

The Most Attractive Women in History
A Plea for the Art of Portaiture. Or .. Towards a Real Renaissance.

By Jean-Marie De Dijn
Philosophus, EU.
2024 - 20..

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Dedicated to Ann Christy (1945 - 1984), a rose picked too soon by life, yet with eternal fresh petals. And to Tania Fierens, a ... by ... with O, she knows why herself.

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Introduction.

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Acis and Galathea Revisited, Romeo Castellucci (Castel Gandolfo, Palazzo Pontificio, Ricevuto Immacolato or ab urbe condita del teatro mondiale, 1???), photographic sketch, 20-- (work in long progress), private collection.

Romeo Castellucci is a well known producer of trials and errors in the world of theatre and opera. Because of our good relationship with Peter de Caluwe, director of the Opera of Brussels (1963, Belgium, capital of capitalistic EU), we were able to get him (Romeo, not Peter) for a short interview. We make an effort to summarize Romeo's verbiage, even though at one point of infinite exhaustion we dragged ourselves to the nearest three seater to sleep a long sleep. The man reportedly - thank you, Peter - just kept on talking to himself for an unknown amount of time; hopefully he remembered everything for his forthcoming automutilationbiography.

1) Peter gave me the cautiously enthusiastic request to model theatrically with the bodies of these two figures in the photo, preferably with as much live music as possible, preferably composed by a contemporary soundmaker of my level. He himself was like being stung by a wasp by these apparitions and wanted to do 'something' with them, but he needed someone like me to turn a dream into action, an act that in turn should function as a dream of yet another opera that had come out of his House of Trust. He was thinking, of course, of my infinite empathy, workaholic and other abilities such as to spend big bucks on ostentatious productions. The man had read my mind - I was on holiday in the Maldives at the time and he in unsightly Grembergen! - because there I was just thinking about my very first own written, composed, staged and conducted opera, a work for which I have already prepared the applause tape of four and a half hours.

It will be about the Greek shepherd Acis and the nymph Galathea. For me, certain G.F. Händel (1685 - 1759) and W.A. Mozart (1756 - 1791), already devoted some pleasant music to it. They were, I admit, not losers. But. Because of my lifelong experience in the world of opera, I finally have the courage to admit that I can do better than these, all in all, modest predecessors. These two figures of the photo are only sketch figures because for the performance itself, somewhat to the regret of declarant Peter, we will only use real Italian singers, trapezists and jugglers - if possible these three theatrical forms in the same guises. Sorry, Peter, but I am much more important than such a director, a civil servant. I serve no civils, I serve The Higher.

2) I can tell you that I am preparing a second opera, under the working title "S.O.S.". That abbreviation stands for "*Sempre Oriana e Selen*". I have been fascinated since before birth by these two strong and at the same time vulnerable Italian women, Oriana Fallaci (1929 - 2006) and Selen (1966, pseudolomitonym of Luce Caponegro).

Both were very physically inclined ladies because at times heavy smokers. That is a particularly dramatic element because of the immanent fire hazard in the opera house. I still find cleaning women too little to use as pawns in an opera production. But firefighters! Which bodies represent more scorching heat and symbolize the transition from life to death - and vice versa! And another world first on my account. The ladies also share a deep understanding of the male phenomenon of which I am such an inspiring specimen - Romeo suddenly shows us a pout that he was neither interviewed by Julia.A Fallaci nor spoiled by Julia.B-Z Selen. He picks himself up and continues: they also share a striking respect for the religious and the

groundbreaking. And who has pushed more boundaries than I, the Servant of the Higher Beautiful?, he now bellows airily.

The connecting "*Sempre*" comes, of course, from the closing verse of the famous poem "*Non è mai perfetto*" by my Oriana : "*Ama molto, soffri poco, lotta tanto, vinci sempre*". I find that title a personal challenge anyway because I can always be called perfect; it's only clumsy performers who sometimes make mistakes and especially the stupid audience that, admittedly rarely, doesn't want to understand me. In me is despite all my obsessive deconstruvturing theatre a great romantic and man of hope; is there nothing more beautiful than a woman, an Italian, who incarnates the best features of Oriana Fallaci and Selen annex Luce Caponegro?

3) No two without three, though this three is the One, the First, the Alpha. One day I must come to myself as the most important person I ever met, both personally and in terms of the central force of international theatre and opera work - apart from my revered mother, of course, the Virgin Mary. I am ultimately preparing an opera about myself! I'm going to introduce myself-myself-myself to the audience in a form of apotheosis. With an emphasis on Theo or God. I was always a God in the depths of my mind and my audience should know better to worship their Romeo, their Creator of Grounded Fiction and Human Wisdrom.

To our not unpleasant surprise, preceded by crystal clear disbelief, our citizen of the world began to hum and then sing, in ... Polish! What an admirable intellectual, what an alien polyglot. His foreign accent is horrific, but who cares when one hears these divine words and melody:

*"O Romeo słowiczy sokole
O tęsknoto niewieścich pokoleń
Otworzyłam Ci okno
Na tę moją samotność
O Romeo
czy jesteś na dole
czy jesteś na dole"*

As you immediately know, this was sung by the divine Kalina Jędrusik (1930 – 1991). After this musical-existential outpouring or outburst there is a silent moment. Always ever again falls on a day that Talking Silence. And. Sometimes. Generally. Always. Followed by a confession: "*People, how I am to this day influenced by those communist-occupied-revolting-free Poles from Krakow. My eternal Kalina. And my infinite Tadeusz (NB: Tadeusz Kantor, 1915 - 1990). I did not invent anything myself; it was all there already, behind that Iron Curtain.*"

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, August 2024.

PS. Some time after we had written the above text, we learned elsewhere - in Slovakia during the summer of 2024 - and by chance that Peter De Caluwe, and despite his wish, could no longer remain the director of DE MUNT. The 2024 - 2025 opera season will therefore be his last there. We have no idea who his successor will be and how this decision was made, but are suspicious and wait-and-see given that this is obviously a political decision.

In any case, we may here proclaim an opinion on behalf of very many people. Peter de Caluwe (Dendermonde, 1963) was, no is, a unique person. He is/was an extremely driven, always calm and simply a very capable man. He was/is the right man on the right place, and that place was partly because of him one of the most important opera houses in the world, following in the footsteps of the almost inimitable Gerard Mortier (1942 - 2014), also a man of whom we and many, many others may think with exceptionally warm and grateful memories.

Peter is/was not only an opera director hors excellence but was/is also - or because of that - a very open or democratic thinking person, speaking and writing about music and the world through many media. The man knows his languages and can especially say or write something in them. We did not always agree with his views or even disagreed profoundly at least once before, but that is democracy and he has devoted himself doubly and thickly and his whole life to that good.

Very personally we must regret that although we are contemporaries and from the same region, he unfortunately followed his secondary education in his father's school in Zele near Dendermonde. So not in our college in Dendermonde. He would certainly have been a great friend from whom we could have learned a lot.

We hope that after Peter De Caluwe DE MUNT will continue to be an internationally leading opera house. To put it bluntly, we do not wish Peter anything because we are absolutely convinced that, once he gets over this disappointment, he was/is/will be the same man in another place and in another beautiful function, passionate about society and art. We wish him - who has always retained something of the freshness of a youngster - much happiness in life and good health.

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Epilogue.

1. One day an interesting “*kiállítás*” in a pleasant, provincial library in Hungary. Or whoever keeps his eyes open a lot, can have them caressed regularly.

In the cozy Hungarian provincial town of AAA, so cozy for us because there is ... + ... + ..., besides not forgetting a great library, we like to - visit. For everything for this library: the building is fresh or full of light, although the direct sunlight is well shielded. An excellent architect, and that is no surprise to us after ten years in Hungary; there have been interesting architects for decades, at least for government contracts, because privately it is rather bland. That library: there is very friendly staff, about which we must say something more immediately. That one male staff member not only gives a real because firm handshake – every time – but is genuinely always friendly and good-humored. The other staff members are therefore ladies, and all are .. There is really and not only here, in Hungary something that one should gradually, throughout today's Europe, call old-fashioned friendliness and politeness. In any case, far from all the woke and its pomposity, the alertness that one ‘must’ have in order not to say anything ‘wrong’ because... That openness and friendliness are experiences that should essentially be a normal human experience, and that we value strongly for the rest of our lives anyway.

If we may summarize our lives now just over 60 years old, we have a fundamental interest in: women, books and trees. We encounter those three in this library. Indeed, there are a remarkable number of 'trees' or large plants. This library also has the pure space for it, but the combination is surprising to us - and particularly pleasant. First and foremost or fundamentally, there are of course many books, very orderly and attractive 'although' of course exclusively in Hungarian. Where we are what is called reasonably highly gifted, and therefore could learn languages relatively easily (up to a certain level because there was still a certain laziness ...), Hungarian is terribly but really terribly difficult for someone who, like us, mainly knows Western European languages in addition to the Slavic language Polish (can speak it after all, so can also listen to it). Incidentally, as an eternally curious or social person in Hungary, in at least ten years, we have never met a single German, Dutch or other non-native who can speak more than a few short sentences in this language. By the way, we sometimes make this kind of standard joke to the new Hungarians we meet:

“Tudtad, hogy minden magyar zseni? Tudod miért?”

Mert beszél ... magyarul!”

*(“Did you know that every Hungarian is a genius? Do you know why?
Because he/she speaks ... Hungarian!”).*

In the Hungarian language there are very few bastard words, or words that come from Latin and/or Greek, such as, as a striking example, the universal word “*universiteit/université/university/.... - and so on*”. Well, the concept of university and so the same on, it is unrecognizable in Hungarian because it stands for “*egyetem*”. We do not know the etymology of this word but it can be very interesting. Of course we have known the Hungarian word “*egy*” for a long time because it means “*one*”. And then it begins. What a rich language, both grammatically and in terms of its exceptionally diverse and nuanced vocabulary! It cannot be a coincidence that Hungarian is also an exceptionally important literary language, with an unimaginably rich fruit of works from world literature. Oh dear ... All that wealth, we like to sit among in that fine library. And we cannot taste any of those many fruits. So we are only there to use the internet, on the computers that are there. Incidentally, the Hungarians are like the French. A “*computer*” is not an “*ordinateur*” but a “*számítógép*”. We understand something of that compound word because “*gép*” is a machine. And “*szám*” is number as we have of course known for a long time what a “*számla*” means; the bill after you ... We don’t do much arithmetic on those computers, although we do have to check our account balance regularly to pay bills with it, for example.

What we have experienced or visited several times in this library in the cozy Hungarian town of AAA (three times A or does that promise anything, at least for us), was a “*kiállítás*”, an exhibition. Each exhibition was always centered around the work of young people, the kind of people we miss quite a lot because in better (neurological) times we liked to teach young people between the ages of 16 and 18. We found that infinitely more interesting than, for example, ‘teaching’ university students. The so-called cultural sciences in particular have been flooded in recent decades by something that should be applauded in itself, the democratization of education. As a result, many more young people can follow higher education. As a result, you can hardly have any contact with students or professors and other teachers, it all becomes something like higher education annex industry – and the quality of the average, graduated student irrevocably decreases. With young students - in higher secondary education - you can have much more intense learning contact!

In the provincial town of AAA good secondary education is apparently given, we also heard in the other, slightly less pleasant town of BBB. In any case, we will never be able to give guest lessons in any of those places, not only because Hungarian is terribly difficult and we simply cannot learn Hungarian perfectly due to our existential conditions (older, weaker and we have to write maximal in addition to maximal rest). But also because our didactic approach – rather free and full of experiments – does not fit at all within the standards and traditions of the very traditional (Central) European secondary education. In Belgium too, our more open or experimental at the same time perhaps much more demanding way of working was not suitable for every school - or appropriate. We still have a specific manuscript about it lying around among so much 'junk' on our PC - for more than ten years ...; about (more) freedom as (more) responsibility in secondary education. Moreover, and now we are getting onto more thin ice or real ice, something that we have encountered there very rarely because of that climate, because on the surface of national politics. We generally like Hungarians very much because we share a desire for curiosity and even politeness and blah blah blah. But we really never talk about national politics, so not even with those who speak excellent English

or German to very rarely French (like DDD who was once in the French Foreign Legion and speaks good, albeit very slowly, French). We strongly suspect that with our way of teaching openly we would have little to no chance of lasting longer than, say, half an hour in that nationally run school system. That does not rule out that we have already bought a painting twice from a pupil in the last year of secondary school from the Hungarian AAA. Coincidentally, both times they were young ladies, who always spoke excellent English. That certainly helped with communication! We could also approach the second one more easily because her mother also ... blah blah blah. And she was/is Kálmán (family name) Borbála (first name).

“*Borbála*” is therefore purely (sic) Hungarian but is generally known in its basic form because it comes from “*Barbara*”. And that name is quite funny in this situation, because it does not only come from the Ancient Greek “*βάβραρος*” or “*barbarous*”. And that, dear people, means nothing else there than ... “*foreign, non-Greek*”! That is correct here. Because Borbála is Hungarian or non-Greek, hahaha. By the way, the core of this name is “*bor*” or thoroughly Hungarian. Bor means “*wine*” in Hungarian; beautiful, isn’t it! We ourselves actually only drink fresh organic milk in addition to thermal water or practically never alcohol such as wine. Consequently, we did not get drunk from Borbála. By the way, she could mathematically have been our granddaughter. But we did get more or less drunk from her painting – this truly delightful and cute work. Moreover, we had the feeling that this work represented a portrait in some way, a portrait of her ... mother. And this remark – made by us in English and translated by the daughter into Hungarian or her mother tongue – was appreciated by this mother present! Still nice, if everything is the best of all possible worlds!

2. A work after our heart and especially after our mind! Or maybe after both?

That we like paintings is quite clear throughout this website. And that we like the combination of painting and flowers is also evident from our (later) historical choice of a famous historical masterpiece. SEE: **Virgin and Child in Flower Garland, Rubens + Jan Brueghel The Elder**. This bright or floral painting is called (here) “*Fiatal Flora*”. “*Fiatal*” is obviously Hungarian and means “*young*”. Of course it sounds good together with the noun “*Flora*” because it is a – simple – alliteration. In terms of content it is certainly good, although any art history expert can ask us the question whether an older, even old to ancient Flora has ever been depicted. On the English-language Wiki page about this famous “*Roman goddess of flowers and spring*” one sees at least ten images of all cheerful ladies like Flora, all rather young, say up to the age of about 25 at the most. SEE:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flora_\(mythology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flora_(mythology))

This statement is immediately followed by the historically certain statement as an aside, that the inhabitants of Europe until roughly the year 1900 were on average only 35 years old. In that average sense, all these art historically selected Floras are actually already ... old. But a critical remark must be made about that too, because due to centuries of very high infanticide and generally very poor or bad hygienic conditions, people lived on average very short lives. But so, those who survived birth and the first period of life and were subsequently able to live in better, say financially and consequently also hygienic conditions, actually usually reached blessed ages. Although, and we must also make this as a final aside; everyone who depicted a Flora was of course a ... woman. And they almost all had a child - or more. And not a few ladies, were they beautiful as Flora or even more beautiful as Venus, they would die in childbirth.

That dying in childbirth, or the place where new human life has almost always appeared in the world for centuries, after having stayed in the womb of that mother for no less than nine months, is of course at odds with what Flora meant as a goddess. After all, she was one of the so-called “*Fertility Goddesses*”! Incidentally – we didn’t even know this until writing this very article! – there are or were also male counterparts, the “*Fertility Gods*”. SEE:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_fertility_deities

Who among modern women still calls upon a Flora, a - as a fertility goddess or god? We have no idea. That the name Flora lives on to this day and will live on into the long, unfathomable future; it seems certain. You know enough derivatives yourself. And how many garden centres do not have this goddess in their brand name!? Now this painting, when we noticed it for the first and subsequent times in that one room of the library in the Hungarian AAA, was without a title. Or better; we do not remember any title, possibly because it was not only sometimes a little dark in that room and we did not feel like turning on the harsh fluorescent light. But most likely the painting was without ... a title! We will discuss that title or the event “giving a title to a work of art” in the next paragraph.

We saw this work among twenty works of art by this relatively young lady and artist. Of course, we cannot go into the whole of what she exhibited here. It was very diverse, in quality and in emotional charge. First, we knew about the existence of that exhibition in a – separate – room of this Library, because there was a poster about it. And as is to be expected with such posters or announcements of an art exhibition, one work by this artist – largely and not completely but with something like the ‘core’ – was depicted on this poster. Of course, we also saw that work in its entirety, it was interesting but in terms of theme or emotional charge completely the opposite of this work we chose. That work showed a woman’s face mixed with a snake that ... Anyway, there was more to explain, to fear, so to speak, and so on. Anyway, this work “Fiatal Flora” stood out for us, because we have, let’s say, a certain weakness on the one hand for hard thinking and strong, idiosyncratic, but always responsible critical thinking, but also and not at all in contrast to that, for the subtle, tender, more ... – more feminine, perhaps? In any case, after sixty years of walking around here and gradually thinking and also self-critically for the most part, we can say that we personally and socially consider constructive thinking and doing to be the most important thing in life. Or giving “*added value*”, adding to the ... fertility – of life itself, right!?

We find this painting sparkling, in form and colour. Of course it is about a youthful work and one can make some more critical remarks, such as ... and In this respect we just laugh at ourselves because even though we have literally read tons about art, looked at countless works of art quite attentively; we are and will never be a 'real', call it a real art historian. With that we want to say this; that at least some academic art historians, according to our reading of their scientific work, make very beautiful, actually more technical or 'purely' art historical analyses of even entire oeuvres of artists in addition to of course more penetrating analyses of individual works of art. But still; that read truth does not exclude for us the authenticity that we consider to our own eyes, through the actual encounter with a work of art. Of course, we must humbly admit, that encounter can only be half visual in the sense that we may only encounter the visual work via an image, via paper or via an image on a screen. That of course has its own technical imaginative or present-bringing value, while it is even more self-evident that the actual encounter with the – often half-known long before – work of art, is the most or only important encounter. Although that very close experience has also been disappointing

throughout our lives, possibly because we now stand live in front of a recently restored masterpiece while we knew that work as it were 'dead' through the many, previous encounters on photos in art books.

It goes without saying that the moment in one's own life when one encounters a work of art also influences the appreciation of it. After all, we were plus sixty when we saw this work, with two annoying or structural illnesses that still allow us a lot but in any case make us weaker, and can sometimes literally paralyze us. With that existential experience or 'act' (...) we know anyway, of course not always projected on our forehead as an idea or guideline, that life will come to an end anyway - although we still pick, so to speak, every day along the way, a fruit that makes us ... more fruitful - hahaha. To put it bluntly or simply: this work gave us joy when we first saw it. It gives us joy with every further viewing. It gives us such joy that we would like to share it, so to speak, and give it to several people we love. That's how we are now. We are not going to do that giving - at least for the time being - because we shouldn't always want to give everything away. And yet we do it, by placing this work here on this all in all modest website about "*The Most Attractive Women in History*", next to an also rather modest text or review. Yet in that sense we always remain awake or on our opportunistic qui vive because just a part of the experience around exactly this painting, we can or rather must use to think about it intellectually or simply humanly: the title, or see next paragraph! And before we continue thematically, we can possibly see this work extra as an honorary expression and symbol for the fine, creative, open, positive, constructive, ... Hungary! These are valuable ways of doing and thinking that we, as it were, in the most sincere way, insofar as we are important as people meeting this work and the artist, really want to give our solemn "*fiat*" (Latin for "*Let it go/be!*") – at least as a form of moral support.

This or any other title; what more can we say about it? Why, after all, come up with a title for an (important) own work of art, a work that was not made by oneself but acquired? Now, why not!? Let's briefly look at it legally. Owning a work of art means having the right of ownership over it. Does that also mean having the right to use it or to show it? And how far can that go - or not go? One can hardly imagine that someone would want to adapt a purchased work of art, improve it at least - because who would want to .. deteriorate something like that? There are historical examples of this, but then indeed historical or rather art historical. For example, a certain Pieter Paul Rubens sometimes dared to simply adapt or say adjust or improve a work of art in his own possession but of another make. And so on ... - but so few continue!? We are effectively talking here about an absolute top artist himself who dared to slightly adapt a work of art by someone else but therefore in his own possession. From a purely art historical perspective, one cannot imagine a more handsome or versatile painter, who effectively preceded Rubens – or was it then of course Brueghel (the Elder) or Titian!? Incidentally, to our knowledge, that adaptation work was never done with the reportedly quite impressive collection of the noble gentleman Rubens as regards – small – antique sculptures. There was clearly a limit for this top artist, alias very independent, partly arrogant man. Nevertheless, everyone knows examples of how works of art have been effectively adapted by the owners throughout the centuries and certainly up to the present day. We give these clear and generally known examples:

1) So to speak, any work of art must be restored shortly after its creation! You know the phenomenon; you buy a new car and from the moment you drive it out of the sales garage, it is already partly worn out. *Mutatis mutandis* Restoration of works of art has been a specialty in itself for a very long time. Of course, due to scientific progress in particular, renovations are no longer done in the same way as before. In fact, the intention was always to

obtain an improvement of the work through a renovation. In the past, this was often very disappointing based on current knowledge, so that quite a few historical restorations later (now) have to be ... restored. In any case, there is hardly an art lover who is completely opposed to any renovation;

2) Somewhere after WWII, painters started painting – in any style – purely and solely on canvas or without any frame. Of course, they worked on canvas, although another surface was certainly also possible, such as linoleum, cardboard, plastic, etc. Almost throughout all times, with the exception of frescoes of course, frames were used for every painting. The same happened with etchings, drawings, pastels and so on. The verb “*to frame*” that is generally used in the art world and in the ordinary world can simply mean that one prepares an ordinary canvas to hang it up, so without any real “frame”. Or framing without a frame – what a joke sometimes, that art world big and small. So that is possible and has been considered the new normal for decades. We personally do not like that frameless at all, although we are surprised by a certain age-old aversion to painting the frames themselves, even very partially. Frame or no frame, and how frames can or ‘should’ be tackled in a purely painterly way by the respective artist; it is a discussion in itself. In any case, anyone who buys their own painting, etching, etc. on paper or canvas or ‘something’ similar, which is as it were naked, can perfectly frame it themselves or have it framed by a professional. In our experience, that last professionalism or professional person is not so easy to find anymore. We personally know one excellent professional, who is now passing on his knowledge to his son or future is assured. SEE professional and artist Hans De Munter in Dendermonde:

<https://www.schilderke.be/>

If all these adaptations are socially permitted and even promoted, and are usually and preferably done by professionals, why not also this kind of adaptation to works of art such as sculptures, paintings and so on, by means of another/better/more suitable/..., or in particular an own, personal name or title!? In any case, it is not a purely material or tangible, in any case visible adaptation as in the previous two cases. Of course, it happens that the work of art in question is very famous and represents an undeniable social interest, and at the same time is in personal or private possession. For example, there is the Flemish “*TOPSTUKKENDECREET*” or the legislation concerning top works of art within the legal context of the Flemish Community. SEE: <https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topstukkendecreet>

This regional law concerns a list of Flemish cultural masterpieces that must remain on the territory of the Flemish Community forever. It contains a concrete list of currently a good thousand specific masterpieces. The vast majority of these are, not coincidentally, in Flemish museums or universities or churches. However, less than ten percent are indicated with “*s.n.*” or “*sine nomine*” or “*naamloos*”. SEE:

<https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topstukkenlijst>

These ‘pieces’, always important works of art such as paintings and so on, thus always have an official name or title, at least for the Flemish Community. But what prevents the owner – who certainly cannot alienate or sell it across the Flemish border! – from giving it his own title!? There is of course not the slightest impediment to this, although the personal necessity must be hard to find. In any case, we have no knowledge of such a title-deviating example of a Flemish masterpiece from the heritage. There are of course countless more works of art present, in particular in private possession, where fewer than a hundred of these Flemish

masterpieces form a part. In any case, many works of art are added to that mass of art in private possession every day. How quickly a part of these works acquires a certain broader or general importance is another matter. In any case, even when lending these private works to all kinds of exhibitions or when displaying them in photographic reproductions in all kinds of media; where is the problem if a work of art is named differently by the owner than the artist intended? Even when the work has already acquired a fair amount of publicity over time, so that it is actually considered well-known, with 'therefore' this or that 'public' title?

3. Our Young Flora! Or make up your own title for a beloved artwork!

In an earlier phase of our lives, when we had, so to speak, ten lungs and four hearts – or was it the other way around? – and also because of circumstances in the Belgian city of Ronse we knew ourselves to be extra intellectually and socially motivated, we, among many other initiatives, made quite a few titles for one artist of excellent quality; probably about a hundred titles. We will not elaborate on the beginning, continuation and end of this special intellectual activity. In any case, we received the photos of the works at home or went to see the works in question ourselves. And then we made up titles, usually in bed. And those titles were always 'accepted' as far as we can remember; good bed work! We also wrote – now admittedly at our desk – various articles for these artists and even speeches that were given by 'personalities' at his request on major occasions. Wonder if they ever knew which strange guy had written 'their' speech?

We are very happy to openly admit that we really enjoyed the intellectual work of creating suitable titles for a whole series of works of art (by one artist). Although at a certain point we started to find that a bit too much of a good thing. In the meantime we are older and call it weaker and we are above all busy with gigantic research and thinking and therefore writing about human behavior in times of crisis, more specifically during WW II. And we do that without a doubt at the highest possible level, because with the use of our maximum time and strength, although we are of course no Spinoza and we therefore sincerely hope that really everything we let go of and will let go of, will be improved by other, probably mainly younger people. Wait - and see! That mainly political theme is of course not our orientation here. Here we actually write for women or a few specific women, more specifically for XXX and apparently also for a certain Italian Lucella - ohlalala. Whether those ladies read one thing or another and even enjoy it; that would be nice. But in the end it does not matter that much, although we will come back to this problem later. SEE: **Gust De Smet**.

In the meantime, we have been, as it were, smoothly and pleasantly buried and survived by a very recent and as yet unstoppable avalanche of works of art with (sic) corresponding titles by the Belgian artist Willy Deventer (°Ronse, 1945), alias Daventra. SEE:

<https://view.publitas.com/atelier-92-94/pdf-vijfenzeventig-gazet-255-april-a-25/page/1>

You can see it and please first rub the sleepers from your eyes, especially if you have slept too long and especially if you want to wake up: this remarkable man is already at 15,000 (fifteen thousand) "heads" ("*koppen*" in Dutch) or – fictitious – portraits, which he produces daily at a regular rhythm. And indeed, the man is exceptionally skilled in language or he 'produces' his daily titles just as often – together of course with a "*head*" or portrait! At a later time we want to pay brief attention to one of those head-portraits, especially also (...) because we have written a fairly long article about this very remarkable and worthy art-historical fact much earlier on the internet edition of this artist. In any case, already 15,000 fictitious portraits

seems, humanly speaking, a form of madness or call it extreme skill and drive. And at the same time also and therefore already ‘inventing’ a title 15,000 times; *il faut le faire!* The verb “*to invent*” does not do justice to this great intellectual and of course artistic achievement! In that referenced article (hopefully also on this website soon) we firmly ask that “one day” several researchers will investigate both the works themselves, the accompanying titles and of course the combination thereof. In any case, this should be done by someone with an excellent knowledge of Dutch because Belgian/Flemish Willy Deventer is so linguistically proficient that he indeed plays or juggles with the Dutch language. In many cases it seems to us almost impossible to try to translate one thing and another. Oh well, the expression “Traduttore, traditore” is well-known, or “*Translating is betraying*”. That should be seen in its nakedness as an exaggeration next to a truly annoying truth. At the same time, that expression should be viewed positively because it should be seen as an encouragement to learn as many languages as possible from a very young age. In the EU, ideally, every child would learn not only their mother tongue but also (later on) two or three other (father) languages from an early age! That this literally opens up the world, in this case the European world, is something we regularly see in Slovakia, where a traditionally rather closed population is changing, or rather opening up, because at least one ‘foreign’ language is taught at school from an early age.

To our somewhat justified surprise – we are not yet speaking of bewilderment, but perhaps one year after the publication of this text we may use this term? – we openly admit here that we have never heard of studies, articles or directly more serious or thicker (sic) books, about the importance of titles of works of art. The number of works of art that are in the official museums of, say, the EU alone, is simply incalculable. Who would count something like that, as if one were to count the trees in one's municipality (incidentally, for many Flemish, so very urbanized municipalities, that is not such a difficult task; on the other hand, we have planted between 350 and 400 trees with our own hands somewhere in Hungary alone – not too bad, is it!). It goes without saying that here and there we have read ‘something’ motivated or intellectual about titles of artists. That certainly happened by the artists themselves and usually very briefly explained, or then by museum directors or curators of thematic exhibitions, and also sometimes by contemplative art historians. We can say here frankly that of the package of titles for his works of art that we have invented for one Belgian artist for years, most were, so to speak, attempts to express impressions of those works of art. We have a certain affinity with ‘something’ like poetry and mystery and we have to leave it at that for now. Secondly, the event happened a bit too long ago to have retained specific memories of that work (...) and in a certain sense it involved a bit too many different works. Although we have to add that it was not a production line (sic) and we always did our sincere best to make ‘something’ attractive or nice. That must have been successful because we do not remember a single refusal on the part of the artist, whose wife was not just rather dominant and ambitious and – how to put that diplomatically? – was greedy for money: those works of art were always sales works or those ‘things’ had to be sold of course. We have in any case remembered that once a Dutchman had become so addicted to the ‘respective’ work by one of ‘our’ titles that he immediately ordered – and bought – that work. Sometimes our then structurally not humorous partner would say that our titles were better than some works of art. That is not an insult to this artist (and certainly not to that partner – hahaha) because what artist besides Brueghel, Goya, Picasso, Rubens and van Dyck can now deliver consistently high quality? In that sense we dare to say here, and we will definitely leave it at that, that perhaps inventing suitable titles as a verbal/intellectual activity is easier or simpler than making interesting works of art. That seems to us a certainty afterwards, and seems to us as it were beforehand or purely theoretically even more self-evident. On the other hand, we would like to point out once again the truly exceptional achievement that the modern Belgian graphic artist Willy

Deventer (alias Davenport) produces with his 'heads' and the accompanying titles. We would of course not go so far as to claim that his titles can stand on their own, but we do have a feeling (a feeling, an impetus for thoughts) that someone – who wants to analyse and think about it in writing – can think about it and therefore write about it in the well-known 'much more'.

Ultimately or very fundamentally; one may – must? – ask the question whether a title of or by or through or a work of art, or such a title has (any) importance? Sometimes, often, usually ... it has only an indicative, so not an added value to the work of art that it titles. Often an artist tries to suggest, or supposedly give, a "*layer or so-called depth*" to the work of art with such a self-chosen title (that exists – hahaha). And we have to laugh about that on occasion – but do we blame that on our bad character or less moralizing, on our excess of analytical or untangling ability or our love of credibility? What use is that to a title or a so-called more profound description or suggestion? In that, let us say, rather liberal or intellectual as well as in a materialistic sense (in the sense of property and user rights) freedom-loving view, one can quite safely name any work of art in one's own possession as one wishes. For example, one can observe the beloved grandchild who may one day once again express – must express! – the very familiar 'something' about a work of art, as happened to us with our dearly beloved son who commented on a very beautiful work of art by the Belgian artist WDZGB3 with ... "*Kaka*" ("*Shit*"). Namely, on that magnificent lithograph there were two swans approaching the feet of a naked woman on the shore. And this naked woman was really completely naked and stood with her ... turned towards us – the viewers! Indeed, "*Kaka*" or well thought out, Miłosz!

Much can therefore be thought of about titles, if one wants to dwell on them for once. But let us conclude these considerations about this issue with a more or less pressing question, a question perhaps about freedom (yet again!!!) Pardon me, a question about freedom in the context of looking at and evaluating works of art? Indeed, why do we all, at thematic exhibitions and in ordinary (private or public) museums, apparently always need titles for the works of art we encounter? Why do we apparently NEED them – TITLES? Even more! Why do we even need name tags on or next to the works of art in all these same circumstances, more precisely why do we even need (must we?) to know the identity (first name + family name, or if necessary just the alias) of the respective artist!? Now it's getting hotter or more exciting, yes? It seems literally unimaginable; no name tags next to or on (on the bottom edge of the frame, for example) paintings, etchings, sculptures and other forms of works of art!!! Isn't that a form of perfect freedom or call it sincerity or credibility, perfect throughout the contemplation where the eye - and therefore the mind or the brain and the heart - are not hindered, say distracted, say conditioned by a stupid name tag, an annoying "*name*" like there is: a title + first name and surname (or alias)!!!!? Away with all forms of snobbery or "*name-watching*"! You look - and above all; you enjoy, or not! - the works, pure and simple or in other words completely unhindered by the real redundancy of purely verbal information - again, of a (normal) title and of a (normal) first name and surname. Something tells us that once a wicked museum director came up with this plan but was then either removed by a very startled mayor and city council, or was 'asked' via an urgent and compelling letter to abandon the intention to convert this concept or theory into reality. But you know the expression, which is very, very simple but equally clear or convincing: "*Wait – and see!*".

Once, in 2005, we went with some reluctance to a hyped exhibition in the Brussels Bozar. The umpteenth world-famous curator or master of masters in assessing and showing works of art, the Swiss Harald Szeemann (1933 – 2005), had created a so-called unmissable and very

unique retrospective exhibition there. With the title (of course): “*Visionary Belgium: C'est arrivé près de chez nous*” (‘*Visionary Belgium: It happened close to home*’). It would be the swan song of this grey art goose because he died shortly before the vernissage. So we left with a (rather gigantic) prejudice, even before we had bought the entrance ticket. We admit that. With what is called in Flemish “*long teeth*”, we dragged ourselves through one and a half rooms – with (for us) a lot of nonsense about so-called important or interesting works of art. When we made the turn to start the second and fortunately last length of the exhibition route, we saw through the mass of people – we readily admit it, there were many people walking or it was a real success in terms of quantity – finally, finally, “*O Nostra Signora della Salute – Mille Grazie*” – a real work of art, right at the end or through the people! We then continued somewhat cautiously because we did not want to crush or even hinder the other parts of the mass of people. We kept our gaze fixed on nothing other than “*The Redemption, or the Encounter with a True Work of Art*”. And, dear viewers or readers, it turned out to be a Rembrandt that was unknown to us until then. But a Rembrandt. Whose light – The Light or La Luce – had gripped us through a mass of people and after we had become doubly dull, as it were, by all the artistic hip-hop nonsense present. That was/is an encounter with true art. We experienced it a few more times, and in more or less similar circumstances.

Oh, of course. The title of the work, of that wonderful painting by Rembrandt! We forgot ... Or ...? Oh, oh, oh. Could we have been ... mistaken? A Rembrandt, great and overall! But why did he then appear in ... ‘*Visionair Belgium*’ ...?

4. Young Hungarian artists for ‘older’ Western European immigrants in Hungary?

We have known the Hungarian countryside and the provinces quite well, for a while now. We literally needed that incredible peace and space there (space always gives peace) compared to the extremely interesting but extremely busy Belgian country, without going into that any further. What we had to establish with absolute certainty, besides trying to enjoy the peace, is that besides our rather poor or modest Western European presence as a passer-by or temporary immigrant, there were and continue to be a great many Dutch, Germans, and some Belgians who were and continue to flow in – so they live there or stay there permanently. You don't have to use a microscope to also establish that it mainly concerns people from the pensioner class. In addition, there are to a very decreasing extent the usual adventurers, a few desperate ones (hahaha) and even white or other colored entrepreneurs. We shouldn't look into other people's wallets, but everyone, so also almost every Hungarian who has ever heard (...) of the internet, knows what an average house in the Netherlands costs, once sold – by those Dutch people of course. We assume that when those Western Europeans have sold their house – or houses – there, they do not give that capital to the poor people of the Netherlands, Germany or so on, or to the Holy Roman Church, the United Protestant Temples and the well-known such. Or at least very, very partially. Long ago, when monkeys were still ..., we suggested to a Dutch estate agent to organize some charitable work by Dutch, Germans and Belgians for Hungarians. That was – of course? – laughed off with a certain cynicism, although this estate agent genuinely had/has a lot of sympathy for us. We then modestly keep silent about the differences in monthly incomes between the natives – Hungarians – and the Western European, mainly retired residents. We better not go into that either.

In any case, young artists, in whatever country they are, always have a hard time launching themselves. And quite a few fail. And fortunately for those who do become teachers - in art, at whatever level (and thus do extremely important work!!!). That social art phenomenon is generally known. Picasso too - you probably know him and hopefully you probably know

more than just him and hopefully you know a lot, a great deal about him because the man is extremely interesting - spent a time, in their younger years, selling paintings as street vendors for literally peanuts, together with his friend Georges Bracque (1892 - 1963)! Preferably with a piece of cheese and even a good bottle of wine. Incroyable mais très vrai! That starting scenario would turn around or improve for them, but of course that desirable scenario never happened in the same way - not even that spectacularly but just decently - for many artists. Coincidentally, we know a Hungarian, let's say, folk artist who paints beautiful flower frescoes (so not making and applying ceramics), on houses. She does this very coincidentally only for ... Hungarians, or on Hungarian buildings. Just as coincidentally, we have not yet personally sought out that lady; it is a matter of time. Or not; it is perhaps a matter of age, because she is already a bit older. We would like to see something like that happen - painting houses, outside or also inside - by naturally (!!!) Hungarian young ladies and young gentlemen - graduates or still students at art academies. Or Hungarians for the non-Hungarians in Hungary. Something like that?

There are many, many more possibilities here than paintings as frescoes – on walls outside and/or inside. But also; we are and never want to become someone's manager. We give ideas or proposals, but are neither actual managers for individual artists nor an art agency. Although we may of course, as in this example of the young and strong personality of Kálmán Borbála (2006), a lady who also speaks English perfectly (and understands – hahaha), recommend young Hungarian artists! It goes without saying and also given the rich Hungarian painting tradition known to us, that many more possibilities can fit pleasantly in the Western European eyes. We think first of all of ... portraits of course! Portraits of the lady Dutch, German, hostess, and of her Dutch, German, ... (meanwhile also Hungarian!) husband who lets the grass in his large garden be grazed by his patient herd of goats – or has it mowed by that relatively cheap Hungarian neighbor, hahaha. Since it mainly concerns older ladies and gentlemen, they usually have family who are not only younger but also like to visit during the holiday months. So that is still July and August and some other school holiday periods in between. Well, it means that the Hungarian young lady and young gentleman and especially hungry and driven artist can make portraits at all times of the year. And she/he can continue to do so for a while in a network. By the way; birds flock together. Or if you pull the thread of the trousers of, say, one Dutchman, you suddenly pull a whole bunch of Dutch, Germans, ... in one village. Frescoes with good flowers, portraits of ..., and so the very well-known and so on. So there can be painting, etching, drawing, Why not proposals for, say, the kitchen of the lady who would so much like some old Delft, pardon Hungarian and especially completely new ceramic tiles specially designed for her on site? What kind of rubbish tiles do people in kitchens and bathrooms, especially, go to get for their walls in the special supermarkets like ... (we cannot advertise, not even negative or discouraging)!? If you can order all that or have it designed and executed by young artists – from the country itself! Why not cast or carve statues for the garden – of Mr. and Mrs. and also the grandchildren who ...!? Anyway, dear young Hungarian, Romanian, Slovakian, Serbian ... artist; learn to speak a little German, French, English or All beginnings are small. But in the beginning there was the word, the Logos - remember!!!??? Speak to one resident of the region in that language and then ... That is how marketing works, if there is sufficient ambition and of course good (growing) professional knowledge and a correct price. Think of the eternal “*three P's: Price + Place + Product*”. Roll up your sleeves and first let your tongue hang out of your mouth!

Of course, for at least thirty years now, a mainly Dutch real estate industry has been sown across the Hungarian land, and there are rarely Hungarian real estate agents who know German, sometimes even Dutch. These real estate agents not only like to sell – houses, of

course. But they also prefer to sell (as it were; what a wonderful thing that is, isn't it!?) the renovations to those houses; earning double. Although it is generally best to wait and get to know a house and neighbourhood better, a quick at least partial renovation may be urgently needed. By waiting, you will acquire more and better possibilities anyway. In this way, a renovation can at least partly go hand in hand with, so to speak, pure art creations, certainly with mosaics or ceramics in kitchens and bathrooms! Of course, the existing real estate agents provide all kinds of other useful services, through their – rather poor to somewhat better or excellent – knowledge of the Hungarian language and customs. But (so, always that but ...). But so!?! We are getting older or weaker, let's admit it, although that old age has great advantages such as the accumulation of - experience or something like more personal knowledge even .. wisdom!?! But we remain curious or open ... We have never seen or heard of a single Western European broker who works professionally in Hungary, and who once recommends a - respectable and preferably young, call it promising - artist. At best, these brokers are inversely interested in the very old Hungarian farm tiles, wooden beams, doors and windows. Because, they can then be transported to ... the Netherlands or Austria or X to sell for a high price. Those items that are sold off abroad in Hungary are then used commercially there as very authentic Hungarian farm tiles and so on. Or (interesting) Hungarian items for (interested) non-Hungarians, now outside Hungary. It is almost laughable, but we (almost) have to cry about such a lack of, let us say, artistic and/or empathetic or artistic Hungarian-Western-European Brokerage-Plus.

Although we do not want to give an example of exhaustive, creative services by (young) Hungarian artists to Western European settlers in Hungary, we still have to point out a reverse, albeit analogous movement: on to the Netherlands, Germany and ...! Of course (sic?) we have never heard of networking on an intra-European level, where young Hungarian artists in particular are stimulated by Dutch brokers and immigrants to give those young Hungarian artists in the Netherlands, Germany and so on, a chance to be featured in an exhibition. Hello EU, there is still a lot of work to be done, also or especially (liberal thinking, right?) informally or by the very ordinary people.

Epilogue.

Also don't forget, dear Dutchman, German and so on, that Hungarians think differently, grammatically and therefore also in terms of worldview. Much more Western European, they turn it around. For example, they pronounce and write the first name AFTER the family name! Or in concreto: Hungarians pronounce and write "*Kálmán Borbála*" and therefore not - according to Western European logic - "*Borbála Kálmán*". You got it!?! Keep it!

For young Hungarian artists who now, as it were, (want to) think 'exclusively' of their own market; see our concept of "APPART-ART". SEE **Údova pieseň (A Folksong), Vlasta Flendrovská**. But we assume that as philosophers we always think in a general or principled way, so that purely heuristic ideas intended for one context are also more or less applicable to other more or less adjacent situations. Bonne chance and "*Sok szerencsét*"!

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, March 2025.

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Inger in Black and Violet, Evard Munch (1863 - 1944), oil, 1892, Nasjonalmuseet Oslo.

T.U.S..

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Jenny Montigny (1875 - 1937), Emile Claus (1849 - 1924), oil, 1902, Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Brussel.

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1. A mmonumental mmonumment.

Through deep or long experience we have become rather suspicious, not to say cynical, concerning social or public veneration of so-called greats of the earth, more specifically the Belgian, Flemish or very local earth. In particular, thousands of Belgian compatriots - and in the EU it will probably be more or less the same social movement everywhere - received at least a street name, after that life and sometimes already during. That last recognition phenomenon is in itself hardly believable - but true, at least in our much-loved Belgian city of Ronse. And that while after sufficient study of these lives it appears that they were very ambivalent to socially destructive persons. Real political criminals or scoundrels then do/did not receive a street name or other public permanent mention by apparent definition. In a rare historical event, these even disappeared because new and apparently courageously impressive historical insight led to this. This happened, as is known, with many street names dedicated to the USSR and more precisely Stalin and recently in the case of the Antwerp war mayor Leo Delwaide (1897 - 1978 + see the groundbreaking, say honest and thorough studies by the Belgian historians Lieven Saerens and Herman Van Goethem, with which they are literally - and uh... together with us - the exceptions in the rigid, Stalinist world of modern historians regarding WWII in the Low Countries). That is nevertheless a delicate matter in itself because - to put it mildly - a person like this old Belgian politician has, in addition to historically very precisely situated missteps, tried to lay out and walk many human paths, as a person among the people or a politician among and for his voters and fellow citizens. At the same time, it is not only pragmatically impossible but simply nonsensical in principle to have these kinds of discussions in depth, say in their entirety. The Belgian colonial past is an example of this and

in an important democratic country like France, for example, one is certainly not going to appreciate Napoleon at his true political value, namely as an Adlerian power-hungry man with countless crimes on his record, and consequently remove him from the countless squares and other strong drinks dedicated to him. Even on a local level, every product of social veneration cannot also become the subject of critical investigation, let alone correction; more general or principled positions can be taken.

Emile Claus (1849 - 1924) can be seen in an Olympic year like now (2024) as an excellent second-rate painter from an international level; a series of almost final places, besides being a regular winner of the bronze medal with an occasional silver! He also knew that he was not a second Rembrandt or Jan Van Eyck. As if every writer is no longer allowed to write and especially publish because there was once a phenomenon like Shakespeare (circa 1564 - 1616). It is always about other times and other places, but about the same need to read and/or look - at works of the visual arts. At the same time, the visual arts and painting in particular are that obvious art that likes to question itself in principle and then even only wants to be concerned with itself. That is understandable from a purely art historical point of view, at least for a very small group of insiders - of reviewers, curators, museum directors, top collectors and here and there even (...) an extremely modern artist. On the other hand, it is existentially historically tiring to annoying for the vast majority of people, alias art lovers, such as us, unfortunately: **LINK Luc Tuymans**..... Moreover, compared to a painting - the following applies somewhat less to graphics - you can borrow or even buy a book, but it is never unique in its materiality. You can even translate it, although there is the proverb "traduttori traditori". That means, at its crudest, that every translation is a betrayal or simply that it is best to try to read works in an original version because that is where most - not all!? - nuances for that reader are present. Books are therefore super easy to distribute, although you do have to make a fair amount of effort to use them - to read them. Works of visual arts are unique to such an extent, except for graphics, that they can only be encountered very precisely situated. And that is usually in public museums and meanwhile in the remarkable partly understandable largely regrettable fuss of collections of private read filthy rich collectors who now want their own (sic) museum. And who are buying their bliss of eternity with it - except for those few real special cases or idealists who at least do not lend their name to their foundation but for example name it as ... [Home - The Phoebus Foundation](#) Fortunately, there is a kind of compromise between the book and the visual work possible that makes the latter very real, namely by publishing it in art books. The value of art books can never be overestimated and there can never be enough of them published at preferably democratically affordable prices. In a sense standing next to it but of - for the time being? - even less access - and therefore lasting knowledge value, is the PC and the internet. This allows one to find many works of art at very high resolution or excellent visibility, although no depth or actual colour elaboration can be displayed - which also applies to the art book. One must then use a real or decent screen which is not possible with the technical scum of the Smartphone, a monstrosity that, due to its all too compelling algorithms, makes its viewer not look anyway but scroll.

Anyone who looks through the work of Emile Claus, in a book or of course preferably live in the various European museums that have his work (mainly but not only in Belgium) or through a retrospective exhibition such as in 2024 in Belgium (see below), sees somewhat unbalanced work but quite a lot of beautiful works up to masterpieces. Above all, he is recognized as a grabber, recorder and translator of light. Emile Claus is not seen as a luminist for nothing, even called the "*Prince of luminism*". That is certainly no small compliment, especially for a painter who essentially always works with colour, shape and light. Just think of such a comparable compliment for a writer! Incidentally, he made graphics very regularly,

often but not necessarily as a 'reproduction' of a painting made by him and therefore considered important by at least himself. A very successful double example of this is the painting next to the lithograph of "*Cows crossing the Leie*." ("*Koeien die de Leie oversteken*.", 1899, Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels). To our knowledge, those graphic works by Emile Claus were always black and white, but graphically very strong and formally just that little bit different from the referenced paintings. The very striking scratching in linear patterns in those lithographs makes these works exceptionally mobile, as if they are on the edge of the silent but effectively moving film (we would like to make a silent appeal so that the entire world finally starts to make the distinction between effective and efficiency - please!!!). We have been able to establish this several times, such as unfortunately only via the internet for the phenomenal lithograph of this 'in itself' important painting from 1899. And that was somewhere even more a valuable lithograph because it was dedicated "*to my good friend*", student and painter Anna De Weert (see further and this lithograph is dated 21 December 1899). That printed work is a very beautiful part of his work, but it is unclear to us whether that can also be labelled as luminism? In any case, it seems to us very important for future overview exhibitions to hang paintings and 'their' graphic expression through lithographs and so on, next to each other, to allow the viewer to compare. It is also striking that we ourselves have never seen this approach in a permanent collection of a museum - until now. It is incomprehensible how such interesting grounds for comparison are ignored in museums, until now. One of the co-objectives of our study of portraits is in any case to restore the value of graphics.

