Stop Press: A new movement is born... or at the very least defined.

As events in the marquee drew to a close yesterday Amélie Nothomb was pressed by an audience member to give a name to the current literary scene. At first she explained that when asked by Lycéens to specify which literary current she belonged to, she would normally reply “la romantisme belge” – Belgian Romanticism – delighting to imagine the perplexed faces of the young scholars’ teachers.

Reflecting further, Nothomb was abruptly visited by the angel of inspiration, who forced her to declare, with evident rapture, “La Rhapsodisme!” There remained no time to discover from Nothomb the characteristics of this newly-baptised school, but when articles are written, journals are founded and statues are erected in commemoration of The Rhapsodists, be sure to remember that you heard it here first.

**The Birth of Rhapsodism!**

Books are available for purchase at Shakespeare & Company and in French at the independent French bookseller stand outside square René Viviani. There will be a signing by authors following most Festival events.
To attempt to draw a line dividing the literary and the visual arts is an enterprise that is destined to come unstuck. A large number of distinguished writers - Henry Miller, Hermann Hesse, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Wyndham Lewis, among them - have discovered that their are certain subjects which force even them to turn away from words and towards painting. Equally, many painters have produced large bodies of written work. Vincent Van Gogh’s correspondence with his brother Theo is one of the most astonishing and heartbreakingly beautiful works in the history of literature – albeit an inadvertent one. It is its natural then that literary festivals should attract the interest of artists, and this one is no exception.

Hidden away on the second floor, next to the green sleeping, but she was the perfect subject. “She wasn't sleeping, but she was meditating, she seemed very relaxed and very peaceful. Painting her was a pleasure.” It seems that the feeling was mutual. Eating a sandwich in the green room, Carolyn spoke of about the experience. “It was fascinating for me to pose like that. I did some modelling when I was young, for money, you know, but it was never like that. I was laying in that beautiful room, with that huge mirror, and I just started focussing on the reflection of one of the books. Then I found myself sitting into a kind of altered state, something transcendent. It was extremely pleasant and incredibly relaxing, and it left me very hungry!”

Rosy has a second project at the festival, unveiling yesterday evening at the keynotespeech delivered in the Salle Des Fetes of the Hotel De Ville, by Paul Auster and Siri Hustvedt. The installation comprised several pieces on canvases on easels and small sculptures, drawing inspiration from an artist’s studio – perhaps Rosy’s own. In the Salle, Rosy explains, “it’s crazy, everything is golden. Sylvia asked me to do a sculpture installation for the festival and I wanted to do something really homely and intimate, to counterpoint the very flashy French state style – which is very nice of course, but is not very intimate.”

Concerning what motivates her work Rosy prefers to remain opaque: “I try not to think too much to paint, a philosophy. When you are trying to paint something emotional it’s better, I think, to leave the philosophy undefined.”

Downstairs and around the site the work of Bobby Niven’s is on display. Bobby, a visual artist who works all using spectacles in different ways. I like to work with discarded material, material in a state of limbo, and consider why it has been discarded like that. Then reconstituting these materials into a different form, to alter the experience of an object and create a space for thought.

His work on display in the presentation case in the shop, Visions of Excess (pictured) was made before his arrival and at first he wasn't sure where it should be displayed. When he saw the cabinet, however, he understood, where the work had to hang. “I didn’t know where that was going to go, but the cabinet is perfect for it. With the mirror behind it you can look through them and see yourself. It’s magical in a way and quite unexpected.” The work is powerful, melted lenses dripping from metal frames, leading the observer to ponder the intensity of the of the words that pass from books through those lenses, and the thoughts these words stir.

The third of Niven’s works, also involving lenses, is something he would prefer people discovered naturally, rather than have attention drawn to it, so far be it from us to ruin the experience. As he talks about this work, however – a work he considers quite sexual in its connotations – he reflects upon the posignifigance of discarded lenses: “Because they’ve used, they all have a history. Someone spent years looking through them and now we’re looking at them. It’s pretty weird isn’t it?”