



PRESS RELEASE
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Atomium Prize 2026: Discover the winners

The winners of the Atomium Prizes were honoured on Saturday 19 September, the opening day of the Comic Strip Festival. For the past ten years, the festival has been recognising comic strip writers and artists. This year, no less than €85,000 will be distributed among the eight winners.

Brussels is a true creative hub for comic strip creation, as evidenced by the significant presence of the industry in the city, as well as the numerous exhibitions, murals, bookstores, and activities centred around the ninth art. To support writers and artists, the Brussels authorities have been awarding the Atomium Comic Strip Prizes for the past nine years as part of the BD Comic Strip Festival. The majority of these prizes are awarded in cash to help the winners finance their work. This year, more than €85,000 will be distributed among the eight prizes.

These awards were presented on Saturday 19 September, at La Bourse in the heart of Brussels.

The Raymond Leblanc Atomium Prize for Young Artists

The Raymond Leblanc Prize was launched by the Raymond Leblanc non-profit association, whose goal is to publicise, collect and preserve all the cultural heritage created by Raymond Leblanc, founder of the "Tintin magazine", Éditions du Lombard, the advertising agency Publiart and the animation studios Belvision, among other things. Its goal is to reward the work of a young author that has not published more than two comic strips.

Winner: Adele Rhoads - V.A.

What the jury said: *This project captivates from the outset through the power of its fantasia, both visually and narratively. It's a genuinely artistic and ambitious work, driven by a distinctive creative voice and an exceptional command of graphic storytelling. Original and skilfully constructed, the narrative opens dreamlike pathways into an exploration that's at once historical, intimate and familial. Its singular approach promises moments of genuine wonder and invites readers to immerse themselves in a world where reality, memory and imagination continually interact. It's an experience from which one is likely to emerge with a renewed perspective on nature and, more broadly, on the world around us.*

The project: In an isolated house nestled deep within the forests of Virginia, USA, an eleven-year-old girl visits her grandmother, who is suffering from cancer. Together, they share a tender and comforting moment amid the cold sterility of intravenous drips and the hum of medical machines.

Overcome by a strange premonition, the young girl decides to flee the house, climbing out through a window. She ventures into the woods in search of air, of an escape. What starts as a whimsical wandering through nature gradually turns into a disquieting experience, whose return to reality is marked by a darker tone. This event heralds the beginning of a series of increasingly strange occurrences.



Inspired by childhood memories, V.A. is an immersion into a suspended realm, poised on the boundary between the real and the symbolic. It unfolds at 300 Artillery Road, a place where nature seems to engage in an uncanny dialogue with the human body.

Prize money: €20,000 (a grant of €10,000 awarded by the COCOF and €10,000 in advance on rights) as well as an alternating publishing contract with Éditions du Lombard, Futuropolis or Casterman. This year the contract is with Casterman.

Partners: Association Raymond Leblanc, the COCOF, Editions du Lombard, Editions Futuropolis and Editions Casterman

More information: <http://www.raymondleblanc.be>

Catherine Schoemann Atomium Prize

This prize recognises work that honours and supports efforts to preserve and promote European comic strip heritage. This new prize is part of an ambitious, long-term initiative to protect the best of the ninth art, highlighting exceptional projects. It rewards efforts focused on promoting historical works, preserving archives and reissuing and distributing heritage comic strips, thereby fostering the transmission of this cultural heritage to future generations.

The Prize will be awarded in early December 2026 in Paris, in partnership with the SoBD Festival.