Shortly after his death in 1924, because already in 1926, a huge, partly normal, partly pompous monument was erected for him. That did not happen in his village Astene but in the nearby city, a city of European and world importance, especially in the field of art. That monument still shines in bronze and a lot of blue stone in the Citadel Park of proud Ghent... **K. SEE Photo monument in Ghent, 1926...** It is from his former student Yvonne Serruys (1873 - 1953), who undoubtedly needed a lot of assistance for it. This very fascinating lady, who would eventually spend most of her life in Paris, was given a great retrospective exhibition in the autumn of 2023. Logically, it took place in her hometown, the provincial town of Menen near the French border, where she also left her legacy. To our great regret we missed this exhibition, but there is a catalogue and we passed her monument by Emile Claus countless times during our student days. That work itself never interested us at all then and it doesn't interest us now either. That large sculpture certainly never inspired us to study the (painter) depicted. In that respect it has already missed its target once (we were interested in the painting of our youth before that). Art-historically that monument has no value whatsoever. It is not innovative, it simply does not move us and above all: it is much too big to the point of being laughable. But it serves its purpose because - go and see for yourself - it forms an enormous bench for the birds in the park who are just as tired of the branches of the always too few trees as they are too much to shake in the wind. Yet there is something that we see now at that moment or that made us shake. We see ... NOTHING.

2. Mmonumental but with the striking Nothing.

We were mainly trained as philosophers at the University of Ghent in the 80s, at a place that is somewhat further away than this moment. We had a lot of luck studying there with mainly interesting to very inspiring professors - while unfortunately the old-fashioned philosophical genius Leo Apostel (1925 - 1995) had just gone on mandatory health retirement. Could he have at least given us some private lessons!? Without a doubt - including him - this philosophical department in Ghent had one of the most fascinating academic philosophical

educations in the world at the time, although everything can be better because ... blah blah blah. The smartest of them all was without the same doubt the German Rudolf Boehm (1927 - 2019); the man had previously refused proposals from Washington, among other places. Together with a certain Spinoza (1632 - 1677) and the modern Dutchman Cornelis Verhoeven (1928 - 2001), he belongs to the probably greatest thinkers who ever wandered around in the Low Countries - but there is still time to come. Rudolf Boehm is a philosopher who has apparently been forgotten at that faculty itself (to our slight astonishment, he once complained to us personally about "*Who reads me?*" + You can mainly read along in Dutch on [Fenomenologie | Rudolf Boehm](#)). This deep thinker, this researcher into the guiding principles of Western thought, has been partly forgotten, not least because of the power of the personality of that other philosopher at the time, Etienne Vermeersch (1934 - 2019). And this professor was essentially the better or simply superior village philosopher because he was a great 'explainer'. But not a great philosopher himself, as he once admitted himself. This is not the place to write the history of that department. But one could learn to think, very much - and very independently. Without that education, in which special attention was paid to the history of science and paradigms or overarching changes in perspective of scientific thinking, we would certainly never have been able to invent our internationally groundbreaking historical-political work on a crisis like WWII much later. On the other hand, it is also not clear to us whether our groundbreaking work in this cultural field also yields important insights, now around painters - such as around an Emile Claus and? Are you going to judge?

More specifically, one could learn there how "*nothingness*" can be of essential importance. What a so-called thinker does NOT say is in some cases just as important, if not more important, than what he has said or written. Of course, everyone is situated and completely objective thinking is a complete impossibility, insofar as this is an ideal (partly it certainly is, but ...). Once a thinker has been studied reasonably thoroughly, one should more or less understand him/her (or one starts over or one sighs resignedly and might as well become a gardener), as far as his/her principles are concerned, of course. And in doing so, one should investigate what this thinker has failed to write that, based on these principles, makes these principles even more ... uncertain. From cognitive psychology we know that this is difficult, if not terribly, to almost impossible. But it is the core of democracy and of everything that calls itself science. We remember reading that the Dutch legal philosopher Paul Cliteur (1955) somewhere noted that he wanted to study what the courageous though cautious Spinoza never wanted/dared to write but had ... Try that out on your aging day, Mr. Cliteur! And continue with all the so-called accepted great thinkers, in all directions of thought!

These considerations about the importance of the principle and - therefore - the importance of nothingness can be made absolutely certain about the monument of Emile Claus by the woman Ivonne Serruys. In her twenties she reportedly received four years of lessons at the home of Emile Claus. It must have been pleasant there because that is how she knew, among others, the recently met, important Belgian and female artist Anna De Weert (1867 - 1950). And above all: that is how she knew Jenny Montigny (1875 - 1937) very well, about whom directly and finally and continuously further! Of course Ivonne Serruys 'also' knew the lady of the house or the wife of Emile Claus who not only brought around the biscuits and coffee at all these pleasant moments for a few years but also taught her to sniff the scent of oil paint for decades, as if it were lavender. That went so well that lady Claus had a personal grave monument made on the grave of her beloved husband by the phenomenon Georges Minne (1866 - 1951), And he was probably the only real world-class sculptor from the Low Countries since Claus (sic) Sluter (circa 1340 - 1405/1406) and fortunately a lot more productive. That grave monument, unlike the mentioned monument for her husband, can only

be admired in the garden of Emile Claus' former home, "*Villa Zonneschijn*" - "*Villa Sunshine*". Unfortunately, we have never encountered that work in person because the domain seems to be private and so is that work; can't that sculpture, together with the grave underneath, be donated to the city of Deinze to be placed in the municipal cemetery there? It can be seen in any case via the Dutch Wikipedia page dedicated to Emile Claus. It would be called "*Opstanding*" ("*Resurrection*"), a bit strange since we assume that the couple Claus - Dufaux were liberal - besides mainly monolingual or by social preference French-speaking? Emile Claus 100% certainly used Dutch, possibly - of course spoken - with a West Flemish accent.

We have previously been somewhat dismissive of his enormous monument from 1926. On the bluestone sides of it there are certainly bilingual messages concerning the essence of his life! On one side it says in Dutch "*AAN KUNSTSCHILDER EMIEL ...*" and on the other side in French "*AU PEINTRE EMILE*" ("*To painter ...*"); each time neatly carved in that rock-hard bluestone or permanent. That was now nicely linguistically divided through a personal, Flemish-Belgian reality, even as "*Emile*" next to "*Emiel*". Incidentally, that specific language problem - for a Flanders that was gradually growing (again) towards its own language as a cultural language - would be cleverly camouflaged at the also public grave monument of his contemporary James Ensor. There in Mariekerke near Ostend only his name was mentioned or mentioned so-called neutrally. That was doing violence to the linguistic or existential truth because on the one hand it was certain that James Ensor expressed himself publicly and literary privately almost exclusively in French. While he could express himself perfectly in his mother tongue, which was the Ostend ergo Flemish dialect! Apart from this simple ambiguity, the only grave mention is the double-language word "*BARON*", right above his own name. And this is purely objectively true because it happened but actually pure falsification of history. In the first or predominantly de facto only place James Ensor was a painter or 'even' "*art painter*" - as the Dutch so beautifully says with "*kunstschilder*" and thus makes the distinction clear with a professional "*painter*" or "*house painter*" ("*huisschilder*") who comes at home to paint the walls and window frames. And last but not least, James Ensor was anything but and throughout the first half of his life with his absolute heyday until around 1890 he was anything but a man of nobility, who, mind you, shot at everything and everyone of the higher powers - with his sublime, unique paintballs.

Very important is that Madame Claus made a significant donation in 1942 from the artistic legacy of her husband to the small town of Deinze from which a museum would later grow; see further. She gave much more - the couple would apparently never have children of their own - because in that museum in Deinze there are altogether about 20 paintings and more than 100 drawings by Emile Claus. Moreover, this regional museum is 'further' particularly richly developed, especially because this region around Ghent was very rich in modern painters. In principle and ultimately practically seen, it could merge with the three local museums that are located in nearby Sint-Martens-Latem. The time will come, the deed will follow, because four extremely related and relatively small museums will be unaffordable for society in the long term, even though there are many strikingly rich people living there who would be ...

On that gigantic public monument dedicated to Emile Claus in the city park of Ghent, several works from his oeuvre are depicted. But - we are where we should be in principle because what is intellectually more important than "*the but*"? So but; what or rather who is not there!? Not the woman of his life! His breath of life. His source in the morning and destination in the evening. And, it was about an artist, a visual artist, she must have been his inspiration or

muse. But - we are back and more precisely or come to a principle. Who was this one woman!? Or did sculptor Ivonne Serruys once shared the bed with her teacher Emile Claus? We do not rule that out because they came from liberal, open circles. The 19th century from which they emerged was a century of many morals par excellence. And blood explodes where the veins are too hot; where was and is it otherwise? In any case, and without being a wimpie wokie or anything 'modern' about it, it is quite astonishing that in this materially gigantic statue, zero attention has been paid to that one wife of Emile Claus - who was therefore de facto ... double. Neither his legal wife of many years nor his girlfriend or mistress of also many years Jenny Montigny are to be found here. What is not said but which is of great importance, may point to a form of forgetfulness, of incredible stupidity or above all of cunning deceit. Our experience teaches us that the Soviet techniques for retouching photos directly from the moment an important leader has fallen from grace, are very, very human. And among those people that we experienced ourselves as Stalinistically human, we very concretely also consider so-called artists known as open. Next to frequently known in the press as so-called specialist professors who call themselves progressive, while one would not expect that attitude there. We experienced those surprises when we were still delightfully naive, an attitude that we nevertheless try to maintain despite the cynicism that was caused through those surprises. Of course we are not asking anything about certain missing representations or 'corrections' around this monument, which is however gigantic. This has already been done literally.

However, there is still something to be corrected in the meantime. There will be an obviously important exhibition about Emile Claus in the regional "*Mudel*" this autumn 2024. *Mudel* is the gruesome abbreviation of the attractive "*Museum of Deinze and the Leiestreek*" in Deinze near Ghent. Quite a few Flemish museums have made their new name intended as euphonious out of this kind of gruesome name finds. Or one of the many stupid fashions from history. And that for a museum or place of certain eternity.

Just read the ad hoc relatively short biography of this man:

[Biography | Emile Claus \(emile-claus.be\)](https://emile-claus.be)

His wife, the later grieving widow, is clearly mentioned on this website. She was married to her Emile in 1886 and apparently lived with him before that in Astene near Ghent. That is now a sub-municipality of Deinze and they lived there in "*Villa Zonneschijn*" or "*Villa Sunshine*". That house name speaks for itself because Emile Claus would absorb the light and the local, still very untouched landscape there and immortalize it for us, art-historically certainly and historically even more than certainly. Because. So that we can now see, purely by comparison with archive work such as these .. paintings by Emile Claus, among other great painters working here, next to the worldly or the present, that the conspicuously rich with their mainly hideous villas have destroyed almost all beauty next to the rural tranquility. Ironic, sarcastic ... They were/are attracted to it because it was so beautiful and rurally quiet so that all kinds of rurally oriented artists came there who then became successful and especially expensive so that ... so that ... so ... That is a well-known song worldwide - all kinds of birds flock together - while now the 'really' rich are barricading themselves in totally unattainable compounds - with all kinds of top works by the revered painters à la ... This couple would remain married uninterruptedly (sic) until his death in 1924 or for almost forty years; a human eternity! She - Charlotte Dufaux - is herself mentioned with some extra personal information on this bio fragment as "*a daughter from a prominent dynasty of notaries from Waregem and Deinze*". That was and is to this day a privileged class that only

came from the liberal and Christian upper middle class and had a lot of local power for a very long time; "*Mr. Notary*"! And in addition and to this day, as a civil servant, it made an excessive amount of money, not least because of its unique function in the handling of real estate. And is/was partly responsible for the terrible and metaphysically irreversible parcelization and therefore the destruction of the landscape of Flanders, including here and also in the rare, unique dune areas. In addition, notary is/was not a profession that an intelligent, diligently studying and above all truly community-minded young person could dream of. But let us not deviate too much and see - see! - the remarkable presence of this wife ergo absence of her rival - what to call it? - Jenny Montigny. And the latter came from the same upper class or could communicate with each other, not least about the man of both their lives: Emile Claus. But this Jenny Montigny is not mentioned at all in the biography of this retrospective exhibition about the same Emile Claus; lack of space on the world wide web?

3. Always present yet absent.

Who was this lady, also from the upper middle class of that time? She was certainly a subject and at least a temporary model for painter Emile Claus, a man with a strong will and drive because of lower origins but since early on with an enormous will to succeed - as an artist. After all, you see her here with a portrait of her made by his hand in 1902. We know that he was her portrait painter because, just to be sure - who would have doubted it? - he placed his signature at the bottom right of the painting. That has apparently been a matter of course for painters since the Renaissance and for centuries to come. Sometimes they made all kinds of jokes by placing that signature on half-hidden or less important parts, such as a table leg or even on a ..., as contemporary James Ensor (1860 - 1949) sometimes did. But we do know of one excellent and amiable contemporary Belgian painter who signs the back of her paintings .. **LINK Luce Caponegro ...** Back or front, bottom or top, Jenny and Emile knew each other for a while in that year 1902 or from front to back and from left to right. Just like the more relevant Yvonne Serruys, Jenny Montigny had taken lessons from Emile Claus, starting in 1893. In contrast to the very lively lady Serruys, who would mainly focus on sculpture and achieved success with it throughout her life and especially in Paris et la province, Jenny Montigny's life and artworks continued relatively calmly. But it always continued. While something around her was almost certainly in the first and most urgent place; Emile and his work!?! A little later than this start as a student because probably from 1895 Jenny would be intoxicated by the smell of paint from the squeezed paint tubes of her teacher; she became the concubine of her teacher Emile Claus. And that relationship was something that is generally known in education as a very serious professional error or violation. Normally the sanction was; out of education! Here; out of my house and out of my husband's studio! Expressed differently and somewhat more romantically: Jenny became - how traditional, right? - the mistress of Mr. the older painter, in this case 1875 minus 1849 years old or exactly 26 (twenty-six) years older: the horny bastard! How horny this specific couple was; we have to wait for their confessions, undoubtedly in beautiful French but just as undoubtedly cleaned up by the competitor annex wife 'of'. We will probably never see those memoirs or confessional letters, if they ever exist anywhere. Jenny would remain the mistress of Père Emile until his death in 1924 or for almost thirty years! Their bond was certainly stable: see their photo from as late as 1920. By the way, who held this camera, exposed this scene sufficiently? ... **K. SEE photo Emile Claus and Jenny Montigny, 1920, source website Jenny Montigny.....** That his wife Charlotte agreed with these facts - for thirty years ... - or at least had to agree, is a certainty given all the simple deductions from the known facts. That is shown not in a detail because when Die Verdammte Teutons invaded Belgium and later Ghent and surroundings in the summer of 1914, the family Emile Claus - Charlotte Dufaux - Jenny Montigny fled to

Merry Old England. And of course they stayed there (?) until the end of 1918. Excuse me, now tell me yourself whether you would want to experience all that yourself, even if you cannot hold a paintbrush then still very clumsily to paint your doors and windows assuming that they are not made of that filthy plastic.

Unless stung by a wasp or tickled by the personal hormones going too jubilantly their selfish way, people are motivated or driven by goals. That does not mean at all that people themselves are aware of all their goals, or that on the other hand they want to reveal these personally very important goals to others. Just when the trio Claus - Dufaux - Montigny had started their strange triangular relationship somewhere from 1893, the aforementioned contemporary James Ensor had already been storming the world with his masks for a few years - and how! Apart from the fact that both painters loved light immensely, we can find no evidence of any mutual artistic influence. James Ensor was both too grand and too anti-bourgeois for that, at least until he became generally successful. The loser would even accept the title of baron in old age, something that Emile Claus was fortunately spared, although Emile had contacts with the Belgian royal family and was as bourgeois as the name of his villa: always sunshine - really never rain? In Dutch language, the internationally known word "*motief/motieven*" can be expressed perfectly or, to be honest, much better with the non-bastard word "*bewegredenen*". Nuclear energy is not needed to split this compound word; it is about "*redenen om door te bewegen*" or "*reasons why one is moved to*". Those stupid Englishmen would have been better off retaining their thorough knowledge of Dutch from the 16th and 17th centuries and developing it further! So that we would not have to use poor English here but fluent and convivial Dutch, a language (...) of which we would like to know whether Emile and Jenny, Emile and Charlotte whispered sweet nothings in each other's ears. Or did they only speak through his two brushes, the wet one in front of his easel and the other wet one in front of their bodies? But let us leave those stupid brushes and especially that stupid penis behind us because we have to talk about art here. And not about something as stupid as sex. People are sometimes driven by their hormones but also by more understandable motives that are positive. In this way they are driven - we think of the last words of Spinoza in his interesting work "*Ethica, Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata*" (1678) - by reason or, in the absence thereof, even (unfortunately) by money, power and ambition. Driven by idealism is a form of moral satisfaction that can be seen as reasonable. Anyone who has never thoroughly read that book by Spinoza, pardon studied it (take a year around your 20th or what does that time mean as existential training for a whole further life if you later only waste 3 - 4 years of your life by scrolling?) - unless forgivably not part 1 of it because that is in our opinion reasonably eternally incomprehensible -, he may actually ... Well, this Ethical-less person may not actually talk about anything anymore, in a café for example, let alone on all his social media, but especially about the being human like himself! Because here - in that book, on that paper to turn around the pages which are first frequently annotated - there is an awful lot to learn. And believe us, in relatively simple, say, by the mass understandable words - although part 1 is only for specialists.

Positively driven, for money, power ...? Oh, oh, oh. In any case, the human being is very often driven by motives that are very negative and undermining, for the person concerned and those affected by it. Indeed, the human factor of resentment is generally known as crucial for, say, Greek mythological wars and millions of others more, also big to bigger and incredibly many small ones. Let us not forget this negative second motive; jealousy. Although we must remain brief here as both negative motives can have their form of rationality or at least excuse (in Dutch also to be indicated as "*verschoning*", or "*making better, prettier*" - "*schoon*" meaning pretty) in existential reasons, these main motives remain somewhere too much taboo in all

kinds of culturally oriented research. Especially jealousy is in our opinion still a terribly underestimated because essential experience in the human condition. It is a very, very widespread humanly destructive poison. Not least among women, among them and/or against men. The terrible and very common denunciations throughout WWII must be situated here, almost never because of so-called ideological reasons, say political collaboration. Although we would love to find some anthropological studies and then study them, to know whether or not there are really cultures outside of Europe, so elsewhere on earth, that really do not know the experience of jealousy - in addition to preferably no other destructive human motivations. If such cultures do indeed exist, we should certainly welcome the representatives or embodiments as immigrants, right?! Or send our dear children there, to be educated. Here is a possible new European immigration policy.

The absence of Jenny Montigny from that gigantic monument in honour of painter, husband and lover Emile barely two years after his death, an event that must have been terrible for her too, is a great pity. Although Charlotte Dufaux as his officially connected wife - Belgium of course did not have polygamy under civil law - is also not depicted anywhere; or were we missing 'something'? But as we said, not a soul is interested in that monument, except for the birds in the park ... In addition to the countless spectators who were present at the inauguration in 1926; what must they have gossiped about? But, always that but, always a but as if a theory, a proposition, a remark, a sigh. What human achievement (except all the work of father Bach of course) could ever have been made without falsifications, even if it is apparently endlessly corroborated! Jenny's absence from that prestigious overview exhibition of her painter and friend Emile Claus, supported by several Flemish ministers, is still unbelievable, let alone acceptable. It is nothing less than "*un faux pas*". It is "*not done*". Of course we cannot make a ponderance, estimate her weight in relation to her teacher and lover Emile Claus, in comparison with that of his only, real or legal wife Charlotte Dufaux. This lady is sometimes wrongly presented as "*Du Faux*", although according to the all-knowing Jacques Lacan - we just had a telephone conversation with his soul - it was the proverbial because telling "*lapsus calami*". In any case, this last woman would have a grave monument made for her husband by sculptor Georges Minne; she was clearly not spiteful. Or was she in turn cunning? Or was she simply crazy? Because the bones or the remains of her husband were kept under that grave monument, something that was not possible according to the same civil law of that time because in death everyone was equal - or off to the municipal cemetery!

The same considerations of absence and lack of understanding cannot be said, in our opinion, of the female artists associated with Claus, Anna De Weert and Ivonne Serruys, who are also absent from this exhibition. Although showing four artists - 1 man and 3 women - is probably not feasible for practical reasons. Besides, there must have been other female students of Emile Claus who later or independently formed an art career. And in that special perspective, a subsequent retrospective exhibition on Emile Claus can certainly be made. Just pick another symbolic year for that! We do not need to provide mathematical proof that the bond between Jenny Montigny and Emile Claus was of infinitely more intense value, not only because of the very long time they had known each other. In a remarkable but rationally and humanly regrettable way, this retrospective exhibition on Emile Claus - on the occasion of the centenary (sic) of his death - shows the absence of one of the most important figures from his life. The exhibition about Emile Claus could have been a double exhibition, about him (of course) and about Jenny Montigny (or intercourse). That would have been a lot more work, including taking out more insurance policies. Unless? Unless Jenny Montigny's work was so much in 'his' shadow - as was not even simply verbally motivated here. And it was/is so much

less valuable materially or artistically. And much less insurable. Or hardly an additional cost compared to now.

As a necessary conclusion to this part of the discussion of this portrait, we indicate that our text was written for the opening - on September 27, 2024 - of the mentioned exhibition about Emile Claus. This also means that we were unable to view the accompanying new book "*Emile Claus. Prins van het luminisme.*" (dr. Johan De Smet, Veurne, 2024), also some time in advance because we sleep abroad a lot due to personal circumstances. We are curious about those writings and/but given our bad character we are already hoping for a successor around ... - yes.

4. Her shyness. Or the opposite of all mmonumentality.

This portrait is a wonder and undoubtedly deserves a place of honour at that retrospective, with an old-fashioned ... halo around it: .. **LINK Ondrej Richter** ... I beg your pardon, a halo around a painting? It deserves a human place of honour. Because (always trying to motivate, like every little child constantly asks: "*Mama/dad, why are ...*"; have you remained that little child?). That we can discuss the content of this fragile, beautiful, albeit not totally world-shattering portrait, is indeed not a miracle from an art-historical point of view, but from a human point of view. After all, it was not destroyed by a jealous wife who later became a widow, and she had every human reason to do so. Artists sometimes destroy their own work because they no longer ... - which they usually deeply regret later for all kinds of reasons, not only because of the lost money. But descendants, a wife, a mistress, friends, gallery owners (hihihi) ... ? This liberal milieu could not have been further removed in terms of philosophy or human and world view from the barbarism of the Nazis, who barely ten years later - in 1937 - held a resounding exhibition of the so-called "*Entartete Kunst*", where every stupid German (and there were many) was invited to come and laugh and scoff. The Nazis would soon afterwards sell a large part of this reviled art for a pretty penny. And would shortly afterwards burn the 'remaining' pieces, just as they would in the meantime murder their own German mentally ill, just as the well-known "*and so on*" a little later. Incidentally or not, it is unimaginable that just a few kilometres from the personal grave monument of Emile Claus by Georges Minne, the painter Albert Servaes (1883 - 1966) lived in his famous Servaestoren in Sint-Martens-Latem, a municipality where Georges Minne also lived. Albert Servaes was a so-called very well-known Catholic religious artist and became a fervent or 'religious' Nazi collaborator during WWII together with part of his family. Who in 2066, as now with Emile Claus - a country escapee in 1914 or in a way not too brave because he could at least have committed alternative resistance, or helped the countless directly impoverished sad people of Astene and surroundings, or ... but the man was already really old and had two wives to support ... Who is going to organize a retrospective exhibition of Albert Servaes? We wish you much courage in advance! Although we have had to conclude in detail through our own rather in-depth research into politics during a crisis such as WWII that liberals happily participated in the infamous black market and also collaborated economically, always for the little money, and that this conclusion is apparently taboo for normal historians, we must say something politically relevant. The liberals almost certainly belonged to the only Belgian philosophical pillar that never collaborated politically with the German occupier in WWII. In that political or more explicitly existential sense, the trio Emile Claus - Charlotte Dufaux - Jenny Montigny shared a lot intensely, built up a lot during their long form of coexistence and perhaps still a little after Emile's death. However, be careful: we do not know the precise provenance of this portrait. And we must not venture into any moralizing here. The relationships between the three intensely involved people are or were simply none of our

business, which does not contradict the previous final consideration at all. In any case, we can be happy that it yielded some interesting paintings by Emile Claus: of his wife (at least three) and of this mistress Jenny (at least one). And? Or was there? Were there other portraits or of other mistresses?

We will not go into what one might call the psychology of a portrait or of almost any painting. Besides the wall on which it hangs, there is always 'something' to be found behind it, unless one starts thinking of floating paintings? No to psychology, then? Not because we don't feel like it today. But because we can't, even though everyone does: if one were to psychologize about any musical work as much as about works of the visual arts, then ... - hahaha! Even the otherwise internationally highly valued because - hahaha (again?) - expensive clumsiness of a Karel Appel has fallen from a tree, in this case from the Charles Apple Tree. Incidentally, a particularly large or dramatic to almost insurmountable problem of knowledge applies here, at least for us. We assume that most people who are interested in the visual arts, when they stop to think about things for a moment after the first, purely visual or viewing experience ("*beautiful*", "*interesting*", "*junk*", and the terrible "*I can do that too!*", by the way a fairly popular reproach that we have never experienced with music), experience something special and very human: doubt! Once they go a little further than the first experience or start to consider something certain, this initial movement of thought almost always goes hand in hand with a feeling of inadequacy with respect to a targeted, viewed work. In our opinion, that is an experience that is in stark contrast to music that one can listen to 'more', that one can also dance to and enjoy: is dancing even possible without it!? We have seen the latter dancing a great deal, but we have never seen dancing through a sculpture, a painting, a drawing. Perhaps through a performance by Marina Abramović (1946)? Let's give her a call! Many musical works move people with pleasure and joy (they also last a certain time, have a beginning, middle and end, sometimes even a real climax) without any additional explanation or knowledge of, even if they were only general notions about the musicological importance of this musical work in question. There is so much to know in pure knowledge and to interpret in meanings surrounding any successful visual work of art. But what is successful, because elsewhere we will have to admit that we do not understand a thing about the internationally adored painter Luc Tuymans (1958) and find his work genuinely horrifying when viewed purely contemplatively? As if one is even allowed to start stammering (the French "*balbutier*" expresses this onomatopoeically, as it were) even when one has studied all kinds of relevant sciences. And there are so many that are effectively applicable around the visual arts. Not least of which is the study of art history, a branch of scientific endeavour that we rate fairly highly because of its very strong interpretative capacity; see among others the work of the great Belgian art expert Bart Verschaffel (1956), erudite, stimulating and (or 'only') understandable, although we have only read a selection of the man; it can still be very disappointing. Of course we quietly admit to having read quite a few art historical studies, of which we do not understand a thing. For example, we once had to help a young art history student at the request of her friendly parents; how we ourselves toiled and honestly learned absolutely nothing from it! She had passed anyway ... Without going into detail in terms of study, we have from a very young age and then throughout our lives, albeit with more or less time, done our best reasonably broadly and deeply to occasionally understand something about the essence of man. While we always had more that feeling of "*not knowing knowing*" (although we are not sure whether we have summarized the thinking of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908 - 1961) with that). But especially in the field of psychology and psychiatry we have always remained reserved. Much of what we read there was/is completely beyond our comprehension, although the most incomprehensible was/is certainly Jacques Lacan (1901 - 1981), a psychiatrist greatly admired by many and regarded by us as a producer of rattle of

words. Give us social psychology, while that is a relative of general psychology that we probably can't do much with here around Jenny and her Emile and his Charlotte? We can say that we simply (...) like to look at this portrait - and would even like to have it, as if Emile Claus could have grown a bit older and produced more - also for us who were born ultimately four decades after his death. Hasn't every good painter produced too little? Although we therefore make a fundamental exception elsewhere for the work of the purely objectively very successful but almost perfect deprime Luc Tuymans - the perfect patient of/for Jacques ...?

The portrait of Jenny Montigny can safely be called a classic. It is as if it is not situated in time and space but has come to us as successful, convincing, human or 'correct' in content and form. It is clearly but subtly worked out from a bird's-eye view, without any male dominance. Do not forget: the painter was a man, and the same painter was her lover. She is depicted just as she is painted because just as she must have sat opposite the upright or at least slightly higher seated painter - who was there at the time; please give the correct perspective! This portrait is made according to the seemingly eternal standards. The face dominates everything in soft tones. Although Claus leaves out the lower legs and therefore feet, he has only made two types of portraits - of women. That is either frontal or where the person, himself or another person, looks straight at the painter. Or, so to speak, non-frontal or unfrontal and therefore the head turned away. In contemporary artists such as Michaël Borremans (1963) or Rinus Van de Velde (1983) we encounter representations of people - portraits or portrait-like images - with the perspective on the back or even headless. Such perspectives are not imaginable in the ultimate classical painting of Emile Claus.

We only know this portrait of Jenny. The exhibition in the autumn of 2024 is very interesting, among other things, because of a series of portraits by Emile Claus that are presented there. Among them is the beautiful and remarkable portrait of the already mentioned Anna De Weert. See

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Anna De Weert also looks at us as a spectator, also like Jenny shows a sketchbook with which something essential of her identity - her artistry - is revealed. At the same time, she stands in the middle of a certain action on the usually calm water of the central river Leie, then a unique stream in this region and once at its confluence with the larger river Scheldt the origin of the city of Ghent, very important in many ways in Europe. It is striking that la Anna is literally counterbalanced by the reflection of the sail of a partly visible sailboat. This is itself formally counterbalanced by the shadow of trees, which makes Anna seem slightly hugged. That mirrored sail is purely technically too big so that it must mean 'something' but we are not going to find out what, because we are focused on Jenny Montigny. Jenny is not sitting on a boat but on a normal, bourgeois chair, certainly not a plastic garden chair or horror of horrors (which barbarians invented all that ***?). She is sitting in the middle of a garden that - dare we say - is typically Clausian in design. In addition, the colour of her neck (light yellow) flows noticeably into the adjacent garden colour (a stronger yellow).

You may find the following two remarks concerning this "*woman's portrait*" interesting, with which we indicate only one of the two possible definitions of a woman's portrait. So it is a portrait about but not made by a woman. Now okay, who talks about a man's portrait anyway?

a) Because of that slight bird's-eye view it almost - almost - seems as if Jenny is sitting on the toilet, slightly bent forward because she is necessarily pushing along somewhat peristaltically;

you know that feeling too. Of course that is not the case but painter Claus could have finished this formally a little better by having her - we are not painters so we will just imagine 'something' - lean back very slightly. What needs no interpretation is the presence of the sketchbook on her book. A pen, let alone a brush, is not visible there, as in the portrait of Anna De Weert. In any case, Anna's posture is much more active or freer. Her sketchbook is literally raised on one leg. While Jenny holds it almost convulsively - with her arms lightly on it but mainly around each other or in front of her body. That posture of arms and hands is one of the most remarkable elements of this painting. You do not need a small degree in psychology to know that closed arms/hands signify a certain feeling of fear towards the other, in this case her well-known painter and also lover. Normally someone who feels completely at ease, open or at least not waiting, is certainly not ready to defend herself at the first alarm. There is no sign of alarm here, while that is actually not possible since she is clearly posing as the subject of a painting. Was their relationship perhaps all that time - or only this year 1902 - purely platonic, that is to say, not consummated or not of flesh and blood but only of connected souls? In the photo of Emile Claus and Jenny Montigny from 1920 or 18 years later, they are clearly much closer to each other. First of all - it almost escaped us even after looking at it repeatedly - they are sitting together on a double seat. In itself, this does not seem to us to be an erotic image at all in this bourgeois environment and for an ordinary house photo. It does indicate a maximum form of intimacy between man and woman, apart from an embrace of course or, in the event, a coikiss or even coitus. Her left hand seems to want to start caressing his left hand. Her left leg enters his free or open legroom: this could not have escaped the notice of any human being or this photographer - for whom there was no more room on this seat.

On the other hand, back to those arms in that painted portrait. It is a portrait, so something reasonably lifelike and preferably as little kicking as possible, or no kicking at all because sitting in the German way or completely motionless. There are many stories of people - women, men or children - who almost or completely faint from standing or sitting for very long periods of time (also a tiring activity if there is nothing to do but be stared at by an artist) as a model target for a painter. How long an experienced painter like Emile Claus, who, mind you, started with a very classical, almost gloomy, in any case completely colourless painting of his own mother in 1872 - Jenny had still not been born for three years! -, worked on an average portrait at the cruising speed of his oeuvre; we do not know. We were not even there, damn it, because we were not born and even our own mother would see life after his date of death so that we would ... If we do not know, we may start hypothesizing or within the internal logic of the domain involved: visual arts. Perhaps the portrait of Jenny was even made solely on the basis of sketches? Which by definition were made in advance, even indoors. That would then be an image of an image, or something like that (experienced art historians can formulate that better). In any case, arms and perhaps even more hands are not easy to paint. Even the smallest child knows that and so Karel Appel can posthumously assure you of that. And just hold them still as a model if the painter has finally decided how he wants to paint them, how he wants to paint them more or less 1 on 1. Or does he not want to depict them 1 on 1 at all but somewhere symbolically, with a "layering" or a "layer of meaning". You know what visual artists have in common with speleologists, and what makes them different from each other? Speleologists also descend as deep as possible. But then they always come back. And do you also know what the similarity and the difference is with mountain climbers, somewhat mirrored the same as speleologists? Then let us know, for which thanks. And of course that is such a deeper artistic layer that in turn invites the ladies and gentlemen depth psychologists to explain one thing or another. And that in turn is - follow the arrows or the guide with his megaphone please - one of the reasons why a normal sober

person should actually buy art books en masse. But! With the very well-rendered reproductions and therefore not - especially not!? - with the texts that explain the supposedly present deep layers. In any case, our dear Emile Claus was an aristocrat; knight, baron, viscount, count, marquis, duke, prince, king or emperor and the same for women and Flemish people et la même chose pour les femmes et les Flamands and madame Dufaux and maîtresse Montigny. After all, he was an aristocrat of light but not an expressionist, surrealist or what-the-heck-ist? That person was moved by all sorts of things, with absolute existential certainty by the light and by women. And with this juxtaposition we do not conceal or rather reveal any intentions. That light. That incomprehensible yet all-pervading, nourishing light. We have not seen anywhere whether Le Emile made it to at least baron and therefore actually had to invent a motto. The divine owlet and for a long time very recalcitrant painter of a James Ensor would be so incredibly stupid and hilariously opportunistic to accept that title in 1929. Oh, also the modern political joke of the Flemish Community - "*What we do ourselves (NB then that detested Belgian state), we do even worse.*" - has now instituted all kinds of official tributes. And honors painter and French-speaking albeit Ostend dialect-proficient James Ensor in this same 2024 really incessantly or above all self-evidently a great marketing gimmick: the Flemish ports and Flemish painters - of course silently concealing their special bilingualism - or see the resemblance! For that, sneaky James had waited just long enough so that he could undisturbed by the now sufficiently deceased Emile de facto take up his motto: "*Pro luce nobilis sum.*" or "*Ennobled by the light.*" Whatever. But he was not the only one: do you know a painter for whom that motto does not apply? Call us - but know we are never on line.

b) Jenny is indeed not headless or depicted from behind. We should take a year or so to go through the rich history of Western art when an artist dared to depict a human being - without their eyes. And then of course compare it with (Indian) American, Asian and African art. However, pay attention to this excellent, albeit very classical painter Emile Claus. We do not know whether he made any more portraits of his Jenny. After all, she must have been his favourite model, his muse! We assume that of the hundred drawings that Claus' widow donated to the milk mouth city of Deinze around WWII (why not to Ghent!!!??? she probably got more benefits from city taxes in Deinze because there was no more new work coming in so she had to search for and lick up all the crumbs), there were at least a few that had her competitor Jenny as their subject. And where are the other drawings because 100 is also quite few - besides the very striking even number and which one!? The latter is just an innocent joke of course because we do not believe in conspiracy theories, unless we experience them ourselves (and we have experienced them, among other things with our historical research on WWII but that is okay because it will end as the truth, albeit of course a start for further critical research). Moreover, it is more than obvious - it is certain - that Emile Claus gave all kinds of sweet words together with drawings to his beloved Jenny, especially "*in the beginning*" when things were a bit more crackling. And that was, as you know, a start that was so solid that it lasted almost thirty years. And where is the art archive of her work? It is practically understandable that no serious place was made for Jenny Montigny in the retrospective exhibition on Emile Claus during the autumn of 2024. We regret that for several reasons but in the meantime we are on our guard against 'more' censorship on her level and with regard to her mentor and mistress, of whom she must have been the muse or source of inspiration at many moments with apodictic certainty. Throughout our own gradually 50-year more or less conscious life experience we have experienced several to very thorough times how pure historical deception works. And that between about 1975 and now, 2024. And that, ladies and gentlemen, in the country of the Belgians or a modern democratic country. And that by liberals, catholics, socialists, Flemish nationalists, and probably greens; or the whole bunch of political colours of the last fifty years in Flanders/Belgium. Democracy is a powerful

at the same time very fragile tree. We use that metaphor because we love trees as much as we love visual arts. And we are also democratically happy about trees because we have never seen a single straight one between them! So what happened, by natural (logic?) the eternal wife but also eternally in his life's shadow Charlotte Dufaux, with her name as "*omen est nomen*" (we apologize a little to her but we had to score this goal kick), to images with (directly) or even by (indirectly) Jenny Montigny? Did she 'objectively' hand over everything, to a city, then to family and so on? Money was earned gladly or necessarily by widows of in this case very famous painters and that was understandable. Pensions were not much in Belgium before 1945. And that certainly did not apply to the self-employed, a profession to which painters may be included although one could just as well call them workers of the palette (and so on). Visual artists are not that much more important or not at all, compared to other craftsmen such as masons, roofers and so on. Or would Charlotte have exchanged work and especially the cheaper ones such as sketches of her Emile with the local wheelwright, farrier, garage owner, baker, butcher? With her own, new lover alias sponsor as "*do ut des*"? According to reports, Jenny Montigny would increasingly go downhill financially after the death of lover Emile, or go up in poverty. And would only have been helped by her family. Charlotte Dufaux, henceforth widow Emile Claus, was not family in civil law! Apparently not existentially or morally either. What is there to understand inexorably, the logic behind that Jenny Montigny herself was reportedly less in the art market, or was seen as old-fashioned? After all, had she been able to (survive) from the sale of her work before the death of Emile Claus? You understand that this question is suggestive.

In any case, she is depicted here very beautifully and somewhat still, as if realistically, as in a photo that was then strongly coloured. That procedure existed at the time, the colouring of photos, also an art technique that we have never encountered again, since WWII. You notice her very blue eyes, on the lips firmly red. Only that strange colour of the neck, we cannot explain. And the colour of the eyes and mouth is hardly noticeable in the two portraits that Emile made of his wife Charlotte, respectively in 1881 and 1900: see

[Oeuvrecatalogus | Emile Claus \(emile-claus.be\)](http://emile-claus.be)

That first dating is absolutely important because it is certain that Emile Claus did not yet know his later great love Jenny Montigny. That was quite difficult or at least as it were male uninteresting because Jenny was born in 1875 or in this woman's portrait only six years old. It is completely illogical to infer anything from these two portraits of Charlotte - always with a side profile - of this looking away as exemplary for the relationship of model Charlotte with her painter and husband. She looks away from the painter twice or her gaze deviates from the one looking at her, the painter, while we know several portraits of him such as self-portraits in which he has his subjects look at her frontally. And then? One cannot even say that painter and model were consistent or in other words that they only wanted to depict her or be depicted by him in this way. Two dates are rather little for an (enumerative) induction, n'est-pas? To form a proposition, there is nothing else to do than further research. It goes without saying that we should look up other possible portraits of her by him. And above all; how is she revealed by Claus through his drawings? Drawings usually have something spontaneous, at least in comparison with painting as done by traditional artists. Perhaps, from the same suspicion - almost distrust - an investigation of the underdrawings in all the female portraits of Emile Claus is revealing? Go ahead! Another possibility is to investigate whether wife Claus - Dufaux was depicted by other Belgian, even foreign painters, graphic artists or draughtsmen through what one can consider a portrait, individually or in group portraits. Then one automatically and first thinks of contemporary and Ghent native but mainly French resident

Théo Van Rysselberghe (1862 - 1926), an exceptionally gifted painter and very popular as a portraitist. As a portraitist he worked both frontally and sideways with the same model, as in the well-known portrait of the left-looking "*Maria Sèthe*" (1891, Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels), the later wife of all-rounder Henry Van de Velde (1863 - 1957). That portrait was probably known to Emile Claus and may certainly have had an influence when he depicted his own wife ten years later in 1900. The question of the portrait representation of Emile Claus's own living environment - first and foremost of his wife - is certainly an important question because we now know sufficiently that at least three female artists took lessons at Villa Zonneschijn or with the - eternally childless - couple Claus - Dufaux. In alphabetical order: Anna De Weert, Jenny Montigny and Yvonne Serruys - and tell us which other ladies! We know exactly that the middle one spent three decades around this couple. And we know that this was to be taken literally because she would never disappear from Emile Claus's geographical side during his life, not even during WWI when the three of them fled to England. We know the enormous grave monument of Victorine Serruys that she made by definition after the death of Emile Claus. She would spend most of her active artistic life in Paris. Of course, as a sensitive person, she had the image of Emile et les autres in her beautiful head so that she did not have to or could not make portraits of them live, already or even gladly as sketches. And we know almost nothing about Anna De Weert and therefore almost nothing in relation to the couple Claus - Dufaux next to the trio Claus - Dufaux - Montigny.

Between the first portrait of Charlotte by Emile in 1881 and that second one from as many years later as 1900, there is effectively a third known portrait of her by him. And which one! It is the wedding portrait of her from 1886 or the year in which they married. She stands there alone; is there not a double or real wedding portrait made for and by a painter who, after all, also made a few self-portraits? Come on, Emile or Emiel: paint and canvas not enough on the best day of your life too!? She stands there in almost full regalia because with her exuberant and official wedding dress. Who can explain the striking position of her hands, in which her right hand seems to do 'something' on her left arm? In any case, there is something much more striking. She stands there on the most important day of her life, after her birth - an objectively certain event that she was at the same time subjectively not there at all. But! She stands there partly absent but with an inquisitive look. She is not standing there at all as one would expect, with a beautiful, big smile, with shining eyes, let alone with what expressions of exuberance! What is going on here?

5. The prince of luminism and his successor, the executioner of nihilism.

About that second portrait of Charlotte by Emile almost twenty years later, we hardly want to say anything substantive, that is to say in relation to the now with absolute certainty firmly intimately present Jenny Montigny. We do see two things that could be relevant. It seems to us that Charlotte's gaze is staring, that this woman does not look happy. On the left we see one painting on the house wall; it possibly represents two swans, traditionally a symbol for marital fidelity. That was irony of the thinking and symbolic human because a sign with a swan on it that was attached to a house also traditionally meant that one could buy a woman there for sufficient money. We also know throughout history how power and success are eroticized, on both sides or from or through the successful artist. And certainly also in relation to that successful artist. And this house was a house of financial trust or an environment of liberals or independents and industrialists. Such a lady of these times, we are always talking before WWII, was extremely rare independent, consequently received her status, money and a form of happiness through the hands and genitals of 'her' husband. In this way, the first portrait in

profile of Charlotte by Emile cannot be interpreted as the second; with a certain looking away due to a form of shame. Shame then not because of the financial and existential dependency, because in that second portrait one sees the plate of soup. Or did the housemaid take care of that food - and she alone? And always? But shame because Emile was busy with "*a young woman*"; can a woman, even from a liberal or most liberated environment of that time and even from such a socially successful husband as Emile Claus hardly do anything else than partly look away - from himself and therefore from you now, as every viewer - who first looks, then reads, then thinks - or only looks? And that second portrait of Charlotte from 1900 barely preceded the first or only portrait of Jenny from 1902 by two years; the same painter, the same passionate man - with two connected women, one of whom was civilly and of course existentially connected, and one who was free, solely and only (please!) by the love for this man and the love for art by and around the same man.

In the meantime or almost finally we must apologize to you for the partial deception. From a viewing distance, a duo of swans can certainly be seen in that last portrait from 1900. However, they were definitely two ... ducks. At least that is the case when one consults the public catalogue concerning this exhibition where the painting can be found under the title "*Two ducklings*". That work would date from 1900 or in other words from the same year as that second portrait of Madame Claus - Dufaux. It would have been painted shortly before that portrait - and hung up and in the most beautiful room. Two ducklings you say? There must have been thousands of them at the time, hundreds of which were shot for the local lovers of the famous Peking-Ghent duck; enjoy your meal. We may be very personal for a moment and admit that we love a white duck very much. The animal seems so cute, so beautiful, and is rather rare to find and therefore special by definition. But two white ducks? And all alone with each other or with no other more or less brown or differently coloured ducks in the vicinity? We have never seen that in a country or place in our entire lives. Have you? We repeat, now as a more strengthened hypothesis; that painting actually represents two swans and so ... blah blah blah ... And change the title of that work, please. Quod erat demonstrandum, sed adhuc incertum.

We find Jenny Montigny shy throughout her portrait from 1902 and perhaps a little less shy in her photo with her lover Emile from 1920. By the way, in that beautiful almost official photo from 1920 she does not look at us. But she looks through him, who does look at us! Shyness is perhaps less appropriate here. Servility then? There are quite a few artists who sell depth, or their work would have depth, say 'layers'. In quite a few cases we gladly agree with that, even if we do not so much see it but may read it through more scholars of art history. In cases - we must refer to poor Luc Tuymans again - we simply see nothing (other than painted misery or pure waste of paint and canvas and preferably as little as possible of our precious life time) then the inflated words of the great art connoisseurs - and of course and of the horrors of modern horrors, the great collectors who - just figure it out - are almost always "*geweldige*" or great business people. Whereby in Dutch the adjective in question "*geweldig*" refers to "*geweld*" or ... "*violence*". Or it means both fantastic and either destructive. You will probably not read or hear anything about this in this anyway very important and prestigious overview exhibition: glory to Ukraine and to the organizers of this important exhibition! That is certainly at least ironic, if not a form of historical deception, because that region of the Leie above Ghent on the one hand once produced, through its unique, rural beauty, a remarkable number of good to excellent visual artists. We see artists here such as Emile Claus and at least some female artists such as Jenny Montigny. The unsurpassed artist next to local resident Georges Minne already showed up here. We are also thinking of many important others, including the internationally probably most important, albeit most undervalued, Fritz Van den

Berghe (1883 - 1939). In our opinion, he is the greatest Belgian painter of the entire twentieth century and - for example - ten, no a hundred times more interesting than, say, the fairly well-known René Magritte (1898 - 1967): at the recent surrealist exhibition in Brussels 2024, one could see that only Paul Delvaux (1897 - 1994) could paint fully-fledged and the others were above all producers of ideas on material surfaces. Except, of course, for "*la période vache*" by Magritte, very coincidentally of which he did not sell a single work during the relevant exhibition: we would have liked to buy them all then and certainly with a nice discount, but born in 1963 or therefore a little too late: You see how the most personal metaphysics plays a role in the general history of art. And on the one hand follows on the other; the Leie region, with the largest concentration in the village of Sint-Martens-Latem, is chock full of snobs and the concrete destroyers with their mostly ridiculously ugly villas with the very personal gardens and of course a place for golf, about the most ridiculous 'sport' in history. We do not reason here at all out of any jealousy and people think of us either with the upper part - the brains - or with the bottom - the lowest instincts as jealousy. What is there, they can have it, although we did-do want the land: to let trees grow there naturally of course (you can start talking about a real forest after about five hundred years of untouched, that is to say without human messing around in it). But it should not have been there only very barely, or otherwise from an urban planning perspective: it is an attack or destruction of whatever was there and could have been. That the three interesting museums in the village of Sint-Martens-Latem will one day have to merge with the Mudel, where the overview exhibition about Emile Claus will take place in the autumn of 2024, is evident. It is written in the financial stars, especially if most of the local snobs who support it lose that attention: to the government then! That terrible attack on the beauty or actual rape of the Flemish country above the centuries-old urbanized Ghent can never be made up for. Even more. Almost all of Flanders has been turned into a patchwork of domestic stones. If only it had been at least/at most a Paul Klee every time, with that endless, unmanageable patchwork of house-garden-garage. What remains is now being saved or save what can be saved - and then let the trumpets sound and go with hordes of tourists or non-green enthusiasts to find where it presents itself as monumental or to be preserved! In that sense, this exhibition is not only a mirror of the conspicuous absence and importance of one or possibly two important women in the oeuvre of an important Belgian/Flemish artist. It is the very concrete and almost blinding mirror of the post-war destruction of the Flemish landscape, of the parcelization that was carried out by all the parties of the time - socialists, liberals, catholics and what about the few Flemish nationalists at the time?

