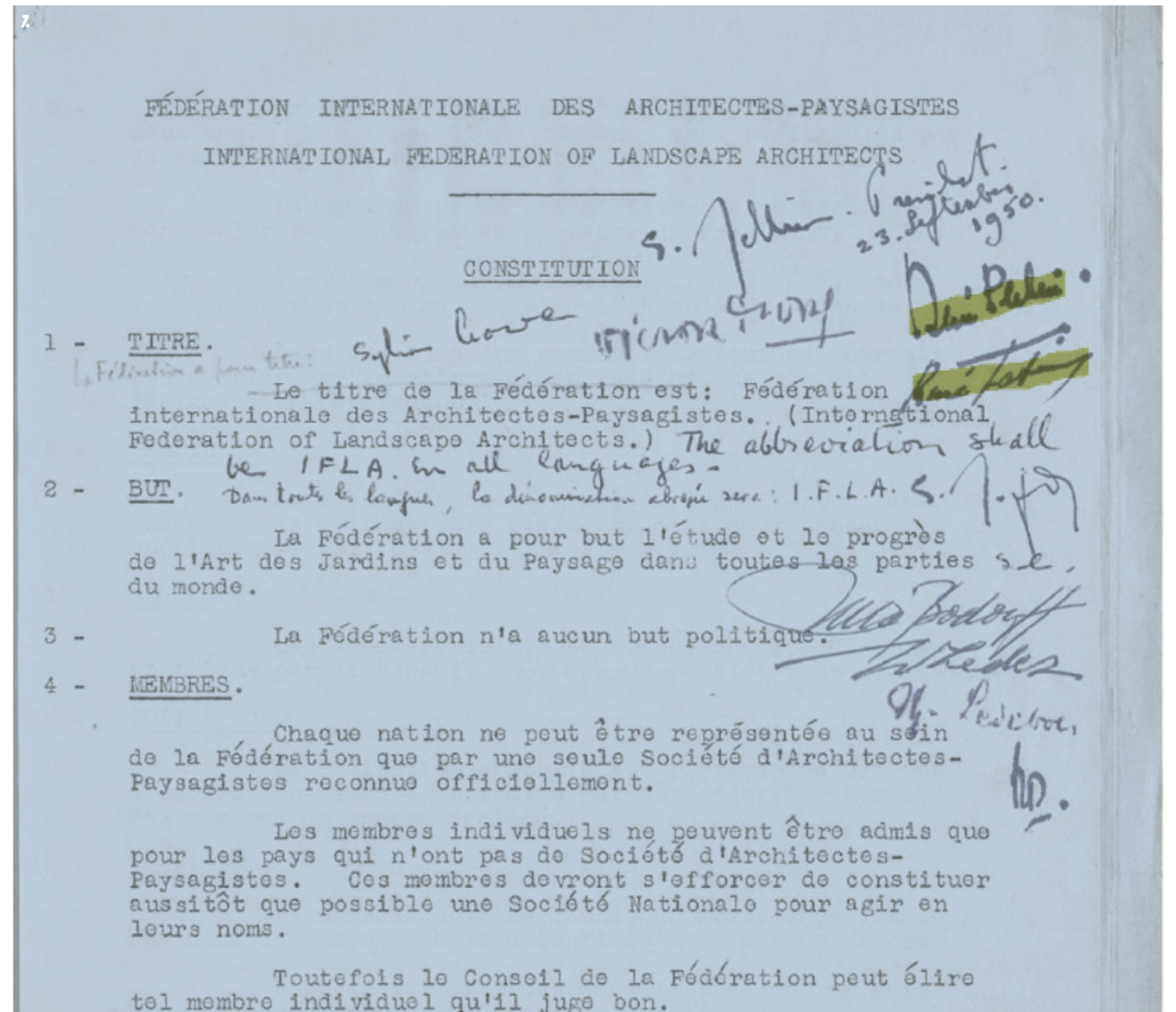


LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE IN 1948

On the twenty fourth of August 1930, Jules BuysSENS and Georges Wachtelaer, along with a dozen other garden architects, created the Association Belge des Architectes de Jardins - ABAJ (Belgian Association of Garden Architects). Five years later in 1935, the ABAJ became an officially recognised professional association. The archives show that in some of their minutes, as early as 1934, the notion of an International Association of Garden Architecture is being discussed.¹ In the same year as the ABAJ was created, it exhibited the spectacular Rose Garden at the Brussels International Fair where BuysSENS was the chief landscape architect for the entire exhibition site, assisted by the young René Pechère. On the Exhibition premises, the ABAJ also organised what seems to be the first International Garden Art Congress: the Congrès International d'Art des Jardins. Invitees were members of the Société Nationale d'Horticulture de France (SNHF) and of the Société Française d'Art des Jardins (SFAJ)², as well as some other well known international figures within the profession. It seems that it was on this very occasion that the idea of an International Federation of Landscape Architects emerged³, a proposal that was approved of by attendees Jules BuysSENS, René Latinne, René Pechère, Jean Canneel-Claes, Jules Janlet for Belgium, Achille Duchêne, Maurice Thionnaire, Ferdinand Duprat, Jacques Gréber for France⁴, as well as Ulla Bodorff for Sweden, C.Th. Sørensen for Denmark, Pietro Porcinai for Italy and Walter Leder for Switzerland. Many of these individuals went on to be present at the founding meeting of IFLA in Cambridge in 1948.

