials sponsors for renovations (you won't find those revenues in the figures either) and rarely with event sponsors. There are opportunities here, although we are realistic about the net return, knowing that a large staff commitment is often required for qualitative return [#WW] and this comes at the expense of hall rental opportunities. VIERNULVIER has little experience with professional policies relating to sponsorship, patronage, crowdfunding and wills. In the spring of 2022, we will draw up a plan for this with the help of experts. Starting 2023 we budget that net annual revenue at €125,000. For hall rental and the running of the Café, we anticipate a turnover of €3.63 million, representing a net return of €968,000. Lower revenues due to falling purchasing power and rising costs results in a lower net profit.

OPERATING SUBSIDIES — The City of Ghent subsidises us annually for our artistic activities (€302,070) and for building maintenance (€248,000). We also generate project funds from the EU (Creative Europe, sometimes Interreg), through dossiers submitted to the province, King Baudouin Foundation and foreign cultural funds.

BUDGETARY DISCIPLINE — Budgetary discipline and strong **cost-consciousness** are the building blocks of our business policy. That business acumen translates into the budget ownership of each team. To monitor budget execution, VIERNULVIER works with analytical accounting, as organised by two dimensions: by team and by project. Quarterly audits are submitted to the Board. In the interim, our **audit committee**²³ assesses risks and prepares strategic decisions. The **statutory auditor** does the final check.

With wage costs accounting for 49.9% of total costs, indexation and seniority increases have a large impact on the result.

VIERNULVIER adheres to the principles of solidarity, transparency, sustainability and responsibility and the agreements as formulated at **Juist is Juist** [#POTA]. You can find our internal Fair Practice regulations at viernulvier.be.

3.1.2. Financing for the building

In parallel with our subsidy-increase request for our operations, we ask the Flemish Government to take into account the self-financing that VIERNULVIER does for its infrastructure. Funding for our content-based activities is always under pressure due to the competing need for infrastructural funding. VIERNULVIER Arts Centre has an emphyteutic lease for the building with the VIERNULVIER nr. 1 cooperative lasting up until 2052. The costs of restoration, renovation and daily operation are at our expense. For this, we drew up a three-track policy.

Track 1 — For the **restoration** of the protected monument, we drew up a management plan in consultation with the Flanders Heritage Agency. After approval, the Flemish Government entered into a Multi-Year Premium Agreement for a total investment cost of €15,929,796. In late 2017, the Flemish Government decided to make a financial contribution of €10,855,461. VIERNULVIER is funding €1,750,000 from its own resources. We are in discussions with the City of Ghent concerning the remaining amount of €3,324,335. These are proceeding constructively, but we do not (yet) have a commitment. In the meantime, the first

phase of the restoration has been completed. Four more phases bring us up to 2035. To be clear, we are not applying for Arts Decree funding for the restoration.

Track 2 — With the **renovation works**, we seek to meet the urgent needs of our artistic activities, professional stage technology, safety and environmental regulations and contemporary audience comfort. For this, we occasionally receive support from the Cultural Infrastructure Fund (FoCI). The City of Ghent is making a yearly financial contribution of €248,000 until the end of 2025. We use this city funding to cover 40% of the costs not paid by FoCI or to cover renovation works not deemed priorities by the FoCI. After the 2024 elections, we will negotiate the continuation of those funds.

Track 3 — **Every day**, works are carried out that are necessary for the **maintenance** of the building. We fund these with our own resources. We invest in our own team of maintenance staff (7.5 FTEs). Due to the multitude of works and the complexity of the building, this is more economical than outsourcing to external firms.

The annual cost for the building, paid for using our own funds, is €854,700.

Annual cost of the building financed with our own funds	
1 FTE infrastructure & monument coordinator	
1 FTE building services team coordinator	
0.6 FTE technical project coordinator	
0.5 FTE infrastructure admin	
1.8 FTE electrician	
1.8 FTE carpenter, plumber	
0.8 FTE all-round building technician	€453.800
maintenance contracts	€65.000
maintenance materials	€70.000
property tax	€53.400
emphyteutic lease	€12.500
past depreciation charge (excl. restoration MPO)	€200.000
	€854.700

There is a need for an annual **provision for maintenance and repairs** of €225,000, essential in case of lift failure, for updating electrical installations, keeping emergency lighting operational, renewing pipes. We work in a building from 1913 with many outdated installations. Every building attendant report after each activity lists new building-technical defects that must be fixed, preferably the next day: loose handrails, dragging doors, broken lights, clogged toilets, a stalled lift. The City of Ghent's investment budget cannot be used for this purpose because these funds are allocated in advance for planned investment projects. **The annual cost totals €1,100,000.**

VIERNULVIER is not quick to raise the alarm, but now we must. We do not put the budget we spend on the building towards our content activities. **Here we come up against an objective disadvantage compared to fellow arts organisations** that have no or hardly any costs for their building because it is owned by the Flemish Community or because they receive an additional subsidy for infrastructure on top of their operating funds through their management agreement. We have to fulfil the same functions and are assessed based on the same criteria, while our deployable resources are significantly lower.