We know and ask your forgiveness for a lack of originality but "*luminism*" really rhymes compulsively for us too - one, two and ... jump: "*nihilism*"! One can always philosophize (sigh) about the question whether Flanders/Belgium is the ugliest country in the world, architecturally speaking. The diversity, say anarchy throughout the country and even often within one and the same street effectively produces pleasant read entertaining pictures as well as purely architectural gems. All well and good - or bad. But. However, this is about urban development - or rather or not rather, the historically fundamental lack of it, which can be historically interpreted from around 1945. Incidentally, we ourselves see a clear connection with the extreme lack of civic spirit in Belgium from 1939 - 1946 or during WWII. During our political-historical research we established an unimaginably broad, intense and almost completely disruptive black market - about which we want to complete our reasonably intense study this or next year. People just did their own thing or for pure self-interest. People loved 'their' painters and so on. But also or especially in the first place they loved themselves next to at best their own family, possibly their own pillar - and Mother Church to renounce disaster and obtain salvation. There is nevertheless a huge difference with our northern neighbours

who also had an intense black market, although it had not yet been sufficiently historically researched. But the Dutch have developed an exemplary urban development. With for example or especially very concrete very beautiful or literally exemplary place for and cyclists (vulnerable road users) and the open space (also very weak).

In various media or ways Emile Claus is called the "*Prince of Luminism*". Add to that almost everyone from the so-called schools of Sint-Martens-Latem, except for an intimist like Gust De Smet (1877 - 1943)? Purely artistically and of course also on a human level we can particularly appreciate that intimism. At the same time we have an almost fear or a certain aversion to it. Once we have left aside that every person has the supreme right to be what his depth demands for him, we find the closure of humanity a very regrettable matter, except for the very important and meanwhile almost underestimated even forgotten hermitage. Besides, that hermitage individually or in a group like for example the Cistercian fathers with their simple but oh so penetrating and viable "*Ora et labora*", is only possible through silence. Try finding that in the so-called modern world, certainly in a completely overpopulated ergo degreened country like Flanders/Belgium. We have to use intimism here a little unfairly as a coat rack for the filthy intimists, the people and residents who lock themselves up in their house-garden-garage. As it were, the internet and especially social media, next to the very interesting medium of e-mail, have come here as a support or existential alternative - although we have a fairly big shudder and disinterest in those social media and in that respect we are perhaps too willfully conservative: give us silence, the book, the Certainly also give us eye contact, the eyes, the eyes of Bette Davis (1908 - 1989) - or closer by because in this geographically and temporally susceptible world, the eyes of Luce Caponegro. ... **See Luce Caponegro**But please, do not all go to this eye-wearer at once, or find your won eye-holder.

By the filthy intimists we mean of course that extreme individualism and the accompanying deep personal or family loneliness besides of course a fundamental lack of moral and political passive and active engagement, as a citizen of the POLIS. Whoever doubts it even a little bit or much more; something like democracy is the very best form of organized society that humanity has ever experienced. It is so at least on the scale of society since we cannot return to so-called ideal small communities like with the tribe of the ??? in ... ia! The extreme individualism of society as that which has been in the same region for a relatively short time that a painter like Emile Claus and so many more others and talented people have sung about, expresses itself in a terrible, in itself unliveable society. Indeed, where we may speak with complete confidence of various painters like Emile Claus as "*Princes or princesses of luminism*" we must speak much more quantitatively but just as qualitatively (sic) of the chronological physical successors as "*Executioners of nihilism*".

In the provincial towns of Deinze and Waregem involved in the overview exhibition, several cycle routes have been set up in honour of this Emile Claus year; see

[Op de fiets met Emile | Emile Claus \(emile-claus.be\)](http://emile-claus.be)

It is almost laughable for those who know these regions. Fasten your seat belts, put on ten bicycle helmets at the same time and so on. Whoever tries to take the bends of the countless once so rural, winding roads there at even low speed, risks everything. Bicycle paths have improved somewhat in Flanders in the meantime but are non-existent compared to the king car and the queen residential street. We will not list them. The Netherlands - again - has had an infinite lead in this respect for half a century in terms of quality of life. What is gone (as a

monument in particular) is gone. But what is in the way (as a house,) is in the way, is in the way. Jenny's small garden was absolutely certain then in 1902 and always before that and only for a few meager decades, a very, very large, extensive garden, their broad and everyone's shared rural living environment. And that was the reason why those artists liked to come there to absorb the light, the space, the air - and sing about it, in verses, sculptures, paintings ... It has been gone since 1945 at a furious pace because it has disappeared, built up - in-di-vi-dual and with the bringers of prosperity, an infinite number of factories and industrial estates. You know the expression: "*The last one turns off the light.*". In a certain way because in a quasi-literal way Emile, together with Charlotte, together with Jenny, ... Anna, ... - all of them luminists - have used the light again and again because it was borrowed for free because it was overwhelmingly present - and after him it was turned off. So came the executioners of the light, followed by the executors of a historically unprecedented nihilism. With the purely materially unprecedented wealth. Wealth next to poverty - in the same, causal line. And of course immigrants are drawn to that self-evident historically unique wealth - or out of sheer necessity. Do they know anything about Emile Claus and his ...?

6. Le jardin secrèt.

We assume that the portrait of Jenny was painted by her goldie oldie Emile in the garden of Villa Zonneschijn - during sunshine. Or was it at her home, in her garden - during sunshine? That is not to be assumed. Strongly likely because only two years later she would leave her parental house-garden in Ghent for her own home in the village of Deurle, near Emile and Charlotte, later part of Sint-Martens-Latem. In that first and most likely case, Emile - or she - had to do something that was practical but emotionally very charged. Because she was sitting down, they needed a chair and this bourgeois type certainly did not stand outside - in the rain next to the many sunshine of the garden of Villa Zonneschijn. In that first case, he and/or she must have taken the chair from his house and from her pardon of Charlotte as well. Flying saucers had to wait a few more decades, but flying chairs have not yet been found to this day (2024). That practical happening must not have been a pretty experience for the lady of the house Charlotte who must have had the very feminine hormonally fueled 'wish' now and then to ... that shrew of a Jenny. Fill in according to the measure of your imagination and hardest feelings. One can also see it differently or more friendly, more sweet, more poetic - although there is very hard poetry by for example Pietro Aretino (1492 - 1556), about the only Italian who ever dared to become a protestant in this by definition solid land of the papists. Although we do not know of any poet who read his or her poems publicly while farting, or even someone else's, then it is recorded because doing that on request must not be easy considering how many green beans and other legumes one eats ad hoc beforehand. But let us not deviate again, although that seems a necessity with infinite art connoisseurs and not to forget the central artists themselves who so like to 'see', to discover layer by layer in their deep, deeper and most profound work as if they themselves have put it in with the most premeditated deliberation. As if they are not busy with art but with vivisections on, mind you, lavender-smearred or at least not yet stinking corpses.

Let us now concentrate not so much on the pure portrait itself but on the background that we make foreground: the garden. Yet we cannot help but discover layer by layer and thus have to suggest that this background garden could also be a metaphor for the foreground of the portrayed lady. Wasn't she somewhere the playground of the painter, the horny, always much older stupid ass of a man who had indeed also been her teacher in a functional sense? And that teacher possibly always remained partly to be able to tinker with her body? Or at least drew a lot of inspiration from her youth and beautiful eyes, as if he were a mosquito that

sucked her blood daily - a blood-sucking vampire bat. But let us now concentrate and with joy or positivity on that background. Also because it actually looks more joyful than the foreground; the garden gives joy through its colours while Jenny does not even conjure up the beginning of a smile on her face. Which she also does not do, and the same goes for Emile, in their joint photo portrait from 1920.

Through the incorrigible, eternally sociable all-round thinker Herman De Croo (1937) who we met as such somewhere on YouTube and who was asked there to what extent power eroticizes and so on, we learned the concept of "*jardin secrèt*" from his answer. Apparently this liberal had not forgotten his deep Jesuit education because he had learned the following concept at this remarkable religious organization. Also remarkable because it was about sexuality and a bit more secrecy around it, in any case the part of almost every person that is very private, such as for example or especially around one's own partner. That is objectively remarkable because with all the interesting characteristics that can be said about the education of the Jesuits, everyone who has passed by there - their novices themselves in the first place - knows that in addition to so-called very critical or independent learning to think, snitching is nevertheless one of the fundamental characteristics of their view of humanity, i.e. pedagogy. That is now the complete opposite of this presentation of the concept "*jardin secrèt*", according to the teachers of the Jesuits of Herman De Croo a secret part for every human being. No one seems to know anything about the decades-long triangular relationship Emile - Charlotte - Jenny. We do not even know but can surmise that after Emile's death in 1924, his very legal wife Charlotte closed the door and therefore also the gate of her garden to his now widowed mistress. It should be noted that the concept widow exists as only the civil translation of the female partner - the wife - of a deceased man. But that therefore (sic) no word exists for approximately the same, existentially anyway, although not according to certain laws, for the - er - kind of widow as mistress of a also deceased man - in this case clearly always the same man and painter Emile Claus. From then on Jenny had no rights whatsoever, to the extent that she would have had them for even one moment according to earthly laws. Moreover, had le Emile left something like a written or actually filed will? He was after all a son-in-law of "*a prominent dynasty of notaries from Waregem and Deinze*"? In that testament with other but equally clearly written words, probably in beautiful French: "*And for my dear Jenny, ... brushes next to ... next to ... frank ...*". We quote completely hypothetically, we say, but for those who want to discover layers in our thinking, which, strongly against our twenty-year historical-political research into human behaviour around WWII, are not based on rock-solid facts, be it only human paper.

But this *jardin secrèt* or secret garden. In the context of this beautiful portrait of a woman and all that it brings to mind, that can have two meanings. And no, may we elaborate for a moment, it has nothing to do with the place where Emile and Jenny might have exchanged sweet words, supported by the ever softly singing birds and the flowers, whether or not according to the season, both multi-coloured and deeply fragrant, not forgetting the blossoms of the apple trees and acacias! For such somewhere always secret lovers, the *matthiola bicornis* or the "*night-scented stock*" must have been planted in that garden with preference, because as its English name indicates, it only smells very pleasantly - at night. And yes, this idea - this ideal? - of the secret garden has at the same time something insanely ridiculous for almost all modern creatures on the entire earth and (on the one hand, therefore on the other hand) at the same time something very questioning or useful. To be clear, we are not on social media, not now and hopefully never. We have no time for that because of our advancing age and eternal curiosity, hampered by structurally weaker health: our *carpe diem* does not allow *sociali die*. If you are a little older, you will of course know the event "*Lady Di*" (1961 -

1997). You remember her extreme persecution by what already earlier developed against film stars as "*paparazzi*". Now - 2024 - hundreds of millions of men and women are their own paparazzi because they produce daily a truly endless, incomprehensible by no - other - person manageable stream of informative and image shit pardon messages and photos. You can even "*like*" them - to the extent possible say selectively. They have "*followers*". And we who thought from a young age that only dictators - big and small, national and local - had followers? Given that it actually happens, that answers a fundamental human need. But is it so fundamental or existentially inevitable, say irreversible, that one throws open one's secret garden - and makes it a public garden? We do not think so and of course understand that in certain circumstances some people want to inform other some people, to keep them informed, via the wonderfully interesting medium of the Internet.

Let us discuss the two relevant meanings of this *jardin secrèt* or secret garden.

a) The idea - ideal? - of a or the secret garden must be applied rather naturally to or rather derived from the situation of the painter and his muse, his mistress. What we certainly see as a garden in which the portrait takes place, during the actual painting or simply afterwards in the studio as an apparently necessary element of this painting of a human being. is significant. Without the slightest doubt, the special relationship between the married and much older Emile Claus and the (consequently) unmarried and much younger Jenny Montigny must have been a talk of the town and the region not so much on an artistic level but generally humanly. Everyone from art lovers to all kinds of professions such as the postman of both municipalities and so on, knew 'what it was about'. Emile Claus was undoubtedly the subject of the press of the time many times, which was only written. There was also and always "*Fama*", or the goddess or perhaps the monster of gossip - at the same time also the goddess of fame. In other words, there must certainly be all kinds of documents from archives that suggest something or simply declare openly about the special bond between le Emile and la Jenny. Did le/la Charlotte carefully keep all the press clippings about her Emile, including these special cases?

We have already said that we have absolutely no business with this remarkable and at the same time probably in art circles and in the environments of the higher, wealthy classes rather common triangular relationship. More precisely, the motivation for such a relationship is nevertheless important throughout the creative process of the artist involved. And in this case - it is absolutely undeniable, apparently by the builders of the retrospective exhibition at the end of 2024 - it concerned two artists; Emile and Jenny! The first was clearly consecrated, already sufficiently early in his life. The second must have had a certain success during her life, although things apparently went much less well for her after the death of her mentor and lover. Those reasons are of no importance here. The question is what art historical importance she and not to forget the other female students around Emile Claus still have. But the most important question here is the intensity of her being a muse for Emile Claus. In today's eyes, that question has something ridiculous to very provocative. It is an obvious question from the perspective of the time of then, certainly from a long analog tradition. It is also an important question from a possible then quietly changing position of the woman as 'only' muse.

However strongly we are interested in the many scientific ways in which people like these artists are motivated by other people, now by an intimate though not official bond with a woman, we have decided after deliberation (with ourselves ...) not to go into that any further. We decided that by virtually meeting an interesting woman from the present. It concerns the Belgian Petra Thijs. One would suspect that she is an art historian or at least a historian, but

she turns out to be a master in Romance languages. That is a study that we know is very difficult. Moreover, we have long been convinced of the enormous, truly scientific fundamental importance of all very thorough language studies at an academic level. Unfortunately, we met quite a few crudely put second-hand professors in sociology and history in particular. In addition, we recently had to establish once again within the sub-field of modern history that so-called publicly known specialists are pure history falsifiers, especially around a theme that is so important for their own society and internationally as WWII - with what we may ad hoc call the Ghent history mafia around WWII. In addition, the publisher Pelckmans speaks of Petra Thijs' book (see directly below) that her work is about feminism (we as macho and generally scientifically minded people are not interested in that). And also about ... falsification of history! In any case, in any academic language studies, a lack of scientific level is completely impossible. Moreover, one always learns to think very, very thoroughly logically through the pure study of language, including or not in the least through the necessary component of morphology.

That being said, we encounter via the internet the interest of lady Petra Thijs in two painters. Let us first say something about her attention for the important 'classical' painter Alfred Stevens (1823 - 1906). On the internet we can find a very interesting and somewhere remarkable, though truly exemplary, lecture about this painter. And quite generous: take your time and a box of cookies with it. The title speaks for itself:

[MSK : Lezing: Alfred Stevens, schilder en leraar van vrouwen \(Petra Thijs\) \(youtube.com\)](#)

("Lecture: Alfred Stevens, painter and teacher of women")

It is almost touching how she mentions several people in her introduction without whom she would not have been able to make this study. We ourselves have experienced something different in our life experience. And we know very well how one of our most important friends - also a Romanist - had to sign as a student to the assistant of the 'supervisory' service how her own results of the final work 'may' be used by this assistant - for her scientific publications. Or pure theft. It was, moreover, or even more, in our opinion a very interesting scientifically intriguing linguistic subject because it was about ... blah blah blah ... And we hope never to meet that assistant which in the meantime has become ??? because it will be then thunder and lightning. Now about Petra Thijs' second or greatest art love, a choice that will certainly be very much applauded by everyone: Edouard Manet (1832 - 1883), We wanted to include that painter from the beginning of our portrait project: ... **see Édouard Manet...** Because we only have one body at a time and have spent a lot of time outside our homeland in recent years, and have relatively little time for others anyway because we have to write thoroughly ourselves, we have to wait before we have the physical opportunity to read the rather voluminous book - so-called novel - that Petra Thijs has dedicated to Manet: "*Schaduwlicht*" (Kalmthout, 2022). She has made a great effort for this because she has done about ten years of research in archives: why call it a novel then? The essence is the relationship between painter Edouard Manet and one woman, Victorine-Louise Meurent (1844 - 1927). This lady was not only his muse but also of several other artists and contemporaries, such as Alfred Stevens. The woman also painted herself, and as was customary at the time with much less social success. You see certain similarities with our subject. And so we keep our reservations about Jenny Montigny being a mistress and muse and artist compared to the - neatly married - painter Emile Claus in our back pocket. And refer to the book with the rather apt title: "*Schaduwlicht*" ("*Shadowlight*"). But still this. Throughout this retrospective exhibition at the end of 2024, Emile Claus is called the baron or

count or prince or emperor of luminism: feel free to look up the correct formulation yourself, including in this ... text. So!? Who was Jenny Montigny, very much according to the rules of classical deduction (major + minor + concludans)? We suspect (now and then we think quietly): "*the baroness or countess or princess or empress of luminism*"? Or as a presumed liberal and officially quite loose, rather this 'kind' of lady: "*And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.*" (Luke, 1, 38). And the rest was the rest until long afterwards - as in the referred exhibition. So far we have come: Jenny Montigny was the handmaid of the Lord - Emile Claus.

b) Flanders has been responsible for quite a few things for some time now and one thing that can certainly be called a success is the Sigma Plan, a plan that dates back to 1976 or before the thorough regionalisation of this Belgian country. By constructing stronger dikes in particular, possible flooding is being prevented for the main river Scheldt together with its tributaries - of which the Leie is an important one - not least in view of the rising sea level due to global warming. This is first and foremost a good thing politically, in addition to being very well executed technically. The latter can be considered rather easy work because it concerns relatively simple engineering and construction work. In any case, one must honestly admit that this policy is a success, of the utmost social importance. One must also say it when it is so, although no Belgian Dutch or French speaking resident will doubt it due to all the historical knowledge about flooding. Moreover, the option, both politically and technically well executed, has also been taken to not only build strong or high dikes but also very low or ... floodable ones! After all, the ecological idea was to give the rivers their natural flood plains. Because we grew up in Dendermonde and know the area quite well, we can conclude that this has been very successful there.

For a tributary like the Dender we have no idea where this has been achieved in the region; probably very upstream. For the tributary Leie this is of no consequence to our knowledge. An old river arm is sometimes tackled but there simply appears to be no room left for something like flood plains. This of course has to do with the joyful fact that the "*Golden River*", which was once given that name because of centuries of intensive use for flax (retting), experienced a spectacular industrial development after WWII. How many West Flemish farmers' children became medium-sized industrialists in one generation, with, reportedly, often a great interest in modern art: hurray! It is very regrettable, however, that this has never led to the formation of actual Belgian multinationals, and that even in the case of 'too much growth' the things are sold off to foreign groups. People want international art but do not think in the same way within the economic area itself; strange and painful. This industrialization naturally brought much wealth to the toiling laborers and employees who, according to an ineradicable habit, parceled out their land, the bigger the better. As a result ...

One additional river issue must also be reported as very positive because the quality of these tributaries has improved enormously together with that of the Scheldt. During our youth, the tributary Dender in Dendermonde was unbearable on especially warm days because of the stench and the 'water' looked completely black; incroyable mais vrai. That a teacher in primary school told that he had swum in the Scheldt as a child and sat there fishing; that was like something out of a fairy tale. We ourselves would certainly have liked to kayak a lot, for example; but that was out of the question until now. That fairy tale has indeed been almost completely restored to normal reality. The community as well as the industry have made their contribution to that and everyone can enjoy that, including by kayaking.

We will of course not discuss the entire Belgian Leie and its surroundings. We will look again at the upper reaches of the Leie, or the region of Emile Claus. We have had to report with infinite regret but with hard scientific observation that of all the landscapes that one finds in the highly praised work of Emile Claus, very little remains to be discovered - in the region of the upper reaches of the Leie; did he also paint elsewhere? Indeed, we do know that for the average Fleming, ten trees and a blackberry bush already form a forest. Ultimately, the operational definition of open space for the average Flemish person is a space where no very 'typical' farmhouse ("*fermette*") has yet been built, of course with a garden and a garage, meanwhile also with a swimming pool and whirlpool and we don't even keep up with the developments of the last ten years or so because we don't feel like spatially fed impressions annex depressions. At best, one can find a traditional-looking castle in this region, or even a work of a modernist nature such as the private clinic of doctor Adriaan Martens (1885 - 1968), designed by the famous Henry Van de Velde. This doctor and professor - functionally no fool - was also a very consistent man because he was a convinced collaborator or traitor to the people during WWI and again during WWII. The house Villa Zonneschijn of Belgianists Claus - Dufaux, on the other hand, could simply be called classic.

We live in the present, so in the future, and have little or no open space, in this upper course of the Leie - among other things. For the few snobs from this region who are going to read this, some things could have been presented a bit more diplomatically, but it is clear. The content of the text applies to everyone, because the problem of parcelization is prevalent in the whole of Flanders. Or, where is it strikingly different in the very busy and dispersed Flanders? The living situation is precisely due to very predominantly terribly ugly and especially intrusive houses (with .. and .. and ...) in the region just above Ghent, very ironic as the once heavenly setting for Emile Claus and relatively many very good visual artists from the so-called "*Latem Schools*". These art schools are therefore numerically indicated with "*I and II*". Because a third could not come by definition. You understand why: the washed-up snobs can collect art with their masses of white and black money, but they can't paint a crooked skate themselves. They could do something else - and urgent?

Anyone walking through this region, especially on the small former country roads, should watch out for enormous racing cars that make walking there almost life-threatening. Anyone who really wants to cycle, should go to the "*Vlaams Wielercentrum Eddy Merckx*" on the Blaarmeersen in Ghent: excellent facilities and covered, so safe. Such a velodrome fits in with a long Belgian tradition that was partly in danger of being lost. But as an important cycling facility it is very little, although you can cycle well around Ghent and especially next to the rivers and the big city of Ghent is seriously working on space for the bicycle.

We are again or still in the region that Emile Claus and so many colleagues sang about. Anyone who has time to look next to them, always sees the same pattern. There are hardly any open areas but masses of always independent and off-street houses. With something like gardens around them. You will find a lot, a great deal of grass there. Grass, isn't that for cows, deer, ...? That appearance has a name; lawn. Linguistically it is strange to call it or striking and that word and especially the onomastic absence of the other green in gardens conceals a Dutch-speaking, in this case Flemish, worldview. You will indeed find a tree there now and then, half a tree or a shrub like the "*Buddleja*" or butterfly bush. The latter is almost as symbolic for the invasive presence of the houses themselves because very finely scented and attractive to many insects, it spreads via its tens of thousands of seeds per tree almost like the plague. But let's not grumble about what is planted now and then, uninvited or not, and let's get to the heart of the matter. And again via ... Emile Claus?! Once again the website of the

retrospective exhibition comes to our aid, probably in a way that the good fathers/mothers (who should be mentioned first?) of that exhibition did not consider: "*Impressed by the paintings that contemporary Charles Verlat brought back from North Africa, Claus also decides to undertake an orientalist excursion. At the age of 29 he crosses Spain, Morocco and Algeria. Claus' letters show his great enthusiasm for this new, fascinating world.*" We would like to read from those letters one day, what impressions those journeys produced for the clearly very enthusiastic Emile Claus, at that time no longer a completely young man. Presumably he went there, like quite a few Western Europeans, simply to empty his seed sack, as they say in Ghent. He went there to look with his eyeballs - as a painter - and with his balls - as a male animal. As a participant in the sex tourism of the time; and don't say this too loudly during your walk through the exhibition!! ... see **Eugène Delacroix** We are also curious about the places he visited in Spain; most likely the Andalusian part with, among others, the incomparable cities of Cordoba and Granada.

Indeed, normally we should read somewhere how these journeys influenced the painting of Emile Claus in terms of theme, sensitivity to another, sharper light, and so on. Or for example whether he treated the female model just that little bit more orientally than before in his weak Flemish way. As a relative layman in his oeuvre (not as a specialized art historian) and certainly not on behalf of this website, we cannot attach any work to a possible oriental orientation; strange, isn't it? But that interests us a little less than the question of what he retained in that Middle Eastern atmosphere for the most intimate place of his life: for Villa Zonneschijn and of course its garden. As students we had to be very frugal and above all work a lot, in all kinds of ways and preferably every year for the entire three-month vacation: our magna cum laude is therefore flattered in reverse. Among other things, or not least, we once had our most interesting vacation job for three months; archaeological excavations of the RUG now UG support and that in front of the ... Servaestoren in Sint-Martens-Latem. It was with a fantastic group! We know the local situation very well, a situation that has become much worse because it is now forty years later. That study-work situation did allow us once to go on a dirt-cheap trip to Spain in the last week of September and the first of October. That was a country that interested us mainly or only for "*Al Anadalus*", also because we simply wanted to see a statue of the very interesting philosopher and so much more Averroes or Ibn Rushd (1126 - 1198). We once spent a few days in Granada city looking up, with looking being the appetizer. Then we went up to the "*Generalife*", in Arabic "العَرِيف جَنَّة" / *Jannat al-'Arīf*" or "*Garden of the architect*". It is the summer palace of the then Moorish rulers of Granada. And what gardens ... Finally we went into to the of the "*Alhambra*", the most beautiful building in Europe or poetry in stone or something. And there too those gardens ... And in both palaces all the little gardens without grass!! It is said that the "*Persian gardens*" have been legendary since time immemorial. In such a religiously fanatic country at the same time a country with unimaginable potential energy and more than 2,500 year culture and besides getting a bit older ourselves, we will probably not get there anymore so that we cannot put it to the test. Pardon, there are books and there is the internet: not bad and also for you examples. In any case, Arab and Persian garden cultures are together with the Japanese unequalled. We cannot go into details and differences. And to be brutally said, we are pour le besoin de la cause only interested in their form or appearance - in their exemplarity - and not in their worldview motivations. Their very old garden cultures are appreciated by very many people in the world and in already unknown cases imitated. But for further 'imitation' or introduction, more knowledge is of course necessary; why not through lessons in aesthetics or ...? Two things strike us throughout these gardens:

1) We want to remain consistent, especially when we have to. In these oriental gardens, the grass that is always necessary in Flanders, that overwhelming grass here, is missing. Oh, or away with lawns! Elsewhere we discuss the awfulness of the mono-thing of the Mark Rothkos of this world, these terrible monographic painting-like things that are painted as a kind of Flemish lawns, as it were. Almost every grass garden gives you cramps - apparently even bad ... Feng Shui?! Of course it is nice that children can play football and such; they can also do that in every municipal/city playground and on the street if those stupid cars stay inside or preferably away. We will not mention the inadequacy of bouncy castles. Better to jump out of the box;

2) But what gardens, full of intimacy, peace, ... Feel free to think of more qualities but they always come back to these fundamental values. Was our Jenny with our Emile in such a Middle Eastern garden where they sat en passant, very Middle Eastern refined or in a Flemish peasant way licking their lips, spoiling each other? Details are not at your disposal for reasons of privacy, and are not yet known to us. And furthermore; did Charlotte and Emile order an interesting for example oriental sculpture from Georges Minne or someone else, during his lifetime, that symbolically represented ...?

The Flemish Community is responsible for a great deal on its territory. The Belgian country is simply a very special construction. Many Flemish people are openly or semi-anti-migrant. There can be no doubt about that. However, we propose to tackle a serious Flemish/Belgian disease - the parcelization and many of its consequences - as it were to cure it by more immigration. Through the idea and preferably the application of oriental and/or Japanese gardens. As children we saw the first Toyotas and they were only small cars. You can see the difference in the meantime, quantitatively and qualitatively and statistically. The hundreds of thousands of gardens in Flanders that have been disconcerted by parcelization have a great future ahead of them. Away with the stupid grass and long live the intimate garden. Whoever comes home from a stressful day, does not have to mow the lawn. She and he can relax, become normal children as adults, even become real children by, among other things, playing hide and seek in their own gardens, with their many quiet rooms. Rooms whose walls can be ... removed; one big garden!?! Oh, what will that bring to discussions in court, and to cases of adultery?

Everything is possible. We are now just past 60 years old, so we have some life experience. We planted our first tree (an oak via an acorn) when we could hardly walk. Once it had apparently grown too big, our robust grandmother pulled out the tree, roots and all, without a single word of explanation: that was how it was done then and for centuries before that. Later ... We planted hundreds of trees of a whole range of species with our own hands and an ordinary bucket and spade in the Central European country of WLV. But first ... As a student in the first year in Ghent - 1981 - 1982 - we lived in a room in the attic in the François Benardstraat. Through the dormer window we saw many tiny gardens; why not demolish those walls and ..? Fortunately there was some parking nearby with the emphasis on opportunity; of course that was/is nothing serious. From the following year onwards we would stay for a long time in a pleasant and then very cheap workers' house on the old industrial Stokerijstraat, no. 57, where there was no garden, three times nothing. That was a corner house of an old and then dilapidated workers' housing estate. And no green to be seen anywhere! We started building some boxes as flower boxes around our house and at some neighbours (one is probably still there, the flower box). We tried out some covering with ivy and climbing roses. The fact that all sorts of neighbours came to take out the gladioli; we accepted it because it indicated a need. A neighbour further down the street or the special

Pascal was actually removing paving stones to let willows grow there, which worked out fine. Some time later we started thinking about an article as an architectural blueprint: what is possible in terms of greenery on facades? We wanted to write that together with our great friend architect-urban planner W14W17X. But unfortunately he never had time for that - and neither did we because we needed an architect to draw up plans. In the meantime, many people and cities even companies are busy with that kind of new greenery. With our unfortunately deceased and worldwide birdwatcher Wim Jourquin we were able to stop a huge development in the city of Ronse in two moves in 1999 - 2,000, well timed with a view to the municipal elections of that year. Eventually the city council took this over and turned it into the so-called "*Stadstuin*" (the "*City Garden*"), not entirely successful because there are far too few trees - but still... In the meantime, there are also such things as green roofs. What else? Are you not yet familiar with the groundbreaking work of the architect Hundertwasser (1928 - 2,000 + his first name does not even have to be mentioned): cute, isn't it! And inspiring! And hopefully those internal constructions will never collapse. In the meantime, we have started two more park projects. One was very small because on the ... driveway of our semi-detached house in Dendermonde. Strangely enough, we have never seen that variation elsewhere: a driveway garden?! It also means that the garage, for which the driveway is by definition meant to be used to park a car, is not used as such. More can be said about that later. The same applies to our much larger park project on almost half a hectare - quite a lot for Belgians but in itself far too little to do anything thorough - in the European country BVD1B where there is simply much more - affordable - space. Where we can experiment freely, not in the least, both in the artistic field - we are guided by no less than the work of Paul Klee! - and in the field of types of trees. We will leave it at that but also note that the relatively many Dutch people living there, with much more financial wealth, do not have such ambitions at all. They only like ... grass or large lawns; ugh. The Dutch real estate agents there earn a lot of money from their services but unfortunately have no interest at all in this garden or general green problem. Nobody among them thinks in the long term or literally - green - growing term. In any case, using more open space for something like interesting gardens or parks is hardly possible in our own Belgium and also not in the Netherlands. It can be done privately so only when moving within Europe and then specific mainly age-related conditions apply; so when you are either winding down (older/or sicker), or as an emigrant (if you are younger). What we are trying is therefore rare and in principle almost impossible as if it were a figment of your imagination because trees simply need a lot of time. What about those trees if we drop dead; easy firewood for the next owner? In this case that is perhaps a possibility for Belgian and Dutch private and even government organizations to ... green space ... there? Let someone investigate that!

It is certain that the Flemish community may not be a sacristan or a communist: property rights are important and must therefore be motivated above all. "THE NEW GARDEN" is nevertheless not only necessary for pure beauty and fundamental general peace. It is also not new at all because it has been cherished for more than 2,000 years in ... Persia and then a little later in Andalusia. You know, and was perhaps already there as a tourist. In the meantime, THE NEW GARDEN has also become a very important instrument of general interest of the polis. After all, it is a strategically extremely important instrument against the undeniable global warming that everyone personally experiences. THE NEW garden is also of insufficiently known importance in local water management. Moreover, there is one extra powerful argument for more trees and real intimacy in THE NEW GARDEN: our children! Where and how can they be more moved and passionately touched than by butterflies, bees and those friendly mosquitoes in addition to the almost most important thing: the everyday birds in this kind of new, real gardens! Fresh, fruit-bearing small trees and berries of all kinds:

a treat for half the year. Children get less and less natural stimuli and space, not so much to play but to grow up in general. And what about flowers - also or especially wild flowers! Didn't Emile Claus reportedly whisper these last words on his last bed: "*Flowers, flowers, flowers...*" - his eternal flower bed!?! Garden is life. Garden is growth, change and interesting or educational distraction Which pedagogue at which university in the Low Countries writes a vulgarized or well-readable "*pedagogy of the garden*"? Pedagogues, teachers, gardeners and parents: get to write and work please!

And always remain alert and optimistic! Hopefully the snobs from inside and outside Sint-Martens-Latem will continue to play golf as if their lives depend on it! If that sport were to stop, that green would indeed be freed up from grass - short grass... - existing terrain. For real estate agents. For houses. And again for stupid gardens. Or? Still for ...? For a ... second golf course next to it - woohaa!!!

7. Emile, wife and mistress in a comic strip by Willy Vandersteen?

Until well into the 90s, you were not allowed to borrow comics from Belgian libraries if you were a child. The good little ones apparently had to be protected from - from what? Only under the supervision of your parents were you allowed to take your favourite comics with you, as well as those you did not know yet and wanted to try out. In later years, you finally got comics if you took a few 'real' reading books home with you. Finally - we repeat that it was certainly past the mid-90s then! - you simply got those comics. It was limited in number, which in itself made sense. Those were the days, all before the explosion of the internet medium.

We escaped those sad restrictions - thanks to private initiative, as it were. From a few years old we could read (and write), and devoured everything legible - albeit already with a form of qualitative selection. Due to the circumstances of our youth we spent a great deal of time with a grandmother in Dendermonde. In retrospect she was relatively well-off. She certainly had a great many "*images*" such as an old German graphic by Raphael that would make a lasting impression on us and that we were very fortunate to have been able to keep until today, as the only one of her most important pieces: ... **see Raphael** On the other hand she was exceptionally frugal. You could call it stingy but that generation of Belgians had already experienced two wars and not least, her husband and his two cousins Bonkoffsky would together experience about seven years in Nazi prisons and camps, and at least survived! A person then becomes cautious for the rest of his life, in many ways. So we had to ask her, if we wanted to read in the evening, to turn an extra lamp to the chandelier - so that we had sufficient reading light. This grandmother from Dendermonde - we never knew other grandparents in life - also had two neighbours. Even then, Belgium was densely populated and everyone had two direct neighbours; there were many more, such as the neighbours on the other side of the gardens, who were a little less direct.

Those neighbours all got along well, fortunately. In this Dendermonde garden district - a relatively common urban development phenomenon in Belgium after WWII and shortly before - all residents were separated by "*ligustrum vulgare*", one of the most popular or used green shrubs at least until many idiot neighbours started using concrete and plastic: 'progress' or, among other things, a waste of good money. We would of course learn that Latin name much later; what was "*vulgare*" or simply vulgar there in retrospect? Nothing of course because it was and is a great garden demarcation that was always kept at a normal height - about one metre - almost certainly on the instructions of the housing association in

Dendermonde. This allowed every resident and certainly also children like us, to have a broader view from the local or individual situation. Compare that openness or form of ... democracy with a later advancing very 'modern' fuss in which even ordinary neighbours place higher and impenetrable fences, or an obstacle - in advance because literally communicated in the act - to communication. And then of course just be happy with that other progress because now finally dare to openly complain - on those very social media - about "*the foreigners*" - haha or especially infinitely sad. Those hedges of that time - they are fortunately still there - have stayed with us so deeply that more than forty years later we would use the same privet in other ways, as mainly independently valued plants - in short mentioned relatively large own park project (where besides every nearby resident can enter because we never wanted to make a fence on the street). Those ordinary but beautiful and anyway evergreen hedges were truly a feast for the eyes and heart during autumn and winter! And please compare again with those mind-numbing concrete and plastic fences!!! - had a very great cultural or human significance for us at that time. These hedges were absolute examples or entrances of progress for us. We could literally just walk through that one neighbour's house because of them: there was a lot less hedge there. Call that a hole - in the hedge. We really don't know anymore whether we made that hole ourselves, although our grandmother wouldn't have done it. She of course (...) spoke to her neighbours over this hedge. Through the door and window of these neighbours facing the garden or by popping in, we always politely asked if we could enter the beautiful stable. Incidentally, that stable - just like these houses of simple but beautiful architecture - was never locked day and night, although we never went to look at it at night. You just knew something like that. And it was precisely that stable that we were after! Because there against the entire back wall was the true paradise! On shelves were hundreds of comics that we were all allowed to read. Which we all brought back very neatly, albeit very symbolically torn to pieces: until the next one!

As was the case in the then predominantly Christian Dendermonde circles, the bulk of these comics came from the stable of the Christian publisher "*Het Volk*" from Ghent, through which we also read a great many informative comics. Between our birth year 1963 and until 1977 or during our entire younger growing up years, the newspaper "*Het Volk*" would publish the youth weekly "*Ohee*". Among other things, you could read the unforgettable comics there about the pleasant detective "*Thomas Pips*", work of the even broader and great comic talent "*Bluth*" (pseudonym of Leo De Budt, 1919 - 2010). In the meantime, the man and this important comic series have apparently been completely forgotten - probably because they were too dated. That is understandable, but that work has had a lasting impression on generations of young Flemish people. And not unimportant: Bluth was partly trained as a comic strip artist by the international art genius Fritz Van den Berghe. Of the latter we have already said supra that he is probably the greatest Belgian artist of the 20th century. Also in passing, comic strip art has long been recognized as "*The Ninth Art*". Although we cannot simply say from our stupid heads what components all those previous eight arts consist of. In any case, or that is to say in our personal case, together with completing every possible puzzle and every findable crossword puzzle, we have really had an inimitable logical and worldly education, as it were before or partly next to school where we also very naturally read all kinds of stories under the school desk if by some chance the teacher could not captivate us at all - haha.

One of the blissful moments we shared with a mass of Dutch-speaking children, is this. Later it turned out that there were many translations of the work of that comic strip author, especially in German. His studio, very coincidentally called "*Studio Vandersteen*", turned out to be a cozy goldmine - and probably still is and we wish big congratulations. Just as

undoubtedly his justified ambition was spoon-fed by the system of Walt Disney (1901 - 1966), albeit somewhat more modestly. This great, unique, sometimes somewhat overwhelming comic strip author - he could think of more series than a human could read and in retrospect praises us as infinitely happy that there was nothing like the internet, let alone social media ... This excellent independent entrepreneur who worked on all series in his studio with up to 30 other employees, we would recognize a few decades later directly by his early style when we came across some of his works in "*Volk en Staat*", the daily newspaper of the collaboration movement VNV in 1942. How it could have taken so many decades - after WWII - that the same comic strip artist who had been spreading idealism over us all for decades, you could safely say absolute top artist Willy Vandersteen (1913 - 1990) was also and still early in his career the author of these great pieces of, among other things, anti-Semitism; strong or incomprehensible stuff ...!!!!??? The non-discovery so long ago did not surprise us afterwards because the academic education in history throughout the Low Countries or certainly as far as modern or most modern times or especially WWII is concerned; we could talk about anecdotes or scandals for hours. It is indeed a remarkable disgrace because if one were to consult a doctor with the same 'professional' level as the average historian around WWII, many would literally die. Well (sic), we regularly discuss this in our reasonably groundbreaking political-historical analyses around WWII. And we have certainly already sown the seeds for this, among other things, by constantly eating ... Belgian comics. These were mainly Flemish, but also Walloon. Unfortunately, these neighbours had much less around the certainly even more unique magazine "*Spirou*", although we were at the same time fortunately enough able to read a number of series around the publisher "*Dupuis*", such as ... + ... + Flanders was still very pillarised in those days, but still more open, if only in the area of comics. Fortunately again, there was also attention for foreign comics, relatively little, but there was the phenomenal series "*Prince Valiant*" (Hal Forster, 1892 - 1982). Naturally, the Walloon and English-language comics were translated into Dutch.

In those literally or spiritually or intellectually impressive comics there was the uniqueness in every issue, the always captivating and educational "*SUSKE en WISKE*". That is known as "*Bob et Bobette*" in the French-speaking area, in English it is called "*Spike and Suzy*". It has also been published in no less than twenty other world languages! We have been very lucky, chronologically speaking, because we were able to devour, let's say, the first classic hundred issues, before this comic series gradually descended to descended to ... To nothing less than at least less than the greatest poverty and with that in any case partly throwing a blemish on the uniqueness of this series, its classic comics. The publisher and the inventor and the heirs themselves found it necessary to continue the series until eternity, with all the consequences in terms of quality, an incredible disgrace. That is understandable because of the enormous money that can be earned. At the same time, this transmission, first during and then after the death of Willy Vandersteen, can be understood because such a series becomes "*sui generis*", as if it has always existed and must therefore continue to exist. It is a scenario that has followers within the international comic strip world, in addition to very famous 'refusers'. In the latter and in principle case is the even more famous Hergé (alias from Georges Remi, 1907 - 1983). He, the father of the Belgian comic strip and a world star to this day, he the father of the unique comic strip character "*Tintin*" has forbidden further editions of this Tintin by other comic strip artists. Ironic because it is precisely his heirs - his second wife (during his lifetime) with her second husband (during her lifetime) - who are otherwise known around this charismatic comic strip character for their extreme greed - or diametrically opposed to the eternal fragile idealism of the same Tintin. Hergé the half-prescient worked with Willy Vandersteen for several years and gave him the successful nickname "*the Brueghel of the*

comic strip", a well-deserved compliment. And that from the mouth of one of the great and internationally highly regarded Belgian artists of the 20th century. That comic strip art in general and universally is considered a great or a separate and highly valued art form is a right thing. The 'ordinary' visual artists who have been influenced by all kinds of comic strips are countless, so we will not start on that here. But - always that but. Can you imagine that, for example, the heirs of the excellent and locally and internationally highly valued painter Michael Borremans - the man is still very much alive and kicking and we wish him multos annos and much life and pleasure in art! - will allow, say, a student of his (who would that be?) or an admirer or just an opportunist and decent painter to bring works to the market "*in the style*" of him or as a Michaël Borremans epigone!? Even with a signature such as "*By 'FR4UY', in the style of Michaël Borremans, with the permission of his heirs.*"? Are you bursting into fits of laughter? The scenario is not ridiculous at all, since during the lifetime of visual artists more or less (to nothing - haha) false works are marketed under their names. Now try to find real or unadulterated graphics by Constant Permeke (1886 - 1952) on the Flemish markets! In addition, we know from direct experience how many types of artists are also - or mainly? - concerned with creating art, pardon, with creating money. In Dutch we can formulate this nicely ambiguously because we can speak of "*scheppen*" as "*to create*", as well as "*scheppen*" as "*to scoop up*". If many artists are not obsessed with money - who honestly believes that sincerity themselves? - it is the pleasant lady of the house or the mistress who are obsessed with money. Or these artists 'have to' constantly go to the whores - especially to the more exclusive segment of it, the so-called luxury escorts. Of all those types and shapes and weights there are apparently masses in the country of the Belgians, the younger the better and especially young wenches from Latin America. And there it is: "*All that stress also from having to create that new art*". Or - "*Noblesse oblige*" because something as trivial and vain as paintings, the better wallpaper, goes over the counter for exorbitant prices. This special succession scenario has with absolute certainty never happened during the life or especially after their death, with the artists Emile Claus and much less with Jenny Montigny. Or it concerns all kinds of museums and other idealistic opportunists who publish the better posters of the better paintings, or even types of "*original copies of*" painted by anonymous 'artists'.

Back to Willy Vandersteen and his unique series "*Suske en Wiske*". We must - must - talk about Jenny Montigny and her Emile and his Charlotte with compelling necessity and unavoidable fatalism about one of his, if not better, then philosophically most interesting numbers, "*Het brommende brons*" ("*The humming bronze*" + 1971). In that comic strip, some remarkable similarities can be found. Note that throughout this kind of ongoing series of comic strips, we could read this number from 1971 perfectly and also actually at its publication, because of our birth in 1963. Although we are sure that we were not really aware of that at the time. For us, those shelves in that shed with their hundreds of comic strips were one big reading and viewing paradise! There is a separate Wikipedia page in Dutch for this comic strip, just like for all the numbers in this series. That is of course a happy fact and you can guess who is behind this, although we would like to repeat that from number XYDZ the series has been bogged down, really deeper than quicksand. Or it is nothing else and the real fans will agree negatively about that, nothing other than pure betrayal against what one may call the original quality. And how come you can't find this consideration on these pages?

[Het brommende brons - Wikipedia](#)

[Lijst van verhalen van Suske en Wiske - Wikipedia](#)

The comic strip "*The humming bronze*" could be filmed as a sugary operetta-like tear-jerker. And effectively (so not efficiently ...) much is recognizable from the lives of Emile and Jenny and Charlotte: there we are! Did Willy Vandersteen know their triangular relationship because the man knew a great deal about life in his homeland, was very well documented to process everything from it afterwards? Or did he have one, or two, ... mistresses himself? Or see it differently: such a special relationship and certainly among artists or relatives, is timeless. It is interesting that Willy Vandersteen would finally really start to blossom from 1945 or the last year of the war and then until his death. That he had supposedly done some art collaboration during that period that had just passed, was pragmatically seen as something that was fortunately swept under the carpet by the Belgian military court. And that was fortunate for the artist and his heirs and for the countless readers. In any case, he would testify to an enormous optimism throughout each issue of the - classic - editions of "*Suske en Wiske*", with which he also gave the golden decades of the golden fifties and sixties an artistic and pedagogical shape at the same time. Indeed, his comics were always positive or optimistic in attitude without one exception. And with that he went completely against his old good friend and partly mentor Hergé. This comic strip author, regularly depressed and reportedly not at all a fan of children and from a certain point even fed up with his own child Tintin, would end rather heavily cynically, almost crashing with the downright hilarious and self-blasphemous "*Tintin and the Picaros*" (1976). We as good Christian readers of Willy Vandersteen never had any problems with that. Even more so because there is not only the "*but*" regularly but also the "*more*". We still have to say something about that concept "*more*" how Willy Vandersteen confused us as children for years. In his comic strip "*The Texas Rangers*" (1959) gin is occasionally touched upon and Lambic says about it: "*It tastes like more*". Believe it or not, but for years we were wondering whether "*more*" was something like chocolate, or a form of perfume if necessary, or strongly scented peanuts that make you drink more (gin)? While it was obvious - but not to us - that it was a small superlative. We - never great fans of spirits, even alcohol; give us "*Cécémel*", the best chocolate milk in the world - probably couldn't even believe that these comic strip heroes could be interested in something as stupid as spirits - oh well. That endless optimism of the - classic - "*Suske en Wiske*" expressed at the end of each comic strip has certainly given our innate optimism a firm push, especially when we were confronted with a *** stepfather from about the age of 7; what did that *** person come to do in our lives?

That is on the one hand, because on the other hand, we have also been permeated, as it were, by a strong Catholic upbringing, for eternity, by what we may call a structural naivety. Going to Holy Mass twice a week for almost two decades; it leaves deep traces. Although we almost derailed from a certain point in time. In any case, we have always made a deep, convinced commitment to the feasible and - indeed - the democratic openness of the world through our thoughts and actions. While on the other hand, we really cannot empathically penetrate the souls of the countless people who are mainly or only motivated by either money or power, or both. These observations make us truly intellectually bewildered and humanly sad. We can console ourselves with this scientific knowledge: one percent of the population seems to be genetically psychopathic, only and solely interested in satisfying their own needs, using the other as a doormat. Is nationalism the same but on a broader scale? We simply never learned all that or the essentials from all those comics from those bygone but inward-looking times.

