

observant

INDEPENDENT WEEKLY MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY

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Riki Janssen steps down as editor-in-chief of Observant after 29 years

An interview about respect, not being afraid, trust, and the hardest period of her career. "I couldn't let it go anymore"

P. 5-6-7



+ Why does no one care about the university elections?

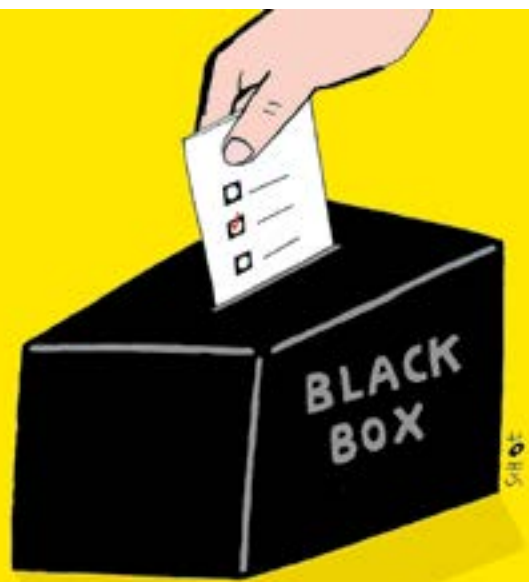
Read the analysis – based on articles from the Observant archive and drawing on years of attending council meetings– on observantonline.nl/English That's where you will also find the latest news next week. The next print edition will be published on June 5



Column

"After years of hard work, the pieces are finally falling into place — and yet, I've never felt more lost"

P. 3



How do you actually vote for the university council?

For those unfamiliar with the Dutch voting system, it's not clear at all. "There are no instructions anywhere"

P. 3 *Illustration: Bas van der Schot*



editorial

It's been a good run

A few weeks ago, the whiteboard in my office came crashing down – screw, wall plug and all. It's the same board I've used every week for years to map out the print newspaper and website. Fortunately, we weren't in a meeting at the time, as it landed squarely on the table where my colleagues DB and LR usually sit on Monday mornings. Yes, much like a family, we've all more or less got our usual spots at the table. A superstitious person might have called it a sign.

In the weeks leading up to that moment, there were editorial meetings I wasn't allowed to attend, and conversations that stopped abruptly the moment I walked into the room. In April, at the end of a public University Council meeting, I was caught off guard by a short speech from the chair, followed by applause from council members and the Executive Board. It felt a bit odd, to say the least. Last week, I found myself in the Law Faculty garden with my colleague WD. Not for a lunchtime chat (we usually eat at our desks), but for an interview. And for once, I wasn't the one asking the questions – I was answering them. Then came Monday's Editorial Board meeting, where some heartfelt words were said to me.

And so here we are. Today, Thursday 22 May 2025, is my last day as editor-in-chief. Am I feeling a bit emotional? Of course I am. But I also know that this is what I want. It's been a good run, after 29 years at the helm, and it's time to hand over the reins – no matter how warm, close-knit and professional my team is and always has been. I've learnt a great deal over the years. One of my earliest lessons came from Kees Schröer, then chair of our Foundation Board. In a burst of youthful defiance, I'd attempted to confront a board member and fallen flat on my face. Kees told me, "It doesn't matter if you're right; what matters is getting others to see that you're right." Many more lessons followed. I'll share two of the most important ones. First: the realisation that perfect is the enemy of good. If you always aim for perfection, you're only setting yourself up for disappointment. Something will always go wrong, no matter how hard you try. Most weeks, "good" really is good enough. And that's not a lack of ambition – it's a healthy sense of perspective.

The second lesson came printed on a coffee mug a former editor once brought in: "Sometimes a colleague knows better." I've come to understand that acknowledging this doesn't make your team respect you any less – quite the opposite, in fact.

My highly esteemed colleague Wendy Degens will be taking over as editor-in-chief. I'll be staying on as an editor until I retire – no longer front and centre, but writing articles in the relative calm of the sidelines. And I'm looking forward to it. Take care!

