

**EN** Every week, AGENDA goes in search of the sound & vision of Brussels. This time, we shake up established patterns and codes with the all-round visual artist Aline Bouvy. **ESTELLE SPOTO • PHOTOS: SASKIA VANDERSTICHELE**

**T**hrough the doorway of love is a good way to accede to knowledge," declares Aline Bouvy when asked about how she arrived at art. "When I was still in secondary school at Saint-Luc in Liège, my boyfriend was studying at the erg (école de recherche graphique in Elsene/Ixelles). Back then, art still wasn't a definite choice for me. When he told me he was doing sculpture, I pictured him carving marble. [Laughs] He talked to me about a whole load of artists and I didn't dare say I didn't know them. I said nothing and then I went to the library to see who those people were. In the end, trying to reach the artistic level of the boy I was in love with turned into a discovery and a genuine interest. Contemporary art was a world that opened up for me and in which I felt good. I studied at the erg too and that's where I realised that it wasn't technical research that I was interested in, but something along the lines of attitude, of concept. You get an idea and then you wonder which medium would suit it best. And if that medium doesn't exist, you try to invent it." Born in Brussels, but brought up in Luxembourg, Aline Bouvy is half-Spanish, on her mother's side. She studied at the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht and later moved to Berlin and London before returning to the Belgian capital and settling there. "Brussels is paradise when it comes to finding materials," she observes. "And from here, moreover, you can reach anywhere quickly." Her studio, hidden away at the end of a series of garages in a street in Sint-Gillis/Saint-Gilles, near the Zuidstation/Gare du Midi, looks like a multidisciplinary laboratory inside. Rolls of linoleum are to be found side by side with sanders, moulds in blue silicone, funnels, large photographs, a blowtorch, wooden boards, etc. When we met her, Bouvy was busy preparing for her next exhibition at the Baronian gallery.

## WILD

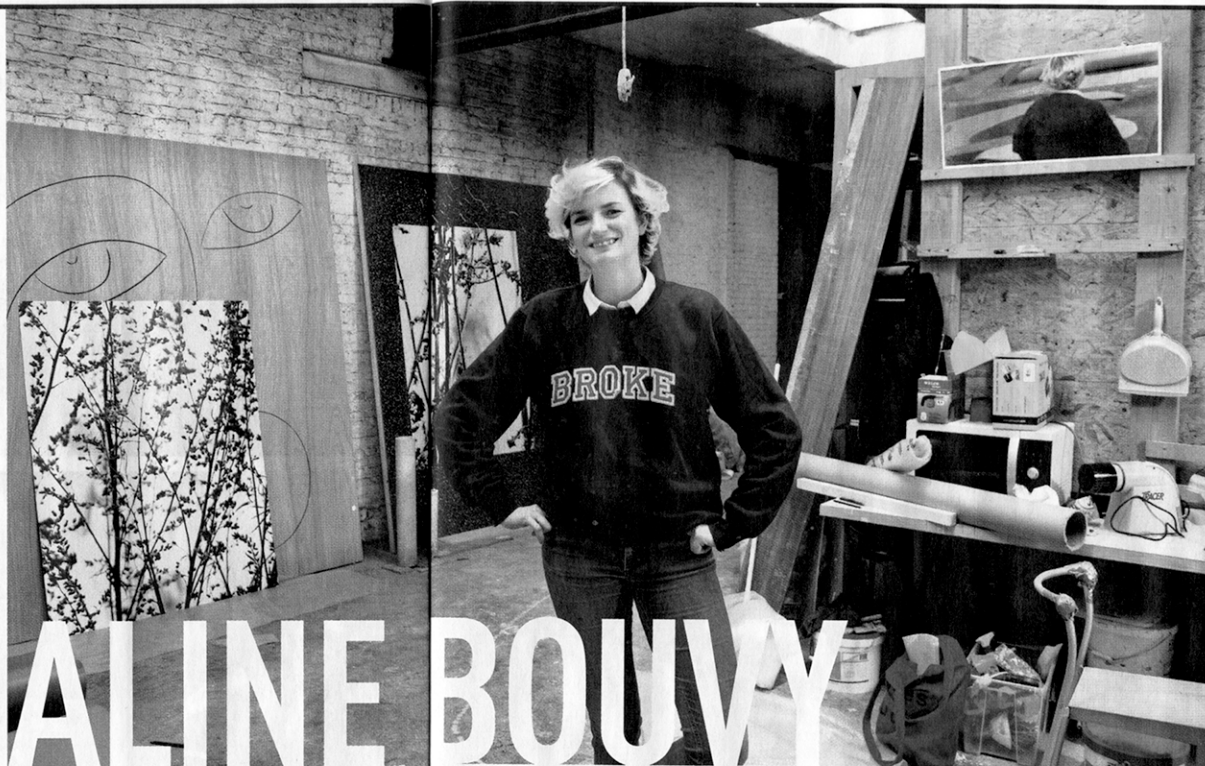
The show is entitled "Urine Mate", a title lifted from a song by the British duo Sleaford Mods. She herself posed for the invitation card. "I wanted to present myself as 'urine mate' of anyone who wants. I'm in studio clothing, no make-up, hair uncombed, in a position that recalls 1980s Calvin Klein ads. What I really like about Calvin Klein is that he was the first to go into unisex, whether in perfume, clothes, or whatever. This exhibition, among other things, explores the genre and the attitude associated with that approach and the questions it raises. In it, I present a series of photographs of male nudes,