The man and artist Willy Vandersteen could then, from 1945 onwards, forget the well-known 'of everything' surrounding the tragedy that had just passed. He had to do that anyway in order to be able to live commercially and with his family. He must have carried some things with him with him for sure, although due to lack of time we will not make an overarching content

analysis here and gladly leave that to comic book lovers and finally broad and deep-thinking academic historians - although as we saw with lady Petra Thijs that there are also competent Romanists next to a ... ists ... ists and ... - fine! WWII was a horrible time for all Belgians, although that honestly was nothing compared to countries occupied by the Nazis, such as Poland and large parts of the Soviet Union, not to mention quantitatively and qualitatively (how to express that?) the fate of all Jews who were on Belgian soil at the start of WWII on May 10, 1940, as Belgians or as foreigners, after almost all European Jews had been persecuted for almost 2,000 years by the holy mother church - three times just initials. However, there is and was one form of political attitude that we may consider to be the saddest and most human of all: denunciation. And that certainly happened many times a day during WWII. And it is certain that this was not done only or not at all by psychopaths, despite a gigantic uncertainty due to far too little scientific knowledge about this nevertheless eternally human phenomenon. It happened through your neighbour's grandfather, for example, who had also loved your grandmother before the war but fell short because he only ... And then saw an opportunity to ... with ... And Endlösung.

People used to know, and to a certain extent still do, almost everything about each other's neighbours and family. Especially in dangerous times like such an occupation, this came in handy if one wanted to 'solve' all sorts of existing feuds, say, to "*Endlösen*" them definitively. And we encounter this, among other things, alongside or out of jealousy in "*The humming bronze*" (1971), which is at the same time a classic but moving love story: look for the similarities later! It is a comic strip where we encounter very original storylines around - defective - communication alongside, not least, the problem of - looking at each other correctly, incompletely and longingly, through statues or standing images. Here too, Dutch is quite enriching because the Dutch "*standbeelden*" of course means "*statues*" but analytically means "*standing images*", or standing thing or standing images. As the real philosopher and washed-up German Rudolf Boehm once told us: Dutch is a very philosophical language! The comic strip is a work written for young people, but can be read perfectly by adults through so-called sensible glasses.

The main characters of "*The humming bronze*" are first and foremost a shepherdess called Mira. And that is a name like a bell, albeit one with very feminine sounds. It was the name that was known to most Flemish and many Dutch ears as the main character - also - from the book "*De teleurgang van de Waterhoek*" by the famous writer Stijn Streuvels (1871 - 1969). The novel dated from 1927 or one year after the death of Emile Claus. That publication caused quite a stir in the very Catholic yet narrow-minded Flanders because of its boldness or openness. It was also successfully filmed in a Belgian-Dutch co-production, also in ... 1971. It is absolutely certain that the inner crowd knew about this film production already in 1969 or two years before this film was finally shot and released. It cannot be otherwise that, given that this comic strip by Willy Vandersteen also concerned a special love story, he was aware of one thing or another. From the Wikipedia page dedicated to this specific comic strip, we know for certain that this comic strip was published in the newspaper "*De Standaard*" from March 31, 1971 to August 1971. That was quite a coincidence, because the "*release date*" of the film was ... March 4, 1971. That was no coincidence or a little bit of shamelessness on the part of Willy Vandersteen, who apparently came up with the story of this comic strip together with a collaborator. About that collaborator - Paul Geerts (1937) - we do not have much good to say in breadth/depth, other than that he should have kept his individual hands off the comic strip series; sorry, man. But here that guy really did his best, together with the spiritual father: of course we do not know the mutual responsibility or the respective contributions. Equally obviously, we do not know when we read this comic strip as a young child, but given the

circumstances that every comic strip lover (including our neighbour - haha) liked to devour comic strips "*saignant*" with freshly ground pepper, we must have devoured this comic strip in the same year 1971. There was no question that we knew anything about the film itself, and only now have we figured out this similarity - from clear facts.

While the film and the book are set in an unspoilt, bucolic suburban Flemish country, in the comic strip everything happens in or around an urban park. That urban park is full of statues. There is the poet who - he is a poet, isn't he - sings about his beloved or Mira with verses. However, they are positioned in such a way that they cannot see each other but through the magic of the comic strip they can hear and speak to each other. We do not find that far-fetched at all because it has happened to us repeatedly that, alone or silent as a mouse, we hear the portraits or sculptures present talking to each other in a museum. Although that apparently only goes from room to room. We therefore propose to all museum directors in the world who have the same sensitivity as a mouse, to place all portraits and sculptures in one room in the future: a lot of work for movers and undoubtedly architects - and all by Willy Vandersteen and Stijn Streuvels! The further similarity between film and comic strip is that the theme is identical because both works deal with something universal or falling in love, in both places presented quite specifically. In any case, it is correct that a shepherdess or a farm girl - as in the book and the film - is used as the heroine. She falls in love, and it is mutual, with the poet Amadeus or "*The Beloved of God*"; wake up every morning with such a first name. There is the classic jealous woman annex sculpture, who calls herself "*Vanity*". That could have been more subtle in the manner of "*Asterix*" for example, but the previous first names make up for a lot. So as always, a lot happens or there are quite a few bad guys involved in this story. Those bad guys are led by "*Feesles*" or "*Faceless*". And that in 1971 or Willy Vandersteen already foresaw Facebook popping up?

Logically, that means that we as children, who only got English lessons after the age of 12 and who almost never encountered the English language on TV or radio or elsewhere, could not understand the meaning of this name at all. It was therefore a stupid invention on the one hand or only from the mind of the creator himself. The target audience - the young people - could never understand this ingenuity (...). What we did understand and we have also remembered to this day the image or picture and even the blue colour of the clothing - pants and vest - of Feesles on the cover of the comic, is that Feesles, in revenge for the unmasking of his gang by the heroes Suske and Wiske and friends, did something dramatic. You can partly notice it directly on the cover of that book, the only thing we can refer you to as visual material unless you simply buy or read the comic yourself. What follows we would have liked to use as visual material here, but for copyright reasons we will of course not do so. Feesles wants to dynamite Amadeus because he considers him responsible for helping our friends who have busted his gang. He is 'after all' (sic) informed about this, guided by "*Vanity*", not just a jealous bitch but a filthy snitch like Willy Vandersteen must have known during WWII. She - Mira or the true, the beautiful and the just - sacrifices herself and Mira is dynamited by Feesles. Mira explodes and is destroyed. You must now remember that the images could hear and speak to each other, whereby he sent her poems, always of his own making of course. So it was love at first hearing - but without mutual sight! And now comes the best part. It is worthy of an Oscar-winning scenario.

Because her statue, her bronze is dynamited, the shards fly around. Not just around because at least or mostly her naturally unscathed and therefore perfectly visible face flies through the air of the park; the comic is bursting with logic! And that face flies at eye level of the poet. So that Mira and Amadeus can see each other. For the first time. And for the last time because

her face with the still living because looking and so longing eyes can look at him. Until the bronze lands on the ground - and breaks. It really isn't over yet. Or it has to really start somewhere, with the core of the matter or the apotheosis! It is nothing other than a phenomenally good scenographic find, more than worthy of Stijn Streuvels. In the hundreds of comics that one could read in the '60s + '70s + '80s + ... it is one of the most impressive moments. Because. What next, you thought? It is about bronze so that ...? His bronze may of course have been hit a little bit by some shrapnel. Willy Vandersteen was after all a full-blooded Antwerp native and therefore with 100% certainty experienced dozens of impacts on and around Antwerp by the **** absolutely far from any Amadeus standing German Vergeltungswaffen V1 and V2 at the end of 1944 and throughout the first months of 1945. And lost acquaintances, neighbours, sports friends, family or friends themselves. But that logical materially damaging consequence against the statue of Amadeus of the now blown up statue pardon beloved Mira standing in the same park was of no importance. You know that; to achieve love, one is willing to endure scratches because "*Never the rose without the grip*". No! And now take a handkerchief. The bronze of Amadeus turned dull. From sadness of course or what else did you expect from a bronze statue in love? He or what was left of pure bronze material was taken away by alert employees of the city park services because a bad statue is no longer worth seeing. Bronze is too valuable to just ... The bronze of Amadeus was therefore and fortunately quickly melted down. With of course all the - very carefully - picked up pieces of ... Mira. Into a new statue, melted together and solidified into one statue - for the park and the public. Cupid eventually did his job and - of course - gave his name to this statue full of love. And in this god they "*lived happily ever after and perhaps even got many small statues.*" Those alert employees of the city park services were not made of iron.

This story of the humming bronze is without a doubt one of the most romantic stories from modern Belgian times. We hereby ask our beloved and honored opera phenomenon Peter de Caluwe (1963), unfortunately only one year the director of the Brussels somewhere more European opera house De Munt/La Monnaie, to make a modern (and listenable) version of this, if necessary or rather a children's opera or why not, a nice, modern operetta? Then mix in Emile and Jenny and Charlotte. Something for a modern version of "*Così fan tutte*" (1790) from a certain ... Amadeus!

8. From Jenny to Petra. Or what have we learned now?

The last formulation is known to every Flemish person because it is the famous final formula of the well-known and extremely skilled television chef Piet Huysentruyt (1962). It is indeed a didactically brilliant formulation; the man was clearly a student at one of the best schools in the entire country.

However, perhaps there should first be some clarification around the meaning of "*we*"!? As far as we know, almost all European languages that have ties to the original language Latin have no Old Slavic possibilities in which the personal pronoun can be expressed plurally or in a nuanced way. In that linguistically poor/poorer way of expression, "*we*" means both "*I*" in the form of the pluralis majestatis and "*You and I, or .. we (haha)*". In any case, we hope that you have learned something despite our possible digressions. And that from the day after tomorrow you will start planting trees and shrubs; away with all that *** grass, and from today make preparatory plans!!!

We ourselves have learned that we do not know much about Jenny and especially do not understand why she was smileless. And that consequently around her and around all the ladies

annex pupils annex ??? of Emile Claus also some thorough digging and thinking may be done - and exhibited, with him there, albeit now somewhat less excessively. We ourselves are especially happy that as a discovery of our reflections and research we have found a decidedly interesting woman, a kind of model thinker: Petra Thijs. With this 'kind' of inhabitants Flanders/Belgium is on the right track. Because; well-educated, thoroughly digging into and thinking about the mentioned subject (10 years!), assertive but distinguished, elegantly giving their own sources without doing "*name dropping*", which is one of the most terrible or most pedantic forms of so-called scientific handling of necessary knowledge. Perhaps we are forgetting qualities, but those can then be partly deduced from the previous ones.

And on top of that, something special has charmed us, which should be a matter of principle: a Romanist who seriously and valuedly delves into another field, here both art history and history. That deserves a feather in his cap. No, that deserves a pen, a PC, a printed edition, a ... - so that other, much younger people can read that and through that, they have now studied brewery engineering or even the science of pimpampom, feel called to become sincerely and diligently expert, to become an expert, in a so-called other domain of human activities.

9. Jenny and Emile and who knows, maybe even Charlotte at our house! At your house?

So we learned something. But we want to end with the double image, of Emile Claus together with Jenny Montigny - in our house, in your house. Or maybe a triple image because with that special wife Charlotte there again?

Those with patience and eyes will regularly receive a visit from Good Fate. On that beautiful day we were able to buy a lithograph by Emile Claus: "*Hay Stacks*" or based on the painting of the same name from 1905. That was a golden opportunity at the time because we had so little means of exchange money available that we were even burning our unique collection of toothpicks to have some homely warmth. Friend LVH1983 was so free and kind to lend us everything. Unfortunately we do not know more about this work, elsewhere on the internet dated circa 1890 and called there as "*The gleaners*", which is an impossible attribution based on precisely this peasant image. Hopefully we will find the correct dates this year via this exhibition. How we acquired this beautiful graphic work, we will have to discuss separately later because there was both a beautiful and very sad love story behind it with the seller. We have then actually been able to make it again or even more of a real, albeit somewhat mystical, love story. You know how it is, that you can jump higher than the ceiling, than the house or even into the sky when you have been able to acquire something unique. That uniqueness happened of course when, not so long later, we were able to acquire a beautiful lithograph of the eternal theme "*Mother and child*" via the fine Etienne. By, yes, Jenny Montigny. Those two lithographs were of course hung together from then on! It is striking that the farmer's wife who is apparently distracted from her hard work in the fields, reminds us of ... Charlotte Dufaux!? Why or why! She is wearing clothes that are a bit too nice without any sweat visible while this was terribly hard work - certainly for women. Her hair is fairly simple but still beautifully made up. But then again that looking away - always by the same painter! Oh, there is what you can objectively call a reason; she is looking at two people who are apparently passing by and it is certainly a man and a woman; also a couple? Of course we wanted and want to see that looking away to see HER or Charlotte as a farmer's wife in costume. And of course we would like to see the theme of "*Mother and child*" literally because Jenny Montigny would - prove the opposite via certificates from the Civil Registry - never be able to fulfill a desire for children, would regularly paint and etch children. First of all, her fellow acquaintance or competitor Charlotte Dufaux could not and never fulfill that

either. She was probably liberal so and ... besides ... But such a desire for children for a woman; that is more than metaphysics, that is written in the stars. Later, much later and at the perceived end of her life, where the emptiness of children is felt more compellingly than ever, Charlotte Claus - Dufaux was able to donate all remaining works of paintings and drawings as her own children - to a local government, who gladly received that, as a young child on his own that would grow into a relatively mature museum. This means that the suspicion is sky-high or much higher than the many haystacks that Emile Claus has painted, that this painter or creator of hundreds of paintings, drawings and lithographs was infertile, perhaps even ... impotent? Isn't it a little, little or bigger bit striking that Emile Claus has indeed painted smaller children, but never a father with a child, or especially never a "*Mother and child*"? Always, always, almost without the slightest exception, a creative artist wants to live on, in the eternity of art history and history. We do not know - yet - whether creative artist Emile Claus has left behind writings or interviews about that. Secondly, why that expression "*creative artist*" or isn't every artist creative? That expression is like a pleonasm and therefore has its very important cultural-historical or existential meaning as a stylistic device. He or she was therefore not a creator of power or money or, however you look at it, two important motives that always distort or destroy man and society somewhere. And yet, very unfortunately, throughout this website we must use the term "*deprimates*" for some nevertheless world famous artists. Because they were/are so completely nihilistic or depressing or destructive or ... anti-creative or anti-human (...) busy.

Five years ago to the day our mother Annie Bonkoffsky died, also and not in the least our only real parent. She sometimes said to us: "*Do you always have to go into everything so deeply?*" But she also said once: "*If everyone jumps into the Scheldt, will you jump with them?*" And took us with her as a small child, for example to buy the very successful painting "XXX562" by XFD5, which now hangs at her 'surviving' last partner - "*Because I like looking at it very much; take it back after my death, please.*" She took us even more to those cozy auctions in Dendermonde at "*Huis Leybaert*", with that unique mix of visual arts, Persian carpets and with whatever materially wanders around with a certain added value under the Flemish skies. That one tree at that newly purchased house in 1979 had, to our amazement, fallen on our return from school - cut down by human hands. It was even a "*Prunis ... persica*", an annual fruit-bearer - once from Persia or an immigrant, partly as she did through her great-great...parents from Poland - mind you! It apparently also bore leaves " ... *and they fall to the ground and ...*". Logic or the moving part of motives. One day you get that consciously, from home, from school, from ... Sometimes just from your inner conviction that you already have as a small child, as if you were driven from before you were born.

Jean-Marie De Dijn, SK, 18 augustus 2024.

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Kinoe no Komatsu, Katsushika Hokusai (葛飾北齋, 1760 - 1849), woodblock print, Edo period – undated (circa 1814). Sumisho Art Gallery, Tokyo.

T.U.S..

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La Maja desnuda, Francisco Goya (Francisco José De Goya y Lucientes, 1746 - 1828), oil, circa 1797 - 1800, Museo del Prado Madrid.

+ La Maja vestida, idem.

T.U.S..

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Le Baiser (De Kus - The Kiss), Frans Masereel (1899 – 1972), woodcut, 1924, 14 op 28, (this print in) Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Gent.

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1. Value of graphics next to paintings or value of artists?

The most famous graphic artist in the world of the last 150 years is without a doubt Frans Masereel (1889 – 1972). He was a native of Ghent, a bilingual Flemish, Belgian and world citizen who knew not the least perfect German - and en passant a great playboy in addition to being a lifelong, loyal friend. He showed, among other things, his deep ties with Germany, again immediately after WWII, where he actually started teaching young German artists among the bombed-out rubble. That was nothing more than an expression in word and image of his lifelong idealism, say, his own International. His worldwide popularity was of course related to his enormous desire for peace, which he expressed as widely as possible in his compelling work during the terrible First World War. Of course, it had something more to do with his anti-capitalist worldview. As a result, he became extremely popular in the former Soviet Union and the unfortunately still communist China, a country that has also had the most insane capitalism for several decades. Frans Masereel produced an enormous amount of artefacts, also the normally much more expensive paintings compared to graphic work. He sold what one calls well. In any case he was never known as a money-maker which he could very easily have been because of his world fame, also with his graphic work. That was completely opposed to quite a few so-called modern or current artists sometimes against their will read thanks to galleries and big collectors and the entire international ***** of very, very big art lovers. People produce things that one may call works of art, things that are painted, sculpted, drawn and what else in formal artistically recognizable or explicit technicality - with some necessary fillings like the present sugar and cream sometimes vinegar or piss as artistic next to all kinds of explanations, to the point of making the public has to throw up before suffocating. But the activity of these formal artists - building up in something even like a life's work; watch out, some are undergoing a substantive, call it formal, artistic evolution in the meantime - can't be called that of artists au fond or in principle or idealistically. They are entrepreneurs as you can find in the local or regional craft or industry field. In that very much

connected to the art world, dealing with money as a so-called means of exchange or measure of value, Frans Masereel is not an old-fashioned example. How he has always or during his entire and rather long life retained his idealism and dignity is a recommendation for everyone who calls himself young and wants to become a Young artists in the free world, multiply your work but not that one means of exchange! It is "*Love for Art - or love for Mammon*" - hahaha.

Frans Masereel was in a sense the Picasso of woodcarving because he is the father of a huge and - 'also' - valuable oeuvre. He was also a painter. That was an 'activity' to which he apparently enjoyed dedicating himself over time. Unfortunately, he could not paint at all because the graphic artist can be seen at work in every painting. We are happy to forgive him for that shortcoming. One cannot handle everything, except for the very few broadly brilliant artists such as Brueghel, Albrecht Dürer (1471 – 1528), Goya, Rembrandt and Monsieur Picasso: who are we still forgetting? These artists were in themselves unimaginably important painters or absolute world leaders: fantastic isn't it. But some of them are known for their incredibly beautiful or overwhelmingly important paintings, that their graphic work is actually forgotten – by most people. But what about our Frans Masereel? Throughout that long and intense oeuvre of wood carvings, he created numerous masterpieces, with individual pieces, so to speak. In addition, he also became famous, and rightly so, with the publication of books or cartoons, which are the joy of every book lover - they are still easily available in relatively new editions - and of the true museum enthusiast. We just said that, at least in our experience, Frans Masereel could not paint at all, while his wood carving is of an unparalleled level, both artistically and - how to separate that analytically? - content-related. We deliberately mention this repeatedly because we note that graphic work is still worldwide considered less important compared to painting. We cannot elaborate further on this remarkable and partly comprehensible fact other than in two necessary ways.

Etchings, woodcuts and all possible graphically multi-formed art products - sculptures can also be reproduced several times and still be considered authentic, but that is another matter - are very rarely published in only unique or very small editions. There is even the technique – or artistic desire – of the monotype, or the one-off or unique print! The normal graphically produced art objects that are to be reproduced are therefore not numerically unique. This art production therefore differs diametrically - or dramatically - from paintings. This also happens when paintings themselves are a form of repetition or reworking – an extreme rarity, albeit not for some painters who, for example, give paintings the same name and shape and then number them. In addition, there is a very important argument to be made in favor of graphics as opposed to painting. That pro argument may sound a bit sad. At least we have had to conclude, through our fairly thorough knowledge of Belgian art between 1880 and 1950 and through roughly 50 years of art viewing, that artists very regularly make excellent graphics - usually etchings. And yet as painters they deliver inferior to much inferior even negligible quality. Surprisingly enough, we know of no art historical studies on this observation, even though we have about a thousand art books ourselves; maybe a taboo? In any case, it seems to us to be a delicate subject on the part of the artists themselves. Who among them would want to make such a comparison in a reflection on their own (life) work? At the same time, on this website we refer to Victor Delhez: **See Victor Delhez** He was born just a few decades after Frans Masereel in the same exuberant painting country Belgium/Flanders. But - or does that "*but*" not even apply here? – he was also born and raised in Antwerp and 'therefore' a fellow citizen of an infinite number of excellent 'local' painters, including some of the absolute world top; Brueghel, Henri De Braeckeleer (1840 - 1888), Jacob Jordaens (1593 – 1678), Rubens, Frans Snyders (1579 – 1657) and Antoon Van Dyck.

Although relatively little has been published about Victor Delhez, a man from two continents, first Belgian and later South American, we have been able to conclude through our studies of him that he has exclusively made graphics throughout his long life or career. These were almost always woodcuts in addition to a minority of linocuts. But. They were always graphic works. Comparing the (top) artist Victor Delhez with his – absent – work as a painter or with that of (countless) painters is simply nonsensical or ridiculous. In our opinion, both Belgian graphic artists - Victor Delhez and Frans Masereel - belong to the absolute world top, not only of their generation and of the last 150 years, but also for the entire history of art, although they face intense competition from the few world-famous painters and graphic artists just mentioned. At the same time, and this is the crucial point, they are fully present as graphic artists and have their absolutely deserved place among other world-famous artists, 'so' almost always 'just' painters!

Certainly for Belgian compatriots and probably also for French and Germans, it is very easy and relatively cheap to purchase a “*Masereel*”. Although a very international artist, many of his woodcuts deal with subjects from his home country. Moreover, there are sometimes works that have been published in hundreds to 750 editions! The intention was, let's just say it quickly, not and never the precious money gain. Based on his deep democratic convictions, he wanted to bring art to men and women as widely and literally as cheaply or affordably as possible. Apart from some German Expressionists, we simply do not know of any modern European or American artists - say in the last 150 years - who had this humanly and socially beautiful attitude, something that should not be admirable but rather the norm; or not? If you look at today and at a Belgian top artist and Antwerp native like Luc Tuymans, you will notice that his graphic work - lithograph or silkscreen - is also extremely or insanely expensive (a few thousand euros) and only affordable from the better middle class. And that has everything to do with the high position of this formally competent painter and still much more clever or cunning and as a pure commercial heron uninterrupted networker who once could have as many so-called noble ideals as he wanted - "*Mammy, Dady, i want to become an artist, ohlalala*" -, but because of his extremely sought-after paintings has become nothing more than a plaything or de facto money slave of the sharks of the international art world, with works that in themselves are in our opinion terribly pretentious and bad or ultimately art historically du jamais vu passé. **See Luc Tuymans ...** By the way, it could be infinitely worse say far more expensive. The lifelong art phenomenon Pablo Picasso (1881 – 1973) made beautiful linocuts in his older age (circa 1960). Now or barely 60 years later, these pieces are put on the market “*post mortem*” at completely outrageous prices such as 20,000 to 40,000 dollars – separately for the sake of clarity! It is better to let this kind of work or 'capital' get moldy in the vaults of art speculators or something (at least copy it in books) - and above all invest in young artists of all countries!!! But it deals – in our opinion, modest or immodest, what difference does it make? – with very valuable art, something that cannot be said at all about painter Fernando Botero. His paintings fetch extremely high prices but are aesthetically and art historically seen - compare with Luc Tuymans - completely worthless. Or at least for what concerns the 'second' or internationally most appreciated Botero'; the 'first' Botero was mucho better! **See Fernando Botero.**

2. The Kiss. That Kiss. Always like the very first time.

There is one famous work by Frans Masereel that has been printed or reproduced on a very small scale. And we have been grieving for it all our lives for a long time now because we have wanted to hang it on our wall at eye and heart height for just as long. Insofar as it is

important, we have personally given 'a' Masereel or a woodcut by him as a gift to acquaintances of the time a few times – in the manner of artist and idealist Frans Masereel: does a great collector like the internationalist and Frenchman François Pinault ever give away paintings?! We will not do that with the woodcut "The Kiss" from 1924. Or maybe we will because one day we want to give it completely anonymously, albeit to a specific museum or university, together with all our other Belgian graphics, more specifically if it is possible (one 'must' want to accept it) in the European country of XC4K. If we ourselves are still alive and conscious because, exceptionally, every person who becomes an heir is oh so greedy. The woodcut "*The Kiss*" is one of the most iconic graphic works of the 20th century, if not of history. Masereel has, and it should be repeated, produced an incredible amount of graphic art, in series and in individual pieces. Consequently, this gigantic quantity included some nonsense or the usual assembly line work - which has a specific art historical as well as artistic therapeutic value (keeping busy until the real thing comes again). In addition to these gigantic quantities of low quality, he certainly produced a great deal of high quality or world-class artwork. As here with "*The Kiss*". He was also a painter at times. But he really couldn't do that: his paintings seem to be a 'sincere' copy of his graphic technique and the real or academic art historians next to the real painters - where are they when they are not entering or leaving the bank? - can explain that to you much better. But what problem are we touching on here, if an artist has shown such exceptional dedication in one area of the visual arts, and that for decades or a lifetime? The truly versatile artists can literally be counted on one hand, such as Brueghel, Goya, Rembrandt and Picasso; who can offer another wonderful name?

This graphic work from 1924 is called "*The Kiss*". As a human experience it had already been shown billions of times. Or shown less often but experienced indoors or before the altar. As a work of art, at least we ourselves have effectively (not efficiently!!!! When will people start making a distinction between these two concepts???) encountered it very little. Isn't that surprising? Is there something socially, morally, politically, health-wise, structuralist, narrow-minded or big-minded, wrong perhaps, about something as interesting as a kiss? It is unimaginable that Europe from about the fifth century - that is, formally counted after Christ - was intensely permeated by one philosophy of life. That was Christianity. And in that, as a core element, was/is/will be, once again, Love. Theologically, that is the vertical love for God next to or horizontally but equal to the love for man, fellow man! That therefore (sic and sic until ...) next to that hardly any to no kisses (the plural of the kiss) can be seen in the millions of up to recently Christian inspired works of art!? It is at least worth a consideration. No, it makes us speechless because it is completely incomprehensible. In addition, you also very rarely see another expression of human tenderness or affection although you can notice a bit more (hidden) lust throughout this art history: just look at the famous fuss about the recently painted masterpiece of masterpieces, "*The Jewish Bride*". **See Rembrandt** ... Frans Masereel was known as a playboy besides being very loyal besides also liberal: some important additions. Seen or rather unseen the latter, we have long been planning an exhibition project around his ... religiosity because we want to approach that in two ways as ... and as (shhhht; we cannot yet give it because so many have already been intellectually disadvantaged, robbed or ...). Unfortunately, no time for that until now:

*"Las! voyez comme en peu d'espace,
Mignonne, elle a dessus la place
Las, las, ses beautez laissé cheoir!"*
(Pierre de Ronsard, circa 1524 - 1585, "*A Cassandre*", 1545),

In any case, shortly before his graphic "*The Kiss*", there was one very famous work of art that appeared in Europe, which he had probably seen himself within the borders of traditional Europe (Belgium, France, Germany, etc.). He had heard of it with absolute certainty and had already seen it as an image, in one of the many art magazines that usually circulated internationally for a short time. But before we go to that eternally famous example, we must point out "*The Kiss*" ("*Le Baiser*") from 1886 or before the birth of Frans Masereel. That "*The Kiss*" was by the sculptor's hand of that other art phenomenon, Auguste Rodin (1840 - 1917). By Rodin - the man, like many famous artists, hardly needs a first name - we once saw the statue "*Honoré de Balzac*" (1897) as a student in high school, in the highly recommended sculpture park or open museum "*Middelheim*" in Antwerp. We still remember as if it were yesterday how astonished we were. Practically every day we saw the - very traditional - statue of a missionary father at the main church of Dendermonde, right next to our college: you quickly look past it but you have it stored in your brain as an 'idea' forever - as an example! And here or then through the confrontation with the statue of Rodin in Antwerp!? We made a discussion of it for the aesthetics course of which we of course no longer have a copy; it was certainly extremely concise - humhum. Moreover, we got that course from an enthusiastic teacher ("*Lights out, spotlight on!*" - with the spotlight of the slide projector because fortunately we did not only get the images to be controlled from a small manual - blessed be this teacher Guido Triest!) only one hour a week. Fortunately, that did happen over two years, albeit the last two of six years of secondary education; compare that with the eternal two hours of compulsory gymnastics - yuck - while we ourselves already trained extremely intensively basketball at school; or two hours purely wasted that could have been spent on ... aesthetics! The task of writing an essay about this sculpture must have been a mandatory assignment. So we had to fill in 'something' because what schoolchild doesn't want a little bit (half anyway) of the points? In fact, that work is still a milestone for our lives for what modern or new art is - should or may be? While we were fascinated by all kinds of applied art expressions from a very early age, in retrospect we have always had the feeling that we never 'really' understood art, even though we have one enormous preference for art: if the given work of art contains something tangible and mysterious or shows an intermediate stage between abstract and recognizable, as in the phenomenal work from the period circa 1900 - 1910 by the later creepy Piet Mondriaan (1872 - 1944). See, among other things, work from circa 1907, later used by a well-known - guess who - contemporary painter as an example, albeit without explicitly referring to it:

[Bestand:Red Amaryllis with Blue Background by Piet Mondrian.jpg - Wikipedia](#)

Or the almost perfect painting from a year later:

[Molen bij zonlicht - Wikipedia](#)

For all necessary clarity we have already read several books about the 'late' or so-called 'real' Mondrian; we regularly do/did/will do our utmost, albeit with metaphysical limitations in terms of (less) time and meanwhile (also less) health. But we understand absolutely nothing about that late or real Mondrian and we also don't get a rotten **** from looking at it. They can keep it (those late works also seem to suffer from a form of scabies partly due to poor quality) and give us any Italian fresco, more specifically a "*pesce fresco*" in an Italian fish restaurant, in good company; "*Better one nice, fresh fish in the mouth, than one rotten one on the wall*", says the well-known proverb. Apparently that final work of Mondrian is his most important, which we therefore very much doubt because just that thing before that; top and why didn't he say to himself; stop!? "*The Kiss*" by the French sculptor giant Rodin dates from a decade earlier than his own sculpture around the literary giant Balzac and is clearly much

more academic. There are various versions of Rodin's "*The Kiss*": in baked clay, white marble and bronze. And in the meantime there are certainly hotheads, say insincere opportunists, next to sincere airheads who have cast it in plastic or even ... uh ...: after all, the good is often imitated - hihhi. All those variations by the hand of the master himself; they are all very nice to compare with each other and simply to meet an example via à vis; petting unfortunately "*Verboten!*" That simply allows for the different possibilities of a sculpture. But those variations of this "*The Kiss*" in themselves tell us relatively little. We find this kiss rather bland, too .. normal - for Rodin, right?!

That is simply impossible to say about the next great sculptor, the Romanian and half-Frenchman Constantin Brancusi (1876 – 1957). His first version of the sculpture "*The Kiss*" dates from 1907 – 1908. That is relatively soon after 1886 or the year of birth of yet another "*The Kiss*" – by Rodin. And also relatively soon before yet another "*The Kiss*" – by Masereel from 1924. What was also produced around these wonderful times, with among other things the terrible events of the First World War and the rise of the extremely creepy world communism and its brown fascist variant, by candidate or recognized artists in terms of concrete representations of that ideal "Kiss" over and over again; we leave that to the academic art historians. Or is it more or better intended for that one true researcher in his or her attic room who likes to make a single image of the many dust that he or she has scavenged and sniffed from many cellars? We wish them, him or her (women are never in attic rooms by rule, except "*Mimi*" in "*La Bohème*" (1896) but she will soon leave that - via the cemetery - for eternal salvation in heaven) all great success! It is of course no coincidence that we have to mention the blessed opera composer Giacomo Puccini (1858 - 1924). Both his work and that of his compatriot and partly contemporary and also predecessor Guiseppe Verdi (1813 - 1901) are full of tragic women who are abused by men - always men - and of course dramatically succumb to it, while they can still continue to sing exceptionally until their last note. Beautiful and ridiculous, but probably not to be solved otherwise, that singing on the brink of death.

Both sculptures and paintings are without musical accompaniment to this day, although there are quite a few contemporary artists who accompany their work verbally, although very fortunately not by singing; we are not suggesting anything!!! In other words, they cannot keep their mouths shut or feel constantly called upon to talk about their handiwork: do you know a carpenter, roofer or so on, who does the same? These double pseudo-pedagogues prefer to try to explain the "*layers*" or very deeper meanings of their work or of someone else's work that they now love. While these layers are either self-evident or not there or do not interest anyone because every pedagogue can explain to you that adults themselves like to understand something, or interpret something. There is absolutely nothing to interpret because it can only be stated that a series of masterpieces by both Puccini and Verdi are about love, and more precisely about the tragic element of on the one hand the exploitation of the man over the (loving) woman and on the other hand about the concept of understanding the truth too late: man seems to realize again and again too late that it is too late. Isn't every "*The Kiss*" by Auguste Rodin, Constantin Brancusi and Frans Masereel, not to mention those similar, kiss-rich artefacts by visual artists that have fallen through the cracks of our knowledge or through the cracks of history tout court, an equally necessary expression of the continuous yearning for each other that is doomed to fail somewhere by a certain power struggle or even game element of at least one of them (always the man, by coincidence?), psychologically or socially, even physically for one of them (always the woman, by coincidence)? In that sense, sculptures are more interesting from a purely material point of view because they cannot be separated. They cannot, of course, literally or physically, but not even through the gaze of the

viewer. Just try to separate the entanglements within the two sculpted representations of "*The Kiss*" with a covered eye or something similar! You can't, even if you had thought of it! Something similar happens in the graphic representation "*The Kiss*" by Masereel. Consequently, a paradox or a form of insatiable hope or complete coincidence can be seen here. In musical masterpieces by Verdi such as "*Rigoletto*" (1851) and "*La Traviata*" (1853) and actually in all major works by Puccini, the same theme is touched upon as in all cited works around "*The Kiss*". However, in the meantime or in comparison with musical work, in the latter three the kiss or the intertwining or the connection remains eternal. The only alternative, so to speak, is to smash or tear the visual work of art itself; come on. And yet, yet.. Isn't there that limitless human creativity in ... destruction!/? That this image of entanglement can also very delicately see its situatedness fanned by a whirlwind into a storm fire of life, and thus be destroyed by a new, albeit chronologically consecutive, yet again inevitable reality, and that this is also understood in this way by quite a few people, is shown in the concept of the famous, rather infamous socialist fraternal kiss: see.

[Socialist fraternal kiss - Wikipedia](#)

Thus, the old East German supreme party leader Erich Honecker (1912 - 1994) functions as a famous image twice in such a famous kiss of comrades. Once it happened when apparently many red roses were still blooming with the URSS party leader Leonid Brezhnev (Леонид Бре́жнев, 1906 - 1982). It provided an unforgettable image precisely because of the sufficient memory of what this kiss had meant politically, and had now fortunately disappeared. But then everything was fine with these gentlemen party leaders. Until the successor in the URSS because in the GDR everything at the top would remain the same. Until indeed in 1989, with the kiss of camaraderie as apparently the kiss of impending political death, of the man and his regime, with the reformist USSR party leader Mikhail Gorbachev (1931 - 2022) with the almost extinguished in all areas of life Erich Honecker. That was a formal kiss for both because the leader of the URSS already thought his colleague from the GDR was not keeping up with the signs of the times, and both were no longer ideologically at ease with each other. It once again produced a very famous image, let's say with quite a bit of symbolism of political decline, although not much of that has remained in our small country because it is downright astonishing that in a free country like Belgium in the national elections in 2024 a communist party - throughout the entire territory - was not only allowed but received a great deal of support, say votes; it is historically 'right' to be deeply afraid of it. So. Beware of their political fraternal kisses. Both moments were supposedly and publicly intended as a kiss among political 'comrades', while however one turned or twisted it East German Erich Honecker and his filthy regime were merely slaves because they could only exist by the 'grace' of the big brother of the USSR - and not to forget via an enormous, annual flow of money from the so-called corrupt West (of course West Germany; do you remember that country or that 'given'?). But it is an image or also an example (in Dutch that is again more interesting than in English: "*beeld*" as "*image*" is part of "*voorbeeld*" as "*example*" or "*voorbeeld*" as "*pre-image*").

Indeed. Just look around in your life and in life. Looking for images of separated kisses! Ultimately, almost everyone, every concrete person knows one kiss, from life, from the immediate world such as from family and friends where "*The Kiss*" no longer went through, now and above all absolutely not dead because "*The Kiss*" overcomes that border at least in the remaining personal memory, expanding within the family and even throughout society. There is simply (sic) a lot of separation, very formally through divorces but also through all kinds of ruptures between people, among themselves or as parts of organizations and so on.

That means that for the most deeply hurt and embittered "*The Kiss*" no longer exists as an example for (their own) life, while let's say they can never physically bury or let their hormones - see opera - drown them out. And yet, yet ... In both a psychological and social sense, every more or less visually successful "*The Kiss*" is both a joyful recognition and - in so far mimetically necessary - an encouragement. It is where it touches the heart through the eyes and awakens it, much like a prick in the backside to shoot forward again and venture into that new but still the same kiss. This is one of the reasons why we are so strongly opposed to the - commercial and museum - glorification of deprimate artists such as Rott and Ko and Luc Tuymans, whereby the first probably not coincidentally buried himself in a kiss of death and the second always turns up again with his face and vocabulary of a gravedigger. That is not a plea for false images or an art historical department of "*Brave New World*". Quite the opposite, as we discuss in the introduction and further: **See Luc Tuymans ...**

3. Pillars: literally and figuratively, although the figurative ones are the most literal.

However you look at it, Brancusi's "*The Kiss*" belongs to eternity. Once you've seen that image, it's incompletely completed. As in the wording of the Nicean Creed: "... *begotten, not made, ...*" You might ask what material it's made of, in which it uses the most powerful or figurative language: limestone, marble, plaster ...? All together, these are modalities. In substance, Brancusi's "*The Kiss*" can be called a primeval image, like relatively few works of art that have been made. Or does - and may we almost hope so? - the same iconopower apply to "*The Kiss*" by graphic artist Frans Masereel? Or even ... more!? "*The Kiss*" by the Romanian countryman alias Parisien Brancusi was actually born in the beginning of humanity, somewhere when man from hunter-gatherer started to settle. And needed all kinds of images for a few important functions. In contrast to Rodin's work, here for once there was no fuss or movement or 'intentions': it is kissing, being connected in the deepest sense. And as the couple kisses, it is at the same time - albeit quite shyly - also the coikiss of the same couple, or the sexual and therefore existential maintenance of man. However much more traditional it may seem compared to Brancusi's "*The Kiss*" from the early 1900s, Frans Masereel's "*The Kiss*" from 1924 is just as iconic - ancient or "... *begotten, not made, ...*". In the more traditional Rodin and at the same time innovator the ancient Brancusi, the kissers stand alone as if they are almost only kissing and almost only love, if need be - one can but should not associate it - only lust or pleasure. Masereel throws that whole lot of the edge of possible sentimentality and vulgarity away completely by situating the kiss, socializing it and - therefore - redeeming it! It takes place somewhere, here and now or more correctly formulated: You can always recognize yourself in it!! This work of art is a scene. Two-dimensional because it is a woodcut on paper, this "*The Kiss*" is pure theater. And theater in which one wants, can or must play along.

After WWI, Masereel lived mainly in France and briefly in Berlin in the early 1920s, where he reportedly became friends with the intriguing and, to say the least, provocative German artist George Grosz (1893 - 1959). Unfortunately, we do not know the provenance and publication history, and more specifically the origin of "*The Kiss*". The skyscrapers present in this work from 1924 have never been seen in the heart of Paris before that time. In New York, on the other hand! We can safely assume that the work either originated in Berlin or was inspired by it, together with a dash of New York. Berlin after WWI was a torn, impoverished city where suffering seeped or poured through windows and doors. On the other hand, it was a city full of life that was a point of attraction not only for the many and often extremely high-minded Russian emigrants after 1917, including and not least the almost incomprehensible phenomenon Vladimir Nabokov: **See Sebastiano del Piombo...** Life there bubbled like the

ever better than better French champagne; who compares or has already compared Paris and Berlin from roughly 1918 - 1933? Not least, Berlin was the location of the famous and very influential film studios of "*Universum Film AG*", better known by the abbreviation "*Ufa*". It is unimaginable what talent flowed there from Germany itself and from Northern and Central Europe, not least the filmmaker and screenwriter Billy Wilder (1906 - 2002, born Samuel Wilder or in Yiddish שמואל ווילדער or Shmuel Vilder), who in 1934 would move to Hollywood or the safe USA for the known reasons after a short stopover in Paris.

Berlin was a city - and this brings us seamlessly to Frans Masereel and his "*The Kiss*" from 1924 - where films were produced on an assembly line including countless timeless classic films. There was that one famous film or "*Der Blaue Engel*" (1930) by Josef Von Sternberg (1894 - 1969) with some top German actors and above all the legendary Marlène Dietrich (1901 - 1992), a true diva - and no, we find her not attractive enough for this website. Since cinemas were incredibly popular in the interbellum - literally every village had a cinema and every small town even had several - millions of European women and men must have sung along with La Dietrich: "*Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Liebe eingestellt.*" ("*I am set on love from head to toe.*"). Attention: she sang that song wearing a ... hat, or did she still have something 'physical' left without - love!? More fitting to the iconic image from 1924 of Masereel and especially chronologically parallel to it, is the film whose screenplay was written in the same year 1924. Due to the astronomical costs of "*Metropolis*", this German film would only be shown in cinemas worldwide in 1927. With this film, director Fritz Lang (1890 - 1976) made one of the innumerable city films of the 20th century, which can also be called the century of the film genre. At the same time, he would absolutely certainly introduce the city as a true player with this film. Fritz Lang would then repeat this city film with the gripping thriller with the telling title "*M. Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder.*" (1931 + "*M. A city is looking for a murderer.*"). With a human penchant for paraphrasing - and often imitating, just say more or less legally stealing (hihihi) - one could propose an alternative title for Masereel's "*The Kiss*" as "*Zwei Stadtbewohner auf der Suche nach Liebe.*"; that is somewhat moralizing or a fairly ridiculous title of course. It can - metablytically seen - be no coincidence that just after the year 1924 - with "*Metropolis*" and Masereel's "*The Kiss*" - the city played a leading role in the field of art again, now in a novel or a piece of writing, by John Dos Passos (1896 - 1970) with "*Manhattan Transfer*" (1925)

This work of art by Ghent and European Frans Masereel is iconic because it is simply graphically exceptionally well or suddenly perfectly depicted. It is almost anti-artistic in these times because it is completely or easily recognizable, or just not to be situated or delineated as distorted (expressionism), mystical (symbolism) in colored forms (cubism) or form-seeking colors (fauvism). The work could just as well have been carved in wood and printed on paper five hundred years earlier. The work is more than "*The Kiss*" by August Rodin and also that little bit more than "*The Kiss*" by Constantin Brancusi an icon of longing for the buddy, the partner, that one love with which one thinks (thinks) one must (must) unite. It shows an improbably inexhaustible urge for a deep bond with one other. The philosopher Plato (Πλάτων, circa 427 BC - 347 BC and not to be confused with the exceptional writer of writers or at least one of the greatest political (indeed) analysts of the 20th century, Andrei Platonov - Андрей Платонов, 1899 - 1951) already spoke in his "*Symposium*" (circa 385 BC) about the universal "*search for the other half*", a mythological representation of course, the reason for which we do not need to say anything here (the Gods who after all... blah blah...). That well-known text fragment was honestly far-fetched, but as is the case with all myths, it answered a fundamental human question: why connect ourselves to another person, and preferably and especially even forever to that one!? Frans Masereel actually explains that question here like

an old-fashioned, solid schoolmaster. Consequently, one needs zero "layers" to understand this work. Of course, one must first encounter or find the work concretely, which is physically much easier than with those stupid paintings of which usually only one was made, unless one, as a painter, was very happy to be tempted to make various "own copies" of coveted work for the precious money. Formally, Masereel uses the so-called environment or a very large part of the background in relation to the foreground of the two young people surrendering to each other (young is the future and everyone loves future-future-future plus those who remain young at heart are ... young!) to explain precisely this foreground in a strengthening way. That is no coincidence of course, because it is an art method that is doubly formally known as cold, ever-reheated tasty porridge. Not only had almost every painter since ab urbe condita and therefore long before the invention of perspective internally arranged representations so that one could, as it were, hold exercises for student surveyors. But in the meantime, something like Gestalt psychology had started around 1900. And those ... parts ... completely ... Well, you know how it is because if you are a man, when you are attracted to a woman you first look at ... then ... to finally ... And Frans Masereel did this even before you because he was alive and kicking then and absorbing impressions and emitting expressions, next to being a serious stud.

The man Masereel was technically unimaginably gifted and as a small child - we have confirmed this via an email from Plato, or was it from Platonov? - never ate with a knife and fork, let alone with a baby spoon, but only with gouges and knives. And always on wooden planks: ceramic, tin or = yuck! We see, among other things, or especially on both sides - of course horizontally, or is that vertical for you? Or call it left and right - two blocks of houses that are neatly opposed in black and white or formally attracted to each other. Of course, those blocks of houses have windows, because those two youngsters are not monkeys who can swing themselves upwards via the ... Via what, actually? Incidentally, you see two factual errors in one of those two blocks of houses. For example, you will not find a second window under the man's window on the side. No, incorrect, that window is closed or has closed shutters! The real mistake is therefore at the window below that of the girl because that window has no flower box irons - or can you suggest another name for this iron thing that is thought of here by us? Indeed, both the girl and the boy who are so eager to lean towards each other that they can finally touch each other, are technically or for rather obvious safety reasons slightly if sufficiently supported by these irons, which for the rest cannot possibly have any other function than something as a support for flower boxes. It is of course a great find by seer and doer Frans Masereel who saw all that as if he were Fritz Lang himself, an impossible person it seems who drew lines on the film floors where 'his' actors and actresses had to step. And you guessed it; if their legs were too short and they could not take steps according to Lang's pre-programmed wish, this Fritz started to drag those legs. Now those were real ideologists and bosses of directors who let the wildly ambitious young men and women toil without nannies on the work floor without them going to court afterwards because of ..., - because of missed career opportunities? In fact, the boy from "*The Kiss*" leans more towards the girl as is appropriate with all etiquette - "*Ladies first*" - which made him grab those irons in terms of safety regulations: that's how careful director Masereel was with this actor of his! And which at the same time gave this image more verve and was not just a stupid symmetrical representation as if it came from Old Constantinople just before Iconoclasm.

There are more blocks of houses than these two blocks framing the view, which at the same time make both sides extremely dynamic. You can try to count all the blocks because we don't; really don't feel like it. There was unimaginable construction here - and in height! It is chock full of blocks of houses, some of which approach the skyscrapers of New York. That city in what is still the New World - where is that new world now and is this world, if it exists,

also given capital letters as initials? - was a place where in 1924 Frans Masereel had certainly never been and whose skyline he could therefore only know from images, in books, magazines or films. Those apartment blocks or skyscrapers of "*The Kiss*" by Masereel stand there similar to architectural pillars, an art element that had been used in various ways millions of times since the earliest Greeks. These pillars have a second meaning because pillars were there in these times and from the end of the 19th century in various, let's say deeply separated constructions and afterwards until about the eve of WWII in enormous development: the pillarization! Literally visible in striking architecture and concrete politics and present in all kinds of social ways in almost all of the then existing Western European societies, you had almost everywhere 3/4/5 pillars that carried the canopy of heaven above the territory of the pillar worshipers. There was the usually dominant Catholic pillar that was often double because it consisted of a more working-class next to a more bourgeois sub-pillar. Unless you were colorblind, you could not ignore the red socialist and blue liberal pillars. A little later, brown and red communist pillars emerged or would very soon even push away the other pillars completely, if not definitively. But let us first or only here look at our tangible or visible loved ones who were probably workers. Otherwise they would of course live in a posh villa or a townhouse or simply in the countryside. That from two different and literally completely opposite buildings, say two real or philosophical/political pillars, two people - residents perhaps, visitors perhaps, even ... thieves, then heart thieves? - reach out to each other with their hands and lips and hearts, effectively kiss each other, it is of great and not just purely sentimental or cozy amorous importance.