Riki Janssen

This is editor-in-chief Riki Janssen's final editorial. From next week, Observant's new editor-in-chief, Wendy Degens, will be writing in this space.



series maastricht and me



Photo: Ellen Oosterhof

"A pretty place with lovely people"



Tink Schiffmann, a fourth-year student at University College Maastricht, shares their favourite spot in Maastricht: The Jan van Eyck Academy.

"I first came to Maastricht in 2019 to start a bachelor's in Psychology. To be honest, I didn't have a great time. It wasn't the most social environment – everyone just seemed to be looking out for themselves. You'd go to the supermarket, head home, cook, and that was it. The Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience is also located quite far from the city centre, far removed from Maastricht's ancient, romantic vibe. "So when COVID hit, I was actually quite relieved to go back home to Germany – or even quit my studies altogether. I'd always had my eye on University College Maastricht and the people there, often thinking I'd like to be part of their community. So when I was faced with the question of what I wanted to do instead of Psychology, the answer was UCM. I applied, moved closer to the city centre, and it changed my life. Now, I feel truly connected to Maastricht. I love dipping my toes into its many small communities, finding people with similar interests and learning new things, whether it's about mushrooms for cooking, gardening or astrology.

"I discovered the Van Eyck Academy about a year ago. I first came here with a friend, which is how I usually discover new places. It often takes me quite a while to be truly comfortable

somewhere and to feel like I understand a place. But here, I feel this sense of belonging. A lot of people here are queer or neurodivergent, which ticks a lot of boxes for me and makes life much easier.

"I come here to study or meet friends, because I hate libraries. They're awful. I don't understand how anyone can willingly spend time in such an anxious place. They're never really quiet, they're too big, too crowded and somewhat messy.

"Van Eyck can be loud too, but it never feels messy. I love the architecture of the building – it's so open and bright, and the garden is always beautiful. It's also very close to UCM, and it has very nice study spaces. But what I love most is that I always seem to run into a friendly face here. When I feel like being in a pretty place, surrounded by lovely people, I come here."

Line-Marie Eichhorst

In this series, Observant asks a student or staff member every week about their favorite spot in Maastricht

Pro-Palestinian protesters block two inner city faculties

A blockade of two faculties and a canceled lecture by a Jewish-American activist: a week after the loud pro-Palestinian protest march through inner-city faculties, the conflict in the Middle-East continues to stir emotions at Maastricht University.

Surprised looks from staff and students at the Faculty of Law, Tuesday morning: the entrances to their buildings and parking lot are blocked by (partly masked) pro-Palestinian protesters, although they can still get in through a shortcut. Some twenty protesters are chanting slogans and singing songs at the faculty's main entrance on Bouillonstraat. Those attempting to enter, are handed a flyer with demands: UM must sever ties with Israeli institutions - not just freeze them, as has been the case since the end of May 2024 - and "condemn the Israeli genocide in Gaza." Around 11:30 PM, the protesters leave (on their own initiative, according to the university), only to show up at the Arts and Social Sciences faculty two hours later, where they block the entrances on the Grote Gracht. After shouting slogans and a brief discussion with students campaigning for the university elections, the protest ended. The demonstrations followed last week's news

that the Executive Board will be "very cautious" for the time being about inviting guest speakers on the topic of Gaza and Israel on university premises. First, an investigation into what went wrong on 12 March, when protestors disrupted a lecture by the pro-Israeli Rawan Osman in Tapijn Z, needs to be concluded, said Rector Pamela Habibović. Results from that investigation should provide clarity "in the coming weeks".

Jewish-American activist Shabbos Kestenbaum was therefore not welcome at UM on Monday. He had been invited by the Jewish student association IJAR. His lecture took place elsewhere in the city, much to the consternation of IJAR, which posted a message to Instagram, saying free speech apparently does not apply to Jewish students. However, the university was worried about the safety of attendees, the Rector told *Observant*. Without concrete evidence that anything had been planned, for that matter. But the topic "could lead to backlash," said Habibović.

She doesn't feel that the university is yielding to the demands of the group - the pro-Palestinian students - who have been the loudest voices in the debate for more than a year. "No. We will learn from what happened on 12 March. And

it is a difficult decision, one we have taken very reluctantly. We believe in free discourse at the university, but if the safety of those attending is at risk, you have to consider all sides."