SHORTLISTED TITLES 2026

- Peanuts, Every Sunday, 1952-55 - Charles Schulz (Dargaud)
- Oeuvre complète 1967 - Gotlib (Dargaud and Fluide Glacial)
- Le Génie des Alpes, intégrale 5 - F'murrr (Dargaud)
- Les 3 formules du professeur Satō - version journal Tintin - Edgar P. Jacobs (Dargaud)
- Max Fridman, printemps-été 1938 : rhapsodie hongroise : la porte d'orient - Vittorio Giardino (Glénat)
- Max Fridman, automne 1938 : no pasaran - Vittorio Giardino (Glénat)
- Giuseppe Bergman, aventures complètes 1980-2004 - Milo Manara (Glénat)
- Spirou ... et Fantasio, 1946-1950, l'intégrale - André Franquin (Dupuis)
- La Loterie, d'après Shirley Jackson - Miles Hyman (Casterman)
- Three Rocks, l'histoire d'Ernie Bushmiller, l'homme qui créa Nancy, Préface de Art Spiegelman - Bill Griffith (Casterman)
- Le Vent dans les Saules, le grand classique de Kenneth Grahame - Michel Plessix (Delcourt)
- Pétrus Barbygère - Joann Sfar and Pierre Dubois (Delcourt)
- L'Epervier, tome 1, le Trépassé de Kermellec - Patrice Pellerin (Soleil Editions, Quadrants collection)
- Jack Palmer, intégrale 1 de 1974 à 1984 - René Pétillon (Glénat)
- Jack Palmer, intégrale 2 de 1982 à 1987 - René Pétillon (Glénat)

Prize money: €5,000 cash



Partners: Catherine Schoemann Projects, Point of View

More information: <https://www.schoemann.be/prix-atomium/edition-2025/>

The Atomium Prize for Graphic Design

This prize recognises a work of outstanding visual and graphic excellence. Factors taken into consideration include the quality of the artwork, layout, typography and overall design, as well as the way in which these visual qualities transcend and enhance the narrative.

Winner: L'oiseau chanteur - Désirée and Alain Frappier (Steinkis)

What the jury said: *"The jury members were deeply moved by the strength of a restrained visual approach that remains profoundly consistent with the narrative. The separation of text and image, the rhythm of the page layout, and the remarkable use of black-and-white textures combine to create a distinctive form of storytelling, in which every artistic choice serves to reinforce the emotion, memory and intimacy at the heart of the narrative."*

Synopsis: A deeply personal and understated narrative in which the author reflects on a childhood shaped by unequal treatment and unspoken abuse. Through a stark text, accompanied by evocative illustrations, she sheds light on family silences and the struggle to rebuild oneself.

L'oiseau chanteur is more than an attempt to lay down the burden of the past through an autobiographical account. It seeks to expose the normalisation of an incestuous environment and of physical and psychological violence inflicted upon children; a reality that, while rooted in the family circle, extends throughout society as a whole. Violence and incest thrive in silence.

The narrative structure, which separates the text from the illustrated pages, serves to emphasise that imposed silence. The illustrations, appearing on the right-hand pages of the book, act as a mirror to the text, which stands alone on the left-hand pages.

Prize money: €4,000 cash

Partners: The Atomium, the Design Museum Brussels, Librairie Brüssel and visit.brussels

Wallonia-Brussels Federation Atomium Prize

The Wallonia-Brussels Federation Atomium Prize, also known as the *Espiègle de la bande dessinée*, recognises an outstanding graphic work published in 2025. The prize is awarded in two phases: initially during the Brussels Comic Strip Festival in September, and later at the *Espiègles Awards Ceremony* in November.

Winner: Pascal Matthey - Du pain blanc et du chocolat (L'Employé du Moi)

What the jury said: *"With Du pain blanc et du chocolat, the jury honours a work of remarkable subtlety and intelligence, skilfully weaving together biography, intimate storytelling and universal history. Having previously explored childhood and adolescence, Pascal Matthey now turns his attention to family trauma, evoking the Second World War indirectly, without ever portraying it explicitly. The book confirms the author's*



growing narrative mastery and the remarkable coherence of a body of work that unfolds over the long term. Poetry and sensitivity permeate this thoughtfully designed volume. Text and image, kept separate on the page, resonate with one another. Fine black-pencil drawings of striking precision gently evoke memory and nostalgia. Through his distinctive line, Pascal Matthey draws upon the collective memory while also offering a subtle reflection on the recycling of images. Through deft nods to some of the most iconic characters in the history of comics, he brilliantly revisits the heritage of the medium itself."

Prize money: €10,000 cash.