The title of this work is "*The Kiss*". And that is in Dutch "*De Kus*", as it is stated on the website page of the Ghent museum about this work. That is - we may say it now or almost confess - not correct. The correct or only title is "*Le baiser*" as one neatly even colorblind but not completely blind; no work of art is ever signed with braille, don't ask us why because we would do it if we happened to be visual artists. Just look at the bottom left in the pencil for the handwritten indication of the title, next to the mention "*14/28*" or the number of this edition. Masereel was certainly mainly French-speaking throughout his life, of course because as an adult he almost always lived in France; do you know a single Frenchman who speaks another language or wants to speak another language at all? French is a fantastic language that is apparently spoken by its natives while they think they are the center and more of the world. Masereel certainly knew Dutch. The fact that he gave this title in French was of course, besides something obvious linguistically, above all a lame joke. The French word "*baiser*" or "kiss" has the somewhat milder "*bisou*" as a synonym. But "*baiser*" as a French verb or written in exactly the same way as the noun "*baiser-kiss*" means a little more that happens while one continues kissing or has just ended up doing so: fucking. "*On va baiser?*" ("*Let us go to fuck?*") is something that is now easily said in dance halls and so on, but in free-spirited environments such as that of Frans Masereel, it was not pronounced but simply done. By the way, it has been known for centuries that French people - at least in the so-called higher circles - fuck each other like rabbits, something that pays off because "we know each other" or regardless of their respective ... pillars! The ever delightful and ideal son-in-law next to the reader at the hearth Bart Van Loo (1973) already wrote about it in his popular "*France trilogy. Eating! Reading/Making love!*" (2011). La douce France is also or even more la pouce France, if you mean what we read - or something like that. Further on we will make the connection between kissing and making love a bit more explicit, as it was certainly present here in this title and naturally flows from the work or the image of "*The Kiss*". However, the title of the work could have been somewhat moralizing: "*Make love not war.*". But that was not interesting because then artist FM - the man cut those letters in his wood blocks in the blink of an eye - immediately gave a 'layer' to this work, through the title that somehow

remained somewhat without complete concealment. Although complete nonsense or total non-conformity with the apparent content of the image in question is perhaps the most interesting for a title - quoi? Whether Masereel could mumble a few words of English, we do not know and we do not expect that either. But as said, he could do much more than mumble or stumble in Dutch.

"*De Kus*" is therefore the familiar or fixed title for this work for the Flemish - usually Dutch speakers - who, not coincidentally, en masse also know a lot of the almost always graphic work of Frans Masereel because they love it very much. We will just say that we are not Flemish nationalists at all, but it is undeniable that French speakers, at least in Belgium, can be called backward people, culturally or humanly speaking, because they look down on and sneer at almost everything that concerns "*le flamand*". One should hear them pronounce it so intensely disapprovingly or one almost wants to attack the speaker's throat, except that this - oops, and we will hold back because we do not want any complaints about racism or tralalala. Nevertheless, for once we do not have a language battle about the title of this work, so to speak. It is probably due to the great actual stupidity of the French speakers who hardly want to learn a word of Dutch, that up to now a culture war has never broken out about the correct title: "*Le baiser*" or perhaps "*De Kus*". And if that had happened, we repeat that this is more of a coincidence, that would testify to enormous irony because it would completely go against the ideal of Frans Masereel, not only in his entire long and downright impressive life's work - what a man or a real or great artist!!! - but even within this one work!!! Indeed, every small child who at least speaks Dutch - and in this case even only or mainly a Flemish dialect - knows that a "kiss" has the word "*zoen*" as a synonym. The word "*zoen*" has the verb form "*zoenen*" and that means exactly the same as the verb "*kussen*": kissing! According to our increasingly poor knowledge of the language, "*zoen/zoenen*" has no similar alternative in French. "*Zoen/zoenen*" are seen as such as a bit more modest or less lustful than "*kiss/kissing*", do you understand? But. Always the eternal but or at least if you know Dutch, a knowledge that is therefore (???) not shared by the majority of at least the French-speaking Belgian compatriots or also residents of the EU. In any case, the Dutch word "*verzoenen*" means - as in "*een verzoenend gebaar*" - a lot because in English it should be translated as "*a concialtory gesture*". "*Verzoenen*" is not 'really' "*zoenen*" but it comes very close to it. But you know that! You know smoking the peace pipe! And if you are against tobacco, you know and have perhaps experienced the kiss of peace! The "*verzoening/reconciliation*!"

Then think of the blocks of houses or pillars from which both protagonists approach/hang/float/fly towards each other ... From the end of the 19th century, political and ideological pillars stood directly opposite each other. Something like forging coalitions was not possible in the early parliamentary democracy of the 19th century. It was a local and national battle that was often literally fought to the death with countless life-long, mentally, physically and/or socially horribly mutilated victims, including for "*the soul of the child*"! Let us think of the train of "*The Kiss*" that was of pure survival importance for leading Catholic Belgium in order to keep its electorate at home by the hearth and under the church tower, away from the godless socialism in the cities and heavily industrialized regions! Moreover, there was something else or the well-known "*more*" - and now even more! When publishing "*The Kiss*" in 1924, Frans Masereel had made incessantly and countless anti-war drawings throughout the terrible experience of 1914 - 1918, where French against German workers fought, especially among socialists; there was no International anymore because of all nationalism! No more .. EU! Or no EU already, as you wish. These blocks of houses, these architectural pillars were also the countries of old Europe. It was the Europe of 1919 - 1920 in which the treaties of Versailles and Trianon had inflicted immeasurable wounds, sometimes still unhealable for all those involved. 1924 was also precisely after 1919 - 1920 and 'also'

after 1914 - 1918. Versailles and Trianon were without the slightest doubt the source of the outbreak of WWII. The well-known British historian Norman Davis (1939) calls Europe in a constant war from 1914 to 1990; he will extend that 'in the meantime' because from a perspective of 2022 - 2024/? By the way, we know the work of this historian reasonably well and certainly have a lot of respect for his work and intellectual capacity. But we therefore (sic) do not care about his clear disdain for "*small historiography*"; after all, we use both approaches and find that philosophically and democratically useful, if not necessary. His position is simply ridiculous and incomprehensible. Besides, each cow blows wind on her own udders. Frans Masereel was also such a double-decker. All his life he was, call it a do-gooder, idealist or whatever; he did his best to ... man .. society ... uplift. In addition, he liked to make some cozy love with his daily coffee and glass of wine. And descending to the arts, to that one work of art to be made again and again: here he flew at a high level, of something like idealism of course and at the same time at the so-called formal art level.

With the considerations around the meaning of "*kus/zoen/verzoening*", we must again - **See Jenny Montigny** - point out the fundamental philosophical character of Dutch, a language that, like any other language, is difficult and yet learnable, even for er In any case, every ambitious philosophy department anywhere in the world can gradually start considering scheduling Dutch as a minor in the philosophy program. "*The Kiss*" is really - look at the image and compare it with the words - about a kiss, because the title of this work is not like the ultimately extremely stupid but oh so well-known and quoted to death title "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*" by a certain ... er That title creator and so-called wit and actually a big little child or a form of eternal bedwetter or the gradually very much over-hyped René Magritte (1898 - 1967) was, for goodness sake, a fanatic of communism for a long time: even after the worldwide revelations in 1956 about leader Stalin? Oh dear, father Stalin did all that to get that gigantic and gigantically backward peasant nation into the industrial speed of nations. We still hear or read about this insanity or supreme cognitive dissonance to this day and undoubtedly again tomorrow. See the lifelong very interesting, hard-working amateur journalist Willy Van Damme from our dear Dendermonde, who can write beautiful, educational pieces about, let's say, ordinary life. But. Who, when it comes to big politics, is an ordinary servant of Russia, read the USSR (still alive with him!) becomes schizophrenic. He has been a remarkable man, apparently for decades. Do you know "*Pasha Antipov/Strelnikov*" from "*Doctor Zhivago*" (fantastic book and film) then you know sourpuss and sour thinker Willy! Wasn't it the eternally sharp Henry de Montherlant (1895 - 1970) who once - in his beautiful French - said never to trust a person who can't laugh? What this driven journalist, undoubtedly enjoying a Belgian government pension that is ten to ??? times larger than an average Soviet - pardon Russian - monthly salary and who has therefore (!) never been seen to laugh for a single second as a true Parteigenosse, has been spouting off about 'big' politics on his website and in thousands of letters to the editor for years! He would not survive a single hour in his beloved Russia: cut off from the internet and thrown out of the nearest window beforehand, after which the entire contents would of course be plundered: see [Willy Van Damme's Weblog \(wordpress.com\)](#). If only Willy Van Damme, pardon René Magritte, had not continued working in the wallpaper sector, because that at least yielded democratic or almost everyone's affordable products, while in the end it could bring distraction and peace to the ordinary to occasionally unusual ones from the street or the moon, almost everywhere in their homes. As for the Suslov epigone Willy Van Damme - again, living richly with a Belgian government pension and probably previously appointed party politically in of course a government service known for its clientelism (or self-service for and by its own staff - haha) who ... But come on or are we now supposedly too 'personal'? Although he likes to shit from his fat villa and constantly on the corrupt and capitalist Belgium and its tralala and tralalie.

What he has felt the need to write for two years now about the Ukraine affair is inhuman and purely crappy. Although we like to hear and stimulate other bells and have had serious problems with "*our big mouth*" professionally and privately, too much is too much and we have not read that blog of Willy Van Damme for a number of years. Yet we want to take another look because with the non-Stalinist hope of 'self-purification'; really. His work - an apparently life's work unfortunately - is, together with his previous years of whining about the also by him highly praised Bashar al-Assad (1965) in Syria, a real example for future academic historians and even philosophers about manipulation of 'truth', in addition to predominantly effective mainly beautiful reporting when it concerns local or 'halal' news. Or how one can be schizophrenic about political reporting. But long live the freedom of writing and speaking! Although a little straightforwardness or elementary honesty is in his place, right. Compared to a true art giant like Frans Masereel, René Magritte is the level of his shoe sweeper - or did Masereel walk around in the South of France mainly with feather-light sandals!? Frans Masereel has produced a remarkable number of intensely attractive and eternal works, although mainly in his first ten years after WWI; who is going to point this out to him as a shortcoming seen in the usually suffocating light of an entire oeuvre? Please! Not only because of his extreme later expensiveness but even in the form of simply affordable reproductions, we have never seen walls of houses 'wallpapered' with a Magritte outside of student rooms; And there he hangs in his place or is what he means in itself; an artist on the level of cooing students. Masereel, on the other hand, who ... Inseparable from that - claim the opposite! - Frans Masereel was a different quality of person. After all, he was in word and thought, in action and deed a pacifist and internationalist, a bridge-maker or bridge-builder. No slave, no servant of political lords or capitalists but a simple very hard working man who made 'figurines' that appealed to top writers and almost every very ordinary to ... person. And where possible he was a pedagogue because he voluntarily taught young people. Effectively, just like his great friend Romain Rolland he would rave about communism in the second half of the 1930s and 'therefore' visit the USSR, then already the largest graveyard in the world for murdered compatriots, allies even countless other internationalists - but Potemkin was alive because the foreigners who only visited for a short time got to see nothing but something 'good'! Both raved about that communism from an anti-fascism but were never members of the party to our knowledge, the complete mirror image of fascism: brown next to red fascism.

4. Graphic artist par excellence Frans Masereel is also an artist through ... stained glass windows?

When we wanted to start writing this paragraph of this study on "*The Kiss*" by Frans Masereel, we came across a lecture by chance that was given on Masereel and the theme "*City*" by the Belgian art historian Steven Jacobs (1967). See

[MSK Lezing : Stadssymfonie op papier. Frans Masereel en de metropool \(Steven Jacobs\) \(youtube.com\)](#)

We are going to say roughly that we like to refer to this lecture but because of only two arms and so on and even because of growing older or weaker somewhat less than two, we have not analyzed this lecture, not even looked at it. Undoubtedly an interested reader of this study and of that lecture can find parallels, in addition to also or only contrasts? We ourselves have a whole series of books about Frans Masereel that we have not yet been able to go through in their entirety, because we are waiting for a blessed moment when we have the time and desire to make a thematic study about Frans Masereel possible for us. The man did indeed live a long time and - therefore (?) - produced an enormous amount, always the same or making woodcuts on the assembly line next to some other and especially much less successful work.

We do not want to repeat it too much but remain honest because Frans; a genius with the gouge but a klutz with the brush. So what because who can say that he is already a genius in one art domain? Elsewhere on this website we will attempt to make a small plea so that many, at least future, artists in the world will want to 'produce' a lot less. Fortunately, very fortunately, there are quantitatively a lot less 'real' artists than 'ordinary' people. Imagine if it were the other way around: more artists than ordinary people!?! Although we would like to make a quick plea for more active art in passing, both in the areas of music and visual arts - including or especially during school hours where one is better ... In any case, an ordinary person has to look at all that artistic violence or even buy most of it (although the reverend artist Rubens was a great buyer of art, from before and from his own time). And that under the question; is all that really necessary, is every person, even a so-called creative person like a visual artist, called to always be busy and busy and ...? And wouldn't he or she be better off, entirely or from the well-known 'a certain' moment, occupying themselves as a nurse, engineer, garbage collector (of extreme importance!) etc. with more really useful things: in their free time they can also paint top works, sculpt, ...! That sounds a bit harsh, even cynical, and as far as the artist as a whole is concerned partly desperate, but it is simply a responsible question. In any case, and we have already mentioned it, the relatively young Masereel, seen within his artistic career, was busy carving wood on the theme of the city in 1924. Later, one would get quite a fuss - we find little of it because both his subtlety and his strength are apparently nowhere to be found here - from him on the theme of the sea, which can't have been a coincidence for someone who lived in Nice for so long and from 1949 onwards. Wasn't that town still on the sea then? By the way, and certainly not to single out the just-quoted professor Steven Jacobs - we had not even heard of this man before this fragment from Youtube - there is, so to speak, a perfect parallel to be drawn with the international epidemic academic publication fuss of the last thirty years or so, which can be simply summarized as "*Publish or Perish*". The ever-present Gaussian curve tells us that excellent to actually groundbreaking work - both in the field of art and therefore in the academic field - is very, very small. We readily admit that we can be accused of a hidden agenda here, but several times over the last roughly 35 years (at our current age of 61) we have refused various in themselves beautiful offers for publications because-because. And that was our scientific view in cases that 99.999999% of people would have jumped on. Even (haha) regarding our - pardon - paradigmatic approach to human behavior in times of crisis such as WWII, we have hesitated quite a bit about whether to start letting go and in which parts. Secondly, at a very strategic moment like in the spring of 2015, we were actually stabbed in the back or simply sabotaged by our formal academic supervisor when we asked him to help us to finally start publishing; please. Incidentally, he would not be the only obstructor or suffocator at the so-called academic top level around that groundbreaking research. But now it is also about a really extremely sensitive political, moral, historical and ??? subject: politics around WWII. We will talk about that later and unfortunately necessary.

On the other hand, genius artists, next to similar scientists, almost without exception always stand at the top of a pyramid, or at a level where they are figuratively if not literally supported by so-called lesser gods, from their country and tradition. These lesser gods can in themselves be of a very high level, at least on a national level, as we may say with painter Emile Claus: **See Emile Claus/Jenny Montigny** ... It is extremely rare to have to deal with a form of one-hit wonders such as Evard Munch (1863 - 1944). That one hit really came out of nowhere, because from a Scandinavian desert in the field of visual arts. He himself would not even be the impetus for the formation of schools! Of course, comparative art is not about sprinting or basketball and such: try to give operational definitions of why this or that artist or scientist is better or more important than the other. In any case, through a fair amount of experience we

are of the firm, motivated, well-founded, if never concrete opinion that, as far as Belgian visual artists in particular are concerned from the period that interests us a lot, 1880 - 1950, there are effectively hundreds of relevant or attractive artists; Flemish, Walloons as well as Brussels residents (many came from Saint-Josse-ten-Node or lived there; there is nothing left of that now, but let us skip this perspective before we are not more obedient to certain rules). One and the other have as a consequence ... No, we first make the distinction between intention and consequence. An intention is an idea that one makes in advance as an artist or scientist of what the importance of an attempt at a work of art or written thought within an article or book will entail. An effect is that idea that almost everyone can make afterwards or from the very moment after the appearance of a work of art or article/book of the then as well as future value. We find it of the utmost pedagogical importance that the 'youth' is taught logic in an introductory and above all illustrative way. The distinction between intention and effect must certainly be part of this, although we hope to read interesting analyses one day about whether effects cannot be partly conceived through intentions, while ... blah blah blah ... We add this mention of the future importance of something creative because from a moment that a certain breadth of society has established that 'something' as a creation is valuable, this will in principle be even more important in the future. In this respect, a distinction can certainly be made between art and science, but we cannot go into that now. One consequence is that for Belgium there are nevertheless masses of very beautiful works of art for this period 1880 - 1950 - subtract a bit but do not add too much because with the living it is almost always expensive or just read on - available to, in other words; soft prices. It is often to be astonished by it and in any case it is one more reason to be very suspicious of modern, say living, especially established artists who charge prices - as is known almost never themselves because their instigators, next to later their parasites the gallery owners, who also have to ... - who are not only morally and so on insane and scandalous, but therefore unattainable for more than 99.9999% of the Belgian population. This observation is on the other hand a plea in itself - which we will discuss elsewhere later - to pay much more attention, so also financially, say when spending your personal art budget, to very young, not yet established artists.

Something funny is - and you should have heard us coming a long time ago - that within a work of an artist and/or scientist, there are periods of let's say top with lows. For our Frans Masereel that is indeed very noticeable because roughly after 1930 he has made almost nothing of great importance. But he has still (sic) produced and at an incredibly high level of work. The blunthead did stay alive 'therefore' in action until 1972; blame him. We don't have to deal with that now because "*The Kiss*" dates from 1924 or - which can of course be concluded from this work - until his great or top period can be evaluated. And that was approximately fifty (50) years before his own physical death. It is generally accepted, or even by experts, that another Belgian, European or world phenomenon of art, James Ensor (1860 - 1949), had already had his peak period behind him around 1890. Just as everyone knows or realizes that James Ensor, albeit often with quiet intervals for longer periods of time, continued to paint and - even more than ever before - sell. And that was rounded off even longer than with colleague Frans Masereel, namely sixty (60) years! Elsewhere in this study on art we will see that a painter who was already internationally famous during his lifetime quickly sold - or gave - a portrait of himself around his own sister to the local or even national museum of their country: **See Edvard Munch** We believe we once read that a certain Luc Tuymans would have 'kept' so-called important works of art of his in his studio for a very long time (...) in order to be able to sell them - read at an affordable price - to their own Belgian museums. What a loser because in principle the Belgian authorities should partly sponsor the man - through tax reduction or something - so that all his work would go abroad

because it is bad for the Belgian public health. And we do not use *volk* here in the sense of Nazism of course - please! - but in the sense of the generally used "*public health*"!

To be honest, we have not investigated to what extent this graphic "*The Kiss*", a standard work of art of the Low Countries and of all humanity, belongs to the permanent, that is, hanging collection of the Ghent museum. The relatively many times that we have visited that super interesting museum over the last 45 years or so, we have, to be honest, no memory of a single graphic on the walls - as far as the permanent collection is concerned. For another thing, we have often looked at the floor there, certainly when "Arte Povera" was still represented there, something we laughed about for a long time at the time, but which gave us a great idea thirty years later or around our 55th birthday: with sincere thanks to "Arte Povera" and the museum! What are all those works hanging on all those walls doing? Every now and then a curator or director comes along who wants to tell a new story for bedtime and museum time and the docile foot soldiers of the visitors come in large numbers or not, attracted by this song of the New Lorelei, as long as it is not too new or the city or Flemish politics intervenes. Now everyone knows that Frans Masereel was a passionate world improver, someone who is normally remembered as the former teacher. Does that still correspond with the 'modern', say current - and therefore ever changing, haha - image of a visual artist? Shouldn't they all be mainly ... or even ... or just ...? We wipe our feet on this presentation of all the curators and directors in the world and we always felt terribly cheated if we ever took the trouble to go and see a so-called super important thematic or curated exhibition. That was then put together by an unbelievably handsome curator - always world famous; was that person perhaps born that way? Wow, what a formidably wonderful woman, her mother!! That should be used to breed descendants, right!? - or preferably by a new museum director who had invented the hot water of art for the thousand and first time. One does just that with the knowledge of the difference between intention and effect, because from the choc of trials and errors comes the light.

We may say that the work "*The Kiss*" by Ghent native and world citizen Masereel is a primeval image, as we said earlier about "*The Kiss*" by Brancusi - albeit now a bit more 'primal'! Is that possible? We think so because we dared or were able to formulate these words ourselves. You know the hackneyed story that "*The sky is the limit*". Well, everyone knows that 'the sky' is not at all 'the limit'. But that there is so much more to discover above that sky. And, it is nice to look up but because of that you will fall a lot more easily by not being able to pay attention to the crooked stones through the roads of life: You please look a lot below the sky. What you can find there to see and experience! One of our objectives of this website is therefore indeed to look a little more 'below' in the field of visual arts, such as not only at those overwhelming paintings but also at graphics, not only at those overwhelming artists who were already canonized during their lifetime, which apparently means that they mainly sell very expensively, but also at more locally known even folk artists. In any case, we pay much more attention to the aspect of the craft of the function of visual artist, such as next to her and him the baker, butcher, roofer and so on. It is a given for every person, whether he is fond of looking at and even collecting art or not at all, that this person need a roofer. Rain usually falls from the sky and one needs a roof over one's head for protection. Any building has essentially three dimensions: there is the above (with any form of roof), there is the below (foundation) opposite that and in between something like walls in yet another artistic or architectural way. Of course one needs a door because otherwise it is not a building but a pile of material, with at best something artistic of meaning. Apart from extreme exceptions such as an igloo, all buildings have windows or the function that lets in light and air. In a number of cases - apparently mainly through what one may call a Western tradition - those windows are

used in an artistic way. Those windows are called stained glass windows or one speaks of stained glass art.

The Cathedral of Our Lady of Doornik/Tournai is one of the most important buildings and churches in Belgium. It radiates world class as a whole and in all respects. It is in itself one of the largest churches in the world in Romanesque style. Unfortunately, in the middle of the 13th century it was decided to demolish the choir and replace that Romanesque style with the new modern style, the Gothic - apparently people did not know then that every modern thing is old tomorrow. That choir has an enormous stylistic inconsistency or does not fit with the remaining Romanesque main part, although such a mixture is often pleasant and even valuable in itself because it can be called very open to democratic. One cannot imagine that there were wishes to also adapt that rest to the modern/new. Fortunately, that wish never saw the light of day. The result of the Gothic choir is nevertheless impressive. The choir is truly stretched to the architectural extreme. It provides a breathtaking effect but gives structural problems that had to be solved early on by an enormous iron construction that literally holds that choir together. These reinforcements are not a pretty sight in themselves but the effect of the choir remains impressive in any case. It can hardly be a coincidence that the very important comic book publisher "*Casterman*" started in that same Tournai. Anyone who takes a first step into the choir and, because of its uniqueness, wants to continue and walk the entire ambulatory, experiences nothing other than the experience of walking next to or through gigantic open strips. The cardboard of each strip naturally consists of the stone parts of that choir. And these, as building elements, as it were neutral or at least necessary to support the upper part or the roof, are actually nothing other than the reasons for the thing itself; the stained glass windows! Walk here on a normal, not even wonderfully sunny day, and the experience is indescribable and a walk through that entire choir, where of course the incidence of light partly changes, makes it completely unique. In Christian or at least Catholic churches, every square metre was ultimately an occasion or obligation to decorate something: from the floor over the walls and pillars along the purely tangible empty space (with hanging crucifixes) to the ceilings and roofs. The stained glass window is probably the most striking element in terms of architecture as well as art. To this day, stained glass windows are not only restored as carefully as possible, but are also continually made new. See, among others, multi-artist and excellent art critic Harold Van de Perre (1937). See [WERKEN | Harold Van de Perre](#) Harold is a man who gave a lecture with slides in the town hall of Dendermonde around Jan Van Eyck (circa 1390 - 1441) around 1980. And that lecture would remain with us so deeply that around 2005 it would also provide us with an article on art resistance in WWII, a case that has plunged us to this day and for much longer into analysis of political behavior around WWII with 'among other things' more than ten thousand pages of analyses and various internationally important scientific discoveries. How seeds can be sown. With certain consequences.

Indeed, Frans Masereel is in his own way and impressively throughout his entire career a maker of ... stained glass windows. Wait a minute. Stained glass windows are made of glass and iron; his work is (mainly) carved wood printed on paper. Probably every piece of glass ever made anywhere is multi-coloured; his graphic work is exclusively in black and white. And it is no detail that stained glass windows are representations of images but at the same time let light through or that they mediate it through their own presence. Every graphic work by Frans Masereel has an impenetrable support; paper. Very many stained glass windows, or at least in the most publically noticeable way, are located in churches. We have never seen a single woodcut by "*FM*" in a church, or it was a written-off, deconsecrated church that functioned as a museum. We have already said above that we want to study in depth in ways a

religiosity present in the work of the freethinker next to liberal Frans Masereel one day; Lord let us live long to write much that is interesting! However, we may or must say here that there is one very important thing that all stained glass art of all in any case older churches, such as the cathedral of Tournai, have in common with the artist Frans Masereel: wanting to educate the people or is that no longer allowed in retrospect, even looking ahead? Does playing at school take place for a long time, albeit only between the ages of 3 and 18, even until the age of 25, and is it definitely over after that time? Isn't education and learning for every day, until the last day, the day of dementia praecox!? Will we - at least the believers - not also be asked at the Last Judgment how much we have studied? In our almost twenty-year research into political behavior around WWII, especially in the Belgian city of Ronse, we have done an extremely large amount of applied genealogical research for the period roughly 1800 - 1950. We could not help but notice that up until WWI people could not or hardly write/read. From the beginning of the glorious story of the cathedrals and other large churches to ordinary village churches and even chapels, the stained glass window was there to teach the good people something about the broad story of that building where they were or where they constantly and at least once a week came together to celebrate the story itself, that of Jesus. The stained glass windows were the comic strips of that time. Especially the earlier "*novels in picture*" by Frans Masereel from 1918 to around 1930 are every time like the corridor in the choir of, among others, the cathedral of Tournai.

It is certain that many works from Masereel's gigantic oeuvre can be situated in terms of content and even time. This speaks for itself for his endless stream of anti-war images during WWI. As unfortunately said, we know nothing about the history of the creation of the image "*The Kiss*". Almost moralizingly, we know that Masereel liked to splash in kiss and coikiss. In addition - and besides? - he was an eternal world improver, indeed eternal because during his life that simply continues through the very broad admiration. We may also see "*The Kiss*" as a stained glass window that he installed in the church of life, of every possible house, although in itself it is apparently only hanging on a museum wall - and hopefully somewhere on 27 other walls, preferably not even once in a ... safe!? We already said that he was friends with the phenomenon Georg Grosz for a while and thus in very appealing company. It is unknown how their further communication remained, perhaps by letter? We have no data on actual mutual influence and although we love both their work very much, we do not have time to investigate this hypothesis. In any case, there was that grandiose biting and fiery mockery in George Grosz that we did not encounter in Masereel's work after WWI. Certainly a work like "*The Kiss*" seems almost impossible to us in Georg Grosz. It was not for nothing that he called his 1946 autobiography "*Ein kleines Ja und ein großes Nein.*", later translated as "*A Little Yes and a Big No.*". You do not have to be a respectable footballer to immediately shoot the cross that Masereel's life's work can safely be called a "*Big Yes from a Big No*". He honestly embodied our own way of thinking because from a very critical approach, building up and building up - not breaking down for the sake of breaking down or simply cynicism, in addition to no exorbitant profit as an artist, mind you. With this, we have quickly added, not at all said that Georg Grosz was not a great artist because in our opinion he certainly said a ... Big Yes!

We have already seen "*The Kiss*" as a political window, through our analysis of the phenomenon of the columns. We can use the idea of a window, of a special stained glass window again, both on a purely human and universal level, but also politically. In the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo (1475 - 1564) had man meet God, not with a kiss 'obviously' but with that other form of touch or almost touch - see those fingers. They lay/hung at - almost - the same height and with completely identical size, say equality. That in itself was unprecedented

because that in the Holy of Holies of the Vatican, also at a command of his heavenly jubilant overlord of the Church, the Pope. That equal descent on the one hand or elevation on the other hand between God and man had naturally become a complete equality between the two people in "*The Kiss*", which took place somewhere in Berlin, somewhere in New York, Calcutta, ... Yet the aim was identical or a real encounter. Admittedly, God is situated a little higher in Michelangelo's work than man - Adam, and Eve could also be considered, although she was not given a place, possibly because Michelangelo was probably in favor of male love? - then the young woman and the young man of "*The Kiss*" are to be found on completely the same floors, although not on the ground floor. But they are present in other blocks, in other columns. Okay, this was the new city, even if it was as old as the Roman street, because Old Rome in particular had been an extremely large city. Loneliness and longing were in urban areas of all times and regions, whether it was the Old World (Rome), Old Europe (Berlin, Paris, Ghent, etc.) or the New World (New York, etc.). In effect, the city had long been, and certainly in the spirit of Frans Masereel, a place for relative or, at that time, maximum possible freedom. Let us not forget that he spent his youth growing up and his education as an artist in the proud city of Ghent, also with a top artist who had been imbued with Ghent and its traditions all his life, such as Jules De Bruycker. Ghent had always been one of the most turbulent, rebellious or free cities in all of Western Europe, until the end of the 16th century - except in ... 1302, hahaha. That was an incredibly deep tradition that lived on in everyone who was born there or especially would grow up there. In our long article from 2006 "*Een zwaar gewapend tapijt met een subtiële vingerwijzing naar de vrijheid. Een wandtapijt rond Ronse als voorbeeld van symbolische verzetkunst uit WOII.*" ("*A heavily armed carpet with a subtle reference to freedom. A tapestry around Ronse as an example of symbolic resistance art from WWII.*"). We were immediately asked by a certain professor of history Bruno De Wever UGent to shorten the article for publication in the magazine BTNG as well as to expand it through a doctorate in art history on similar ambiguous art resistance in Western Europe. Because we wanted to go 'further' and did not feel like taking side steps, we declined those offers, but the fact was that the Ghent tapestry weaver Gaston Woedstad (1886 - 1950) discussed in that article was deeply influenced by the very long tradition of Ghent rebellion in that tapestry from 1943 or the full occupation period.

But city air made it free, it did not make you happy. Conversely, it did not mean at all that village air or the environment of the countryside automatically meant that one was much less free there but still more happy. Being born, growing up, making love and getting married and having children; it was all fairly fixed, rock solid until death. The country person was, as the Dutch say, "*honkvast*", bound to his house or "*homely*". There are countless studies on the changes or transitions from a person as a resident of the countryside to a city person or resident of and - mainly - factory worker in the city. The most famous example or expressed in an artistic here literary-theatrical way, about the mental gap that was created in the 19th century and for decades afterwards between the Flemish countryside and a city (in Belgium, Northern France, New York...) is the play "*Het gezin van Paemel*" (1903) by Cyriel Buysse (1859 - 1932), a particularly intriguing possibly by too many still underestimated even forgotten writer. We are (have been) huge film buffs and have only rarely been moved by theatre productions, but our fondest memories are of a performance of this iconic play by theatre group NTG in an inspiring direction by Dirk Tanghe (1956). The journey to and further life in the city brought with it terrible social misery. We ourselves would live for a very long time from 1982 in a very old workers' house in Ghent - Stokerijstraat 57; halo! - where it was very pleasant with, among other things, some great neighbours (and only one lesser one). But it was a neighbourhood that must have been rotten with poverty for decades. Many people must have felt terribly displaced, like drowning people in a sea of stone and

smoke. The enormous cloud of smoke from the locomotive in "*The Kiss*" by Masereel certainly stood for itself, but also for the unimaginable filthy smoke development due to the burning of masses of coal, both for the housing and for the countless factories and innumerable small workshops. One cannot imagine it, but for the nose and other human parts all these cities must have caused daily certain discouragement and simply health breakdowns. Nevertheless, and even more so for the fortune-seekers who finally wanted to taste the fruits of a better life via the medium of the city, the hormones raged continuously or daily at the sight of other interesting appearances like this woman. "*The Kiss*" is a "*Big Yes*" for life - also or especially ultimately in the city that all together yielded enormous advantages for most of its inhabitants.

We said that we would touch upon a political dimension in this paragraph. We ourselves have no idea how long we have known the work "*The Kiss*" by Frans Masereel - a very long time - or when we first encountered it. You undoubtedly have one or more memories of when you first met a person or event, such as the birth of the first child, or ... Our personal memory contains an enormous number of images, so much so that we can sometimes recognize works of visual art that we had never seen before but of which we certainly recognize the style or the hand of the master. We have no idea where studies exist on something like the psychology of the image, but it goes without saying that probably every person, at least in our Western culture dominated by images for two millennia, has been influenced and marked by one or more images from a very young age. In our study on Emile Claus, we give an analysis of the comic strip work of the famous duo "*Suske en Wiske*" in which we try to show the connection between the portrait of Jenny Montigny by Emile Claus and this comic strip "*Het brommende brons*" ("*The humming bronze*" + 1971). We read that comic strip at the time itself or were between seven and nine years old. That reading and especially one image from that comic strip clearly made a lifelong impression. It goes without saying that what happened during the Second World War throughout almost all of Europe left an indelible impression on every person. WWII came barely after the end of the First World War; there were only 22 years between them! That means nothing other than that an incredible number of Europeans were confronted twice by these terrible events. Frans Masereel was known for his entire life - which can be ridiculed or respected - as a world improver: he wanted to contribute to the ideal of a better, that is a more beautiful and more just world. With no place for war or room for healing its wounds. His and our "*The Kiss*" dates from 1924 or very shortly after the end of WWI at the end of 1918. Is it too much to ask of the human eye and then the human memory to have received this image with the greatest possible sensitivity and ... political processing!? We have been able to read or study relatively little throughout our lives, not least in picture books such as art books - often, although not always, with much 'text'. In Belgium or at least in Flanders, the publisher Mercatorfonds has been at a very high level since 1965 and others such as the Davidsfonds, Lannoo, Ludion ... have also contributed their share to artistic popular education. As mentioned, we ourselves do not know of any studies on the reception and further effects of images. Of course everyone knows something about the value or especially the power of what is called propaganda; Nazis and Soviets were formally masters in their times. And what is (capitalist) advertising other than a very intelligent and successful, because it absolutely certainly achieves its goal (increasing sales) continuous brainwashing with images and some text? But we ask you directly: what reception and effect have images by Frans Masereel, internationally at least in the then Europe and especially most in Western Europe, had on at least sensitive souls?

The question can be asked differently. Did art like this discussed "*The Kiss*" function as a stained glass window, as a window, as glasses, as a telescope ultimately with a view of or

insight into the so-called better future? That future meant for this Europe finally better international structures or mutual cooperation - or negatively and at the same time unimaginably positively formulated with "*Never again war!*". We are not thinking here of the foundation of the UNO at the end of WWII. We are thinking very precisely of the beginning of the Benelux between 'only' a few neighbouring countries, including Belgium, the country where Masereel was born and grew up but where he was not wanted until the end of the 1920s because of his anti-war attitude and actions and even entering the territory was "*Verboten!*". Did Masereel, as that great and very productive graphic artist and by very many famous European writers beloved because by them asked as an illustrator, leave a deep and lasting impression on a number of interesting readers? Somewhere now people are, and are constantly influenced, simply overwhelmed by information. The internet is very interesting but scrolling and rolling with a smartphone makes countless young and old people extremely stupid. It is also both ridiculous and tragic as well as fundamentally undemocratic and inhumane that the algorithms that constantly control and manage these people may not be consciously or openly communicated to them, so that they would get to know themselves better in this scientific way! Talk about irony over sarcasm. By the way, try to view even one interesting image or important work of art on such a ridiculously small screen of a smartphone. That alone is a reason for us not to purchase such a technical thing. It will probably have all kinds of really useful functions, such as in the field of advancing care of personal health and certainly for older and disabled people. It is theoretically interesting but almost certainly in terms of intellectual, personal archaeology unachievable, to examine the *Bildung* of the following people, the Frenchmen Jean Monnet (1888 - 1979) and Robert Schuman (1886 - 1963) and Konrad Adenauer (1876 - 1967). After the eternally reasonable Belgians, willing to compromise, had given the starting signal with the Benelux, these gentlemen, among others and very strongly inspiring, would be involved in the establishment of first the "*EGKS*" or "*ECSC*" or "*the European Coal and Steel Community*" (1952). Which would therefore (...) result in the EEC later EU. And the latter is without the slightest doubt, although of course doubtful and constantly discussed in terms of the 'modalities', the most important political organization ever on the wide European continent. Do you not like peace - and prosperity? We ask you further: do these three extremely important European politicians consequently - we reason the other way around? - among others, have especially read and watched images of Frans Masereel, in addition to the books of his friends like Stefan Zweig? In addition to of course their own extremely penetrating personal and political experiences throughout WWI and WWII.

It is again the story of intention and effect. It was without a doubt one lifelong drive of Ghent citizen and world citizen Frans Masereel to contribute to a better, more open, freer, more peaceful and art-oriented world. His lasting popularity has to do with that, or with the fact that he has, as it were, 'simply' created moving images such as with the popular "*The Kiss*", or - and that will probably be it - for both reasons. Of course, the talkative Frans Masereel has spoken about the technique of his mainly graphic art. But not as a main component of his life and work. From these considerations we may conclude on our tiptoes or at least slightly suggest out loud that Frans Masereel has had a great political influence, more specifically in a gigantically important area. He helped make the establishment of the EU possible, as an intention. Or as an effect?

5. North by Northwest - next to all cardinal directions?

In the few dozen far too few portraits of attractive women that we show throughout this all in all and by definition and per time eternally too modest website - an introduction for you that

you may consider as a gentle suggestion for your own further research - we are somewhat happy that we also have double portraits. They can be counted on one hand like the unique works of Rembrandt and Rubens: **See Rembrandt + See Rubens, The Artist and His First Wife** With the remarkable work of Victor Delhez we even have a multiple human pardon female representation and thereby strongly symbolic: **See Victor Delhez** ... In the now discussed artwork "*The Kiss*" by Frans Masereel from 1924 we also have a double portrait, apparently somewhat less pronounced than the two mentioned and classic examples. In this case we see the couple - right? - in a side profile. That cannot be otherwise because the young woman and the young man are in completely separate, as it were, opposite places/buildings - on a higher floor! In that way we cannot see their eyes. That would have been technically perfectly possible at least in part by showing the open eyes through their visible profile to the viewer - on the viewer's side.? It is even funny - and it looks so feminine - that the theoretically visible eye of the kissing woman is not even visible because it is hidden away behind her lank hair. But hey, who kisses their beloved while looking? In the entanglement of "*The Kiss*" all looking must disappear. Because, isn't looking always a distance to, a deviation from what is being looked at? Or is it not, as in all kinds of also previously European traditions, the socially obligatory or otherwise use of the headscarf by women, so to speak, counterproductive!? Doesn't the covering or "*die Beschränkung*" make the covered thing even more attractive? Isn't eroticism, among other things or especially, at its most spicy when not depicted or of course through the use of suggestion?

Frans Masereel can certainly be called a world improver, a now probably old-fashioned and especially a loaded one. We all know quite a few and very important, very influential 'improvers' of the world, left and right and especially far left and far right; all together with tens of millions of dead on their so-called conscience aimed at improvement. In our fairly intensive research into political behavior around WWII we also came across it once from the mouth of a busy Flemish-minded national socialist, also very coincidentally a member of a very world-improving Catholic family for decades; see for instance Noël De Smet (1922) in the political family tree of the Goebeert family from the Belgian city of Ronse.

Frans Masereel came from a liberal background and met, among others, as a teacher the very important Belgian - Ghent graphic artist Jules De Bruycker (1870 - 1945), a giant among European graphic artists who is apparently not well-known internationally. That seems to be the fate of many great artists because in a quantitative way there are actually too many qualitatively important artists, certainly in an art historically insanely rich region like this part of the North Sea; how can we continue to pay them all a certain amount of attention? In any case, Jules De Bruycker was a man who was technically certainly much smarter or more capable than Frans Masereel would ever become. Former pupil and soon great and famous master Frans Masereel would always keep it somewhere reasonably rough, albeit very plastic or swirling or full of life. Both had one substantive thing in common throughout their lives: the attention and love for the common people. Jules De Bruycker would de facto never leave the three towers of Ghent while Frans Masereel (who much later after WWII would have these Three Towers printed in no less than 750 copies!) would also be forced by the circumstances of WWI to become an internationalist. He was without a doubt a true European avant la lettre of hard, institutional politics. In that sense he is nothing more than a forerunner or even a pioneer of the ... EU. And that EU is, despite all the justified criticism and the tons of cynicism also within European politicians, without the slightest doubt the most important political and economic achievement on this continent. That EU is much more important than what one could call a form of shadowy predecessor with the "*Pax Romana*". In the relatively

short history of this EU, a number of political founding fathers invariably come to light, which goes without saying. But let us not forget the role of artists, great writers such as Stefan Zweig (1881 - 1942) and Romain Rolland (1866 - 1944), and not least the visual artist and their mutual friend Frans Masereel. We see current European top artists - often, mostly or always starting out as world improvers or 'critical' minds - do nothing 'on this extremely important political and value level, other than play the intangible cynics with 'comments' or internally masturbate artistically by openly or implicitly admitting to copying great previous masters and above all; profit from the gigantic free internal market or make money galore if they are not already licking the soles of the super-rich, especially in the USA or, God forbid, in Dubai and the surrounding area. Human. And pathetic. And un-Masereel. And un-Brueghel.

Just like this unique and to this day at least in Flanders very beloved artist Jules De Bruycker, Frans Masereel did not remain an unworldly artist throughout his life, now purely formally seen. That was also impossible because both wanted to tell stories, indeed, in the drastically deep yet broad and far-reaching footsteps of one of the top graphic artists in history, next to almost *en passant* because for only ten years the most important painter of all time, the one and only Pieter Brueghel (the Old, circa 1525 - 1530 - 1569): **See Pieter Brueghel** Frans Masereel would like to return to this Brueghel in all kinds of work. Throughout the crushing experience of WWI, Masereel was a pacifist in heart and soul and drawing and engraving hands - just like ... Just like Pieter Brueghel indeed. And despite that obvious attitude, that is to say, giving not the most pleasant messages for those in power, he was enormously popular because he was very quickly gathered by the great and the good of the European world, read the absolute nobility, read the gentlemen of standing who led armies and death squads through cities and regions. We strongly suspect that Frans Masereel would never experience that remarkable phenomenon.

As mentioned, Frans Masereel was not at all a revolutionary image maker or seen on a 'purely' art historical or formal level. He was certainly never an artist of the genre of Igor Stravinsky (1882 - 1971), whose "*Le Sacre du Printemps*" (1913) to this day sounds both extremely modern or progressive and nothing other than deeply classical: this work too is as incompletely completed, as "... *begotten, not made, ...*". It is unique from an art historical or historical point of view, although 'somewhere' a final or 'human' end point of evolution in art can be grasped. Moreover, Frans Masereel must have met quite a bit of the tsunami-like artistic talent there in the 1920s when he lived in Paris, but that has had a strikingly no lasting influence on his work; correct us if you Frans Masereel was above all a storyteller, knew his tradition like the back of his hand and was essentially nothing more than an artist and observer of the living environment, as dozens must have been driven by the Reformation in the 16th century. Everyone knows masses of studies about the turbulent 16th century in which Protestantism arose, both as a religious and political movement. That was accompanied by countless and extremely quickly distributed prints throughout a large part of Europe; long live the art of printing, not only of the book but also and together that of the new graphic printing possibilities! It is a mystery to us why we have not even encountered a standard work but a whole fleet of art books about those - rebellious - prints. They could certainly stand in your private library next to the countless works of Frans Masereel! In the 16th century, people had ships with sails or on the small canals pulled with ropes next to carriages with horses. From the 19th century, people had mechanically powered packet boats and trains. Frans Masereel loved the delicious and inspiring wriggling in the graphics and paintings of Brueghel. Who does not share this love to this day and certainly even more tomorrow (this superlative is therefore logical or *de facto* impossible but you understand; it is a figure of speech)? To put it

bluntly; Masereel had a certain aversion to the "*horror vacui*"; his works are 'full' albeit perfectly organized or directed; behold and walk through this "*The Kiss*"!

We just talked about that, more specifically about the architecture of the images within this image. We used the term "*pillars*" both literally and figuratively. There are people who move because they are on their way. There are stars who move because they shine with their light and will soon disappear. There are no less than seven pieces of rotating figures (can one give that a professional name? We thank you in advance for the next edition in 20xx), in themselves images of the globe itself that turns and turns - including every day around its axis, with light and dark, work and sleep ... Frans Masereel knew his formal classics, including the horizontal line and something like visual rhyme. So many visual rhymes or metaphors for the movement of life, life in the city! Moreover, Masereel had moved from Belgium before WWI, but he knew his country inside and out and knew it, among other things or especially, as a country with the most densely populated railway network in the world, something that would never be repeated elsewhere. And that had, besides the possibilities of pure travel to the countryside and the other glorious cities of Flanders, that advantage that was purely political and clerical; keeping the workers in industrial areas where the absolute majority had become red and also somewhat less liberal, in the countryside and therefore under and in the church tower. For a long time after WWII, masses of Flemish commuters would experience incredibly long hours on trains every day to go to work in Walloon industrial areas. A few hundred thousand of them could not cope with that and would - together with quite a few Flemish farmers - settle permanently in Wallonia alone or with the nuclear family for a better life. The losers would almost immediately put their own language aside instead of trying to be bilingual ...; Flanders, after 1585 a breeding ground for artists and ... collaborators? That is also an irony of history because in the meantime, however you look at it, Wallonia - until half a century ago one of the richest regions in the world because of - has become economically a half-lame horse that is largely kept alive by Flemish subsidies on a drip, so to speak. But let us stay with the train, of which the well-known motto is also spread in these times: "*The train is always a bit of a journey.*". That was also the case in 1924 and partly or largely pure and hard economic reality. In both perspectives, however, it was the means for smaller people, from the countryside or from smaller towns or dormitories, to get to the fully alive city - even if it was for a short day's journey, with friends, with family, indeed with the sweetheart or already the mistress. It was also no coincidence that in the larger cities next to the most important stations - in any case not the freight stations - there was an almost explosion of brothels; or they were - also - located on the edge of the large ports. The train in this famous 1924 performance by the ever-looking and sketching Frans Masereel was at the same time a purely sociological given or image that literally had its functional importance in any representation of an urban scene. It was just as naturally at the same time a metaphor for something like what one could see as the unbridled freedom of the smaller person. The really rich already had their cars then. It was above all that more or more intense of a metaphor because a person cannot live on images alone - although he can get very seriously excited by images, at least used to a certain extent because there is always the second law of Gossen (Hermann Gossen, 1810 - 1858) or the (declining) marginal utility. However. Remain hopeful and realistic! To Gossen or not to Gossen, one can never get enough of love, beauty and silence.

Frans Masereel was a man of flesh and blood, full of life with quivering flesh and boiling blood. He was known all his life for his sexual lust for life or a healthy person. Where the heart is full, the sketch pads must overflow and the train was therefore something for Masereel to laugh with say somewhat - somewhat - to go and sublimate with. But he didn't

make it too difficult or without too many "layers" (hahaha) for his target audience. That target audience was ... everyone. In the meantime, in 1924, there had been city trains for a while, call them trams and metros. Trams and of course metros had one extra special characteristic: they liked to dive into the depths and needed shafts, tunnels or large tubes for that. We must then take a step further chronologically and mention another giant of an artist annex chronicler of the 20th century. This train as part of "The Kiss" by Frans Masereel, a performance that has a kiss between two people as its main subject, is nothing more than a formally proposed but substantive doubling or reinforcement of this kiss. More; it is the next stop; trains simply have multiple stations on their railway! We are now referring to the daily final phase of this kiss! Indeed, we are thinking of nothing other than the famous final kiss between the actors Cary Grant (1904 – 1986) and Eva Maria Saint (1924) in "North by Northwest" (1959). Director Alfred Hitchcock (1899 – 1980) has them lie down in their train carriage, kissing, and then ... Then their train enters a tunnel! You understand. Masereel was, as just mentioned, generally and lifelong known for his fairly large libido, while he was also reportedly a loyal friend of former girlfriends. You can read that and much more in the exceptionally good biography "Masereel. Een biografie." ("Masereel. A Biography.") by the Belgian Joris Van Parys (1944). This biography was published in 1995 and has already been translated into German (1999) and French (2008) for the international reader: fine and you can still expect it in English, in the year AD 2??? As we hope! Joris Van Parys has more bio arrows on his strong bow, by the way.