'Internal' meetings - with lectures by students or staff members - are allowed. These speakers can be held to the university's code of conduct, said Habibović, who does acknowledge that "there are no guarantees." Erev Rav - a second Jewish student association, which is critical of Israel and Zionism - held a meeting at FASoS on Monday afternoon. And the Palestinian photojournalist Mohammed Alzanoon was scheduled to speak about his experiences in Gaza at the Omnium dialogue platform on Wednesday evening. Alzanoon is in the Netherlands as part of the Safe Haven program of Amsterdam's NIAS research institute. UM is contributing to the program financially, which makes him an "internal" speaker in the university's eyes.

The local branch of political party VVD has submitted questions about the canceled lecture. The party wants the mayor and aldermen to raise the subject with the university, "to ensure that freedom of speech is always facilitated and protected".

Peter Doorakkers

2025 university elections in full swing

International employees having trouble voting: "There are no instructions anywhere"



Photo: Joey Roberts

This week, staff and students can vote on the University Council and the Faculty Councils, but it isn't clear to everyone how exactly you do that. "There are no instructions anywhere," said Michael Erard, Knowledge Valorisation Officer for Law, who posted to the Umployee intranet that several foreign staff members were having trouble.

"This way of voting may be entirely logical to Dutch people, but in an international setting there is no such thing as a 'common sense' approach; everyone's context is different," Erard said over the phone. His problem was that it wasn't clear to him whether he should vote for one single candidate, or one

from each list. "You have to give clear instructions to people who might be used to a different voting system, or who have never voted before. Otherwise you exclude those people from the process, and that's not exactly democratic. I emailed the election bureau and they explained it to me, but it should just be written on the voting page. Now people might drop out, or vote for the wrong person by accident."

Students are also often not aware of how to vote, or even that they can! This year, there are banners with 'UM Elections' outside a number of university buildings, hoping to raise awareness of the election among the students. Surrounding them, members of the

student parties explain to their fellow students how it works.

In a bid for fairness, the parties change location each day, because, as the members of NovUM standing outside the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences on Monday readily admit, students often vote for the first party that approaches them. "But a few people did say they would look up the party manifestoes," they said. Adding, "It's a shame, you want them to vote for you because they agree with your views, not because they don't know who the other parties are."

Polls are open until 18.00 on Thursday, 22 May.

Cleo Freriks



The Girl I Used to Be

“

A few days ago, one of my best friends messaged me. She had spent forty minutes reading all of my columns and wanted me to know how much I'd grown, and how proud of me she was. I read her message five times (and counting). The kind words meant a lot, coming from someone whose opinion I value so greatly. They meant even more, coming at a time when I really needed to hear them.

In truth, I haven't been feeling like myself recently. Or, rather, I've been feeling uncertain about who I'm even supposed to be at this moment in time.

The past three years have been some of the most rewarding years in my life, marked by milestones I never thought I'd set. I'm just a fraction of a point away from my goal GPA. I'm writing columns that are published on a weekly basis. I know exactly what I want to do after my bachelor's degree. I'm confident. After years of hard work, the pieces are finally falling into place - and yet, I've never felt more lost.

Despite all the achievements, my time in university hasn't been entirely uphill. The road to success is bumpy, and I've experienced my fair share of hardships, which have shaped me entirely and irrevocably. Rejection, loss, grief - not just of others, but of myself.

I look back on the girl I was when I first moved to Maastricht - wide eyed, immature, and naively confident that she would be able to control the way her life unfolded. Sometimes I miss her, and the bittersweet illusion of certainty.

I've turned into somewhat of a control-freak over the past years; the type who gives herself fifteen minutes for a five-minute walk and shows up to class half an hour early. Therefore, I suppose the hardest pill to swallow has been the realisation that to become someone new, you must let go of someone old. Even if letting go means freefalling for a little.

I suppose change is never meant to be comfortable. It involves pain, sweat, tears, and a whole lot of uncertainty. For now, all I can do is trust that I'll find my footing again. And if I ever lose sight of how far I've come, I'll just read my friend's message one more time.

