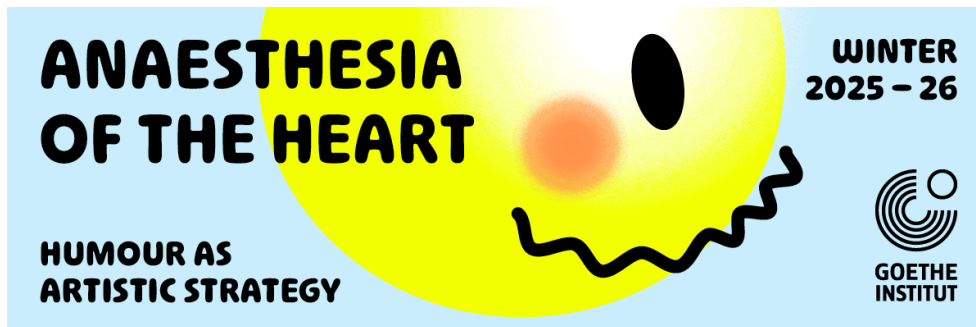




PRESS INFORMATION



ANAESTHESIA OF THE HEART

HUMOUR AS AN ARTISTIC STRATEGY BETWEEN RESISTANCE AND HOPE

Can we still take a joke? From autumn 2025, Goethe-Institut Brussels will dedicate a transdisciplinary programme to humour as a form of cultural expression. Under the title "Anaesthesia of the Heart", the series explores artistic perspectives on humour in times of social tension.

Brussels, 22 October 2025 - Humour can act as a social bond – or break apart old rigidities: Far beyond satire, caricature or irony, humour often appears in contexts of artistic activism, as a strategy of resistance or civil disobedience.

Queer or BIPOC artists, for example, show how humorous art can not only be an escape from a hopeless situation, but can also make people resilient and resistant, especially in illiberal contexts. The French philosopher Henri Bergson describes laughter as an "anesthésie momentanée du cœur", a temporary anaesthesia of the heart, or flexibility in the face of rigidity, and as something deeply human.

However, "humorous" statements can also have the opposite effect: they can exclude, harm and undermine. We are currently witnessing how new right-wing movements, in particular, are continuously undermining democratic processes with ostensibly amusing posts on the internet. As a form of cultural expression, humour therefore often entails major ambivalences. The programme *Anaesthesia of the Heart* focuses on precisely these tensions.

Can humour help us live with the world's many contradictions? What does humour as a cultural strategy tell us about the current state of the world? Is

Goethe-Institut

Rue Belliard 58
Belliardstraat 58
1040 Brussels, Belgium

Press Contact

Magdalena Rausch
magdalena.rausch@goethe.de
+32 2 5858532

www.goethe.de/brussels

www.goethe.de

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there still room for humour in polarised societies? And if new technologies such as artificial intelligence make it harder to recognise humanity, should we pay more attention to humour as a deeply human form of communication?

From autumn 2025 to spring 2026, Goethe-Institut Brussels invites creatives and thinkers from the fields of art, theatre, illustration, literature, music, film, science and philosophy to investigate the paradoxes of humour:

21 – 23 November: Grafixx Festival Antwerp

Düsseldorf-based cartoonist **Nadine Redlich** presents anthropomorphic drawings whose subtle observations oscillate between humour and melancholy.

7 – 9 November: Africa is/in the Future

In this year's edition, the Afrofuturist festival focuses the Black Caribbean carnival as a decolonial practice, among other themes. The programme includes a dance workshop by **Hawah Bunduka** and DJ set by the **Hamburg-based duo CHO ROOM**.

11 – 12 December: Bucket List, Théâtre de Liège

The new play by provocative Israeli director **Yael Ronen** invites audiences to explore black humour in times of crisis. The performance will be followed by a discussion.

Additional programme details will be announced in due course. All information: [Anaesthesia of the Heart](#)

For press and interview inquiries, please contact:

Magdalena Rausch
Press and Public Relations
E-mail: magdalena.rausch@goethe.de
Telephone: +32 2 5858532
<http://www.goethe.de/belgium/media>



The Goethe-Institut Brussels

The Goethe-Institut is the globally active cultural institution of the Federal Republic of Germany. The office in Brussels contributes to strengthening the European integration process and conveys Europe's cultural diversity at a political and strategic level. Its cultural, educational and information programmes in Belgium



promote exchange and cultural engagement, as well as interest in the German language, Belgium's third national language.