

A very personal story about loss

# Years of the Elephant

WILLY LINTHOUT

Charles Germonprez is a man in his fifties, married to Simone with a regular job and his only child, Jack, is the apple of his eye. Then one day the police come to their door with terrible news - Jack has killed himself by jumping off the roof.

From the very first page, Willy Linthout draws us into the difficult processes that await Charles as he lurches between loneliness, grief, incomprehension and love, often losing sight of the difference between reality and fiction.

## Heartbreaking and touching

DE STANDAARD

The story is autobiographical. In 2004 the author's only child, 21 years old, decided to end his life and 'Years of the Elephant' is based on this tragic occurrence. The book was initially intended as self-therapy to help Linthout deal with the loss of his son. However, the originally modest project unleashed a flood of reactions and therapists now use the book as a recognised aid for coping with grief.

'Years of the Elephant' consists of rough, unpolished pencil drawings in an atypical style that is very Flemish, and yet universal. This stylistic choice has made the book an even more personal document. Willy Linthout has created a powerful, groundbreaking graphic novel that grabs the reader by the throat.

**Linthout's choice to leave his pencil-work bare, is a masterstroke, depicting Germonprez's world as one where nothing is fixed or certain**

BLOG CRITICS



## AUTHOR



Willy Linthout (b. 1953) is well known in Flanders and the Netherlands as the illustrator of 'Urbanus', about the crazy, fictional adventures of a famous comedian. The series includes nearly 200 stories and millions of books have been sold. He surprised the comic strip world with his solo work Years of the Elephant, in which he tried to make sense of his son's suicide. Rough-and-ready pencil sketches and the subtle balance between tragedy and more humorous passages have become his stylistic trademarks.

**ORIGINAL TITLE** Het jaar van de olifant (2009, De Bezige Bij, 181 pp.)

**FORMAT** 170 x 240

**PRIZES** Stripschapspenning for best literary graphic novel, Flemish Culture Prize, Bronze Adhemar

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