”

Robin van Wasen, student at UCM

series sing, fight, cry, pray, laugh, work and admire

/ Angella Namuyomba
(2001, Entebbe, Uganda)

/ Third-year bachelor's
student of Biomedical
Sciences

/ Lives in:
Sittard

/ Relationship status:
"I rather keep that to
myself"



Photo: Joey Roberts

“

In ten years, I'll look in the mirror and see a strong, smart Black woman and outstanding scientist

”

What book is on your bedside table? *Autobiografie van mijn lichaam* [Autobiography of My Body] by Lize Spit, about her mother, who was an alcoholic. It's really powerful, just like Lale Gül's debut about the suffocating Turkish environment she grew up in – I devoured that in two weeks. Parts of it felt familiar: how communities function, and how people follow their own logic. My favourite author is Octavia E. Butler. I used to read her books all the time when I was younger. A lot of her work is about the Black community in the US, about their history and slavery. I found it fascinating, also because I realised I was different – the only Black girl in my class.

Persistence got me here. I was fourteen when I came to the Netherlands to join my mother, who had already applied for asylum here. We lived in Huizen, a village where hardly anyone spoke English. It was a culture shock. I had to learn the language, and as a refugee from an African country, I had to work my way up to the highest level of secondary education. I started at *vmbo*, where my German teacher told me, "Angella, you don't belong here." I moved up to *mavo*, then *havo* and eventually completed *vwo*. My mother didn't even know. After finishing *havo*, I enrolled in a lab course at Leiden University of Applied Sciences while also doing an accelerated *vwo* programme because I had my heart set on going to university. I didn't tell anyone, in case it didn't work out. Leiden wasn't always easy; I lived on my own, worked and

studied incredibly hard. But it was worth it. I never lost sight of my goal.

What do you dream of? I've always known I wanted to work in healthcare, even back when I still lived in Uganda. When people fall ill there and go to a local clinic, they're almost always told it's an infection and sent home with antibiotics. As a child, I wondered why people got ill in the first place. Doctors know the symptoms; I wanted to understand the molecular processes behind them. That's what drew me to Biomedical Sciences. After my bachelor's, I want to stay in this field, do a master's and become an outstanding scientist. When I look in the mirror ten years from now, I want to see a strong, smart Black woman who excels in biomedical research – still a male-dominated field.

I feel... seventy per cent Ugandan and thirty per cent Dutch. I've had Dutch citizenship for five years now, and I belong here. But most of my family still lives in Uganda, and I have a lot of memories from my early years there. It's a beautiful country, but the economy is in a terrible state, and having a degree is worthless without connections in high places. I went back for the first time last year. Politically, nothing has changed, but the wonderful colours and smells were just as I remembered. I still speak the language, and it still feels like home.

City or countryside? Countryside, one hundred per cent. I live in Sittard, which is nice and quiet. I run five kilometres every week, and I like running in the woods. I'd love to live in a small village. I grew up in Huizen, so I'm used to peace and quiet.

My mother is my rock. We talk a lot about my studies. She motivates and supports me, emotionally and financially. My father left when I was young. When I feel unsure about something, I turn to my mother. I don't tell her everything, though. I'm an only child, and we're great friends, but she doesn't need to know everything about me.

What's your biggest pitfall? I've realised I can be a bit of a pessimist and tend to focus on all the things that might go wrong. Take group projects, for example – there's always someone who doesn't pull their weight, and I find myself worrying about it in advance and preparing for the worst, making sure their part gets done. I may seem confident, but I don't always feel it.

What breaks your heart? I cried watching a TV appeal about people in Africa without access to clean water. It made me feel so powerless. The system is so corrupt that even the most basic needs can't be met. It's heartbreaking to see people suffer like that.

My little joy in life is... chapatis – Ugandan flat-bread made from soft dough and filled with beans and egg, or ingredients like tomato or avocado. It was the first thing I asked for when I went back to Uganda. They're so good, but you really have to take your time making them. My mother makes the best chapatis.