Partners: Mrs Elisabeth Degryse, Minister-President of the Government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, responsible for the Budget, Higher Education, School Buildings, Culture, Lifelong Learning, International Relations and the Francophonie.

More information: www.bandedessinee.cfwb.be

Galaxies BD Atomium Première Prize

This prize is presented by the editorial team of Galaxies BD, the only radio programme in Belgium entirely dedicated to comics (every Saturday from 17:00 to 18:00 on La Première). The editorial team collectively selects the Album of the Year from among the titles presented during the previous season (from September to June) by the seven Galaxies BD reviewers, as well as the titles featured by the programme's host, Thierry Bellefroid, including both the albums he recommended and those whose creators were invited onto the programme.

Winner: Sixtine Dano - Sibylline, chroniques d'une escort girl – Glénat

What the jury said: *By awarding Rouge Signal, the jury of the first Galaxies BD Atomium Prize recognises not only the power of its artwork, through its composition, colour palette and panel layout, but also the remarkable craftsmanship of its screenplay. The album achieves a striking balancing act between thriller and documentary, without resorting to an overbearing authorial commentary. Through the accuracy of its perspective and the strength of its narrative framework, Rouge Signal reveals the mechanisms of contemporary violence without ever reducing their complexity.*

Synopsis: Alexandre is a white, cisgender, middle-class man. Unlucky in love, bored at work, and left to brood over his resentment alone at home, he moves between his fridge and his phone, compulsively scrolling the internet in search of ready-made answers. Across the street, four women talk and work in a nail salon. From his window, he watches them.

Under the influence of an online community of men, his anger grows and hardens into hatred towards all those whom he believes have seized power and now threaten society.

Laurie Agustí is best known for her work for younger readers. With this first graphic novel for adults, she chooses to inhabit the mind of a violent man, dissecting with almost surgical precision the process of radicalisation and the mechanics of the very worst human impulses.



This chilling thriller follows the logic of misogynistic violence and, through rigorous documentary research, lays bare a terrifying reality. The pace accelerates relentlessly. Painted in gouache, the play of light reveals murderous impulses while drawing on a palette of vibrant nail-polish colours, a tribute to the femininity that the protagonist despises.

Against death and destruction, life endures in the portrait of these four women, each with a distinct personality. A graphic novel that seeks to warn, to prevent, and, through beauty and intelligence, to extinguish the flames before they spread.

Prize money: €20,000 worth of advertising space across RTBF's media channels, together with substantial editorial support on La Première.

Partner: La Première - RTBF (Belgian Radio-Television of the French Community).

The Atomium Cognito Prize for historic comic strips

The Cognito Historical Comic Strip Prize is awarded to the best historical comic strip. The prize is designed to reward authors who, through their work, shed light on a period of history.

Winners: Journal inquiet d'Istanbul - Ersin Karabulut

What the jury said: *The true story of a comics author, press illustrator and political cartoonist who, armed only with his drawings, gradually finds himself drawn into political engagement. The narrative is permeated by the doubts and anxieties of an anti-hero whose very personality is defined by uncertainty. Ultimately, it was the humanity of the central character, together with the vulnerability and humour displayed by his fellow cartoonists in the face of the dictatorship of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, that united the jury in its decision. Equally compelling was the artwork itself: original and deeply personal, venturing beyond conventional approaches, hovering between caricature and realism, and rendered in subtly muted colours that perfectly complement the story.*

Synopsis: Far from being an activist or an intellectual, Ersin Karabulut is first and foremost an artist driven by a passion for drawing. Burdened by his insecurities and self-doubt, he seeks only to do what he loves most: create. Together with a group of friends, he launches Uykusuz, a satirical magazine that quickly becomes a remarkable success, particularly among younger readers. Yet in a Turkey undergoing profound change, political realities soon begin to intrude upon his everyday life.

Through moments that are by turns humorous, moving and at times painful, this book immerses us in the life of a creator who finds himself, despite his best efforts, swept up in the upheavals of his era. Set against the backdrop of a society growing ever more conservative and a country where freedoms are steadily being eroded, it offers a deeply human account of one man's struggle to remain true to himself and his art.