something you don't see much these days: you see lots of naked women, but not many men. I also wondered about how to avoid slipping into the codes of erotic photography or gay pornography. While working on it, I thought a lot about my approach as an artist today and my relationship with contemporary cultural production. That has nothing to do with knowing what today's trends are: it's more about wanting to take part in a dialogue on contemporary artistic activity. I have to situate myself." Her male nudes - blurry, "but not romantic, Sarah Moon-style", she makes clear - are partly hidden by a foreground of plants. "At first, I wanted to work with plants from a florist, but there was something that wasn't right. Finally, I got the idea of using vegetation from waste lots here in Brussels. Those plants have a more violent side to them. When you pick them, they prick you and you find yourself with lots of little balls stuck to your pullover. They fight back." As with her dogs, the wild, rebellious side is a key element of the project. "Ultimately, what really interests me is the question of what I can do with the structures of power that are imposed on me in today's society. What I do in my work, on my scale and using the things that are around me, allows me to question and to undermine those power struc-

tures. I think that can also be done through very simple things like our relationship with what is clean or dirty, with our own waste, such as urine, for example." Bouvy, who is more than willing to take on projects you mightn't expect, recently made a video for the "Liquid Assets" track on the Belgian producer Pierre Dozin's musical project Late Bush. The video has at its heart a plastic bottle, containing a residue of a bright blue sports drink, that stands out in light that is almost garish. Waste again. Subjected to intense heat from off-screen, it melts, turns brown, and at times catches fire in a rather spectacular way. A parallel is drawn between the bottle and images of sweat. The liquid enters, the body transforms, the liquid comes out. "It's very important for me to carry out projects in different contexts and to work with people who don't necessarily come from the 'art world'." Another way for Bouvy to have a go at established frameworks and structures. **A**

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**BOROUGH:** Sint-Gillis/Saint-Gilles  
**EXHIBITION:** Aline Bouvy: "Urine Mate", 15/1 > 27/2, Albert Baronian gallery, [www.albertbaronian.com](http://www.albertbaronian.com)  
**VIDEO:** Liquid Assets, [vimeo.com/148563880](http://vimeo.com/148563880)  
**INFO:** [alinebouvy.info](http://alinebouvy.info)  
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# ALINE BOUVY



## Stray dogs

"For the exhibition at Baronian, I made sculptures of dogs that will fit along the gallery wall like a bas-relief. They're a bit like a railing, a vanishing point. The dog is an animal that interests me a lot, because it exists both in a domesticated way and in a wild way. For this job, I searched on the Internet for images of stray dogs, like the ones you find in Romania that I've heard a lot about from my friend Claudia Radulescu, a Romanian artist who lives in Brussels. I love the dog's free and maybe also cheeky side. Those wild dogs, it's a way of rediscovering a kind of connection with nature. In my work, I like to maintain a kind of distance, like a spectator, standing back from the human, from humanity."