

'Slight is the subject of my work, not slight shall be its fame.' It was the poet Virgil who said this, some two thousand years ago. It could just as well have been Nobel Prizewinner Ben Feringa, if he wasn't so modest. As a proud university we are happy to talk about this man's scientific fame and the subject of his work – nanotechnology and the building of new, organic molecules.

It's not hard of course to draw to people's attention so big a subject as winning the Nobel Prize. Photos, film clips, stories, a bust, a banner or this special edition of *Broerstraat 5*, they have all made a contribution. But highlighting something on a nanoscale, like a molecule, is much more problematic, even if it is a 'four-wheel drive'. After all, a nanometre is no bigger than a millionth of a millimetre. But chemists have found a way around this problem: they have blown up reality by making models of coloured plastic spheres and rods, which represent atoms and their interconnections. And

it's an even simpler matter to leave out the rods and make a nanocar that at least gives some idea of the enormous, revolutionary breakthrough that Feringa has made in chemistry. This already iconic model will be on display – on a racing-car scale – at various locations in the city of Groningen.

And yet thanks to a special refraction of the light, everyone has at times observed something of nanometric proportions with the naked eye: a bubble. While bubbles may horrify economists, in the eyes of children, scientists and artists, they are a marvellous phenomenon – a fragile sphere, dancing in the air, surrounded by a membrane that is just a few nanometres thick.

This is a lovely image for a special branch of science, something to think about over Christmas.

We wish you a happy festive season.

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'This prize is so special, almost magical'

How life changed for Ben Feringa after getting a call from the Nobel Committee in Stockholm. How did he arrive at this point and what are his plans for the future?



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Column

Elmer Sterken, Rector Magnificus



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Alumnus abroad
France

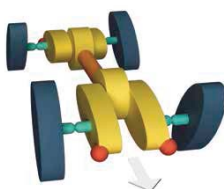
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Alumnus writes a book



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A wondrous city
Herman Feringa



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Ben Feringa's left hands

He built his revolutionary new molecules in Groningen from carbon and other atoms.

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Not afraid of anyone

Colourful mentor Hans Wijnberg attracted Ben, Kees, Bert and many others to his discipline.



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Photo
Nanocar at the Grote Markt

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Kindled by chemistry

A scientist in heart and soul. About a man with a mission and a vision, who stayed true to his roots.



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'You really belong'

Master's student George Hermens: 'With some formulas I still find myself thinking back to Feringa's lectures.'

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Stratingh's car

The first electric vehicle invented in Groningen.



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Nobel Prize laureates and the UG

His invention of the phase-contrast microscope won UG professor Frits Zernike the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1953.

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Alumnus abroad
United States

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Nothing tops Groningen Colophon

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Years later
Organic chemistry