Prize money: €5,000 cash

Partner: Cognito Prize



Le Soir Atomium Prize for News Report Comic Strips

Belgian daily newspaper Le Soir has always been the newspaper of choice when it comes to comic strips. With this prize, it recognises the strip that has stood out by examining the world around us in the form of a news report comic strip.

Winners: Et toi, comment ça va ? - Charles Berberian and Michèle Standjofski (Casterman)

What the jury said: *D'une rive à l'autre de la Méditerranée, Michèle Standjofski, née à Beyrouth, et Charles Berberian, qui a grandi à Beyrouth avant que ses parents ne déménagent en France, se sont échangé dessins et émotions face à l'horreur de la guerre au Liban. Un dialogue artistique s'est noué entre ces deux enfants du chaos. Leur roman graphique, Et toi, comment ça va ?, a tenté de remettre de la vie, de l'empathie, de la solidarité, de l'humanité dans un monde fracassé par les massacres et la destruction. Dans leur livre, les auteurs déroulent les fils du passé comme du présent pour comprendre comment on en est arrivé là, sur fond d'histoire commune entre l'Europe et le Proche-Orient, avec beaucoup d'intelligence et de générosité. Et toi, comment ça va ? nous montre que l'art peut servir à aller un peu moins mal. Dans cette correspondance entre les deux artistes, l'écoute des différences l'emporte sur les désaccords politiques. Le dessin joue de sa capacité à transmettre du désir d'apaisement. Il exprime ce que les mots n'arriveront jamais à dire pour amener une autre vision du monde. Cette bande dessinée invite à reconsidérer notre rapport à l'actualité et à voir comment la petite histoire est porteuse au quotidien de la grande histoire*

Synopsis: *Et toi, comment ça va ?* is the title of the illustrated correspondence between Charles Berberian in Paris and Michèle Standjofski in Beirut. At first glance, the phrase may seem to be one of the most ordinary questions imaginable. Yet in Lebanon, in times of crisis, it's anything but. One hardly dares to ask it when the answer feels so painfully obvious.

Long-time friends, Michèle Standjofski and Charles Berberian bring their perspectives together in response to events that are profoundly and quite literally shattering. While she continues her artistic work amid the tremors and dust of the bombings, he uses drawing as a way of making sense of all that has been obscured by the relentless flames of fear, anger and despair, stoked by rolling news channels and social media alike, through clashes, fake news, and the shock of war's violence.

Prize money: €20,000 in advertising space, as well as considerable editorial presence on the media channels of the newspaper Le Soir.

Partner: Le Soir



Spirou Atomium Prize

It's all about humour! This year, Spirou magazine is celebrating young talents who excel in the three-panel comic strip format. How do you develop a coherent storyline, a universe, a gag and writing that appeals to all readers, young and old, in just a few panels? Each participant may submit a maximum of four three-panel comic strips.

Winner: Maxence Jacquin

What the jury said: *"The art of the comic strip is all about precision: every word, every letter and every tiny visual detail must contribute fully to the rhythm and musicality that, when expertly handled, leads the reader to the punchline. At the same time, it must embody a sense of humour that is spontaneous, direct and effective. This is a balance that Maxence Jacquin has achieved in his series Charles & Cie, which the editorial team of Spirou found witty, clever and just the right amount of irreverent. A 27-year-old illustrator with no professional background in comics, Maxence Jacquin has yet to publish his first graphic novel. His comic strips will appear in Spirou magazine during 2027. »*

Prize: story published by Spirou magazine, and all publications will be paid at the professional rate.

Partner: Journal Spirou

More information: <https://spirou.com/concours-prix-atomium-spirou-2026/>

The Comic Strip Festival continues this weekend...

The **Comic Strip Festival** takes place from September 19 to 20, 2026. It will no doubt be another edition filled with **exhibitions, activities, and unique encounters**.

More information about the Atomium Prizes available at: <https://www.visit.brussels/en/visitors/agenda/bd-comic-strip-festival?undefined=prixatomium>.

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