3.2. A caring human resources policy

VIERNULVIER operates following a horizontal organisational model with teams, roles, mandates and consultation methods. In addition to transparency and open communication, it also boosts involvement in policy-making significantly. The team evaluates this positively.

²³ Marc Standaert (director and chairman of the audit committee), Sammy Bouzoumita (director), Veerle De Waele (finance coordinator) and Franky Devos (general coordinator).

WORKABLE WORK — To ensure the quality of our services, we plan only limited expansion starting in 2023:

- **+ 0.5 FTE HR** (now 1.5 FTE, including personnel administration): support in recruitment and welfare, inclusion and training policies;
- **+ 0.5 FTE ICT** (now 1 FTE): roll-out of building management system, digitalisation of stage technology, stock management, fire control centre and support for livestreaming;

THE FURTHER EXPANSION OF THE TEAM WILL NOT PROCEED DUE TO FINANCIAL REASONS

+ 0.2 FTE technical project coordinator (now 0.8 FTE): site monitoring, price comparisons, consultation with engineering offices, architect, safety coordinator and management of digital plans.

For the development of the **new** plans:

+ 1 FTE cultural programmer / Extended Platform coordinator: developing partnerships, recruitment and artist follow-up, residency

follow-up with external organisations/companies, reporting, additional fundraising;

+ 1 FTE researcher / music, visual arts & games producer: development of new artistic category and international network, recruitment and follow-up of artists, cooperation with educational partners, additional (European) fundraising;

+ 0.8 music, visual arts & games production + nightlife:

+ 1 FTE public engagement officer (now 0.8 FTE): public engagement, focus on participation, diversity and inclusion.

VOLUNTEERS — In 2019, 152 volunteers clocked up 6,900 (!) hours. Since 2019, a volunteers coordinator (2/3) has been working on our volunteer policy. The permanent realisation team volunteers made a plan regarding the place and role of volunteers and the organisation chart at VIERNULVIER. It reflects how we deal with volunteers in achieving our organisational goals and what the rights and expectations of volunteers are. An important principle is that volunteering does not replace paid work. Over the coming years, work will be done with respect to recruitment, coaching, an accounting policy and a welcome and exit procedure.

PLATFORM — VIERNULVIER shares its expertise in HR with resident artists, organisations-in-residence or through informal conversations with artists-in-residence. For Refu Interim, we guide people in their search for a (new) job: preparing CVs and cover letters, practising a job interview, familiarising them with labour legislation.

A list of job experiences and external positions of the coordination team and programme officers can be found in appendix 8.

3.3. Good Governance

VIERNULVIER complies with the principles of good governance set out in the current management agreement.²⁴ A lot of focus has gone into this over the past policy period as evidenced by the evaluation of the Flemish Community. Our Board subscribes to the **principles of Good Governance** as formulated in the Governance Code for Culture of 26.06.20.

The governing body consists of nine directors and one **government commissioner**.

The financial, artistic and general coordinators attend board meetings in a non-voting capacity, supplemented by team members according to the agenda. Two members of the Young Board and two staff representatives also participate in the meeting. The governing body meets at least five times a year, while the general assembly takes place twice a year. Beforehand, the **HR committee** considers personnel-related topics, the audit committee considers risk management: financial, security, crowd control, covid, and so on.

VIERNULVIER is committing to **two innovation schemes relating to good governance**. The outcry following the announcement of our name change showed great engagement. Many people feel like VIERNULVIER 'shareholders'. A working group of directors and staff members is working with external experts on a **governance transition process** that will allow a larger group of people – resident artists, staff, suppliers, audiences, platform partners, neighbours, and so on – to participate on the board (read: a kind of parliament of VIERNULVIER). In this way, the flattening process – which led to the reorganisation of the staff team – is extended to the board level. This transition process was started in June 2022 and will take at least two years.

In late 2020, we launched an open call for a **Young Board**. The goal: to bring new substantive and methodological insights into the governance of an arts institution and unlock a wider network for the sake of board diversity. Twelve diverse voices asking questions that would otherwise never be asked. Their term runs until December 2022. Our dramaturge, audience engagement officer and general coordinator follow up on the project internally. Astrid Jans is documenting developments and working on a set of dos and don'ts for ourselves and the sector at large – see 2.3.4.4. participation in cultural governance.

3.4. More than caring for the monument

Buildings erected in the 19th and early 20th centuries with the function of presenting art evoke a bourgeois grandeur through distinction and distance. Those wishing to enter the temple of art have to cross a raised threshold. In contrast, the common thread in the renovation of De Vooruit is the evolution towards a common place, a shared meeting place for a heterogeneous community. That remit is partly fulfilled by our Café and Terrace, public bicycle parking facility and new entrance area, which was deliberately made a part of the public space that is accessible 24/7. Yet we are far from current-day buildings that demonstrate intelligent urban performativity. They help shape social life and are appropriated as much by the local community as by art lovers. Jozef Wouters: 'How many extra glass panels can you stick on a facade before you realise that other things are needed to bring in the area's young people?'