Deborah Blekkenhorst

Weekly personal interview with a student or employee

Riki Janssen steps down as editor in chief for Observant; a final interview

“Oh heck, I don’t like interviews like this”

Observant editor Riki Janssen didn’t have an easy time of it in the mid-nineties when she wanted to become editor in chief of the university newspaper. The organisation was all a bit of a mess, she says, looking back. Things had to change. But the board of the foundation at the time didn’t want to promote her. And yet she managed. Now, after 29 years, she’s stepping down. An interview about respect, about not being afraid, about trust, and about the hardest period of her career. “I couldn’t let it go anymore.”

Text: Wendy Degens



Photo: archive Observant

// No sob stories, alright, don’t dwell on the stammering and stuff. Oh heck, I don’t like interviews like this.” It’s her turn to discover what it’s like on ‘the other side’, to pour out her heart and soul. And she also knows: the more open interviewees are when answering questions, the more interesting the article. Riki Janssen (1959), the second editor in chief *Observant* has ever had, is

handing over the reins. “It’s been a good run. I don’t always need to be at the front anymore.” She has been at the helm since 1996; she has seen how much the university has grown, the introduction of English as a second working language, the digitalisation, including of the university newspaper. Isn’t 29 years a long time? “I had already decided to stop before covid. But then, well, so much happened, in the office, in colleagues’ lives. You wait.

I knew who I wanted to hand over the reins to. But she still had to think about it,” she says, winking at her successor. “An outsider wasn’t an option for me. I have seen it go wrong so often for fellow newspapers. It’s very hard if you don’t know the university.” How often has she heard, ‘When are you moving to a serious national paper?’ “In the eyes of many, a university newspaper is ‘lesser’. I understand the sentiment, but it still feels like a shame. The work is the same. Our standards are just as high, we adhere to the journalistic code, we’re critical, just like a *Volkskrant* or *NRC*. Moreover, I didn’t want to leave Limburg, or the team, or this university, and I feel it has to be said, it’s nice here, there are fascinating people here, doing fascinating things. Should I give all that up because there is ‘more’, because of the prestige? Absolutely not.”

Frills

About that ‘prestige’, a while back it was the subject of some debate at the office: the email signature. What do people put next to their name in an email? Their position, obviously, but also their titles? Janssen admits that for a very, very long time, she didn’t list her degree. Just ‘Riki Janssen, editor in chief’, not ‘drs. Riki Janssen, editor in chief’. Too many frills, bragging. Yes, of course, you should be proud of who you are and what you’ve achieved, but blowing your own trumpet like that, no, not her thing. She doesn’t feel she’s better than anyone else. Nor even than her colleagues, because “sometimes they do know more”, she says. “There’s no shame in it.” Her motto – ‘I am the first among equals’ – reflects that. “When you produce a newspaper together, you need each other. I want contact, I want to know how my people are, whether there is anything going on, so that I can take that into account. That’s why I’m not sure I could have led a larger organisation. Is that connection still there?” Janssen’s leadership? Empathetic, respectful, she gives her employees freedom, trust, “because I know how nice it is to be in charge of your own schedule, to work on your own project. Looking back, I wouldn’t have changed a thing, although I could be too focused on the madness of the moment, on a paper that needed to be finished.” That weekly deadline and all the organising that surrounds it are still a source of stress. If people don’t submit their pieces on time, things don’t go as planned, especially on Wednesdays, if the printer is waiting, then you’re better off leaving Janssen alone.

Tough

After studying philosophy at what was then still the Catholic University Nijmegen, Janssen had two options in mind – it was the early eighties, jobs were scarce, so you took what you could get. “I thought about academia, researching things. Or something with writing, because I quite enjoyed that, no more, no less.” She had already ▶



**"It's been a good run.
I don't always need to be
at the front anymore"**

contributed to a student journal – reworking a paper into an ‘academic article’ – and took part in a course on how to write about science more simply. After that, she applied to join ‘*Observant*’s sister paper’ in Nijmegen, now known as *Vox*. At the same time, she applied for a PhD position in ‘women’s studies philosophy’ in Amsterdam, “I wasn’t selected”. A moment later, “I read recently that the person who got that job is now a professor.”