In absolute terms, that book by Joris Van Parys or more concretely the life of Frans Masereel himself is one long plea not only for art but for everyone or for the people or fellow human beings. It is also one long ode or plea to want to live. As a true Ghent citizen of his time and perfectly bilingual in addition to being a resident of la douce France for so long, it is fitting to conclude this piece about Frans Masereel with the famous ending of the poem by the famous Ronsard, who is also famous for it:

*"Donc, si vous me croyez mignonne,
Tandis que vostre âge fleuronne
En sa plus verte nouveauté,
Cueillez, cueillez vostre jeunesse:
Comme à ceste fleur la vieillesse
Fera ternir vostre beauté."*

(Idem, see supra but for this infinite beauty we will repeat that information here; Pierre de Ronsard, circa 1524 - 1585, "A Cassandre", 1545 + and it is therefore time that you, o non-French speaking, start learning this unique language - in addition to Dutch of course!).

6. An afterplay - very short.

Now – for how much longer? – in communist China there is a camera hanging on every possible and especially impossible street corner, on every floor of the countless apartment blocks, in every public building that also has a corner (and where there are toilets, separate for women, men and male party members), on ... You can go on if you like but we are fed up with it by now. With excellent facial recognition of course: someone is doing something well – or it is done even better! The ancient medieval town of Kortrijk, which is unsightly on a Chinese scale, has also introduced this fuss. Under a liberal mayor, no less. We wonder how a free-born, free-spirited and open artist like Frans Masereel would have depicted his "The Kiss" under these circumstances, these cameras. Pardon: would he have dared to depict it?

Pardon: he would never have depicted it anyway because he had been in prison for a long time in both China and Kortrijk. From the inception of the idea of this work.

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, september 2024.

Liegende mit Frucht (Lady with Fruit), Fernando Botero (1932 – 2023), Bronze sculpture, bought in 1998 by the city of Bamberg.

T.U.S..

.....

Lucella alias Luce Caponegro, May Oostvogels (1960), acryl, 2022, private collection.

Forget La Loren, forget Claudia Car. Per favore forget! The two most exciting Italian women of the last 100 years are by all male means in the first place Anna Magnani (1908 - 1973) and in the second nearest to first place Luce Caponegro (1966), also known as Selen, old Greek for Moon. The latter is still alive and kicking, grazie, mille grazie alla Santissima Madonna Maria, Madre di Dio, to whom she is like a decent a bit older schoolgirl praying every single day - even before sipping her cappuccino with her still unpainted but eternally sultry lips, sweet as fresh slices of panettone from artista del leccare Giuseppe Mascolo.

But if we think of the said goddesses of the Italian screen, Sophian Loren (1934) and Claudia Cardinale (1938), they exist in myriad images, moving of course and even more immobile, as photographs - but not in portraits as drawings or paintings. Fortunately, one can still find some charming ritratti of Anna Magnani in that huge image library of the worldwide web.

Even luckier, we've met a Belgian who, while not calling himself a fan of Luce Caponegro, because he claims he is nowhere to be found in the long waiting lists of her social media, is a lover of her aura next to an art patron - in his way, quantitatively modest as well as qualitatively ambitious.

We respect his wish for anonymity and listen briefly to his story. To cut a long story short, he tells us that he met the female painter May Oostvogels by visiting a shop where he at the parkinglot actually... To make it indeed short, one thing led to another; a portrait based on a photograph. What portrait! As a woman and with her belated vocation as an artist, May Oostvogels has like no other managed to capture the delicacy of the eternal Italian beauty of La Luce or Lucella - the working name of this portrait. For example, our lover of the phenomenon Lucella told us how on a very sunny afternoon he entered the studio of May Oostvogels, where the portrait on the easel was ready, and how he was struck by it almost as Bernini (1598) - 1680) depicted the rays from the "*L'Estasi di Santa Teresa d'Avila*".

And those eyes, those ... a rose is a rose is ... The most beautiful eyes in the world! While the eyes of Bette Davis (1908 - 1989) are world famous and beautifully sung about, they are dead and can only be seen on the silver screen and in photos. These playful, deep, naughty, wise, fresh, aristocratic eyes, this Pesche Ripiene with a little touch of Amaretto, The Eyes of La Luce or Lucella, they can not only be seen on Luce Caponegro's social media but just every day. Because she lives - she breathes - she works - she eats - she sleeps - she hums; every fresh day. Any straniero would be jealous of the Ravennati for less.

She flourishes indeed in Ravenna. And just this Italian city is proclaiming itself officially as la città delle donne - an English translation would be an offense towards the heavenly and seductive language from the boot of Europe, the most beautiful country in the world. You now know where in that country the most attractive eyes are. If you can't go that far every day, you can now admire this portrait of La Luce, Lucella, Luce Caponegro, on this website among other very historically very attractive women.

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, 2023.

PS. We find it remarkable and certainly necessary to mention that this portrait is 'only' signed on the back by May Oostvogels.

PPS. We are an independent and rather idealistic person, lifelong. We believe we may emphasize that we personally want nothing to do with the modern commercial and press activities of Luce Caponegro, without going into that further. In this portrait project we met her briefly twice. And wrote to her more. And that was/is it. She never showed any interest in this project, not least because - like a tiger with 1,000 legs - she has many projects of her own origin. We think that in the meantime we have shown some sympathy and hopefully some empathy for this intriguing and fine woman. As for us, we have learned a lot again. And let us all wish her a thousand years of beautiful life!

Ľudova pieseň (A Folksong), Vlasta Flendrovská (1984), Mal'ba za sklom or Podmal'ba na sklo (Behindglasspainting or Reverse glass painting), 2024, private collection.

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1. The eternal wonder of discovery: seeing without actively looking.

We have studied quite a bit formally and supposedly also informally. That is simply our essence, although we know that our one grandfather on the mother's side - on the other side we have no knowledge at all because of the life dances for our venerable mother, especially because we are a so-called natural child, otherwise and better said: a love child - that this one grandfather known to us read a lot. For example, as a Fleming and perfectly bilingual - that was how it was in the Belgium of that time and especially as a servant of the professional army from the age of 14 - he read the traditionally existing Belgian daily newspaper "La Libre Belgique" every day, at least from his usual early retirement. In French, namely. Since he died a good half year after our birth and we must have been so-called very gifted but even at the age of less than one year we did not think too much and did not even look around that much, we consequently only know from our apparently amused mother – only child of this man among others – that he also read that newspaper on the toilet. Now such knowledge, if made public on one of the social media in particular, would lead to hilarity if not to ... prosecution? For lèse-majesté? In any case, it was for this person with absolute certainty in that place neither a personal or family hiding place nor a situational or incidental hiding place. He did that – reading - there – just next to ... er ... pissing and shitting. With some archive research, one could undoubtedly fill a nice article with not only Belgians and especially more public figures who like to read, also especially - on the toilet! In the social housing estate "*Het Keur*" and in those beautiful houses, which to this day still look very beautiful or are a feather in the cap of the master builders and the public Dendermonde construction company of then and now, it was very, very quiet. We, born in March 1963 and let's say gradually receptive to "*impressions*" from roughly 1967, have never, but then never experienced any noise from the neighbours. Never. Try to experience that peace in the same country Belgium with its

meanwhile extra two million inhabitants or especially immigrants from all over the world - with meanwhile and particularly unfortunately something like very portable and extra loud radios. We also know that the couple grandparents liked each other or in other words, they never quarrelled. Of course my grandmother then widowed from the end of 1963 did not quarrel with herself, although the number of Belgian and European inhabitants apparently has increased considerably with serious, internal or what one calls psychological to psychiatric problems - or is there now more coming outside!?

It was true that this grandfather Petrus Bonkoffsky had a great voice, as if he was constantly shouting at home. The man also used to shout for many years when he had to drill young recruits as an adjutant in the exceptionally efficient Belgian army. Whether those recruits were given a gun or even allowed to shoot; we were not there again. Apparently my grandfather was not given a megaphone as a drill master. But we ourselves, as grandsons, may have an outlier with a squeaky voice - like our own mother - but on the other hand very regularly a reasonably strong, albeit not heavy or sonorous voice, like this grandfather. We can raise our voices so-called by simply speaking a little more intensely, useful in all kinds of situations. Although some listeners sometimes dare to startle and become more hesitant as - speakers. This (one) grandfather not only read his - exclusively French-language - newspaper every day, he also reportedly (according to his daughter) read - many books. Unfortunately, a thousand times unfortunately, we have seen nothing of it or inherited nothing of it except one rather brisk introduction – now exclusively in Dutch – to medicine. As children we used to browse through it, especially or to be honest only in the accompanying pictures. Although later, rather morally driven, we had for a while the ideal to study medicine, of course to help the very poor people, a trait that was normal in this Christian environment and that we have completely internalized to this day and tomorrow. Amen. In retrospect, it was already clear then that medicine was not our thing.

Elsewhere on this website we have already written how the same house of these grandparents, and therefore for us existentially that of our grandmother or widow (although we never knew that word or concept in relation to her), was an enormously rich source of impressions, a source that would literally or figuratively or both, continue to refresh us until the present day – and always tomorrow; always that next day! That wealth of impressions was therefore internally fed by very many ‘things’ that were not only as it were overwhelmingly present, practical matters of course alongside a great deal of adornment or rather aesthetically intended matters. But therefore – we now understand and appreciate in retrospect! –, we were not externally hindered or fed in that way, by the normal presence of sound or call it normal silence. To say something. We never heard a single so-called marital quarrel in our neighbourhood. Never. We regularly heard from our one direct neighbour and ourselves gladly one of the then world-famous Mexican singers Luis Mariano (Mariano Eusebio González y García + 1914 – 1970). Our apologies! Because we thought Luis Mariano was Mexican because he sang – we heard it so many times – the very popular song “*Mexico*”. No, because the man turned out to be Spanish and French - although the Spanish have a lot to do with Mexico and the French a little bit, don’t they? But that song, the resounding of it, that sound that was produced in that way and resounded to my grandmother’s garden, among other places, that was 1) not disturbing in terms of content, on the contrary and 2) never or never at a number of decibels that would be tormenting for a normal person. We would experience differently later, or at least when we came to live in Dendermonde again in 2013, with a complete psycho as a neighbour who, among other things, had zero higher degrees – and we had four at the time and we ‘even’ did a doctorate in a fifth direction; too much of a good thing for this simply jealous person, such as they are so common under God’s heavens and

pollute the ground and air there. You understand that we do not wish to go into all the truly unstoppable and so to speak creative (sic) frequent misery that arose from this neighbourhood, as if we suddenly lived on the edge of a volcano that almost daily vomited ash and smoke and stench. That terrible misery would actually only disappear by our ... disappearing or our moving to a better place!

But everything used to be better, says a proverb or the man or his wife in the street. And we can confirm this on this very concrete and extremely important human aspect. Indeed, if a child or any kind of person wants to grow up, this being needs a minimum, say maximum space, literally spacious in a lot, very much greenery - and peace or silence with birdsong. It needs, highly necessary: trees and therefore above all, forests or real serious 'collections' of trees, rivers with adjacent, passable or cycleable banks, meadows where there is no barbed wire, the sea even with dunes and dunes ... For the umpteenth time - and we hope we can say it regularly - Dutch is again more interesting in terms of expressiveness than English. Because "very, very necessary" can be expressed in Dutch as "*broodnodig*" or literally "*as necessary as someone needs bread*"! Of course that is even more understandable from a centuries-old - now probably much less in many modern cultures - essential importance of "*the daily bread*"! Back to the needs of that/the child. In this, as in our case, it is of great importance that the growing child can make interesting observations in and around the house, in the rooms that can sometimes be as continuous as possible, and of course in what one might call a garden; the front garden, side garden or – if it is less fortunate in the worldly traditions of building close together – a 'normal' garden or a back garden. So we are indeed talking about individual homes and not about collective housing, such as in apartment blocks, a building phenomenon that we will discuss in more detail immediately. Our hearts ache when we realize how many growing children, who are therefore susceptible to so many impressions, are not only imprisoned in the cages of apartment blocks where there is usually hardly any to simply horribly ridiculous nothing of greenery next to them. While inside they can still get very few impressions due to all kinds of circumstances, especially poverty, for example, 'something' decent cultural – a real work of art in particular, not even very expensive and not even very important but still original or stimulating. Have you ever walked through the elevator and hallways of apartment blocks: you want to get out of there as quickly as possible, out of those rabbit holes. It is certainly true that at least in Flanders, a great deal of effort has been made in recent years to strongly promote the mental and intellectual growth of our children, at least through library development. The modern library of our childhood home town Dendermonde is a true example of this. City and municipal libraries are without a doubt one of the most important pillars of the common education of a population.

Now these are also, as it were, model libraries – rest assured, in other places such as the Belgian city of Dendermonde we have also encountered such library facilities, such as in ..., ... and indeed ... to the even more exceptionally impressive or leading ... But that is also a city of- yup! These are mainly providers, or a form of very passive places: one can borrow, a lot of quality and even quantity but of course has to choose it oneself. At the same time, all libraries that we have visited anywhere in several EU countries and that we really value in three of these countries, always also have an active offer; with lectures, exhibitions and so on. Of course that is also passive in the sense that one can experience it but that there is no obligation or pressure to do so, except for the children who go there under the supervision of teachers. There is something else that we want to emphasize here, or encountering it in seeing or hearing – in other senses? – via a form of active-passive, say "*a fruitful passivity*". We call it the title of this paragraph "The eternal wonder of discovery: seeing by not actively looking". Of course, this cannot and will not only be about discovering in art, because all

kinds of people certainly only or especially have an eye for the wonders of technology, which can also be used verbally or by reading or via CDs or other material in public libraries. How this kind of experience, this form of very useful, albeit by definition accidental pedagogy, can be functionally stimulated or encouraged, is a question that literally by definition seems a difficult, almost insoluble question. Something for pedagogues? We may call this experience what is generally known as wonder, which therefore needs space and rest. That is certainly known as such from and through the elusive thinking phenomenon Aristotle (384 – 322 B.C.), a great thinker who, both simply and inspiringly for the ultimate ‘more’, spoke in this regard of “*the wonder as the beginning of philosophy just say thinking*”.

We met this precious and wonderful work of art “*Ľudova pieseň (A Folksong)*” in the spacious and light-filled bedroom of the Slovak grande dame A-a Z-a. We admit it. At first we had much more eyes, only eyes and also hands and more body and certainly even soul, for this grande dame who gladly invited us to try out the piece of furniture for which a bedroom is made: the bed. That was certainly a spacious bed just as – we repeat already now – it was a spacious room, so spacious that things like this beautiful work did not immediately or as strikingly catch our eye. After what had to happen, had happened and what may always happen again with eager repetition, albeit with necessary experiences to be devoted to all kinds of less interesting things in life or ultimately time killers, our less lively eye fell on this; this whole of colours within a relatively small frame. Our eye fell on this painting. The time of pleasure for flesh and blood and soul with another, very concrete person, with this Slovak grande dame, was immediately replaced by this small happiness through a subtle somewhat surprising work of art. With our old camera that occasionally wants to work well or wants to perform its function (provided there is enough battery), we photographed this directly from the front and back. Indeed, we first did not see that work of art at all as an extremely invisible part of the spacious whole of the whole of the bedroom, a topos with special logos because nothing other than conceived for the furniture of furniture, the bed, where then the love for the Slovak woman can be conceived, further encouraged and then blissfully flamed out. After which the work of art came to us as a form of lively waste because what is still important after “*the deed or the act*”, after which because what makes “*omne animal - so also we - triste est*”? After which we perhaps still slightly drunk thought we should turn the work of art around; an inspiration led by “*the Fate of Predestination*“(?). This forced us not only to look at that previously more than completely invisible backside ourselves for a moment but even to capture it for a probably not too eternal eternity. There was namely a lot of text on it: see further and so wait a moment although you can see on the double photo in question that we didn't pull anything out of our thumb, the thumb with which we had to press the button of this old camera, the thumb with which we may have pressed another button just before, in a place where, as they say, the average Slovak woman likes to have that thumb first before moving on to more and more excitement of the eternally most intimate encounter.

2. Seeing something interesting (in terms of art), but not wanting to interpret it but adding ‘something’ to it! EXTRApretation instead of INTERpretation.

Before we go into the content of this work of art - or maybe not (haha?) -, we should definitely point out that on this website about art and attractive women - see the overview of all discussed and to be discussed works of art - we will later discuss two other Slovak artists with also behindglasspaintings. They are the already deceased Valeria Zusana Benáčková and the still living, albeit much older, Ondrej Richter. Given the relatively young age of this artist Vlasta Flendrovská (1984), it is clear that the fairly old Slovak tradition of behindglasspainting or reverse glass painting is very much alive. Moreover, and we find this

important, although not entirely essential as an art phenomenon in itself: it is clear that this remarkable painting technique, even at first sight, brings or 'allows' traditional yet substantively new accents or forms. We 'do not see' something IN this work. Or we are not going to interpret the work of art - or only a tiny bit (for which no thanks). But we look much more FROM OR AROUND! In one sentence; we did not make any INTERpretation from the work, we did some EXTRApretation from the work.

That we want to extrapret or add something meaningful to this work, that effectively transcends the work but is therefore born from it (for which many thanks to this artist!), is perhaps in itself a different way of looking at art, or not? Pedagogically, that seems to us an important way of thinking about art, so that we should call this a downright positive motive - why we are therefore positively motivated not (only) to interpret or dwell (sic) on this work of art.

That we do not really or thoroughly want to interpret also has to do with, let's say, two negative motives, or a form of diplomacy. That is an important human characteristic that we personally regularly sin against through our arrogance, but that we also have and use from time to time because of our friendliness. That we are regularly arrogant, even irascible, it is in a sense an advantage to be aware of that and therefore to take that into account with even more sensitivity on the one hand and especially more creativity on the other. And we have just explained the latter with the positive motive! A first negative motive is that the artist herself has explained quite a lot or sufficiently about this work - on her back and see the next paragraph. In that paragraph we of course give that literal explanation of her own with an extremely brief commentary. So we cannot jump ahead stylistically anyway and explain things twice. But. We have known Slovakia quite intensely for at least ten years and the men and women there quite well. So this work is about women and men - or about men versus one woman. We know, let us say, certain differences between the attitude or mentality of women on the one hand – indeed much more open than ... – and on the other hand (...) men, all again and always in Slovakia. We speak again from a good ten years of fairly intense experience in that country, mainly in the middle of it or in “*Stredné Slovensko*”. And we do not want to say more diplomatically or more specifically; we are not going to claim anything about the form of potential truth claim of this work with regard to modern Slovak society.

The second reason, so to speak, of a rather negative nature for not wanting to say anything or hardly anything of substance about this work, is simple: see previous reason (haha, hopefully a little joke is allowed). And above all: we do not want to smear this still young artist (born in 1984) with any of our possible negative insights – if we may express ourselves that way. So for a rare time we are won over by .. self-censorship? No, we simply do not find certain possibly critical or far-reaching representations interesting, also for the career of this young artist (after all, we discuss almost exclusively older, even deceased artists and are then ‘freer’ anyway). Moreover: see the positive reason. In other words, we want EXTRApretation above all, and therefore ALSO to let this young artist potentially enjoy or support her! In other words; the work that we found very beautiful at first and second and .. sight, we use from this joy to give a little more joy, to the artist herself and to all her colleagues, domestic and who knows, foreign. We have met them before, several young recently graduated Slovak artists, who have great difficulty in finding sufficient - money-making - assignments or work. Hereby ...!?

However, we like to interpret, as we have already demonstrated elsewhere on this website with our deep and long and fairly difficult study of a Belgian tapestry – from the war year

1943 – a study from 2006. In our series of manuscripts on political behaviour around WWII we do almost nothing else than interpret – although that mass of studies in itself is an enormous ... extrapretation – isn't it?!

At the same time, we dare to make a very light plea for a form of ... superficiality that can be called cosy, or at least daring to give in to a developed intuition, even subtle debauchery. In the art world, far too much has been asked of so-called profundity for a long time, by of course the active artists themselves and not to forget the very important decision-makers such as reviewers, museum directors and so on. We, who have been extremely curious from a very young age, have already read tons of real bullshit, so to speak – about art, and not only about it. There is no shortage of attempts at pretended profundity, which of course occasionally produces pearls for people or readable, say understandable at worst (...) stimulating, somewhat mysterious analyses or interpretations. By the way, may we be extremely topical for a moment and think of the great recently deceased artist David Lynch (1946 - 2025). He had an older brother, younger sister, aunt and the entire family on all sides of his parents and of his four legal wives and x number of mistresses dead after they all tried to understand his work. Although he warned them from the start of his public career: one just had to “*experience/live through/undergo his work!*”. Moreover, one can travel and read as much as one wants, it is completely impossible to understand more than say a few world cultures to their deepest subtleties. We will not go into that any further, but here we may say that we are Belgian and Flemish, mainly raised in a Christian culture and in any case in an environment that is at least formally as free as possible – in our case almost certainly much freer than the vast majority of our fellow tribesmen. Slovakia is indeed a European country and has been a member of the EU for some time and even has – very fortunately – the same currency (the euro for those who would not know), but is quite different compared to our reference. So with respect to this reverse glass painting we are first and foremost simply sincerely happy with the valuable art or viewing experience with it. Hopefully we've also got some interesting thoughts for some other people. What more could you want?

3. The back of this painting: a written meaning in the language of the painter.

So we found this small painting interesting enough to look at, and one day we actually turned it over. Now we have seen hundreds of works of art, especially Belgian ones, pass through our hands throughout our lives. Usually there is nothing to turn over because there is nothing to see there. But it can still contain important information because that is the side where there is sufficient space for writable paper. Sometimes it happens that there are all kinds of dedications on it, such as a text from those who long ago donated it to someone, mainly as professional colleagues, as a business gift. The names of those donors generally mean nothing to a modern person. Sometimes there is biographical information on it about the artist of the work, a matter that is quite self-evidently useful because it is justified. In any case and that because of a very long and quantitatively fairly intense experience, we do not remember a single text from the artist himself that wanted to say 'something' about what is on the real ground, the foreground. In this therefore very unique case, the background of the rather coincidentally guided reversal – we perhaps wanted to notice ‘something’ – turned out to reveal a text that had certainly been written by the artist: **See picture.**

The text as a whole consists thematically of two parts. The first part is a text of a folk song, the title of which is underlined. It is more than clear – after ... reading it – that this song is the theme of the painting. We give the song text below, on the left in the original Slovak and on the right in English.

Ľudova pieseň:

Horela lipka horela,
pod ňou panenka sedela.
Keď na ňu listy padali.
všetci mládenci plakali.
Íba ten jeden neplakal,
čo ju falošne miloval.

A Folk Song:

The linden tree burned,
under it the small girl sat
As the leaves fell on it.
all the young men cried.
Except for the one
who loved her falsely.

Below that is the statement of the technique of this painting: “*Podmal'ba na sklo (Behindglasspainting or Reverse glass painting)*”. In addition to the name of the creator of this work of art. The only mention of the country in English is: “*SLOVAKIA – EU*”. Interesting for .. tourists - or travellers!

4. A soft extrapretation. The legendary member “The Linden tree”, an epic poetic song by Franz Schubert.

We now know the meaning or origin of the work of art from the artist’s description with the text of a traditional Slovak folk song. It can’t be a coincidence that the tree that is central to it – and on fire! – is a “*lipa*”; the lime tree. It is listed here as a smaller lime tree, with the diminutive “*lipka*”. It is no coincidence that we have known that word for a long time because it is the same word in Polish. The lime tree – “*Tilia*” with its scientific name – is therefore one of the most iconic trees in the entire European culture, just like the oak. It is perhaps even more interesting because the oak does not give wonderful nectar to the bees like the lime tree, from which they then – for us (...) – make honey. What a magically delicious honey, lime honey! Incidentally, English or Anglo-Saxon knows two variations; the linden tree or the lime tree. We would like to briefly and yet intensely dwell on one other iconic representation of this tree, so beloved by the Europeans, with a famous song. That song was written by a German poet and set to music by a brilliant Austrian, but also German-speaking composer. The piece of music is much older than this painting. But so eternal, so classic.

This song itself is part of the wonderful cycle “*Winterreise*” (“*Winter Journey*” – but doesn’t the German sound much more intimate?) from the therefore certainly divine year 1827. This cycle of twenty-four poems was written by the German poet Johann Ludwig Wilhelm Müller (1794 – 1827). He would also have previously contributed to the therefore also divine year 1823 when the also by him composed twenty-poem cycle “*Die schöne Müllerin*” (“*The Beautiful Miller’s Daughter*”) was set to music. And how!?! Both cycles of sung poems are among the most beautiful that Western humanity has ever produced. Of course – we would almost say – hardly anyone knows the lyricist. Everyone – we may say with more certainty – knows the composer, Franz Peter Schubert (1797 – 1828). Schubert – who needs his first name or he is one of those wonderful people who have more than enough with their family name to bring forth many, in this case only positive associations – Schubert, therefore, was and is probably the most lyrical or most heart warming composer in history. Alas, we do not know all the African, Indian, Chinese, and so on composers from the worldwide history of the phenomenon of music.

We once performed another song from the cycle “*Winterreise*” for a class of first astonished and then moved pupils from a final year technical school. They had – ‘obviously’ – never heard such music before, while the bass line of that one song was so modern – so eternal or so

classical. And the singing. And the text. We could not pass up Schubert's suggestion to also perform something of his around this central tree – the lime tree – as a soft extrapretation. We selected this fragment via Youtube, with the duo of interpreters, the German baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau; (1925 – 2012) accompanied by the British pianist Gerald Moore (1899 – 1967):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrxAGwzMp_Q

For the English translation, See: <https://oxfordsong.org/song/der-lindenbaum-2>

Der Lindenbaum.

The Linden Tree.

German source: Wilhelm Müller
English translation © Richard Wigmore

Am Brunnen vor dem Tore,
Da steht ein Lindenbaum;
Ich träumt' in seinem Schatten
So manchen süßen Traum.

By the well, before the gate,
stands a linden tree.
in its shade I dreamt
many a sweet dream.

Ich schnitt in seine Rinde
So manches liebe Wort;
Es zog in Freud'und Leide
Zu ihm mich immer fort.

In its bark I carved
many a word of love;
in joy and sorrow
I was ever drawn to it.

Ich musst' auch heute wandern
Vorbei in tiefer Nacht,
Da hab' ich noch im Dunkel
Die Augen zugemacht.

Today, too, I had to walk
past it at dead of night;
even in the darkness
I closed my eyes.

Und seine Zweige rauschten,
Als riefen sie mir zu:
Komm her zu mir, Geselle,
Hier findest du deine Ruh'!

And its branches rustled
as if they were calling to me:
'Come to me, friend,
here you will find rest.'

Die kalten Winde bliesen
Mir grad' in's Angesicht,
Der Hut flog mir vom Kopfe,
Ich wendete mich nicht.

The cold wind blew
straight into my face,
my hat flew from my head;
I did not turn back.

Nun bin ich manche Stunde
Entfernt von jenem Ort,
Und immer hör' ich's rauschen:
Du fändest Ruhe dort!

Now I am many hours' journey
from that place;
yet I still hear the rustling:
'There you would find rest.'

Does this lime tree give more peace than the one from Slovakia?

5. On to the real extrapretation. Via the exceptional architects Hundertwasser, Le Corbusier and the extremely common Plattenbau.

This colourful and fresh artwork is by a Slovak artist. She is Slovak by nationality and Slovak as a resident of her native country. She lives – that is public information because it can be found on the internet – in a huge residential area of Bratislava. That is after all a capital of a European country, once before WWII and back and apparently definitively since the separation in 1993 with the Czech Republic, officially on that first of January or from several perspectives an ambivalent matter to start a new chronological year with. The Slovaks were never asked, by a binding referendum in particular, whether they wanted to divorce! For various reasons, a larger and richer, more diverse country – such as Czechoslovakia was because with Bohemia and Moravia included and the unmistakable world city of Prague on top of that! – would certainly have been better! Before that, Bratislava was one of the larger, albeit rather unattractive cities of Czechoslovakia. Before the end of WWI it was known on the one hand as Pressburg (German name, so also written as Preßburg) and on the other hand as Pozsony (the Hungarian name). Bratislava only became the – Slovak – name of this city from 1919 onwards, which was hardly inhabited by Slovaks and whose previous Slovak name – Prešporok – was derived from the ... German Preßburg. This probably makes the city the newest capital in Europe. For Hungary, which until the end of WWI was roughly a thousand years much larger, albeit with constantly changing borders as was more the ‘custom’ in ancient Europe, Pozsony – Bratislava was historically a very important city. After all, from the middle of the 16th century it became nothing less than the royal Hungarian seat, since the Turks had occupied a very large part of Hungary by then. De facto Bratislava was a totally unknown name until 1920 because it had never been a Slovak city, always Hungarian and German with a mixture of Jews. Where now live about half a million Slovaks, until a hundred years ago hardly one Slovak lived; “*The Times They Are a-Changin*”. The only interesting historical buildings in this city are Hungarian, exclusively Hungarian.

That is a special historical and existential fact. It may yet give the impetus for something that could be a unique Slovak touch in architecture. “*The Times They Are a-Changin*” may also mean that new and very striking, let us hope, especially valuable paths can be taken through modern architecture. We hardly know Bratislava other than by sightseeing, so to speak, by driving through it by bus or – then we must of course ‘look’ extremely more carefully – by car. There is very little new interesting architecture to be seen to date, at least in high-rise buildings. In districts that we could observe in other ways – always roughly – such as via the internet, there is really nothing new to notice. Nothing is little because ... Nothing. So there is only functional residential construction, a lot of new and standardized high-rise buildings. Because of course people live there – residents, city dwellers. And relatively many or absolutely predominantly in high-rise buildings or in apartment blocks. We know rather well to very well some larger Slovak cities and especially parts of their districts where only high-rise buildings can be found. There you can see – so to speak diplomatically – always the same type of high-rise buildings. And for that they use the name “*Plattenbau*”. See:

<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plattenbau>

That is a type of collective housing in the GDR (the former East Germany) with a series of layers (approximately at least 5) of which all components are prefabricated. These components are therefore not only made in a factory and therefore assembled on site using the better Lego work so that one gets a rough building, where all kinds of facilities such as electricity etc. are finished. That means that the whole looks completely homogeneous; after

all, there is no or very little space to let the components or panels diverge from each other, to bring in some more individuality. Plattenbau is therefore very efficient, so that countless, certainly tens of thousands of copies have been built in Europe. It is also boring. And that is not only the case for Western European tourists or immigrants who are much more used to individualized housing. That is certainly the case especially for a relatively young country like Slovakia. Slovakia was a country that consisted of small towns and mainly many villages. As a result, it has preserved a particularly rich folklore to this day. This is expressed in many ways, such as in the very popular dances with traditional costumes. It is in these costumes that one finds an incredible diversity or a particularly great cultural wealth. From childhood we have been very fascinated by art in, let us say, its broadest expressions. But folk art was never really our thing and we have actually never encountered it at home or in the small family circle! In Slovakia in particular we also became really interested in that cultural aspect and through the years of regular visits, we have acquired, among other things, about one hundred and fifty books about the diversity of that country. As a result – through books or reading them or at least looking at the pictures in them (haha) – we know with absolute certainty that this incredible at least regionally very diverse cultural wealth, also expressed itself in the regional, local, let's call it traditional architecture. This happened through all kinds of ornamentation and even with relatively simple colour motifs. And of that incredibly rich folk art, which has expressed itself for many centuries via the 'skin' of clothing and via the 'skin' of houses, or in two extremely visual, memorable and therefore essentially very inspiring ways, there is really no trace to be found in either the Plattenbau or the modern high-rise buildings that are so intensively used in Slovakia! That is an absolutely certain and correct statement and at the very least a regrettable one. May we remind you that this European country de jure and forever (sic) only really started out as an independent country in 1993!? And ... !? Apparently mainly motivated to (further) build something like more individuality, more independence, more identity! Well then Slovakia; what in its current and future architecture!

As far as we are concerned, since certain happy modern times – say roughly since the year 2,000 – we have not known a single interesting Central European architect, let alone a movement of architects. But that may be due to us or to our finiteness. After all, we only have two eyes and they are constantly distracted by so many attractive women, certainly in – haha – Slovakia! We simply cannot know 'everything', not even from our own interests, which certainly included architecture and urban planning from our earliest student days – thank you eternally, reverend friend Frank alias Umberto alias ... ! We may say that, like almost everyone who can read and write – in Europe at least – we know two names of modern, European architects: Le Corbusier and Hundertwasser.

The famous French-Swiss architect Le Corbusier (alias of Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (1887 – 1965) became known, among other things, for his very important - and for that reason rightly very famous - contribution to world architecture with his five realizations, each with a large complex of apartments. They all had the original French name, "*The Unité d'habitation*" or "*Housing Unit*". See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unit%C3%A9_d%27habitation

The first one in particular became authoritative and can still be admired in Marseille. It was built between 1947 and 1952 and is therefore still relatively young. It was given the – rightly so – proper name "*la Cité radieuse*" or "*The Radiant City*". Between 1955 and 1965, Le Corbusier would repeat this design four more times, three times in France and once more in

(then West) Berlin. It can be said with absolute certainty that this design hit like an atomic bomb. Or rather; it was a feast for the eyes of man and in a certain sense for that of the architect because the design was imitated worldwide. Worldwide?

In order to be able to give a concrete answer to this last question, with of course the perspective on, say, the country of our Slovak artist Vlasta Flendrovská, including or not in the least its capital Bratislava, it is important to point out the way in which Le Corbusier tackled his revolutionary, meanwhile classical design. It happened with a few other important architects and artists, besides the so to speak self-evident engineer. Their names are not important here; the collaboration certainly is! Perhaps the word architecture is a bit too little to speak of the experience of The Radiant City. In terms of content, that is to say, artistically, it is certainly of a completely different order than that of the Plattenbau and, you can safely say, also in comparison with probably all the collective housing complexes that we ourselves have ever seen, let alone been able to enter.

Friedensreich Hundertwasser, born Friedrich Stowasser (1928 – 2000), was an Austrian artist and architect. He was best known for the colourful buildings he designed and was an advocate of human and environmentally friendly construction methods.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedensreich_Hundertwasser

It is rather obvious that Hundertwasser was strongly influenced by the immense genius Antoni Gaudí (1852 – 1926), who himself was without the slightest doubt one of the most important architects in world history. We do not write ‘real’ scientific treatises on this website and cannot go into this relationship. However, we must note that, although Hundertwasser was certainly strongly influenced in his architectural language by Gaudí, he himself nevertheless had a continuous interest and made architectural contributions to multiple or collective housing. We do not know this at all in the grandiose work of Gaudí, which is at most to be regretted theoretically. But this man also worked quite intensively or for an extremely long time on his relatively few projects. A comparative study between the five Housing Units of Le Corbusier (and co!) with the work on apartment blocks by Hundertwasser seems to us an excellent idea; this question will certainly have been dealt with somewhere in Europe or in .. We suggest that you look up both their work and make this comparison. There is one thing that these two architects have in common without any discussion. And that thing is indeed important in something like architecture and especially the larger because more collective version of it. You know the proverb that cooking costs money, and building is always cooking at a high level. That is why the genius of the Plattenbau speaks for itself because through a uniformity and the prefabrication of the components in a factory, every, ‘individual’ cost price could not be matched – because it was as low as it was architecturally possible! In other words, for the tens of thousands of existing and the many additional editions à la Plattenbau, a version that was, so to speak, subsequently upgraded in the manner of either Le Corbusier or Hundertwasser, was unaffordable. Even more priceless – but the superlative of zero remains by definition ... zero – would be tens of thousands of concrete editions of Hundertwasser or Le Corbusier, if these architects had already been able to complete more than, say, two hundred collective buildings as high-rise buildings. Even more, *mutatis mutandis*, the same thing can be said if the small or – who knows? – larger ‘versions’ or pupils, i.e. successors, of both famous architects had also always wanted to realize very valuable high-rise buildings throughout their lives. Tens of thousands also to finish high-rise buildings that are as complete or high-quality as possible, aesthetically or existentially; it is not even possible on the drawing boards, let alone on the solid grounds of this world.

We must nevertheless pause for a moment, in terms of content or strategy, to consider the creative phenomenon of Hundertwasser. The man was what one might call a sincere idealist or a thorough daydreamer. While a type like Le Corbusier was certainly groundbreaking, not only in terms of this collective housing, but perhaps a little too ... French aristocratic aloof, too ... Swiss watchmaking precise – say a little too rational or a little too little of a Mensch, perhaps? It is absolutely no coincidence that Hundertwasser, in addition to his more purely architectural concepts (such as his view on the line in buildings or the straights and curves), applied a number of very democratic principles that he presented in architectural translation. In our opinion, the most important here is his “*Fensterrecht*” or “*The Right From Your Window*”. That is certainly a fantastic idea and it was, so to speak, only a matter of time before a freer spirit, a very creative and at the same time extremely human and ecologically oriented architect annex artist, would formulate such a concept. Of course there are architects who can listen to the wishes or especially the way of thinking and acting of their clients, when it really is about personal housing construction - and then also realize that in a subtle way. That seems more obvious than it is. In any case, for collective construction or high-rise buildings, that way of thinking, listening and then applying is really almost impossible. 'Purely' theoretically it is possible but with all kinds of and even the greatest possible restrictions it remains nothing but unrealizable. People worldwide can clearly be prepared en masse to go and live in “*boxes*” or apartment blocks, whether or not Plattenbau or a bit more individualized. As residents they are certainly not members of a symphony that can flawlessly, albeit thanks to a leading conductor, go and live or play while living. While Plattenbau is functionally and socially self-evidently highly responsible, as an architect it is understandably completely impossible to take maximum account of the living and thinking world of a complete or per resident of a part of it, any apartment. Hundertwasser formulated an alternative that was very responsible and very sympathetic in his line of thinking. Through the “*The Right from Your Window*” every resident of an apartment could, within the length of his own ... arm (and that of his fellow residents, but isn't there such a thing as technical extensions!?), paint around every window as he or she wanted! This always meant theoretically that if new residents arrived, they could of course make use of the same right, and thus get to work with their paintbrush! Or not? Incidentally, we have not done any in-depth work on Hundertwasser's thinking, but here we may ask for the sake of completeness whether – and how – he thought of any right to paint or aesthetically tackle the windows themselves – haha?

We can indeed not go into the wonderful Fensterrecht extensively or exhaustively here, but we still see many more difficulties than advantages. Now, what do you think? The whole of a block of apartments can become an improbable pot pourri. Just imagine that some residents are colour blind, or suffer from some form of eye disease so that ...!? Moreover, what do you do as a collective when one or more ostentatiously refuse to participate, and for example even threaten legal action against their neighbour above that .. , next to the neighbour on the left who even ...! Painting from a window is certainly very dangerous; if you fall from the first floor, trying to stop your paintbrush that almost slipped out of your hand, for example, you probably have a chance of survival. But what if ... fifth floor ...? Good luck or “*fasten your seat belts*” with that painting – from windows of apartment blocks!

Should we just sit back and do nothing? Or should we just visually indulge ourselves as a passer-by or tourist, as it were, at that remarkable but very isolated new high-rise, which by financial definition is only and exclusively reserved for new and existing rich people? Certainly not. Because! After all, we all know the famous because encouraging, albeit to be

honest rather unpronounceable because much too long and therefore too complicated proverb: “*Point n'est besoin d'espérer pour entreprendre, ni de réussir pour persévérer.*” (“*It is not necessary to hope to undertake nor to succeed to persevere*”). There IS an ALTERNATIVE!!! And art has already offered it to us!!! Or at least via the world of comics and children's illustrations, we can offer you 'something' as an alternative to overcome the apparent dullness of Plattenbau, at least partly. It concerns two forms of art, on the one hand the world of comics and on the other hand that of illustrated children's books: in both worlds something is said/written and also - and here especially - drawn. The first world is also for adults as for children, although we know few children who never grow to the stage of adulthood. Or in other words; don't we all secretly like to remain children?

Somewhere around the year 2000 we came up with the concept of a biennial for Belgian children's illustrators, under the name "Illustrale". For "*reasons*" we had to register that name as a trademark one day (because we had also come up with that name ourselves) - although that formal legal action helped quite quickly to nothing at all. In 2003 we would build the first exhibition with a group of so-called enthusiasts selected almost entirely by us. For that we had chosen as part of the exhibition concept - also almost entirely our work - one illustrator who would get a separate or individual exhibition or more space, while the other invited illustrators could offer a limited overview. The explicit objective, well known to everyone from the beginning, was to invite for the first time only Flemish, then later the French-speaking Belgian and then also Dutch illustrators. Our personal dream was to start something on the well-known day of later, also with the gigantic growing ... African market - as the first illustrators' festival in the whole of Europe! It would never get that far (sic). We chose in group after a selection by us of ten Flemish illustrators the Antwerp lady Erika Cotteleer (1972). In the selection that only we had made there was also ... and ... and so on. But also “*MARTINE*” (French, original name) or “*TINY*” (in the Dutch translation). See:

<https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martine>

<https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiny>

“*Martine*” was therefore the original or French-language name of the young heroine, of an incredibly popular series that was written on the one hand by the French-speaking Belgian Gilbert Delahaye (1923 – 1997) and after his death by Jean-Louis Marlier (1963 - 2019). She was, so to speak, drawn in a legendarily pleasant and attractive way by the also French-speaking Belgian Marcel Marlier (1930 - 2011 + father of Jean-Louis). In retrospect, as founder and largely organizer, we should have insisted more – or worked less ... democratically? - on the selection of “*Martine/Tiny*” for various reasons, one of which is briefly important here: cartoonist Marcel Marlier was still alive in 2003! But ... He was a French-speaking Belgian and the Illustrale group from 2003 turned out to be for us, completely unforeseen but inevitable, a gang of schemers with their own agenda, personal and political. Incidentally, none of the collaborators of this Illustrale who were approached in 2003 had even once come up with the idea for this biennial – only we, as a gift to the community of the city of Ronse, a community for which we had done a great deal for many years, alone or in groups. In the latter respect, there seemed to be no room at all in the so-called monolingual Ronse – officially Flemish indeed, but situated on the Dutch/French language border, so ...!!! – and against all original plans, for anything like French culture – and until now! The “*Illustrale*” was stolen and transformed into “*Picturale*” and, apart from the pure betrayal on a human level towards us as the sole creator and absolute main organizer, was from then on (already ten biennials, with all due respect for the efforts, albeit ...)

exclusively Dutch-language. That is laughably incomprehensible and extremely sad, having to (sic) experience how a cultural event became a political event in addition to being a vehicle for all kinds of personal ambitions. For us personally it was probably the worst trauma of our lives. It was also intellectually and morally incomprehensible to us how so-called artists – among others, a very famous writer of children's books was selected by us in the first group – turned out to be pure or rabid nationalists (that is to say, haters of the French-speaking part of the same country Belgium), even if they, like that writer, had previously won so-called multicultural prizes. The word "*culture*" definitely acquired a double-charged meaning for us; or 'real/informal' culture (politeness, friendliness, openness, ...) versus 'formal' culture, the culture of producing things like books, paintings, ... A well-known artist can therefore perfectly (sigh) not be a ... cultural person! In any case and always somewhere remain hopeful or still objective; it is a matter of a certain irony that the 'new' management (now Picturale instead of Illustrale) also chose to make a mural of the work of one (indeed only Flemish, so Dutch-speaking) illustrator from the next edition in 2005 onwards. In the city of Ronse – in French Renaix – one can see a series of these murals from that year onwards, per year of the new biennial, albeit (sic) only and exclusively by Flemish illustrators. For Walloon Belgians or Brussels residents or just say French speakers; no place on these walls, let alone in the accompanying exhibitions. In any case, in Ronse, among other places, one can find murals of a certain aesthetic value. The difference with that Belgian city of Ronse and what we mean by work on the tens of thousands of Plattenbau throughout Europe, is that in Ronse free-standing or, as it were, 'lost' walls of buildings are always sought. But in principle the same system can be applied to the free or 'empty' walls of every Plattenbau, although we may make a small plea for 'something' aesthetic and existential at every entrance door; see further. At the same time, this introduction is also a slight digression, a heartfelt plea to concern oneself with art at every Plattenbau. The time of all ideologically dominant communism has been over in Central Europe for several decades. But as we have outlined in a so-called free, democratic country like Belgium (from 2003 and up to the present), political control or misleading cultural policy or nothing more than a form of intra-national gross racism - apparently lies around every corner?

Again, anyway. On both the Dutch and French wiki page of "*Martine/Tiny*" you see – the same – fresh image of Martine – or (in the Dutch version) Tiny! Now she is by no means the only important figure from the world of art, more specifically from the world of comics or illustrators, who is depicted on all kinds of very available walls in Brussels, as high as houses or very realistic and therefore unavoidable. There are already ninety (90) such murals in Brussels within this section of the visual arts! And that number will probably increase over the years, if at least free walls remain or become available. The tourist office of the important city of Brussels could of course not leave such a gift for the tourists and lovers of the genre. It put together a route – a "*Striproute*", or "*Parcours BD*" or "*Comic Book Route*" – through which you can easily find and admire these murals.

See: <https://www.brussels.be/comic-book-route>

We believe that by giving a few examples from the small and peripheral city of Ronse, albeit with a fundamentally culturally and politically wrong because misleading approach, masking the entire relevant cultural event, and the important, central city of Brussels, where clearly 'sincerely' because exhaustively all relevant artists are systematically featured, we have been able to put every resident or artist with an interest in improving the living experience of the Plattenbau on a promising path. Again, it is not our calling here to promote art out of a favour for this or that movement and so on. It is about the principle; that through certain aesthetic

applications, the living experience in no less than tens of thousands of editions of the Plattenbau throughout Europe can be strongly maximized, that residents and visitors there can feel happier somewhere and structurally. Now we must still briefly dwell on that both Belgian and international "*Martine!/Tiny*" and also - indeed - from our own experiences with that important country in our lives Slovakia. That well-known first name is indeed quite easy for us there too, because we know at least two interesting Slovak ladies, with (...) as first name ... "*Martina*" - yup! Although we call the chronologically second either with the diminutive "*Tinka*", or with a derivation of her family name as ... (but we can't say that because otherwise ... - haha). We also have a pet name for the chronologically first. What are we saying; we have several for Martina1. But also that one ... we ... don't ... (haha?). Just so you know this for a moment. But of course you know much more or better: after all, everywhere and always and especially also in Albania, Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria and ... - or at least everywhere where there is a lot of Plattenbau! – there are very many girls' names for use in collective housing! As a name and as an image for a respective housing complex. It so happens that we were interested in naming houses about fifteen years ago (once for a logic course in Ostend, and in principle that study is waiting somewhere in the basement of our PC under the working title "Logic for ..."; we still have a lot of writing to do in this too short life!). Almost all house names in Ostend are named after ... women. "*Villa Maritza*" for example, is a well-known example of this in the Belgian coastal city of Ostend!

See: https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Villa_Maritza

6. We travel to learn – yes! Also or especially: we travel to give – yeah! Introducing APPART-ART.

With this well-known and clearly still very lively theme, we also found a nice website with the same name; See: <https://traveltolearn.co.in/>

We have a certain life experience as we were born in 1963 – so we are already 60 years old – and above all; we have already worked as a student and afterwards in quite different places. Before our brain crash on 15/12/2015 we had been working as a teacher for ten years. In the beginning we ignored two offers for a permanent position (so teaching permanently or 'standing' at one school) for various reasons that are of no importance here. In any case, we ended up at a series of schools, in two provinces and – as far as the education system in Belgium is concerned – in two educational networks; that of the Catholic network and at the state schools. Never or to our amazement again totally never, never (sic) were we asked by anyone and certainly not by a management to give our impressions of the school, in particular to give a form of Swot analysis. Never! That is understandable in a way, certainly for those who know the rather timid or shy spirit of the average Flemish person. But it was about schools or - par excellence - systems of education or of progress in thinking and acting. Yet the laws of heuristics are just as intensely compelling as they are simply universal; every newcomer or new person in a reasonably different environment, is as it were flooded with impressions! It really cannot be otherwise than that in principle every new teacher, for whatever short period he or she may go to work, is a goldmine of tips for improvement for every school - and also free: where do you find such consultants!?! But. Again! We have never been asked to give a single tip, in whatever area of the well-known SWOT analysis.

