

A monumental uncompromising oeuvre

Manners of Living

LEONARD NOLENS

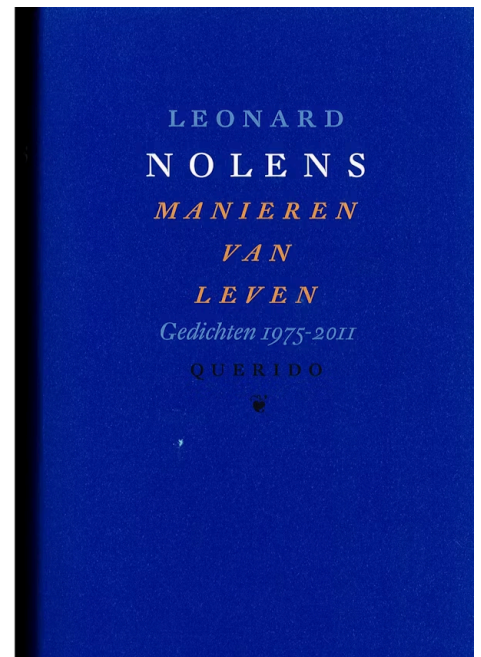
Leonard Nolens is a monumental figure in Flemish poetry. His poetry forms one of the most all-encompassing and uncompromising oeuvres in Dutch-language literature. He made his debut in 1969 with baroque, experimental poems, and in the mid 1980s his work became far more sober. His spellbinding style gave way to a spoken-language tone, while continuing to encompass profound thought.

A poet on a lonely high

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With brilliance, Nolens addresses a number of classic themes in ever-varying modulations, as if haunted by them. Whether the poems deal with parents, the questioning child, youth, farewell parties, cities, friends, loneliness, alcohol, God, money, the dream woman or the dream book, they all form part of the construction of a self and the writing of a life. Nolens' poetry is distinguished by the polyphonic ways of thinking and imaginary ways of acting that are contained within it. Each poem represents a reasoning, each cycle a solid yet explosive behavioural type.

His recent volume 'Zeg aan de kinderen dat wij niet deugen' (Tell the Children We're No Good) confirms that Leonard Nolens is now also able to depart from what seemed to be a preoccupied focus on the singular 'I' of the early poems and rather to alternate between the use of a specific 'I' and of a communal 'we', which in his latest collection also refers to a generation. The poet lovingly portrays this generation, but as a member of this group, also casts a critical eye on his and their lives.



AUTHOR



Leonard Nolens (b. 1947) is a poet, a diarist and translator. His most recent collection is 'Opzichtige stilte'. Beside poetry four highly singular diaries saw the light since 1989. Complemented with a fifth part that bore the title 'Hidden agenda 1997-2007' during work in progress, the diaries were compiled in 'Diary of a poet 1979-2007'. Photo © Sven Van Baerle

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