Janssen and academia, it wasn’t what was expected at all. Not that she lacked the brains for it, far from it, but as a teenager, she was “focused on other things”. “I didn’t do any homework. I was an active child, spoke up if I had an opinion, enjoyed sports. I wanted to be tough, strong, a tomboy. After primary school, I went to the mavo [lower general secondary education]. If anybody wasn’t ready for school, it was me.” Was she bossy, too? “Not so much, but I did like to be at the front.” She remembers organising a circus in the final year of primary school. “I took joint lead and organised the whole thing with a group of other girls.” The same thing applied to handball, a sport she played at quite a high level in her hometown of Nederweert, and which she was very good at. Janssen was captain for years.

Sports mad

“Now that I’m older, I recognise that that toughness, that shouting, was compensation. I had a fear of failure and a terrible stammer. I’ve carried that with me my whole life. In the end, I decided that training as a teacher, something I did consider briefly, wasn’t for me, because you had to talk so much.” It’s why, when she was a student journalist for the newspaper at the Catholic University Nijmegen, she dreaded phone calls. Speeches as the editor in chief of *Observant*: “In the beginning, I would write out my whole speech. It’s still not my favourite thing in the world, haha, but I did always do it. ‘You can be afraid, but you mustn’t let it hold you back’, it’s what I also always told colleagues and students who would freelance for us.”

Coming back to her school career: mavo, havo [senior general secondary education], the social academy, and then through a colloquium doctom – a university entrance examination – university. Reading philosophy, no less, not exactly a practical degree. “My older brother, who started a degree in biology and changed to psychology halfway through, gave me a book by Simone de Beauvoir. He thought I was too sports mad and needed elevating,” she laughs. “I read it and I instantly knew: ‘I want to live like De Beauvoir.’ I wanted my own Sartre – and I found him, with glasses [former *Observant* editor Wammes Bos, her husband].”

At university, the fear of failure reared its head again. “I was scared I wouldn’t be able to handle the academic environment. I did it anyway, even though it was a struggle at times. I learned to think, analyse, ask critical questions. It has been incredibly valuable in my career as a journalist.”

Chaos

“What utter nonsense,” she cries, when the start of her tenure as editor in chief comes up. The foundation board at the time (*Observant* is a foundation; the board is in charge of personnel, including hiring and firing) did not want to appoint her as editor in chief, despite the fact that Janssen had taken on a number of crucial responsibilities. “Things were so badly organised.” Five years earlier, in 1991, when she had been hired as an editor, she had been surprised at the “disorganised chaos”, no weekly timeline, no agreements regarding deadlines. Naturally, she could have left, but she didn’t. She went into organisation mode. “I have no idea why the board didn’t want to promote me to editor in chief. ‘Because I’m a woman’, I’ve always thought.” In the end, it was her fellow editors who took up her cause. They sent a letter to the Executive Board, which at the time included rector Hans Philipsen, with a request to intercede, so that Janssen would get the job. “It was one of the last things that Marja Verhulst, secretary of the board at the time, did. Marja thought I was on the young side – I was 36 – but I was allowed to try.” Janssen was appointed as the interim editor and given a coach. “Irene Levy. She taught me so much.” Her top tip: “You are not God, you cannot always do everything perfectly.”

Feminists of Maastricht

There was a time when she faltered; that ‘mantra’ didn’t help her anymore. Janssen calls it one of the hardest periods of her career. It was the end of 2021. Feminists of Maastricht (FOM), a student organisation, was displeased about an article on free tampons and sanitary pads in university premises. It was started as a pilot and *Observant* had written that they were intended “for women” who had insufficient money to buy them. FOM wanted that changed

to ‘for people’, because “not only women menstruate”, the students wrote in an email to the editor. “We were told to change it immediately, or else they would ‘mobilise their community’. I felt we shouldn’t have to give in to that, but the mood was threatening. The online article was flooded with the worst comments, calling us ‘racist, right-wing extremists, transphobic’ and a host of other things.”

There were posters around the city accusing the university newspaper of discriminatory language. In the middle of January 2022, the *Observant* website crashed. A targeted cyberattack by FOM sympathisers, according to an email sent to the office some two weeks later.