We want to apply this legality of the heuristic here, from this Slovak artwork. The Dutch website on heuristics guides this form of thinking very well and we translate ourselves: "*Heuristics (Greek εὐρίσκειν = to find, compare εὕρηκα = I have found it) is the science,*

study or art of finding. It is devoted to methodically and systematically arriving at inventions and discoveries.”

See: <https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heuristiek>

Now tell me; who does not appreciate or have a taste for inventions or discoveries that can make life better or more pleasant in one or even more areas? Everyone, right? Living is one of the most important needs of any human being. Many modalities go hand in hand with this. One modality is without a doubt the aesthetic or, should we say, the (general) existential experience of living. One can then try to analytically isolate and study the aesthetic experience. But everyone understands that this is an intellectual and political approach, but that living without any pleasant or beautiful experience is completely impossible or even unliveable, at least much less liveable! We have already briefly mentioned the experience of the gigantically important but extremely unpleasant or unaesthetic really purely functional Plattenbau. We saw the particularly impressive alternatives for, let us say, most human, profound living in mass cohabitation – say in apartment blocks – via the brilliant architects Le Corbusier and Friedensreich Hundertwasser. This is not the place to give an architectural overview regarding multiple or cohabitation. But it is certain that these two top architects, insofar as they have built quantitatively very limited by definition and therefore have given building possibilities to a limited number of residents, have in any case or very automatically had very many followers and also worldwide or outside their own Europe. All these projects, however incredibly valuable to exceptional to occasionally rather failed, have in common without the slightest doubt that they are only intended for the better class or the upper middle class. It is a law of the Medes and Persians that all ultimately very interesting, famous, valued collective housing projects such as apartment blocks, even if they were nevertheless conceived as purely social housing and therefore also inhabited as such in the beginning, are one day occupied, pardon inhabited by higher or wealthier classes. That happened in particular with the cited project by Le Corbusier and co, The Radiant City in Marseille.

Ergo! How to get out of this problem and this great challenge? First of all, we have to be extremely realistic and consider – or see (!!!) – that in our Europe alone there are tens of thousands or even more blocks of apartments. We have seen an enormous number of them and always very concentrated in countless cities in Central Europe, in particular and now listed alphabetically, but certainly not exhaustively, Belgium, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. Especially in Slovakia we know the housing situation very well; apartment blocks via Plattenbau are the most important form of living there, in large cities but also in many smaller cities and even regularly in smaller villages! It may not sound pleasant to some readers, who possibly live in these types of blocks and also work elsewhere, but we cannot consider the living environment or at least the outside of this form of living as very pleasant or personal. A minimum, if possible, maximum degree of personalisation by residents of these apartment blocks via the “*Fensterrecht*” (“*The Right from Your Window*”) of the aforementioned and well-known architect Hundertwasser seems to us, as already mentioned, to be de facto and perhaps even ideally impossible to realise.

How then can something like a more aesthetic or more existentially lived-in living environment be achieved in, around or through this extremely common form of building, of this Plattenbau? We propose here the concept of APPART-ART or: *APART-ART is the art of making the living environment of apartment blocks more lively through works of art.* APPART-ART is perhaps the most appropriate and most financially suitable way to make the almost countless apartment blocks aesthetically AND therefore existentially more attractive or

liveable. The point is to make the whole of apartment blocks, if possible, collective living environments more liveable by means of aesthetically tackling or making the most eye-catching and heart-catching external parts more attractive. Because the apartment blocks are usually too large – roughly at least four building plots – to be made more liveable in a whole, this approach must be approached from a Gestalt psychological perspective. The expression from speech theory of “*pars pro toto*” or “*the part for the whole*” is also known. A well-known example of this for Belgians is the naming or discussing of “*Holland*”, while one should speak purely geographically for the larger country “*Netherlands*”. Because Holland is only a part of it, although it is clearly the most striking or important part for various reasons. There are almost countless examples of the principle of *pars pro toto* throughout an infinite number of languages. That principle is therefore epistemologically very well known and is consequently not exceptional or drastic as a way of thinking, so that it should not immediately encounter an abrupt rejection if used in another situation! If it is impossible by financial and other practical definition – occasionally it is, but that is; occasionally only! – to aesthetically dress up and upgrade the whole of an apartment block, let alone as we have already experienced several times with a street of apartment blocks welded together or standing very closely next to each other that is virtually a kilometre long, then the partial approach is not only a simpler solution but often also the only one.

Although in our opinion the discussion about APPART-ART should start both ideally and practically and that throughout various European and other countries, at all levels such as at municipal or city art academies and of course at the higher art academies and universities, the crucial building element of the ENTRANCE, the DOOR or the ENTRANCE DOOR seems to us to be of strategic importance as a first proposal. We ourselves do not even see a potentially different or at least partially different possibility because one must assume that in Plattenbau the entire external surface is divided in the same way into windows and ‘intermediate parts’ if it does not appear entirely as a concrete surface on the outside. By entrance, door or the ENTRANCE DOOR we indeed mean the only or absolute main entrance through which the residents and their visitors enter an apartment block in the normal way. We functionally abstract partly from smaller entrances where one can enter for functional purposes, for example – in particular for checking and maintaining technical parts of the building in question. It goes without saying that an aesthetic approach is also possible here, certainly if one has so much money to tackle the whole of an apartment block. One understands that the decision here will be of a more financial nature. In any case, there will almost certainly never be a purely technical entrance of sufficient importance to function as it were as the *pars pro toto*. We would like to encounter an opposite of that as a concrete example with the necessary intellectual explanation or justification.

The ENTRANCE DOOR is by definition the only component that marks the transition between the outside and the inside. It marks a clear boundary that cannot be replaced by a meaningful or normal alternative between the OUTSIDE of the functions next to or much further from the apartment block such as walking, playing with the children on playground equipment and so on, and the INSIDE or living. For quite understandable reasons we abstract here from forms of elevators even special staircases that occur in blocks, usually for very remarkable architectural reasons so that they are nothing other than completely unaffordable or unfeasible for the ordinary, countless apartment blocks such as the Plattenbau. The entrance door can safely be called the most striking component of the large apartment blocks of the Plattenbau. One can even say lapidary that these blocks consist of entrance doors - and the 'rest'! It is interesting that entrance doors, at least in our experience, are usually present or incorporated on both sides of the respective apartment block, which in itself creates all kinds

of aesthetic possibilities. We do not need to go into these possibilities here at all, because that is the task of architects and/or artists, while we are only trying to develop a principled approach. In any case, we noticed several times - in Slovakia - that one side was the official street side. In the meantime, that side is generally completely occupied, literally like a half jungle overgrown with parked cars; the previous - communist - (building) regime clearly did not foresee so many cars! Which urban planner would have foreseen that phenomenon? At the back of the same apartment blocks, there is usually a beautiful and especially more intimate walking path with, on that also entrance doors of the same size and at the same height or width as at the front or street side. There, the transition from outside to inside certainly seems to be an existentially different experience, which may well entail a different aesthetic approach to the entrance doors.

In any case, almost every entrance door is accentuated in various, though remarkably very few different ways. Often they are located just above some stairs leading to them because there is usually a small basement. The entrance door is usually about twice as big - or wide and of course also as high - as the standard windows of the Plattenbau in question. Furthermore, almost certainly for all apartment blocks in an area, standard sizes have always been used for the concrete panels, i.e. for the windows and the entrance doors. We suspect that most models of Plattenbau in at least all of Europe and then especially in Central Europe, or the places of the former Warsaw Pact such as Poland and so on, with extreme exceptions really only used the same standard sizes. After all, in the communist bloc the guided economy was a dominant principle. And in any case, the residential function for the population was not only one of the main concerns of every communist regime, but the realization of that function also turned out to be one of the largest financial investments for these states. The greatest possible standardization was therefore a form of uncontested standard, an architectural Holy Grail. Incidentally, that does not mean at all that the former Central European communist regimes did not produce interesting architecture. As one might expect, it was almost exclusively to be found in the more prestigious building functions, such as for government buildings. We must then think of buildings that were very important to the governments there, such as an opera house, a (very important for the regime) museum (such as the resistance museum or "*Múzeum SNP*" in the Slovakian city of Banská Bystrica, which was given a very remarkable or remarkable architecture, which in our opinion has nothing to do with its content?). Let us also think of hospitals sometimes, and certainly for a number of these countries of all the newly built 'palaces' in the relatively common thermal areas there. That is certainly one and important part of living or using buildings for important functions in these countries, which on the one hand allowed those people to experience interesting architecture very regularly. But, whereby with a certain irony that was of course unintended (communism and irony???) the monotony and, to put it bluntly, a certain inhumanity of the Plattenbau, was emphasized even more! One should make the journey or transition from an important architectural government building to such a Plattenbau, which as mentioned never stands alone but sometimes in remarkably large groups - whereby the monotony is emphasized even more!

To this day, in these Central European countries such as Slovakia, the vast majority of apartment blocks have never been demolished or replaced by qualitatively better new construction by financial definition. In the meantime, these older buildings have, if all goes well, been 'only' adapted on the outside by applying insulation. That is of course a fine thing that also brings about a better colour appearance in quite a few cases. But, again in our obviously limited experience, we have never seen anything like more aesthetic or more intense existential architectural adaptations or improvements by applying insulation over in

principle almost the entire skin or the outer parts of a block of apartments! By 'almost' that entire building we of course mean that the exception is the entrance door! Even, and that will usually have been the case, if these doors were also replaced by perfectly insulated ones, the well-known and annoying ... 'nothing' happened around it. That nothing is nothing other than a really big and probably continually missed opportunity, not even for so-called reasons of opportunity, mainly financial or purely technical reasons. But indeed, where one has no concept - as here APPART-ART - or no intellectual and visual sensitivity to a certain way of thinking and then acting, one can, so to speak or literally, simply not have thought of it: to therefore also apply an even partial, albeit striking aesthetic and therefore existential improvement of the respective apartment block from these impressive insulating activities! This means very concretely that in all these countries there are still tens of thousands of apartment blocks where, apart from the purely functional improvement by applying insulation with at best a new and even more beautiful colour appearance, absolutely nothing has happened. With the eternal exceptions of course; show them to us, where and how and whether successful!? So there is really a massive amount of work to be done, but if you don't start, you never have to finish. Here lies an enormous pile of work and only work to be evaluated favourably, or without the slightest negative effects or without the slightest, call it collateral damage! The main function of this is of course the improvement of the collective aesthetic and therefore existential experience of the residents, and not to forget that of the visitors in addition to the residents, but where in the meantime and de facto ad infinitum an enormous amount of work and therefore money for an income can be earned by the 'workers' of those activities: artists!

We noticed that Plattenbau indeed, for the same reason of saving, rarely or simply does not use separate recesses where potentially terraces could have been located. We have seen, however, in some, particularly Slovakian, residential areas, a few types of Plattenbau with very small recesses for terraces. This was probably only in the kitchens or it concerned relatively small interventions on the outside. In other words, Plattenbau is for the most part and again with exceptions, on all four sides only present in concrete or glass sections (windows). The mutual relationships between concrete walls and the windows with glass are, with those extremely rare exceptions - again; where and how? - identically the same on every building layer. From that rather overwhelming perception of simplicity, say boredom or dullness, every entrance door automatically stands out. This is further facilitated because every entrance door, in our experience, always forms the separation of two bays as if in a perfect middle. Each bay or each vertical building line represents a completely separate or individual apartment per separate building layer, which, due to the compelling concept of the whole, can be 'seen' as a barely knowable part of the entire block; one really has to count the floors if one wants to see/distinguish one's own apartment. Visually, if one wants with a certain imagination, one can see each entrance as that building part that, as it were, carries all the - anonymous - apartments above, just to the left and just to the right of it. If each apartment above is completely similar on both sides due to the unifying principle of Plattenbau and visually as it were non-existent, then exceptionally when someone, so to speak, hangs out some washing at an open window, then that entrance door with a structurally strongly elaborated and qualitatively inviting aesthetic intervention can ensure a lasting effect for all the apartments above it! This means that in itself an aesthetically adapted entrance will provide a better experience once one goes in (and out) through it. But depending on the design of the aesthetic approach to/around that entrance door, that aesthetic can also strongly influence the entire experience of all the apartments above this entrance door. All those apartments, or that part of an apartment block, are then, as it were, personified. Politically, one can call that - along and somewhat late - the end of the communist, state-led system.

Now each block has a house number, whereby each entrance door is given that house number with an additional or lateral numbering, of course starting with one until the last number of the last countable entrance door. What now makes little or essentially no sense at all, is the naming of each part of a block, seen via each entrance door. For example, now giving number "15/3" a name; it has something presumptuous, not to say sad to ridiculous, doesn't it!? But the artist who tackles the aesthetic approach of the entrance door, can also come up with an interesting name for the part of that block, such as with the title of a 'normal' plastic work of art. Will the Slovakian, Polish, Burladian, ... post protest against this?

The aesthetic phenomenology of the entrance as a place for aesthetic interventions, in itself and as a 'departure point' for the apartments above it, probably still needs to be written. In any case, in the concrete aesthetic elaboration, the creativity is truly endless. Has it ever been different? But there are many neo-styles, aren't there... Such an approach can be worked out differently or more precisely or 'more modernly', conceptualised or modelled on local art traditions. With the choice of the behind glass painting "*Ľudova pieseň (A Folksong)*" by the Slovak artist Vlasta Flendrovská (1984) we are immediately at a ... candidate for the very concrete application of APPART-ART! We write this ourselves because we don't know this artist personally at all. Purely quantitatively or in view of the almost countless apartment blocks throughout Slovakia - approximately 5.5 million inhabitants - she alone has plenty of work. Take the relatively small, friendly municipality of "*Závadka nad Hronom*" with approximately 2,500 inhabitants. Most of the houses are individual, but there is also the district (časť or part) "*Paseka*". There are four large apartment blocks. There alone, a passionate artist can not only produce beautiful work but also spend a sufficient amount of time working on it or earn a relatively decent living from it. Such a municipality can then use that in its city marketing and so on, and so on. In this way, several balls are set rolling, always with the certainty of a growth in the general or social interest, at the same time as the growth in the interest of its own young or not so young artists. We have absolutely no intellectual interest in proposing even one form of choice of aesthetics. It goes without saying that in a country like Slovakia, where folk traditions are very, very strongly experienced in many, public ways, the countless folk stories such as in this beautiful painting will play a role. Other municipalities, cities and governments choose a ... approach, their approach. And so on. Or almost to the creative infinity!

Many young artists in Slovakia, among others, find it very difficult to launch themselves and hardly develop anything like an art career. It is a shame for all the ultimately half to completely lost dreams, efforts and possibilities. It is also a sin for the social efforts at the municipal and higher academic level. Isn't there a great opportunity here that is also, because that is what it is all about in the first place, of great, almost essential social importance!? A SWOT analysis can be worked out by all kinds of enthusiastic thinkers. We are thinking, among other things, of organizing courses or workshops by the municipal and certainly the higher art academies, where young people are trained as "*Magister in Arts*". Certainly teachers of art history and architecture at universities and colleges may feel addressed by the development of APPART-ART. Given the enormous scale of Plattenbau in the EU, there is no doubt that interest is also possible there, with 'among other things' possibilities for subsidizing specific projects. One can also look for large local, regional, national and supranational collectors who naturally want to promote lively and preferably relatively young artists from their collection, through APPART-ART. They can provide support in exchange for even more socially known reputation and so on.

Indeed; there is still much and so on – to think about! And especially much to do!

Epilogue.

By not wanting to (and partly daring to) dwell on something, one can perhaps sometimes – as we may hope here – go further. Or: by not wanting to interpret even or not too much, one can perhaps extrapret creatively?!

And in the meantime, we and a certain Slovak grande dame, albeit not Martina, enjoy a beautiful work by the young Slovak artist Vlasta Flendrovská. Oh, also ... not Martina. But look, her first name “*Vlast*” historically refers to both “*power, rule, sovereignty*” and “*homeland*”. These are certainly promising because strong associations for an artist who, through a small, fragile work of art, set us on the path to the previous reflections. May she, as an artist and inhabitant of a fascinating and growing country, much more ... power ... home ...

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, January 2025.

For Frank, by all means – and many purposes more.

Madame Cézanne (Hortense Fiquet, 1850 - 1922) in the Conservatory, Paul Cézanne (1839 - 1906), oil, 1891, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

T.U.S.

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Madame de Pompadour, François Boucher (1721 - 1764), oil, 1756, Alte Pinakothek München.

T.U.S.

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Madame Moitessier, (Jean-Auguste-Dominique) Ingres (1780 – 1867), oil, 1844 - 1856, National Gallery London.

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Epilogue.

1. More French than French! But also too unknown/unloved?

Does the name or the word “*Ingres*” really mean nothing to you? You can feel in your elbows that it is a very French word, that it is a word that can only belong in the language of la douce France, that infinite heavenly language. Indeed, in itself the word really means nothing. It is a ‘pure’ word. It is a name, a family name. But it sounds so Frenchy French, ça sonne tellement français! It does, because it is very close, evoke several important meanings. “*Ingres*” rhymes with the verb “*vaincre*” or “*to overcome*”; not bad, right!? And “*Ingres*” rhymes with the close “*convaincre*”, or “*to convince*”. Also! And. “*Ingres*” also rhymes with the verb “*peindre*” or “*to paint*” (!!!). We are not going to throw that into an almost silly summary sentence (“*Ingres sait vaincre etcetera ...*”) because we may not believe in coincidence, the coincidence of the adjacent words, just a little bit. And yet! May we now claim from the foregoing that Ingres was not only a painter, but a real painter, a convincing artist, even historically and also philosophically, in addition to politically and pedagogically (pffft!) a winner! In any case a winner for many ‘types’ of attractive women or our subject!

For the, let us say, very large public, Ingres is apparently not a name like a bell. He does not resonate deep or heavy sounds like the bells of Van Gogh and of an already impressive series of top artists. Then we are talking about names, more precisely family names, that do not need a first name but have become a brand name in themselves. Yet Jean-Auguste-Dominique

Ingres is absolutely not an anonymous case. Just take his first name. We have rarely found another application of this combination of first names. Apparently the triple “*Jean + Auguste + Dominique*” is quite unique while the variations on “*Jean-X*” are very common in the same French: thank you ma for our Jean-Marie! J.A.D. Ingres was nevertheless very famous during his lifetime and already at a very early stage. He is said to have had almost three hundred pupils, or nothing less than an impressive number. Although!? We may add that, despite our rather broad knowledge of European art history, we ourselves have not been able to identify any of them as a name in themselves. But then again! We must also be careful with this remark or nuance. Although everyone can name off the cuff a number of important artists (painters or sculptors) who indeed helped to lay the foundation (hahaha) for younger, in turn, great visual artists, or even, as in a famous French case, who very dramatically prevented that succession (Auguste Rodin, 1840/1917 versus Camille Claudel, 1864/1943), no mathematical relationship may be made. It is therefore not the case that mastership and apprenticeship must lead to ever greater mastery. We assume that several, broad studies in addition to very in-depth monographs have been conducted on this intriguing issue, mainly by art historians. Presumably, in this area of pedagogical expectations, everyone is a form of victim of a similar example that has even spread over one more generation. It originated very long ago and has been a truly unique and leading example throughout the entire Western cultural world. We think of the successive trio of philosophers Socrates (Σωκράτης circa 470/469 - 399 BC), Plato (Πλάτων, circa 427 - 347) and - without a doubt the most brilliant of them all and probably the smartest man in all of history - Aristotle (Ἀριστοτέλης, 384 - 322 BC). Incidentally, Socrates in particular had one outstanding pupil, Xenophon (Ξενοφῶν, circa 430 - 355 BC). People, what a wonderful infectious sun, back there in Athens!

We will see in a later paragraph that our Ingres at least influenced the super phenomenon Picasso very strongly and precisely. If Picasso is not a name like a bell, pardon, a name like a complete carillon! Both of them of course never met each other due to the chronology of their lives but at least as far as Picasso was concerned they were active or working as artists (‘busy’) on the same because French soil for a very large part of their lives. It goes without saying that a man like Ingres, who as we will see immediately, was very quickly canonized or as the French themselves like to call it “*un monstre sacré*”, left all kinds of profound artistic traces on several greats of art. We cannot testify to that ourselves, so we will soon talk about the example with Picasso. Nevertheless, Ingres, through two works and with names around one reasonably well-known French compatriot, became very famous and undoubtedly already known to you, as (...) ‘painter of’. The French country and people have produced two real monsters over the last five hundred years, who were somewhat different by birth but nevertheless exactly the same by blood and by nature: warlike and imperialistic. The first was the famous “*Roi Soleil*” or more precisely according to his birth certificate and the subsequent logical coronation “*Louis XIV*” (1638 – 1715). The man was also known as “*Louis le Grand*” Presumably this was because of his “*la pouce France*” or his very pronounced or publicly known sexual activities at least fairly one-sided: the man had the ladies high to preferably not too low but to choose and impregnate. The man was, as is well known, hideously vain in every possible way and among other things wanted to have himself immortalized continuously. Presumably his most beloved portrait dated from 1701 when he had just passed the age of sixty and thus had the potentially ever-approaching death in sight. It was the work of his court painter Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659 – 1743 + the man had the slightly less French because Catalan original name of “*Jacint Francesc Honorat Matias Rigau-Ros i Serra*”; sometimes a tolerant fellow that Louis). See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Louis_XIV

Please keep this portrait at hand for a moment because we are going to move on to Ingres. Or to who else!? Ingres became famous at a very young age through two paintings, one of which is almost a copy of that famous portrait of Louis XIV! Ingres was born in 1780 and therefore born late enough to keep his stupid neck attached to his smart head and had hardly known a king at the beginning of his life. The storms of the French Revolution, which in principle and for a time de facto put an end to the monarchy in France, had already subsided somewhat, or at least in the area of guillotining. One of the other scourges or consequences of that revolution was the rise of an admittedly brilliant military man, in addition to a great letter writer and reportedly half-and-half good lover, a man who was far from the noble blood birth of his otherwise half-countryman Louis XIV. But he did share the unimaginable ambition with him, in addition to especially the insane military and expansionist ambitions. Both, Louis XIX and Napoleon (1769 – 1821 + born in Corsica as a half-Italian as “*Napoleone di Buonaparte*”), belong without any doubt – at least according to us – to the greatest European criminals because mass murderers of the last five hundred years. We can easily go back a literal while, but then it will gradually become a bit crowded, like with Caesar, Attila and ... While we can also go the other way to the more recent times towards monsters like Hitler and Stalin. Although they all, exactly all of them, needed a fair number of collaborators and implementers. At the same time, Louis XIX and Napoleon and tutti quanti can in their own way be equated with organizations like our Holy Mother the Church with more specifically but not only the Inquisition. Although the Protestants and Orthodox have also done their best to murder and quarter more or less en masse on occasions (that lasted for centuries), often ‘only’ but spiritual or social, in the most complete possible contrast to their source – Jesus Christ.

Napoleon – then already but also only “*Premier Consul*” of the French Republic – is said to have personally commissioned Ingres to paint this portrait, but he himself did not have the time to enliven the work with his presence. That was a problem that the exceptionally technically gifted and still fairly young Ingres had no problems with at all, because in 1804 he would paint Napoleon blah blah blah ... This magnificent portrait can now be seen not in France itself but in the Belgian city of Liège:

[https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bonaparte,_Premier_consul_\(Ingres\)](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bonaparte,_Premier_consul_(Ingres))

Under the well-known French motto “*Everything can be better. Et tout va tres bien, madame la marquise.*”, Ingres was again commissioned to paint a portrait of the same Napoleon just two years later. This fellow had now risen in rank, which was not really planned – in the ranks of ranks. Indeed, it was difficult to climb above “*Premier Consul*” even for a math whiz like Napoleon who must have been incredibly good at calculations, especially in ballistics because the man, just like Louis XIV, was crazy about cannons and what could be achieved with them. You can find this new and also the last portrait of Napoleon by Ingres here:

<https://www.musee-armee.fr/en/collections/museum-treasures/napoleon-on-the-throne.html>

You can see immediately that this portrait, known under the titles “*Napoleon on the Throne*” or “*His Majesty the Emperor of France on his Throne*” is largely identical to the just shown portrait from 1701 of Louis XIV. One may see it all in its time, as much as one wants and can; above all they are completely ridiculous portraits, except if you talk about this in la douce France; “*Please don't laugh!*”. Because or in other words and very briefly explained: they are two queers who were allowed to play macho.

So. In that way Ingres was known to many of you to this day, by both or by at least one of the portraits of queer alias macho (or vice versa or identical?) Napoleon. Fortunately, Ingres would finally be allowed to portray real women, although he probably had to wait a long time for the most interesting of them, or about forty years. He was allowed to paint that wonderful lady twice and certainly life or posing, although in one case he would need a very long time. One work was finished in 1851, while the other was begun in 1844 but it would not leave his studio for her salon until 1856. This is the most important of the two portraits by “*Ingres/vaincre/convaincre/peindre*” of Madame Demoissier and at the same time one of the most beautiful portraits of women in European history. Even if you are French, you have to cross the Channel to see it because it is on display in “*The National Gallery*” in London. See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Madame_Moitessier#cite_note-7

The other portrait of her is also fantastic but we will not discuss it separately. It does not hang in France either but further away because it is also in a “*The National Gallery*” albeit in Washington, USA. Both museums are beyond the madness of beauty! See and compare for yourself:

https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bestand:Jean-Auguste-Dominique_Ingres_-_Madame_Moitessier_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

2. An artistic imitator – aha!! But; it is The Pablo indeed. So ladies and gentlemen!

Art books; You can never have enough of them. At least, we can never have enough of them and it is such a shame that we can no longer teach because of an annoying but fairly persistent neurological problem. How many students – in our case – especially final year students of secondary education still receive introductions to art history, of course together with sufficient attempts at interpretation from philosophy, theology and history, if not political science and whatever else may be used to explain – QUESTION MARK! Fortunately, there is also a lot to be found on that intriguing but also disastrous medium of the internet. Incomprehensible to us - we do not have a Smartphone deliberately also because we understand and must acknowledge the power of the psychological because behavioral system behind it! - how people waste their valuable life time on daily and endless scrolling and scrolling and ... While as we made a beautiful and extra useful discovery here on a beautiful wiki page about Ingres:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Madame_Moitessier

And no, ladies and gentlemen, the same discovery is not to be found on, so to speak, the same Wiki page. Indeed and yet incomprehensible and, mind you, about two French or French-related painters and about exactly the same subject – the delightful portrait of this lady by Ingres – that extra is not present in the next French version. Compare, it always says what is provisionally written:

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madame_Moitessier_assise

And that extra and much appreciated discovery is of course what a certain Pablo Picasso (1881 - 1973) did after his encounter with this painting, and even more after his encounter with yet another very attractive woman, whom he not only wanted to kiss and such, but also wanted to paint. With this as a result:

<https://www.nortonsimon.org/art/detail/F.1969.38.10.P>

The work is called in English “*Woman with a Book*”, dates from 1932 and hangs under - but do not worry not “in”! - the Californian sun because in “*The Norton Simon Museum*” in California. Picasso had fallen in love again which again brought about a flare-up of creativity, although in that respect he was rather genetically predisposed or born like Obelix in a cauldron of creative magic potion!

You probably know by now that we like to make “*pleas*”, or friendly proposals to do ‘something interesting’ every now and then, in this case around and with art. For example, in the context of our studies on “*attractive women*”, we occasionally show five obviously different versions of a portrait based on an existing photo of the famous Italian lady Luce Caponegro (1966) alias Lucella. On this website you can ‘already’ see one of them: see **Luce Caponegro/May Oostvogels**. Because we want to keep you on tenterhooks, we can only tell you that these are portraits made by four different artists - and all women. Picasso was not among them, also because that idiot died when we were only ten years old - and he probably had not accepted a commission from a stupid Belgian at that time; after all, we were/are always male and always too poor, for that kind of art anyway. No complaints and back to that masterpiece by Pablo Picasso. Of course there are small differences with the ‘original’ or call it the source of inspiration. So it is not about Madame Marie-Clotilde-Inès Moitessier “*née de Foucauld*” but about the then – in 1932 – very much alive and jumping Marie-Thérèse Walter (1909 – 1977). The Spanish stud was a bit older then because he was born in 1881 or had entered life almost three decades earlier. That is what you call a detail and we also like to see the reverse happen, although it is quite rare. He would make a lot more portraits inspired by Madame Walter. Of course we cannot propose a study of that series but you will understand that we are quietly thinking about their respective ‘provenance’, whether they also had such an artistic source of inspiration as here with the identifiable work of Ingres. The nice thing is that both works – the original and the one inspired by it – came together one day. You will also find the testimony of that here:

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/exhibitions/past/picasso-ingres-face-to-face>

For several months in the already blessed year 2022, while roughly two thousand kilometers to the east the modern Mongols were invading the West, killing, maiming, raping and destroying, you could see this duo of paintings/women in “*Room 46*” of the blessed museum “*The National Gallery*” in London, where we quote from this website:

“*“Picasso Ingres: Face to Face’ is a unique opportunity to see these two portraits, side by side, for the first time, and to trace the continuous thread between 19th and 20th-century artistic development.”*

With all this joy - and the small sorrow that we were not there at the time - we almost forgot that we have to make a plea once again, because here too. That plea is so obvious, although it is also implicit in this short quote: to hold more of this kind of comparative exhibition work in at least one of the fixed locations of one of the most relevant works of art that are the subject of comparison! It goes without saying that works of art are regularly exhibited on which the central artist wanted to draw inspiration. Here it is very explicit or striking and exceptional. And with what a triple result! Elsewhere - see **Jenny Montigny/Emile Claus** - we have also made a plea to try much more in future to confront paintings by a master with the graphic

work based on those paintings, especially with lithographs and engravings. We understand that in many cases this is very difficult for drawings, certainly for somewhat older masterpieces and for older paper that cannot tolerate much light. We are of course convinced that we are not inventing the wheel here and that consequently (hahaha) many more art experts have thought of this formula – and worked on it. This certainly means an immense organizational or practical problem, especially when one particular classical work has strongly inspired several later artists. We ourselves know absolutely nothing about computer science, but we wonder whether this kind of artistic – museum perspective could not be developed through some program or other? That program should make it possible to inventory the undoubtedly relatively many possibilities for this kind of both very interactive and, so to speak, relatively one-sided projects. So that they can possibly be exhibited together ‘somewhere/once’ as categorically related to each other and the views compared, and also described with an interesting catalogue! In concrete terms, it seems almost impossible to us that only Picasso was inspired by this famous portrait of Madame Moitessier by Ingres. There must at least be all sorts of student works or studies by academy students around this work, whereby it is then a matter of probability, so to speak, whether one or more of these students then effectively grew into great artists. Secondly, Picasso's inspiration is somewhat freer than just an admittedly idiosyncratic or contemporary imitation of the original by Ingres. That means that there will probably be more bound studies of this portrait by Ingres, with, as mentioned or hoped, if possible beautiful works in themselves or at least works by later successful, independent painters.

Anyone who already has a general knowledge of (Western) art history knows that throughout this history very many also very modern or current masters were and are inspired by visits to museums where the so-called classics hang. Those classics are of course (don't they?) gradually but more and more moving towards the present time. Or expressed numerically-artistically, new classical works are constantly being added that one can almost always see via art books and/or the internet, but that one can actually study fully, so only in situ, the visu of life. Moreover, everyone knows and as we have just indicated, that in most higher education in the visual arts worldwide, very much classical work is studied ergo imitated. We know it and it is an eternal reality that will certainly never change in the future and you too know this very famous verse or pericope: “*For many are called, but few are chosen.*” (Matthew, 22, 14). Source: www.biblegateway.com/ The later selection or progression of effectively valuable, not even international top artists, is very low from any higher art education. However, viewed from an art historical perspective or taken all together over time, this succession certainly gives a stream of very good to absolute top artists that is almost impossible for the average art connoisseur to follow. It is already well known that many of these top artists destroy older or mainly academic work at a more established moment, as being worthless. In other words, relatively little of the comparative work obtained in this academic way will be preserved later. But it will be there. Just as there are always progressions among art students, it is not always per year, then at least per generation. And that brings us seamlessly back to Picasso and his Ingres.

We do indeed necessarily return to the website of the comparative exhibition Ingres – Picasso from 2022. There you can read a striking quote from one of them, from the sure-footed, self-assured mouth of the more modern or of course infinitely more documented Picasso: “*Lesser artists borrow; great artists steal.*” We do not consider it our task here to analyze this quote, because we simply have the ‘feeling’ that something is not entirely right with it. What is true and real is Picasso's commitment, which he, as an unimaginably creative artist and as a man who knew very early on how leading he was as an artist, blithely states that every artist of

whatever quality – and therefore certainly also the better or most beloved/appreciated artists – ‘uses’ works of art by previous artists as models, sources of inspiration for their own work.

By the way, we would very slightly like to correct Picasso because he forgot a second or extra possibility concerning this portrait of Ingres, since we already know that he made a somewhat less striking portrait of the same lady. See again his work from 1851:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Madame_Moitessier#/media/File:Moitessier_\(Ingres,_1851\)_NGA.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Madame_Moitessier#/media/File:Moitessier_(Ingres,_1851)_NGA.jpg)

3. The mirror or the exaggerated perhaps ridiculous idea of vanitas or vanity. Because: there is salvation to be obtained/built in the world!

We just discussed Picasso with his interpretation or new use of this famous painting from around 1850. We have not said everything about it, as if, ultimately, everything could be said and in that case one would even have to say everything. Picasso himself has namely started to appear in his version, of a completely different, albeit ‘still’ French woman. He has therefore become a character in his own painting, a fact that cannot be said of the work of Ingres, in neither of the two versions he made as a portrait of Madame Moitessier. Correct us if you do ... ‘something’!? Just look at Picasso and Marie-Thérèse Walter. Because it always says what it says:

<https://www.nortonsimon.org/art/detail/F.1969.38.10.P>

You can't miss it either, because whoever looks at this portrait of her - which is in any case the core or theme of this work! - automatically looks at her head first. And what is standing right there (right in front of the viewer) next to it; the silhouette or the head of Picasso.

We have the feeling that an important Belgian painter saw that painting by Picasso and used it as inspiration – in turn. The very classically trained, hypersensitive and tormented Jan Cox (1919 - 1980) painted the interesting double portrait of himself (...) with the famous Belgian writer and all-rounder Hugo Claus (1929 – 2008), in 1955 with the title “*Hugo Claus and I*”. Unfortunately, we cannot show an image of this work, neither here nor via a reference on the internet. But the profile of Hugo Claus in particular is very similar to the representation that Picasso gave of himself in the painting discussed about his beloved Marie-Thérèse Walter. In this way, ‘much’ from the insanely interesting and moving world of great paintings indeed touches ‘much’ other work. Even more and very much in common: the features that Picasso gives himself in that work do not at all resemble the features of ... himself but rather those of the reasonably well-known Roman emperor Nero (37 - 68). Just as we have the feeling that in that double portrait of Jan Cox and Hugo Claus the first – the actual painter – has depicted the second more as Emperor Nero, than as the pure Hugo Claus. Much indeed touches much.

In any case, Picasso had in common with Ingres that they stood with both feet in the 19th century. In other words, they were brought up in a form of eternal classical past. In that past, Picasso would soon make short work of it, although he would then quickly go back and forth to neo-classicism or simply remain Picasso the painter of everything, one was very intensely brought up with images, images with stories. Ingres, Picasso and countless Western visual artists were all brought up in the noble art of iconography. What Picasso comes to do with Marie-Thérèse Walter is mainly or only look. Not just look; it is lurking or playing the spy. As the macho. As nothing else than the owner of this young woman. Because this man was a

bull. He would drop women when it suited him. And fell for them when it suited him ... So he literally watched his beloved, not so much as her lover but rather as her guard appointed by himself – or against another potential male lover. He would hold up a mirror to her at another time, in the extraordinary, fantastic or magical “*Girl before a Mirror*” (1932). Perhaps this painting, for which he also took Miss Walter as a source of inspiration, is more similar to Ingres' work on Madame Moitessier? See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girl_before_a_Mirror

In this interesting wiki page you can find all sorts of readings around the meaning of the work, in which possibly the “*Death*” with the famous motif of the “*memento mori*” appears. We will not go into that further because it is quite likely that the mirror in Ingres' work has something to do with death. Let us first note that in these times around the two portraits of Madame Moitessier only in this one (most discussed) portrait a mirror is present, and unmistakably very central. This mirror – behind her (of course) – takes up about one third of the entire painting or is very prominent and absolutely cannot be ignored. This mirror can therefore formally have nothing other than a specific meaning, ‘next to’ or in interaction with the central subject or the portrayed woman. Moreover – and quite self-evident for something like a nearby mirror – it also reflects a part of this woman, namely the unmistakably most important part of her: head and neck or her bust! A very penetrating discussion of this painting will certainly point to this reflection in which, in particular, a door of the room can also be seen, and where both (she as the portrayed and Ingres as the portraitist) are located. We will not go into that. In the next paragraph we will learn convincingly that this woman was considered incredibly beautiful or attractive by several contemporaries, including not least the top painter Ingres. This is visually demonstrated here twice or literally repeated via the striking mirror as if it were the very old, very well-known literary stylistic figure of *repetitio*.

Ingres would also use a mirror twice in similarly painted portraits of women, at least as far as we have been able to dig through his oeuvre sufficiently. He would do so with a painting that dated from the time of the two portraits of Madame Moitessier, or nothing new under his iconographic sun. He would do so for the first time thirty years earlier in another painted portrait of women. That was first the portrait of “*Madame de Senonnes*” (1814 + Nantes, Musée des Beaux-Arts) and later the portrait of “*Louise de Broglie*” (1845 + Frick Collection, New York). See for both works:

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_de_madame_de_Senonnes

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Vicomtesse_d%27Haussonville

Back to this great portrait of Madame Moitessier. At the same time, there was almost certainly a sting in the soft flesh of this woman's beauty. A mirror was not only a utensil par excellence for ladies for centuries, and up to the present. Even the internet apparently cannot offer an alternative. Or are we seeing that wrong!? The mirror could, as just indicated in Picasso's work, be intended as a possible indication of the transience of man, of the transience of flesh, in the case of the equally beautiful, adorable Marie-Thérèse Walter. Just as meat is once cut or once literally dead but therefore 'still' edible because it remains fresh or visible for a certain but almost precisely measurable limited period of time, it is the same with the so-called eternal beauty of women, of this woman, also of such an incredibly attractive woman at the time. She is now very beautiful and there is a certain chrono-logical irony associated with this

portrait! After all, Ingres had worked on this portrait for more than ten years. Or at least he waited a very long time to finally finish it, to present it as an image of that moment, between 1844 and 1856 or twelve years! In any case, she had remained consistently beautiful during that time or twelve years or more than a decade, because he – Ingres – had taken up portraiture precisely because of her then (and clearly enduring) beauty. The Dutch “*voortdurend*” can be translated into English as “*always*” or “*constantly*”. But this Dutch word has – once again – a certain philosophical advantage over English. “*Voortdurend*” is a compound of the words “*voort*” + “*duren*”, with the core “*duren*” or “*to take time*”. “*Voort*” is then an augmentative or means “*meer/more*” so that “*time keeps taking longer*”. Otherwise the English word “*always*” is also interesting as “*all ways*”. In other words, the mirror is of great iconographic importance because it is an indication of a very important, albeit very negative, value, which apparently went hand in hand with all female beauty for centuries if not millennia; vanity. In any case, all ancient Jews, and therefore all Christians – in this case the entire majority of the Western population for at least fifteen centuries and still ‘many’ afterwards!!! – knew that because they heard it constantly. It was held up to them on all possible occasions of joy, of prosperity, of beauty as here, of ... Of essentially the most positive life experiences (!!!) as a ... mirror for their ears and soul. You probably know through which words or you recognize these famous words:

“*All Is Vanity. 1 The words of the Preacher,[a] the son of David, king in Jerusalem. 2 Vanity[b] of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.*” (Ecclesiastes 1:1 - 2). Source: www.biblegateway.com

That there was *vanitas*, even insane *vanitas* in and around the life of the French painter and citizen Ingres, he knew with absolute certainty like no other. When painting the portrait of “*Madame de Senonnes*” (1814), his well-known former and double model and ruler of the “*Empire*” – Mr. Napoleon (I) – was in trouble, although he had not yet definitively disappeared from absolute power; that was ‘only’ one year later. Thirty years later, when he painted another lady’s portrait of *vanitas*, when he painted “*Louise de Broglie*” or in 1845, it was a completely different situation. Although? The France of the 19th century continued to experience quite a bit of revolution and restoration. In the meantime, Ingres himself had for a time come into the favour of a prince, or the son of the French ... king (!) Louis-Philippe (1773 – 1850) between 1830 - 1848: “*The Times They Are A-Changin*”. Ingres was once again, and in his old age, even “*Sénateur du second empire*” during 1862 - 1867. Incroyable, mais vrai. It was as if he came to sit on the lap of the old Napoleon again!

So. That power and *vanitas* go hand in hand; all understanding for this logic. But is vanity present everywhere by definition? Do you believe that (also): “*All Is Vanity*”? That some realism may be preached (sigh) does not seem to us to be a bad pedagogical thing. More precisely, there is a very old tradition of “*the cardinal values*”. Among these four core virtues – in principle they should belong to the pedagogical core of all education, also informal or at home – is “*prudence*”: see

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cardinal_virtues

Philosophically and theologically we cannot go into great detail here and we must concentrate on the essence. We certainly have respect and attach importance to monks, for example, who dedicate themselves to prayer in the most deserted places in the world. But in our opinion, that life or that attitude to life is indeed far from (earthly) joy, far from (earthly) prosperity, far from ... Or far from the most positive (earthly) life experiences. But. That life or that attitude

to life is not opposed to life itself, is not opposed to joy and the like! Even more important - philosophically and theologically speaking, while ultimately every theology is an applied form of philosophy - is the conclusion that the thoroughly Christian idea or the 'ideal', that heaven is the ultimate and above all only redeemer of all forms of earthly suffering, is untrue! Let us very positively assert or assume that it is indeed a correct statement, albeit not a true one... That is to say, it can be a correct representation of the matter, although that is reasonably or necessarily a point of faith since it is still very empirically completely impossible to prove. But unfortunately, it is not a true statement from a Christian perspective, and for that we refer to the core of the thinking of a Christian ... theologian. We also evaluate this theologian as a great philosopher, but we cannot go into that here either. The man has written a gigantic and usually very difficult oeuvre. The study of it alone takes years of time and a lot of effort! We say that very precisely for the reason that he has already passed away and we can no longer ask him about his thoughts on this famous/infamous passage from Ecclesiastes, part of the Old Testament, and therefore - with certainty - part of his absolutely hyper-intense field of study of Christian theology. We find our Preacher or especially this extremely famous and much too often quoted verse, really exaggerated, overly moralizing and almost touchingly ridiculous. Is there then nothing imperishable, nothing of lasting value - also in beauty? Is the experience with or perception of The Beautiful through beautiful things and events - as attractive women - not imperishable and forever burned into the individual retina, as it can/will be in multiple ways the collective or social retina!? And moreover; what simple world or human/woman image prevails here in Preacher! As if aging does not produce its own beauty!? As if aging is by definition becoming uglier? What a real fool or thorough pessimist, that Preacher!? And "*All is vanity*"? Pardon me, what do we mean by "*all*" or the whole of life? How can a person live with such core thoughts?

The Dominican and theologian Edward Schillebeeckx (Edward Cornelis Florentius Alfonsus Schillebeeckx, O.P. + 1914 - 2009) is undoubtedly one of the greatest thinkers that the Low Countries – the man was born and raised in Belgium but would mainly live and work or write in the Netherlands – has produced, last century and throughout all previous centuries. Perhaps he is even one of the last great theological giants that Western Europe has produced? Time will tell, but his value as a thinker cannot be underestimated or ignored. We ourselves have seen the man once live in a form of debate or dialogue with the philosopher Leo Apostel (1925 - 1995), also a phenomenally gifted intellectual but still that little bit less great but therefore – may we express ourselves so difficultly stylishly, please? – still very, very impressive. We add this personal note that we have a great and indelible regret never having had the circumstances (no money enough to go and study under more comfortable or ambitious circumstances) to have studied with this professor for at least a year. It is what it is and of course there are his written texts. In particular and for this context we must emphasize the core of his thinking, that "*Extra mundum, nulla salus*". In understandable English: "*There is no salvation outside the world.*" Although this is not formulated very correctly according to formal logic, we may no must translate this into a more optimistic or persuasive language: "*There is salvation to be obtained/built in the world* - and much, perhaps even sufficient, alone already but still better with more people". From this crucial human conception or ideal we have otherwise or very operationally approached a certain nota bene Italian lady, Luce Caponegro or in our name Lucella - without further comment whether that meant a successful objective for either party but one effect is of course these texts about the so-called attractive women in history.

To illustrate this, we will use a fairly recent quote, which can be found on the internet. It indicates what it indicates or is clear enough in our opinion, self-evident in itself and especially concerning that unimaginably pessimistic thinking around the 'ideal' of vanity:

<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/essays-theology/schillebeeckx-no-salvation-outside-world>

Schillebeeckx: No salvation outside the world

BY RICHARD MCBRIEN FEBRUARY 1, 2010

“... reported on *Schillebeeckx's final message* to his theological colleagues at a symposium held in his honor in Leuven in December, 2008.

That message was Extra mundum nulla salus – "There is no salvation outside the world." It was a conviction, Hilkert noted, that "captures the love of the world and the 'grace-optimism' that characterized [his] life's work. ..."

From the earliest to his latest books, she wrote, Schillebeeckx "helped readers grasp the core sacramental insight disclosed by the Incarnation: The mystery of God is to be encountered in human life and creation."

For Schillebeeckx, "the creative and saving presence of God's grace" becomes manifest "wherever human persons minister to one another, especially to the neighbor in need. Human love is an embodiment, a sacrament, of God's love." He called these experiences "fragments of salvation." (our underlining).

Case closed? About the vanity of this mirror, in among others the portrait by Ingres of Madame Moitessier? Somewhere the whole thing speaks for itself since we, at least we, discuss her beauty here, as one of the so-called attractive women in history? Interesting or mentally, morally and socially necessary, is of course the further discussion about the evaluation of beauty through the metaphysically unstoppable process of ... aging. We can only hope, so to speak, that we provide sufficient impetus for this elsewhere on this website. Because. What we certainly cannot do, not only because we know nothing about AI but because we simply have no interest in it, is to make a simulation of the aging process of Madame Moitessier! Now we know in any case that she was an exceptionally attractive woman for at least twelve years before Ingres - she remained so. But of course we know nothing about her later situation, about the question of whether she was and remained happy, or whether she perhaps and yet ... And so on. Perhaps she already knew and especially understood the core of the matter according to Edward Schillebeeckx? Who will say or deny it; already through and through she knew and had enough of that thinking of “*Extra mundum nulla salus*”. It was perhaps how little or openly known one of her life mottos – besides ... Besides indeed also a belief that afterwards, after life, after earthly life, there was a second and even longer life, with much, infinite to almost boring – salvation/salus/salvezza!?

We still have to ask two small but pressing historical-epistemological questions. And try to give an answer to them. The first question seems relatively easy or at least convincing to answer. Did the artist Ingres himself know enough about Christian iconography, that is, about the Christian worldview? The answer is twofold: yes, although especially one time with great certainty. Firstly, he demonstrably made a number of religious paintings next to even stained

glass windows (in churches): so! Secondly, the general intellectual escape from the concepts of the Christian worldview was completely impossible, even for the most hardened republican. The French Revolution, as you know, would reform quite a bit - even the calendar and so on. It did not have much success or lasting impact. From the famous top writer and bishop Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627 - 1704) onwards, there was something specific about the French church as the "*Gallicanism*" that leaned towards French royal absolutism. That aimed for a certain independence from the Church of Rome. But you understand that we cannot go into that. In any case, we would be very surprised if the memento mori were no longer present in that Gallicanism. Moreover, Louis XIV, preceded by François I (1494 – 1547), was an ally in the Islamic Ottoman Empire in his endless intra-European battles, or an enormous historical form of collaboration: what were the consequences in terms of the thinking of 'his' people? There is the other, much more difficult and perhaps even more important question: if the Christian thinking of theologian Edward Schillebeeckx offers an answer to the centuries-long doom-mongering or anti-happiness thinking within the Christian worldview, and given his situation in a time when the power and influence of the Church (of Rome) really declined considerably, was his thinking not simply too late? This question can be reformulated historically in the sense that a more optimistic, say more earthbound-Christian oriented thinking was actually absent throughout the whole of Christian civilization before 1945 or the beginning of the thinking period of Edward Schillebeeckx? We cannot give an answer to that here either, not even very tentatively, to our deep regret.

