

## Weaving with words

## rooms

SANDRINE VERSTRAETE

In 'rooms', Sandrine Verstraete explores how we construct ourselves as individuals. The poet feels that her personality is fragmented and sets out in search of a coherent identity. But is such a thing even possible? Can poetry, or the search for language, help with this, and if so, how? Across five cycles, Verstraete moves through 'rooms' that are both physical spaces and mental landscapes – spaces with boundaries. Memories, imagination and experiences flow into one another, while the quest for a coherent self is constantly called into question.

In evocative sensory poetry, Verstraete explores the possibilities and limits of language. Different voices emerge in the poems: at times they seem like separate characters, at others facets of a single fragmented identity. By playing with grammar and the meaning of words, and by coining new words herself, the poet makes language both the subject and the instrument of her quest. As a result, 'rooms' reveals both the power and the limitations of words in our attempts to come to terms with who we are.

Verstraete calls language rusty, scathing and limited, yet, paradoxically, she herself can do absolutely anything with it: demolishing and rebuilding, vanishing and reappearing, preserving, conjuring, singing, and playing.

JURY OF THE HERMAN DE CONINCK PRIZE

Impressive. Language is both a building block and a wrecking ball, and nothing (and no one) can get around it.

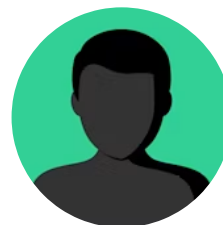
POËZIEKRANT

Sandrine Verstraete writes in 'the language of the gut'. She delves deep into bodies and things, and what she brings to the fore is something we immediately recognise as 'intimate' and 'part of who we are'. And yet, at the same time, her words are obscure, disturbing, and thus captivating.

PETER VERHELST, AUTHOR

kamers

## AUTHOR



Sandrine Verstraete (b. 1986) is a poet and lawyer and studied Multimedia Design at KASK in the city of Ghent, where she also lives and works. In 2013, she published her debut poetry collection 'r mp'. Between her first and second publications, she worked as a lawyer and felt her personal language was disappearing. In September 2025, twelve years after her debut, she published her second poetry collection 'rooms', for which she won the Herman De Coninck Poetry Prize in March 2026.

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