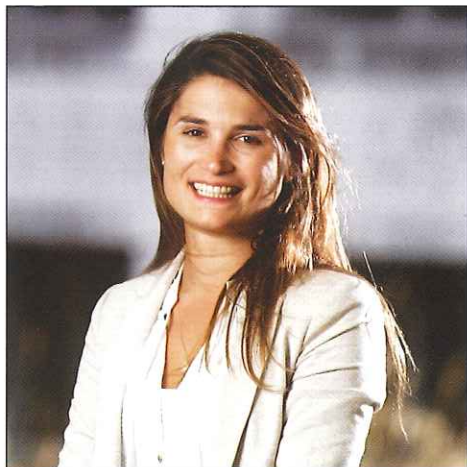


## Fulbright scholar Sofie Indesteege studies international property law at VLS



After earning a master's at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgian attorney Sofie Indesteege spent a year pursuing postgraduate work in art and cultural studies in Antwerp and Paris, where she focused on photography. That year confirmed her love of art as well as her desire for a career in law.

"I did everything my heart would want to do, but at the end of that year I decided that while I enjoy art, I like the objective, rational point of view," Indesteege said. "In art, there's a lot of talking, but not always that much happening. In law, you have certain rules that apply. In the art field, there was never a right or wrong. It did not matter if the work was finished. I wanted something more firm for my profession."

Indesteege joined Monard-D'Hulst in Brussels as a commercial litigation attorney in September 2010. There, she developed an interest in intellectual property and international law, areas that would allow her to combine her passions for law and the arts. "I want the object of my work to be something I like," she said.

That led her to investigate opportunities to study intellectual property law in the United States, where the academic work on the topic is proceeding rapidly. "There's a huge difference," Indesteege said. "In Europe, we value the art because it is a creation of the artist, while

in America they look at a more economic rationale. How much protection does an artist need? It's a different perspective."

Indesteege applied for a Fulbright scholarship, initially setting her sights on studying in New York. Then she was contacted by Cynthia Coleman, director of Vanderbilt's LL.M. program, a master's degree program that allows foreign attorneys who already hold a law degree from a university in their home country to spend a year studying law in the U.S. She found herself impressed by the friendly, helpful admissions staff. Vanderbilt's strong intellectual property program, co-directed by international intellectual property law expert Daniel Gervais, cinched her decision to study at Vanderbilt. She also liked the idea of living in a smaller city with a thriving music culture.

"Everybody is very friendly here," she says. "I want to take a bit of that back with me."

— BY JENNIFER JOHNSTON

### THE LL.M. ADVANTAGE

Sofie Indesteege is one of 44 foreign attorneys spending the 2012-13 academic year studying the American legal system at Vanderbilt. Members of her class represent 15 nations, are members of the bars of 13 nations, and include a Swedish appellate judge, a Nigerian judicial clerk and associates with law firms in Belgium, China, Colombia, Italy, Japan, Lichtenstein, Mexico, Panama and Peru.

The program's faculty director, Daniel Gervais, is an internationally renowned scholar of intellectual property law who was recently elected to the prestigious Academy of Europe and a visiting professor at Sciences Po Paris. Gervais holds two law degrees from the University of Montreal, Canada, and completed graduate studies at universities in France and Switzerland. "A global economy means a world in which business and research chains are being reshaped and in that world, international law often will mean as much as domestic law for many lawyers," he said. "Because the American legal system is so influential, Vanderbilt's LL.M. program and the ability to learn how it works and how American lawyers think is a great investment."

Vanderbilt's LL.M. students can choose among three academic tracks. The Course Track allows students to choose a broad array of courses that reflect their professional inter-

ests, and the Law and Business Track enables attorneys who practice corporate law to focus on relevant coursework. "I practice corporate law, and I wanted to learn more about how the American legal system works," said Susumu Tanizawa, LL.M. '12, an associate with Nishimura & Asahi in Tokyo. "I chose Vanderbilt because it has a Law and Business Program."

Law professors and students interested in pursuing a substantive research project can choose the Thesis Track and work closely with a faculty adviser during spring semester to write a scholarly paper. Two 2008 graduates—Max Karacz of Austria and Thomas

Wuertenberger of Germany—had their papers published in American academic journals.

Foreign attorneys who spend a year studying the American legal system at Vanderbilt gain a distinct advantage in the legal job market and become more effective lawyers. "My LL.M. from Vanderbilt is a huge advantage in my practice," said Erdem Balkan, LL.M. '10, a partner with Guzeldere Law Firm in Istanbul. "Many intellectual property laws in Turkey are actually born in the States, and Vanderbilt has a very good intellectual property program. I also gained a worldwide perspective on the law and a better understanding of the legal structure of U.S.-based corporations."



Daniel Gervais, professor of law, faculty director of the LL.M. program, and director of the Vanderbilt Intellectual Program, was elected to the Academy of Europe in September 2012. Gervais is an expert on the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement), the most comprehensive multilateral agreement on intellectual property to date, which covers copyright and related rights; trademarks; geographical indications, such as appellations of origin; industrial designs; patents; the layout designs of integrated circuits; and undisclosed information, such as trade secrets and test data. He was the first professor at a U.S. law school elected to the academy.