In bad faith

“It was bizarre,” says Janssen, “I had never experienced this before.” What didn’t help, was that she’d only recently lost both her parents. The loss was still fresh. Her mother had been bedridden for a long time and died during the covid pandemic in 2020. She also lost her father, quite suddenly, a year earlier. “I’ve always been a very outspoken individual, but there was hardly anything left of that person. Fear took over. It got very personal, I was being insulted in online reactions by people who didn’t know me. But that wasn’t what really got to me. It was the accusation that the editorial team, that I, had acted in bad

“I’ve always been a very outspoken individual, but there was hardly anything left of that person. Fear took over”

faith. Of course, there were numerous times when I thought, ‘What could I have done differently?’ It’s a reflexive reaction. Could I have prevented this? I don’t know, I don’t think so. But I should have rung those students rather than sticking to email. Talking is often so much better.”

The fact that there were ‘anti-*Observant*’ posters around town, that FOM had warned about mobilising the community, it meant that Janssen sometimes felt physically unsafe, too. It was winter and still getting light as she arrived at the bicycle parking behind Boullionstraat. “I often thought, ‘What if there actually is someone behind me?’”

It broke her down, but she persevered – albeit, less intensely. HR adviser Pierre Schröder advised her to rest, to not work for six, seven weeks. “I said no, I was scared I might never come back.”

The *Observant* team were “worth their weight in gold, not just in that situation, but in all my years as editor in chief [there have been few changes of staff]. My team feels like a family.”

She also enjoyed the support of the Executive Board during this tough time. That hadn’t always been the case either. “When Jo Ritzen, former Minister of Education, was the head of UM, I always felt a little threatened, ‘he’ll pull the plug’. He was not a fan of an independent newspaper. Countless times, Cor Spreeuwenberg, head of the foundation board at the time, had to meet with him because there was something new Jo didn’t agree with.” There is much more of a mutual respect with the current chair, Rianne Letschert, and her fellow board members, “although they are not always happy with the negative publicity”.

Struggle

Janssen is not just a manager, she is still very much ‘on the front lines’ herself. “It was a deliberate choice to keep writing. I know what it is like to struggle with a story, to ask difficult questions, to have to call back an interviewee because there is something else you want to know, to approach people in a random university building.” Since 2017, she has written a weekly editorial about the goings-on in the office. “I had my doubts in the beginning, ‘What have I got to say’, but I always managed, there’s always something.”

She is clear about the role of an independent university newspaper in 2025, “it is still incredibly important”. But shouldn’t the format be different, especially to retain students, who spend so much time on social media? “It is difficult. We have a very varied readership, there are people who still want to pick up a paper copy of *Observant*, and there are a lot of online readers. We try to serve them both.”

Janssen will continue working as an editor until she is 67. “I’m looking forward to it, writing articles, with no other responsibilities. I’m not going to get in your way,” she tells her successor. “I promised myself and you that. I’m completely ready for it, I can leave it all behind with confidence. //

colofon

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[@observant-um.bsky.social](https://bsky.social/observant-um)

3 book shops* on books in a paneldiscussion

* Limestone Books
* Dominicanen
* De Tribune

Paneldiscussion moderated by Marlo Saalmink & Lars den Hertog

Tuesday May 27
walk in 19:00h
short introduction at 19:30h

Listen; it's all about books

look over there

fish to go

ready to enjoy at home

naturally from

Van Leendert Vis

Markt, Maastricht open: Tues - Sat

vanleendertvis.nl

DE MEDEDELINGEN VAN DE UNIVERSITEIT, FACULTEITEN, SERVICECENTRA EN STUDENTEN-ORGANISATIES ZIJN TE VINDEN OP

WWW.OBSERVANTONLINE.NL

THE ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY, FACULTIES, SERVICE CENTRES AND STUDENT ORGANISATIONS CAN BE FOUND ON

WWW.OBSERVANTONLINE.NL

Agenda academic ceremonies

Aula Minderbroedersberg 4-6



SCAN THE CODE



Maastricht University

Vacatures

Werken voor de meest internationale universiteit van Nederland? Scan de QR-code voor ons actuele vacature overzicht*.

Voor meer informatie over werken bij de Universiteit Maastricht, ga naar <https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/nl/werken-bij-de-um>

*Medewerkers van UM kunnen een volledig overzicht van interne- en externe vacatures vinden door in te loggen op SuccessFactors via Umployeee.



www.maastrichtuniversity.nl