Caring for our monument is not just about infrastructure, but also about reflecting on its power and how we can dismantle or utilise it – see production and presentation. We are currently engaged in a major **restoration campaign** that will last up until 2035. In brief, this entails the restoration of the facade and the interior restoration of the Balzaal, Domzaal and Dance Studio in 2024-25. In 2026-27, the Café, the Concertzaal and the facades of the ancillary buildings will be restored. The works are planned so that they only have a limited impact on our activities.

In terms of **energy efficiency**, we are renewing the ventilation system in the Balzaal and Domzaal (corona safety), investigating the possibility of installing solar panels, continuing the conversion to LED lighting and replacing domed skylights with insulated, rectangular skylights [#SUST]. Renovating the fire control centre, updating the emergency lighting, replacing the lift in the front building and the goods lift in the Concertzaal will in turn contribute to **safety and accessibility** for visitors, staff and performers.

Regarding **stage technology**, we are renewing the theatre hoisting equipment in the Domzaal, improving the acoustics in the Concertzaal and finishing the stage technology data network [#DIG]. We're still occupied with TRANSarchitecten's feasibility study into De Vooruit's **logistical accessibility**, discussing scenarios with UGent, the City of Ghent and SOGent. We described the funding in 3.1.2.

Together with the Trades Hall in Broken Hill (Australia), Paasitorni Helsinki (Finland), Victorian Trades Hall Melbourne (Australia) and The Workers Museum Copenhagen (Denmark), VIERNULVIER is part of a steering committee exploring the possibility of a serial nomination as a **Unesco World Heritage Site**. In 2021 we launched a global call to other workers' assembly halls. The application will be submitted in early 2024, supported by the Flemish Unesco Commission, the City of Ghent and Amsab.

In 2022, together with Handelsbeurs, NTGent, CAMPO, Minard, Action Zoo Humain, KASK, Les Ballets C de la B, LOD, Democracy and NUCLEO, we set up a non-profit association (vzw) which, through the Gents Kunstenoverleg, is responsible for the temporary use of the impressive **Arsenaal site**, a former NMBS (Belgian railway) facility in Gentbrugge. We are aware of the larger societal issues with which the Arsenaal site is enmeshed and recognise the mechanisms of instrumentalising artists and culture, the process of gentrification, the need for slow urban development and fair housing policy. We see our commitment as a strategic move to give the Arsenaal site the best possible use. The aim is to permanently anchor art and culture in this important place. This debate will be the basis for the programme that all partners are developing there [#POTA]. The site will be a shared space that encourages experimentation and answers the call for new intermediate spaces for art and culture. Through open calls, artists will be sought who seek to use the space for development (studios, workshops, recordings, etc.) and presentation (site-specific performances and concerts, exhibitions, etc.). KASK is developing a nomadic school there, for example. VIERNULVIER is contributing €50,000 to the non-profit organisation's capital. We ourselves would like to use the Arsenaal site occasionally for location-specific projects, perhaps as part of GIF or Het Theaterfestival.

VIERNULVIER, together with Democracy, is establishing the non-profit organisation Muziekzaal Wintercircus, which will assume the operation of the concert hall under the **Winter Circus** – see development. There is one consortium in the running to operate the site as a whole. VIERNULVIER and Democracy will become subcontractors making no capital contribution to that consortium. The financing of technical equipment is not the responsibility of VIERNULVIER and is not part of this document. As per the working method adopted with Minard, when it opens, the operation of the new hall will be handled by a separate staff team of vzw Muziekzaal Wintercircus [#WW]. This will be funded by income from hall rentals.

When VIERNULVIER uses the hall, we will pay a rent to the non-profit association. The definitive decision will be made in December 2022. The chances of VIERNULVIER and Democracy not being picked are slim.

²⁴ The governing bodies function within a framework of mutual supervision and balance. There are internal regulations containing a code of deontology, the establishment of relationship between the governing body and the general assembly, and the internal evaluation procedure. The governing body is composed on the basis of competences and maintaining an equal ratio of men to women. At least half of the board consists of non-executive directors and at least one-third are independent directors. There is a consultable schedule of appointments and resignations and a record is kept of the directors' positions on other boards. There is an agreement framework between the governing body and the general coordinator, including with regard to periodic evaluations.

2027 beckons!

This plan is the result of discussions within the future teams GREEN VIERNULVIER, SOCIAL VIERNULVIER, DIGITAL VIERNULVIER, BUILDING & MONUMENT, STRATEGIC & COMMERCIAL POLICY, CAFÉ & CATERING and PROGRAMME, NETWERK & ARTISTIC VISION.

It was approved by the General Assembly on 24.11.2021.

The General Assembly approved the updated policy plan on 5.10.2022.