In the 1940s, training courses in *Garden Architecture* existed at the Horticultural Schools of Ghent, Vilvoorde and Anderlecht. However, the official title of *Garden Architecture* may be expanded



to the wider notion of *Landscape Architecture*. As early as the second half of the 19th century, landscape architects such as Jules BuysSENS worked well beyond the scale of gardens, including spa resorts, housing schemes and more, officially using the title *architecte paysagiste*, i.e. landscape architect.

The main Belgian representative at IFLA was René Pechère, one of the founding members and a member of the executive committee from the beginning. Belgium also played an important role with Brussels being the seat of IFLA's secretariat (based at the address of René Pechère's landscape architecture practice)

from 1950 until 1964. From 1998 up until today, the Belgian capital has been the headquarters of EFLA (European Federation of Landscape Architects), which became IFLA-Europe in 2009.

1948 // NATIONAL PROFILE BELGIUM

By Ursula Wieser Benedetti

1. Cf. Anagnostopoulos et al. IFLA: Past, Present, Future, 2000.

2. Cf. Luisa Limido and Chiara Santini, 'La formation des paysagistes au premier Congrès international des architectes de jardins (1937)', Projets de paysage [Online], Hors-série | 2022, accessed 4 January 2024, <http://journals.openedition.org/paysage/27447>

3. Cf. <https://www.wabap.be/fr/75e-anniversaire-de-ifla/>, accessed 15 February 2024

4. Cf. Luisa Limido and Chiara Santini, *ibidem*.

5. Ursula Wieser Benedetti, Interview made with Jef Degryse on 19th September 2021.

Anderlecht, Brussels.

6. Hennaut, E. and Wieser Benedetti, U. (2023), Jules BuysSENS et le Nouveau Jardin Pittoresque. (Brussels, CFC-CIVA Editions).

7. Excerpt of IFLA Constitution (draft of 23 September 1950), signed by René Pechère and René Latinne. © CIVA Collections, Brussels

8. René Pechère © CIVA Collections, Brussel

9. René Latinne in 1962 at the World IFLA Congress in Haifa, Israel (image source: Anagnostopoulos et al. IFLA: Past, Present, Future, 2000)



NOTABLE INDIVIDUALS

René Pechère (1908-2002) graduated from the Horticultural School of Vilvoorde in Belgium (1932), from the Ecole Supérieure des Eaux et Forêts of Nancy in France (1933) as well as the Institut d'Urbanisme of the University of Paris (1947). An assistant of Jules Buysens at the Brussels International Fair in 1935, he succeeded him as Director of the Green Spaces Service of the City of Brussels (1937-1952). A prolific author as well as a pedagogue, he taught at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture et des Arts Décoratifs - La Cambre (Brussels) from 1939 to 1978. During his career as a landscape architect, he carried out around 900 projects in Belgium and abroad, ranging from private gardens to motorways and nuclear power plants. His archives are held at CIVA, Brussels.

Pechère held key positions in several professional associations. He was the first secretary of the Belgian Association of Garden Architects (ABAJ), and one of the founding members of IFLA. Within IFLA, he had a variety of roles from Honorary Treasurer, Secretary General and Cultural Officer through to its President in 1956. In 1967 Pechère initiated the IFLA-ICOMOS Committee on Historic Gardens and Sites.

René Latinne (1907-2003) was a much quieter character, than his contemporary René Pechère which may explain his lack of visibility within our histories. He is, however, considered by some to be an equally important figure in Belgium as his colleague Pechère.⁵ Latinne trained at the Horticultural Schools of Ghent and Vilvoorde and realised more than 800 projects during his career - mainly public parks and private gardens.

Latinne taught landscape architecture at the Horticultural School of Vilvoorde for several decades and promoted the discipline in Belgium. He was an active member of the ABAJ and one of the founding members of IFLA. Within IFLA,

he represented Belgium from 1948 until 1969.

Jules Buysens (1872-1958) graduated from the Royal Horticultural School of Ghent in Belgium (1890). In 1891-1892, he continued his training at the Palmengarten in Frankfurt (Germany), then became an intern at the Sander & Co orchid nursery in St. Albans (United Kingdom) for half a year. From 1896 till 1902, he worked for renowned French landscape architect Édouard André in Paris, where he was mainly entrusted with the supervision of projects in Russia. Jules Buysens rapidly became an internationally renowned landscape architect, working on projects in Belgium, France, Russia, Monaco, Switzerland, Poland, Lithuania, the Netherlands... From 1904 until his retirement in 1937, he was the Director of the Plantations and Promenades Service of the City of Brussels, a career he led in parallel to his private practice.

In 1913, he initiated the movement and eponymous journal *Le Nouveau Jardin Pittoresque*, aimed at reforming garden art in Belgium.⁶ During his career as a landscape architect, he realised around

1400 projects in Belgium and abroad, ranging from private gardens to public parks, spa resorts, housing schemes and World's fairs' grounds.

Jules Buysens was one of the founders of the Belgian Association of Garden Architects ABAJ in 1930, and the instigator of the International Garden Art Congress Congrès International d'Art des Jardins at the 1935 World's fair in Brussels.

Georges Wachtelaer (1902 - 1984) was a Belgian modernist landscape architect. Aside from his professional practice, he also taught at the Horticultural School of Melle (Belgium). Along with Jules Buysens and others, he was one of the founders of the Belgian Association of Garden Architects ABAJ in 1930.