4. Then the most beautiful woman of bourgeois Paris. Now still or again: a model for all seasons and all women!

Ingres was quite old when he started on the portraits of this lady. It is said that the man had a somewhat pissy character: won't you allow that please? And, a little and piss and shit have very fertile properties! Moreover, throughout his career he appeared not to be really interested in portraits but mainly in historical pieces, although he would become much more famous after his death for the former: once again the difference between intentions and effects! Young as he was before, he could quite naturally not refuse a power phenomenon like Napoleon to make his portrait, especially if Napoleon himself came to 'ask' for it. In the meantime, forty years had passed and a lot of water had already flowed through the Seine. Besides, a lot would flow through there without the wet fingers of Ingres because he was constantly with fingers and toes in Italian rivers, in the Arno (Florence) and in the Tiber (Rome). As mentioned, Ingres had started this portrait in 1844, which he would only finish much later in 1856. In the meantime, he also made a – beautiful – portrait of the same lady in 1851. In those years, something happened to the older Ingres, because in 1852, when he was already more than seventy years old, he would marry. That happened to a French lady and yet special; she was almost thirty years younger than him! It was – what else could one expect? – a second youth for him. The fact that he would finish those two portraits for Madame Moitessier in quick succession probably had to do with that joy for a new wife and the 'fresh' beauty surrounding him. After all, in 1844, when he was asked for a commission via a mutual acquaintance around Madame Moitessier, he was in a phase of his life in which he was still not very inclined to accept commissions for portraits. Apparently, after the actual meeting with Madame Moitessier, he must have fallen next to or rather completely on his easel because of the intoxicating power of her beauty. Here the information from the English wiki page is very informative but first we need to go into the French wiki page about this same painting. See:

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madame_Moitessier_assise

Here we find the same initial doubt expressed: “*D’abord réticent, car il considérait alors le portrait comme un thème secondaire de l’histoire de l’art, il accepte la commande car il est frappé par la beauté de son modèle.*”. And although we do not consider these texts of this website as purely scientific contributions, in which we would normally have to quote constantly and thus more scientifically, we must now reproduce this note no. 3 in full (it is not that long either):

“*Daniel Arasse, grand historien de l’art, est allé jusqu’à faire l’hypothèse que la tache que l’on voit dans la partie basse de la robe, a été peinte par Ingres non pas comme une ombre mais en témoignage (à la Georges Bataille!) de son admiration et de son désir.*” (vertaald: “*Daniel Arasse, a great art historian, went so far as to hypothesize that the stain seen on the lower part of the dress was painted by Ingres not as a shadow but as a testimony (à la Georges Bataille!) of his admiration and desire.*”

You understand that we should now in principle look up this reference ourselves in the art historical work of Daniel Arasse (1944 – 2003). We are not going to do that because we do not feel like it and because we may assume that no one would dare to make this reference. Purely in terms of content, the so-called “*tache*” or stain can indeed be seen, but then several times and in different sizes. It therefore seems to us the task of very precise ‘ordinary’ research in addition to stylistic and iconographic research to be able/dare to determine whether the older, yet certainly married – and even to a much younger woman! – Ingres has actually applied a form of obscenity here. To be honest, that seems to us a rather French, say oversexed way of thinking because through decades of looking at and reading about art we have never seen such a hypothesis expressed. We might see something like that possible in one of the many portraits by phenomenon Francis Bacon (1909 - 1992) about his (suicided) lover George Dyer? Moreover, this hypothesis concerning Ingres’ spots seems simply silly in itself; to what need of Ingres would these spots have responded? And above all; if ... Then the very wealthy client or Monsieur Moitessier would have noticed this with almost certainty and would certainly not have accepted this version if Ingres had not immediately thrown out the door. Furthermore, one should not forget that this must be regarded as a truly extremely serious insult – if such an intention was effectively behind these ‘spots’, which we doubt – and that the “*duel*” was still used in France in the middle of the 19th century, to ‘resolve’ such particularly serious insults. Finally, let us also consider the fact that we may be certain that the older painter and man Ingres almost certainly and even twice wanted to paint the portrait of this beautiful lady, not only apparently because of her beauty, but also very naturally, one would almost forget, because of the handsome capital he received for it from her very wealthy husband. Monsieur Moitessier was, among other things, a banker. And Ingres had, among other things, a younger and French wife to support; haha.

Now let's turn to the English wiki page about this famous painting.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Madame_Moitessier#

Here one also finds the same assertion concerning Ingres and his fainting and immediate painterly righting upon seeing – the contemplation, the visual caress – of Madame Moitessier, in persona non non grata or a “*persona grata*”. We quote again as is necessary:

“*Art critic Théophile Gautier, who watched during some of the painting sessions, agreed with Ingres, describing her beauty as the most regal, magnificent, stately and*

*Juno*esque that he had ever seen drawn.[4]”. To complete we give the full note 4: “Kiroff, Blagoy (2015). *Ingres: 162 Master Drawings*. Blagoy Kiroff. p. 107. ISBN 9786050378276.”

We are mainly trained as philosophers so we think logically as intensely as possible about how people think reasonably logically. We have to try to get into the head or the thinking or perception of this Frenchman and of course contemporary of Ingres. You see that according to the rules of wiki we can click directly on the man, Pierre Jules Théophile Gautier (1811 – 1872). This way we learn that he was “*a French poet, dramatist, novelist, journalist, and art and literary critic.*” These are more or less the same descriptions. In short; the man loved beauty, didn't he!? We are not really at home in the mythological use from France in the mid-19th century but “*Juno*” was certainly a very important goddess for the Romans and was among other things the “*goddess of love*”; many actually only worse mythological references could be used compared to Madame Moitessier! And now comes the most important part, via this wiki page, about the thinking and perception ability of the Frenchman Théophile Gautier:

“*Gautier was a celebrated abandonné (one who yields or abandons himself to something) of the Romantic Ballet, writing several scenarios, the most famous of which is Giselle, whose first interpreter, the ballerina Carlotta Grisi, was the great love of his life.*”
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Th%C3%A9ophile_Gautier

We really don't need to click further wikiwise on the named ballerina Carlotta Grisi (1819 – 1899), who was clearly of the utmost importance in the life of this man. Not only had he written a lot and literally on her body, but moreover – from our directly formulated perspective! – he did so on her extremely slender or slim body! Or have you perhaps already seen one ballerina, with for example the admittedly adorable appearance of ... Madame Moitessier, but who was also (sic) somewhat 'fuller' or at least completely impossible to move on the European top stages as the top ballerina of these times?

That the poor French prolific writer was dumped by this lady Grisi so that (sic) he would find solace in the arms of her sister and have some children through her womb, that was all of no importance here. Purely logical because deductively we have - and we firmly hold on to it! - that the same man Gautier fell for a by definition very slender woman. And that he ALSO sang the praises of the beauty of another woman from the same times - around 1850 - while this woman as she was known and was literally immortalized in two paintings of that time, as not so slender, albeit plump, chubby, ... or that little bit fatter. We are talking about Paris around 1850. We are talking about Madame Moitessier, among others, who appears in those two well-known paintings every time in an insanely beautiful dress or in the top-class clothing of that time. Of course, “*la Gisi*” would not have been prancing around in the most banal tutus in the many ballets that Gautier wrote for her, until she fell into the arms of another ... She would certainly not have been dancing around ‘just’ naked, because the Parisians had to wait another half century for the “*Ballets Russes*”; did they dance completely naked anyway? In other words, or this conclusion: in 1850 in Paris, or even the centre of beauty in so many socially important domains – such as painting, dance, ... – one and the same Frenchman of, let us say, broad or deep general culture spoke out:

- 1) about and for the beauty of a slim/slender/... woman;
- 2) about and for the beauty of a chubby/plump/... (in Dutch “*volslanke of vol-slanke*” or literally “*full slender*”!).

We have personally been very intensely occupied the last twenty years of our lives with above all the first half of the 20th century in (Western) Europe, in almost all important domains such as art. We have indeed not specifically concerned ourselves with the evolution of fashion, French fashion (of course) and certainly not how it was shown, especially through models. Those models showed themselves either live via a catwalk (an English term) or via photos, via general and specialized women's magazines, posters, ... In any case, we can safely say with a very worried heart that the majority - if not ALL - models, whether they are French or from anywhere else (think of the American phenomenon Josephine Baker, 1906/1975, a variety talent of whom we have seen several public nude photos), are as slim as ... are - or even slimmer!

This means that in the mind of the Parisian fashion world, of the world of that fashion that can be called clothing fashion or of a part of the world that at least half of the world would like to wear, somewhere between 1850 and say 1920 something changed; from ALSO plump to ONLY slim, as the so-called everywhere and always propagated 'ideal'! Also call it the straitjacket for all other women, who can either buy something similar or still want to be inspired by it with self-made dresses and so on. Who is stopping who from making the normal and reverse movement again, so from only slim/slender/... to - again!!! - slim/slender as well as plump/chubby/.....!!!???

Or back to the future – via Ingres!

5. “La gonna fa la donna”. Or “La robe fait la femme” or “The skirt makes the woman”..

We have spent sufficient time in paragraph 3 on the striking mirror in this famous portrait. If that mirror takes up about one third of the space in this painting, we can estimate about the same space for the skirt, for this delightful dress of this delightful lady. And no, we are absolutely not going to talk about her equally delightful jewels now. And for two reasons. Firstly, we can safely say that it is visually very striking that all her jewels can be seen as extensions of her dress; take a look for yourself. And secondly, we simply find a dress or skirt or ... – is there another adjacent alternative for this crucial or strategic garment? – much more interesting to look at than jewels, at least in the direct grasp of an attractive woman, until they disappear from her afterwards.

May we kindly ask you to forgive us a major linguistic clumsiness in this paragraph? Madame Moitessier wears a skirt and up until now (we are only 61 years old) we did not even know the difference between a dress and a skirt. So we had to look it up ... Now we must stick closely to the facts, at least where those facts also force themselves upon us irresistibly. So (yes, so!) we are a great advocate of women wearing dresses or skirts again or more often. What the difference is, where a dress or a skirt begins, is essentially completely the same to us. As long as dress and skirt end the same, as is known (now also to us). And above all; as long as skirt and dress reveal the same amount of beauty. Now we also love language. And make your choice between a title like “*L'abito fa la donna*” (“*The dress makes the woman*”) or like “*La gonna fa la donna*” (“*The skirt makes the woman*”). That choice is made by almost everyone, and just as quickly! In that sense we have made the same translation in French as “*La robe fait la femme*” (the language of fashion, right!?) and in English. You understand and accept!? Thank you.

And now we continue. Although I hope you will allow us to sometimes speak of a dress or sometimes of a skirt – because ...

As an art lover, one can see Madame Moitessier's skirt/dress as a true still life, a part as a possible whole of its own. In the previous paragraph we read that the French art historian Daniel Arasse actually saw stains on that dress. There are indeed dark points of light that can form small shadows. The will is often the father of the eye. If one wants very much, one can see spots in those shadows as actual expressions of an irresistible sexual compulsion of the painter towards the portrayed. We find that 'observation' rather nonsense or wishful looking from wishful thinking. But passons; it does not interest us at all and moreover it can simply refer to something like small albeit unavoidable metaphysics. A painter always works with light, doesn't he?! So he also works with shadow! We only show here our sincere admiration for this important appearance of this woman, a woman who was clearly very rich because, among other things, she sat in an expensive dress in an expensive, almost certainly domestic, and therefore semi-princely environment. But she was/is as a woman a woman like all those who came before and after her, or a being with a body that needs a certain protection against the elements and that at the same time always knows this protective function – and is determined by it – as a social function. In this social function, the element of beauty is probably always present if there is at least a minimal material/financial possibility for it. More concretely. The garment of Madame Moitessier that de facto completely encompasses or wraps up the person portrayed has three functions: 1) material protection, 2) indication of social origin in addition to 3) aesthetic, a function that can be analyzed in itself but is also determined by the previous one. Let us leave the protective function for what it is and must always remain, also needfully abstract from the social function of clothing and concentrate on the last function, that of aesthetics.

Since we are discussing so-called attractive women in history and are doing so (almost exclusively) on the basis of paintings, we must first concentrate on the phenomenal appearance of the woman before the eye of the painter via his hand or his brush (for convenience we will leave other possible techniques out of the equation here). That is somewhat delicate for us because it cannot be the intention in this website that we opt decisively for this or that form of painting school, for various reasons. At least we do not want to do that because we find it self-evident that we do not want to make statements that could, so to speak (conditionally of course) bind future artists, or, to put it more diplomatically or cautiously, at least inspire them. Nevertheless, it seems self-evident to us at first sight that a certain choice in what we are going to recommend directly through the knowledge of painters - portraitists! -, must also have purely painterly and therefore art-historical implications. In concrete terms, we did some research; it is said that for some time now Flemish painters have been taught absolutely nothing in their academic training in terms of materials. More precisely; where in Flanders there is nevertheless an improbably rich and very long tradition of any (we are open here, aren't we?) art historical processing of materials such as of course primarily textiles (dresses, skirts, ... hahaha!), metals, marbles and so on? - nothing is passed on/taught in the art technical sense. We do know that someone as intriguing, somewhat unruly artist as Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven (Anne-Marie, also known as "AMVK", apparently she is a very Christian, strongly Flemish-minded lady because with an alias similar to the well-known abbreviation "AVV-VVK" or "*Alles Voor Vlaanderen - Vlaanderen Voor Kristus/All for Flanders - Flanders for Christ.*" + °1951) works on/with plastic surfaces, with various types of plastic 'even'. Furthermore, we have certainly already seen one intriguing (self)portrait of hers, but due to copyrights, among other things, we will not discuss that here. From that portrait we cannot, for that matter, conclude whether she is wearing trousers or a ... It is quite obvious that makers of women's clothing will never banish the skirt or dress from their shop windows and that the material and aesthetic knowledge of those garments there will never

disappear. In the end, one can always go to the ... Scottish Highlands and borrow from the men there! But so; if ... is wearing a skirt ... and would like a portrait, there is that practical question = which contemporary and future painter can paint that 'in a way' and 'still', assuming that he or she would even (sic) still want to do it? Our great friend and world-class guy Luc Tuymans (1958) is a wonderful example of this. His famous/infamous portrait of the Dutch Queen Beatrix (2013) is *du jamais vu* or indescribably bad but according to the usual experts of course another milestone in the work of this deprimate. Partly because the man either can't or doesn't want to (he can't) do anything with her dress/skirt; he can't even paint something like textile - but can undoubtedly and preferably for days 'explain' about it. A tongue painter, then?

Ultimately, it has come down to the following for several or through the last or the next of the future - !!! - generations, roughly since WWII. Either one paints completely conceptually or abstractly, even very lyrically or whatever. But then it seems to us almost impossible to still be able to speak of artefacts produced in this artistic way under the heading "*portrait of ...*". One can invent and stick as many names or titles on these artefacts as one wants. Since the interbellum we know that titles can actually run away from their subject, can enter into a form of interaction with it. And moreover, if you cannot recognize anything in anything that could also be presented in a painterly manner; what use is a title to a 'suitable' or explanatory sentence, let alone even added value? Of course we do not deny that when the sun shines, we can see sunbeams. Of course we know from the phenomenon of Picasso alone that he made a great many abstract portraits. We have just recently discussed a portrait of him, of one of his lovers, in paragraph 2. That painting was formally beautiful and in terms of content inspired by this famous portrait of Madame Moitessier as well as by his new, very lively flame Marie-Thérèse Walter (1909 – 1977). However, there is not a single person in the world who, if he or she had by chance never heard of Picasso and this woman, would recognize an effective portrait (of this woman by that man) in this. But he or she would see a great painting in it. With 'something' feminine. Because with legs, breasts (especially), a head that is (especially) supported by a beautiful, so feminine position of her arm/hand, ... See again:

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/exhibitions/past/picasso-ingres-face-to-face>

In other words, let us try to use very precise words. This abstract painting by Picasso is either not abstract at all. Or, it is only a little abstract and it is not even not conceptual at all. If it had been conceptual, there would have been nothing recognizable of the feminine. If it had been even more abstract, then ... Then it could probably be called purely conceptual, right!? This painting by Picasso has been cast in a representation that is acceptable to everyone (except the real art experts of course, the curators, the ...) that makes it both recognizable (as a person, a young woman and probably a new love for Picasso) and as a very obviously very beautiful or successful – or art historically beautiful work. We do not prevent anyone and certainly not famous artists of current and future times from basing themselves, as Picasso did on a portrait by Ingres, also on this one portrait by Picasso. Only, if their result is 'purely' conceptual or extremely abstract, it will produce streaks or stains, pleasant or beautiful perhaps or at least so to be hoped. But almost certainly (always leave room for pleasant surprises please!) it will not be a successful portrait – of whoever it may depict or whose inspiration it was!

From the other side of the art side or for those painters who still/again want to work figuratively; there relatively 'perfect' or convincing, moving (again) portraits can be made. But. Either one only makes nudes and then any addition of something like clothing is simply unnecessary. However. At the very least that is a problematic attitude when one wants to

make a portrait of a child or a couple or when one wants to paint a group portrait – and so on, probably/hopefully. If one then (really!) uses clothing, on the other hand, one can de facto no longer express oneself in a more nuanced way due to a lack of knowledge of materials – than via smears or stains! That can be solved very pragmatically in that way: one only makes ... busts anymore! See **Nefertiti**. That cannot be a definitive solution for several reasons; it would be very boring, among other things. But what one cannot technically represent, one cannot paint either, or a variation on the famous saying “*The medium is the message*”. In this way, ultimately only the medium or the artistic domain of photos remains! Whether they are made digitally or even analogue again; has little argument here. Of course, we are not going to deny the light in and out of the eyes of true photographers and admit that everyone can just take photos, let alone portrait photos. May we come back to our great friend Luc Tuymans in this context? Here we go: the photo that photographer Katrijn van Giel (1983) took of a Belgian politician in 2015 is/was a magnificent photo in any case. It is certainly a portrait or an artistic representation of this person to be interpreted/situated. There has been a lot of fuss about this photo and the pure takeover (legally called plagiarism) of painter Luc Tuymans and we will have to come back to it elsewhere. In this entire national and even international discussion – Luc Tuymans is considered an international artist, because the international higher art mob would never have cried for this photographer – there is nevertheless one element that has never been addressed. The photo/plagiarism was a cross-view of a man, fairly obvious with only the upper and middle part of his head. Purely theoretically, this could have been done differently or more specifically predominantly via the lower part, without the brain pan and especially without the – almost always – identifying eyes. Just look at this reconstruction of photo annex plagiarism and imagine for yourself what the reverse result would have been:

<https://nos.nl/artikel/2014585-grens-tussen-jatwerk-en-inspiratie-is-dun>

These images are not completely sharp and not completely complete – for which we apologize. They are clear for the core of the matter because they are completely the same in content. Don't you notice something that just doesn't stand out!? The person – that man – is not wearing any clothes, or at least has not been photographed as such. That does indeed produce a very strong image through the skill and knowledge of the photographer. That therefore appealed to a professional image maker like Luc Tuymans so that he ... But the power of that photo lies, among other things and certainly to a large extent, in the fact that no clothing or only part of the head – of the person portrayed – is shown. For the photographer it would have been easier, as it were, to continue with that clothing. That would have produced a lesser photo, even if not to ... plagiarize. But Luc Tuymans is an image maker but not a photographer, although for some time now he has apparently liked to use a small type of camera. In any case, this image came out very well, not only because it was incredibly attractive and therefore had to be parodied, or rather plagiarized. But also or almost above all; Luc Tuymans simply cannot paint clothes – properly. He simply has no craft or expertise for it. Or “*The medium is the message*”: the lack of craft or expertise is the message. It is then all rationalized by this image maker and boundless expositor. In plain language, it is explained away. Should we speak of sarcasm here or may we simply testify to irony? In any case, with this both famous and infamous photo it is made clear in one fell swoop where the shortcoming of much modern painting lies. It is not in something like a lack of will, or not wanting to look at or observe interesting images. Quite the contrary! It is in not being able to depict, or paint – parts of – interesting images.

Once we had to replace in a vocational school, for (Roman Catholic) religion. We were amazed, among other things, that the reasonably experienced specialist teacher never used real art - in Roman Catholic religion with millions (...) of images of sculptures, paintings, ...!!! So like that. We walked around in our free time, in the school, in the vocational school. So also in the technical rooms or classrooms where 'our' students mainly learned that technical subject. That walking around, our interest, that caused them enormous consternation - for us the very self-evident because we wanted to experience their world with them ... So it had never happened before that even a permanent teacher who was not a technical teacher, had come into such a different classroom: really bad intentions! We think that painters in - four years - higher education should be trained a bit more than just with .. Like they are now apparently 'only' academically occupied with. And learn 'more' professional knowledge. One can then forget as an active artist or not want to use it, later. But the reverse is absolutely impossible. In any case, for those who have the greatest possible interest in the most human object – a portrait (of a human being of course, not of a pet) – there is much, if not almost everything, to be gained from this. Also commercially or as a professional entrepreneur to earn money (honestly and responsibly), But that is an aspect that we may deal with elsewhere. Perhaps, for example, painters in their higher, because academic, education, may also join in the learning areas of fashion education, metalworking, the ...

6. “La gonna fa la donna” and a little more precisely now. Or are two apparitions of the same woman possible?

There is the well-known expression of “*Le style c’est l’homme*”. After our licentiate thesis in philosophy we were completely exhausted so that our brains apparently had room to create a whole series of aphorisms: “*Il cervello è mobile*” – haha. We had never ventured into that genre before, nor with a philosophical genius like Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900). Perhaps it was a form of philosophy light for us at the time or were we making a huge mistake? We still remember that we used “*Amphorisms*” as a possible title, but we never had to use that for a publication. There were a few keepers, we thought and still think. Like this one: “*Style is what you show when no one else is around.*” (in the original Dutch: “*Stijl is datgene wat je toont waneer er niemand anders is.*”). You know how writing goes; it is not always clear where thoughts come from, what they want to mean. The language of a person, still in his mother tongue and blessed is the person who can still speak and write one or two languages as a father language or extra emotional language, belongs to the facet of always more than himself, more than what a person thinks he knows about himself and especially thinks he can control about himself. Then it may sound paradoxical that one can still be or get to know oneself, by showing oneself to all third parties - all mirrors - when absolutely none of them are present, when one is completely alone or without any form of communication. In an existential or persistent way this is of course completely impossible, but it is about a basic attitude. In ancient Greek thought, the term “*ataraxia*” (Ἀταραξία) can perhaps be used for this, as the indication of an equality, a simplicity or sameness of mind. It can also be called a general or deep form of culture, in the broadest or deepest meaning of the word. As a style – ‘true’ style – where the appearance is both the externalisation of the inner self (a borne inner self) and a reinforcement of it.

Now there is a phenomenal experience with people that we have never experienced with men, so only with women. And that is an experience of a literal two-sidedness. Two styles, two outlooks, two ...! So? Also an experience with two ‘real’ or multiple women? Let us share the latest experiences. Whether it is a coincidence, we dare not say, but it concerns for us – Belgians but also European – two European but also foreign women, an Italian and a Slovak.

Of these Slovak women we can honestly say that we have been able to get to know 'them' (plural) quite intensely in the last fifteen years or so. Yet that two-sided experience with this one or unique, indeed unique there or only experienced with one woman. It is of course true that through fifteen years or so of having met more or less the same Slovak women, we can see certain evolutions, sometimes in their character or mood, sometimes in call it their outward appearance. That seems perfectly normal or human to us and is not what we are going to talk about now. That other Italian lady is a completely different kind of person, if we may say so. She has a public personality, with certain picturesque and blustering sides, is a barrel full of energy that can undoubtedly seem both attractive and risky to many men. She is certainly someone with a great deal of vitality, a quality that we value strongly anyway and is so beautifully expressed in French with "*élan vital*" or "*vital force/life force ...*". Because even if we think we have a lot of social feeling or understanding, we still like or prefer to deal with optimistic people. We may approach that first – Slovakian – lady in a friendly, even sociable way. The Italian lady is a more complex case about which we cannot reveal the back of our tongue, at least not here and now – and perhaps never. We wanted to help her with our brainpower, a motivation that also had something to do with no less than three women we had known before, including the woman of our lives who after all... But that is our own business and we will not give her any breathing space here. Luce Caponegro – you can check it out for yourself in so far as relevant – is a public chatterbox and constantly indicates or indicated (!) that she did believe in "*Growth but not in salvation*". We did not like that at all, her belief in the disbelief in a kind of redemption, call it deep peace with herself – in her own life. So action! Go play dove of peace – and take off for and land in Ravenna!

In short, we wanted to give this Italian lady – Luce Caponegro or, as we say, Lucella – a chance in several ways to give shape to her addiction to public self-display, but then in a way that is, let's say, both eternal (transcending her own mortality) and most possible artistic, or by becoming the model of Italian visual artists. Through which, if possible, you won't believe your ears, a revival could also be heralded in the Italian art world because truly – we repeat, the Italians!!! – the art of the (human, therefore 'also' female) portrait seems to have been all but forgotten; "*Incomprensibile ma purtroppo vero.*" This objective and, nota bene, this fairly unique gift for this objectively seen partly troubled partly lively lady, has thus (sic) or at least completely failed up to now. Presumably because this lady 1) is enormously traumatized by 'the men' (and we are certainly a macho), 2) is a huge control freak (via her collaborator Tania; see further) who wants to create her own image production, say dominantly control it (haha because of "*dominus*" or ... "*lord/man*" - hihi!) and probably 3) also because of certain other views on art, high, low, middle, right, left ... - You understand (hopefully our attempt at diplomatic wording here).

From the experiences with both ladies (the Slovak and the Italian) we may perhaps speak of what we once learned as students of sociology as style inconsistency. That was a phenomenon that you understand by definition, although the soup here is not as hot as it is poured, so to speak. As a small child - certainly before we were five - we had a very fine feeling for the various contradictory or repulsive styles that were to be found in our grandmother's house. We saw, as it were, the operational definitions of various styles dancing before us through that oh so familiar house. Of course we did not know the concept of inconsistency, but we saw it de facto and irresistibly present; form A could not really hang or stand next to form B. And so it went on for a while in that house, through various rooms, as if our grandmother had almost deliberately made a mix of styles to challenge her grandson later, so to speak! Fortunately we had no psychological problem with that; that would have been something. On the contrary! It was even an enormous pedagogical-intellectual advantage because it gave us an – additional

or perhaps pushing? – feeling of democracy, of the presence, in this case in the house of one (older) person of completely different cultural forms. Later, much later we would almost shrink in then flee from, say, a (gigantic) house of nevertheless an internationally undisputed genius like Victor Horta (1861 - 1947). That was in Sint-Gillis-Brussels, with ‘of course’ one style, with only one style, especially one style, or what an overwhelming quasi-fascist handling of forms in, mind you, a living and residential environment. With that we did not claim that this crushing feeling must always apply to designers of this genre or in essence of all genres. But with cases like this we came to nothing more than a mere viewing and enjoyment experience but certainly not to a desire to want to use something like that, day in day out. See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horta_Museum

That experience of disparate even contradictory matters-with-identity-or-a-style formed for us anyway a self-evident or the whole of/around our grandmother. And she was a very important woman in our (early) life because the only grandparent we ever knew, and fortunately quite intense and long enough (in that respect important; there were no points of comparison on our own paternal side because-because). Incidentally, something like true communication between a child – then already known as extremely intelligent because already in nursery school busy with ...; us - and his grandmother (widow shortly after our birth) hardly existed more than say some emotionally charged and some instrumental communication. Those older - Flemish - generations reportedly said almost nothing to children everywhere. And by them (grand)children were especially asked little, let alone actually stimulated relatively little towards them, apart from simply making cultural elements such as books available - and then in libraries or via neighbours. Such a situation was bearable as a child because you could think a lot, in the meantime. And regularly enjoying romantic films on television with her – how nice. Many aesthetic as well as psychological insights were not shared or you had to try to observe and evaluate them yourself. Of course, no person can completely unravel what their own psychogenesis is, let alone how the epistemological structure of their own worldview has developed. One can ‘pick up’ the shards from memory. Something of those shards and the shard structure must therefore certainly play a role in what we are now trying to translate from our observations around two remarkable and also living, foreign, albeit European, women. Indeed, the perspective is now different because we ourselves are not only supposedly adult and, to put it that way, sexually quite mature and ourselves apparently constantly attractive to multiple women, such as in Slovakia, Italy, ... But we can also ask those women questions in a certain sense or to a certain extent. At least, that would be possible because with this Italian woman there is an important communicative problem, which we do not want to go into here. Anyway, both ladies, the Slovak and the Italian, share something that we, as far as we can remember, have experienced as very rare in our experiences with women who are attractive to us in all (sic) ways: a form of being different, call it inconsistency throughout their phenomenal appearances. Do we call that human (female) phenomenon a showing of really two different faces/styles through other temporal, spatial and environmental factors while they indeed remain objectively the same person – name, character, ... ! Or does it ...? Does the – slightly or more – different appearance influence the slightly or more different actions of every woman? Does the phenomenally different appearance throughout a communicative context, certainly in a face-to-face relationship and even more so with a macho man like us, influence the existential appearance of such a woman? Does she look as if through the mirror effect of the gaze and the behavior of the man, who thus (!) always meets a formally slightly different often – sexually – more

attractive woman, herself have a different feeling, behavior and appearance? Shouldn't we rather speak of “*style surplusism*” instead of “*style inconsistency*”?

What do we want to say with this? We met the special Italian Luce Caponegro alias Lucella (our working name or nickname for her) twice in September 2022. For reasons we have to (sic) do that again later, although for reasons we don't feel like it that much anymore. By the way. She is a human being. With the right to a private life or privacy, although in her case that is not so obvious. Because. The lady openly and exposed (sic) places half her life on all kinds of media and social media. We do not have access to the latter because we do not want that either since we are not a member of any of those social media platforms because-because. In any case and without violating her privacy, we can say that our first meeting was very short and mainly to really meet. Although we (already) gave her two jars of honey as a gift, a Slovak and a Hungarian jar. As a kind of "*captatio benevolentiae*". To which she replied "*I love honey very much.*" Or a tip for her countless followers! But please, don't all come to La Ravennissama with pots of honey at the same time! It was funny that she looked quite strikingly different then, with her work uniform on and glasses. Also that tied up hair; that gave/gives (?) together with those glasses a stricter or even more serious (...) expression to a person, where she would appear later with loose hair. Looking back from that second meeting; it was as if Lucella has/is two, two strikingly different appearances. And in our opinion you can find, observe that in more media or moments. Those two appearances of hers remind us of a remarkable painting by Gustave Van de Woestijne (1881 - 1947). It is called "*De twee lentes*" or "*The two Springs*" (1910 + Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp).

https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_twee_lentes

Gustave was a brother of the very subtle, also oversensitive and supraesthetic writer and literature teacher Karel Van de Woestijne (1878 - 1929). It must have been a special nest, their parental home in Ghent because Gustave was also a very delicate artist, in our opinion not too well-known internationally. But that does apply to several Belgian contemporaries such as ... and certainly ... not to mention, isn't it scandalous, of ...!! Anyway, one interpretation of this work is that it is about two faces of one and the same woman, or two guises in which she can introduce herself to the world. We recently read this interpretation somewhere, probably in a text from that museum, so from an 'expert'. So we didn't invent anything. Or the idea that one and the same, as it were, objective woman can have two, as it were, subjective appearances – which in our opinion can be observed fairly objectively, as of course in this painting and in the lovely ladies from Slovakia and Italy – is not new at all, although perhaps (???) not commonplace.

The second appearance of Luce Caponegro to us (sic) happened on a Saturday morning in early September 2022, more precisely between 10 and 12 o'clock "*ante meridiem*" of course. It took place together with her so-called press manager Tania and a young artist Stefano whose reason for being there is still unclear to us. He was friendly and spoke English well, which is not self-evident for Italians who excel in Italian - and then basta but fortunately also pasta (it's a very poor joke but it's also a very poor general knowledge of languages there). Tania spoke fluent English - and also Italian. A special lady that Tania, about whom we now have to make a parenthesis. Tania was already awake as a daisy at that early hour or rather overtired. After all, she had just returned as the main actress from the last recordings of the new Italian spaghetti thriller, "*Ladri di biciclette elettriche*". And that will undoubtedly be a new blockbuster in the cinema and in the living room, but it is still in post-production. Her first sentence to us - around 10:03 - showed a certain excitement: "*All my girlfriends want to*

meet you." Whether she considered herself or her boss - who was of course already present and seated - as her girlfriends, we did not ask because we were speechless. Then her climax had yet to come, or rather then her "*Paukensschlag*" had yet to burst out: "*You have saved six hundred (600) euros because I, Stefano and Luce normally charge a hundred (100) euros per hour.*" - it sounded around 12:02 when La Capo's dog jumped up happily when La Negro's mother dived in. Considering the reason(s) for which we were there, had come to Italy, you can perhaps imagine our bewilderment - which continues to this day. Unless this statement is an example of, call it, the typical Italian "*Ospitalità*" or hospitality? In our language – Dutch – that word is close to or almost equal to "*hospitaal*" or "*hospital*" or the place where we had to go to take care of ourselves afterwards, deeply wounded, almost fatally, in our human heart. A remarkable woman, that Tania, as a combination of an ex-punk star and in the meantime a shrewd, steeped specialist in all kinds of social media and internet. Who was that Chinese who at least already knew English perfectly well and pronounced these words: "*Keep your friends close; keep your enemies closer.*"?

Back to her boss, the divina Ravennata Luce Caponegro, although not our (girl)friend but we did our best in a way on the way there. Lucella was sitting opposite us and since her English is apparently not too bimbo, she was looking at me the whole time, accompanied by let's say facial expressions - her facial expressions. You know the Italians. They almost talk more with their bodies than with their normally provided speech apparatus! We talked to and listened to press manager Tania, as mentioned, the shrewd ex-punk star or an ordinary old person with once-wanted-ideals-and-now-like-more-money-please via extreme internet technical qualities. But we especially and gladly looked straight ahead. There we saw a woman with an interesting appearance and great eyes, partly unmistakably deeply sad but not stingy with uplifting optimism and élan vital: captivating eyes like a world and a ... painting in themselves! With a great laugh or if necessary; with deep empathy. With one deep moment of her own shyness when we Was that a beautiful moment, not to be feigned and yet partly as ad hominem proof (right!?) that we had done well as stupid Belgians to contact and visit this famous Italian woman. But there was that beautiful morning, with the pastries we had brought with us that we had of course already discovered a few days earlier (but had of course only bought on the way to that 'meeting') at the wonderful "*Forno Pasticceria Nonna Iride*"... There was also or especially: her dress/skirt. Sanctissima Madonna ...

We can't go into the details of empiricism again, but we can say that throughout a part of our more intense life we have met some ladies with a certain taste. In one case of those ladies - we are now walking on eggshells and have boiled them hard, very hard - it was also an extremely expensive taste and we will not go into that any further because ... Because an expensive taste does not mean a good taste at all. Of two other ladies, however! Especially that one was what one might call a bit poorer or had to approach it more economically. But what class! You still understand that we cannot cite empirical arguments to ... But eternally blissfully joyful memory for him who was allowed to see and experience this skirt on this Saturday in early September 2022, not in a catalogue, not on a photo of a flashy film star in a glossy magazine, not on the ... But life! Sanctissima Madonna, come può la vita essere bella!? Because it was here, in front of us: "*BELLISSIMA!*" Or how we wanted to ask Verdi or Puccini or Rossini to sing the beauty of this human creation, from questa donna con quella gonna. After those two hours we were so tired because of our special neurological problem that we could hardly ... When this lady Lucella leaned next to/against us to show us some of her apparently recent apparently art photos. Those photos made no impression at all despite our tiredness because ... blah blah blah ... Not our cup of cultural tea, we must conclude diplomatically and with lonely

regret – after all, we came exactly there to promote many portraits including potential top art precisely around her in order to ... - her.

So we have forgotten to ask signora Capobiancone the data (what a clinical word) about this dress/skirt! More or even much more important. We have forgotten what this skirt/dress looked like! We can honestly say that from a young age we have had a formidable visual memory annex visual sensitivity. It will probably have become somewhat less powerful in perception due to getting older and certainly due to some consequences of our brain crash on 15/12/2015. But, prego: You must also understand us. We sat for two hours directly opposite or reasonably close to the most beautiful eyes of Italy, from 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988; 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999 (“*I was dreamin' when I wrote this/Forgive me if it goes astray/But when I woke up this morning/Could've sworn it was judgment day. ...*”), 2,000, 2,001, 2,002, 2,003, 2,004, 2,005, 2,006, 2,007, 2,008, 2,009, 2,010, 2,011, 2,012, 2,013, 2,014, 2,015, 2016, 2017, 2,018, 2,019, 2,020, 2,021, 2,022. And Italy is also the most beautiful country in Europe. That does something to the perception of a person, a man, an aging man, a macho, a ladies’ man, according to many ladies, not only in Europe, a man who loves justice and beauty all his life, and preferably together.

We had the same haunting experience with the veracitutely wonderful Slovakian lady X.. She is certainly not a public figure like the Italian but she does like to be in all kinds of public places. Such as in the wonderful, stimulating, heartwarming, intoxicating, ... And so on. Così. With all the modesty that also surrounds her, she is a lady of the world. So it happens that this lady appears in one form of complete display, with what is so gallantly called an “*evening dress*” with always really voluptuous, wide-spreading and jet-black hair; a really beautiful appearance. For which you would want to start painting. To portray her. You cannot miss it, as a man, and probably (hihi) not as a woman either (hihi again because how jealous the ladies can be of each other). I sometimes saw the same Slovakian lady dressed casually or homely and with her hair pinned up, which not only reduces the voluptuousness of her appearance but almost makes it disappear. We can live with that because the arc of attention cannot always be tense, just as the inevitable male erectile reaction cannot always be maintained; there are corpora cavernosa provided. But because of that her appearance, her style changes. Her face takes on something – we are exaggerating for rhetorical or theatrical reasons, but isn't art ultimately one big metaphor, one big pair of glasses!?! – of the features of the fairly difficult to terrible Chinese princess Turandot, one of the main characters in the very special and last opera by maestro Giacomo Puccini (1858 – 1924). This opera Turandot remained unfinished due to Puccini's death but was almost ready. This opera is masterful in terms of music but in our opinion incomprehensible in terms of content to just plain funny nonsense, although there are many ingenious-genius directors in the international opera world who keep inventing their own new insights, as in this opera that almost asks for it. Perhaps the maestro met such a very similar woman and had this opera in mind for a long time, until he found a more or less respectable librettist. There is certainly a particularly dramatic, personal element of Puccini in the opera Turandot around the person of the slave “*Liu*”. If we have the rather bizarre figure of Turandot as an example for this Slovakian woman of a sometimes more distant lady, in addition to those glimpses of great attractiveness that this woman also shows through her inaccessibility, are we not indeed “*combined*” with a – at least for men – rather universal experience? Can it actually be, analytically separated and above all actually observable, that a woman is always rather or only ordinary or unattractive, that she can even be called very boring? And can it – also – actually be that a woman can always rather or only be called beautiful, interesting or very attractive? Rita Hayworth (alias of Margarita Carmen

Cansino + 1918 – 1987) was a famous Hollywood star who starred in the classic film noir “*Gilda*” (1946 + director Charles Vidor, 1900 – 1959). That film had at least one important consequence that resulted in her famous saying: “*Men go to bed with Gilda, but wake up with me.*” That is of course no problem at all – for her and for the men who wanted to have more than a one-night stand, say at least a one-week stand or at most a one-life stand. Should we leave it at that? Or not yet. As our old friend Ip once said to us decades ago: “*You can make any woman hot.*”. Which means: “*Every woman is hot.*” - or hot in potential, so in degrees. And my friend Ip should know because the Chinese have five thousand (5,000) years of culture, with a great deal of pragmatism - and erotic culture. And he would meet a phenomenally interesting woman - and have and keep her, love her. And she ... him. We were/are witnesses, thank you so much.

That is a very simple but really essential observation that is of great, essential importance in times that were never as modern or supersonic-technical as now. One can trade in a woman/man/partner as one always buys the latest edition of Smartphone, 'must' have, as one always has to have the latest of the latest. Or once again: “*The medium is the message*”. Or: how one behaves in terms of means of communication, one behaves automatically because compellingly in terms of communication itself, i.e. with people. In a class society with a very intense division of labor - for a very long time an unavoidable social and economic fact - a person is constantly or almost daily technically or functionally involved with other people. He/she is technically or functionally dependent on them, on so many others. In that case, something general but at the same time so human as concepts such as politeness, respect and trust are of essential importance: you want to drink a coffee and want to pay the correct price for it, but then it must also be a ... next to ... be, show, have, feel, ... Deceit is of all ages and cultures. Even if we do not believe the latter; who is going to conduct or dig up anthropological studies in which a culture knows nothing but deceit!?! Please! A person is nothing without relevant others, a reason why an institution like family is so crucial. But there is a neighbourhood, friendship, there are colleagues who ... , sports friends with whom one ... And that one relationship - even if for reasons it can become a little less close or a little less intimate for a moment. It is probably only reserved for other people in whom one shows a more than ordinary call it an existential or caring even loving interest, that special perception. That of a multiple appearance or that - you can also call it something else - of “*style surplusism*”! So not of “*style inconsistency*”!?! If only that your loved one or the interesting one wants to adopt a literally different 'look' for once. Or just because of a slightly different ... morning mood? Or as my grandmother liked to say, when she had become demented: “*Sometimes we are allowed to laugh.*”

7. “*La gonna fa la donna*” and now a little less at the same time much more: “*L'Arte dell'Amore*”.

Anna Magnani (1908 – 1973). We would have liked to eat, lick, and munch on “*un gelato*” with this donna. And share, especially share: one very, very thick gelato. With all the colours of a new rainbow or at least/mostly with the colour of oxblood. It would have been a quick lick because what a hurricane of human energy and charisma; no wonder that Vesuvius, Etna and Stromboli are all located in la bella Italia.

She played as an actress and was/is/will be one of the ultimately few truly exceptional stars of European cinema. Among other things, she played the leading role – what else, but still!?! – in the Italian film “*Bellissima*” (1951 + director Luchino Visconti, 1906 – 1976). *Bellissima* is of course an Italian word – beautiful sounding, isn't it! In English it means something like

“*Extremely beautiful*”. But in the language-close French it already sounds much more euphonious with “*Plus belle que belle*”. We generally like to admit that we feel Italian and French formulations sound much better or more intense than in English. “*Extremely beautiful*’, when you hear that after those other Latin equivalents, you hardly dare to say it? How would we put it into words in the not to be underestimated Dutch, which probably has more philosophical potential than sonority: “*Mooier dan mooi?*” Now there is a very well-known Dutch, possibly especially Flemish expression that should be taken into account here: “*Moeders mooiste*. That means “*This child is mother's most beautiful.*”. Or more generally: “*This child is the most beautiful.*” And that is what this film is about. Or at least for the largest or very long introductory part. Because that last part, the conclusion, is about the opposite and yet again about ... the same thing. And so it is ultimately a film about love, true love. About “*L'Art de l'Amour*” – here “*L'Arte dell'Amore*”.

There is something special to say about this film. It was set in 1951, so that was quite some time ago. In the meantime, the internet has entered the picture. In the meantime, of course, the little girl it is all about, the very young “*Maria Cecconi*” because she was five years old at the time, has grown older. And no, it sometimes happens that we go to a European country like Italy to visit a woman, whether or not invited out of curiosity or lust, but with this Maria that is of course not the case. That certainly has nothing to do with her age, now compared to ours because we are purely potentially curious about meeting all interesting ladies – again, potential. Of course, the actress Maria Cecconi has a real name, but we are not going to give it away here. And not because we want to keep it a secret, but on principle. After all, you can find that real name directly – via that same very new internet, right? And. In principle, with some twisting and turning and – so the usual tricks of searching on the internet, tricks that we of course know nothing about – you could know or especially see what our cute young child star of 1951 looks like now, in 2024. That is a question that only occurred to us when considering this paragraph. And isn't that crucial because completely logical or compelling!? More precisely, she, the actress playing Maria Cecconi, had to become, at least according to her mother – also an actress, the already introduced divina comica Anna Magnani, “*Bellissima*”, “*la plus belle des plus belles*”. But so? Did she also become that very effectively, very actually? On the very interesting Italian wiki page dedicated to this classic film, this girl is referred to as “*una bimba goffa ed impacciata*”, or as “*an awkward and clumsy little girl*”. See:

Source: <https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bellissima>

That is cutely formulated, but for us – and for Maria and Anna – it could have been a bit more; isn't she wonderfully beautiful and cute? You will understand immediately that it would not really be appropriate to speak of an “*attractive woman*” here. We have already said that we are not interested in the real name of the Italian who played this child in 1951, and so we are not the least bit interested in her appearance now, in 2024 or some seventy years later. Of course, we do not want to brag at all, let alone laugh at the appearance of our child star now. That would then be a naturally understandable starting point, which would raise the question of how this lady – once a toddler, then ... – has fared in the meantime, how she has ‘therefore’ evolved in the meantime – come una bella donna? There are, however, various questions to be formulated and elaborated here, which in themselves motivate an article. That cannot be the intention. However, let us zoom in on one aspect of Maria Cecconi's evolution. An aspect that was clearly shown in the film itself, and that happened at the end or during what one can call the conclusion, sometimes somewhat moralizing but nevertheless generally philosophically justified expressed as “*The moral of the story*”. In life one must constantly eat

and drink and have a hat and a roof on one's head. And that accompanied or led by "*L'Arte dell'Amore*" – the essence, personal and social.

Let us certainly not forget that the film was made in 1951 or only a few years after the end of WWII. That had been dramatic for Italy, on a human level and economically and politically. The country had known the first fascism on European soil after WWI or during the First World War, would get the strongest communist party of Europe after the war (WWII). We do not see this juxtaposition as coincidental: what is essentially the difference between brown fascism and red fascism? Of course there are local differences, but they are two authoritarian, totalitarian movements invented in Europe. Strangely enough, the worst existing examples of serious fascism to date - 2024 - can be found in Asia, because in China and North Korea, so-called communist paradises. Although today's Russia has also been doing its fascistic best for years.

The film *Bellissima* is therefore for a very long time actually about the social presentation of a great dream, which almost no Italian or at least no Roman mother from, let's say, the less well-off classes could resist: to let their daughter become a child star through cinema. And we feel it necessary to point out once again the year of production 1951. When there was no internet. One remembers the opening scene in which a horde of mothers with their young daughters stream into "*Cinecittà*", the gigantic film studios in Rome. All very understandably with the hope of a better future for their child; who as a parent does not share this kind of dream? A non-Italian regularly goes crazy from the chatter of those Italians, especially the Italian mothers. Of course the film has so much to offer as there is, the simple beauty that such a child radiates, the classic all-encompassing love of such a mother, of every mother for every child (in principle anyway, because sometimes things in life can be more complicated - sigh). To achieve that sacred goal – a better future for her child – Anna Magnani will employ a series of apparently sanctified means, all of which amount to extreme stress for the child on the one hand and undermining neglect of the family itself on the other.

In the end, there is an important criticism to be made of the scenario, because what turned out!? That all the efforts of mothers and therefore children were in a sense for nothing, such as the 'having to' learn dance steps as a ballerina, wearing the most beautiful skirt possible (here we are – also!!!), and so on. Because it turned out – really at the end – that the film crew did not want a new child star like the famous Shirley Temple (1928 – 2014). But so: "*una bimba goffa ed impacciata*" or "*an awkward and clumsy little girl*". That was Maria Ceccina for sure. But la madre Anna Magnani understood the money-devouring, people-devouring machine of the film industry and – of course with her child – refrained from further interest, while the film crew had set the choice on her child! In our opinion, one can find that plot twist too sudden, or too contrived. We saw the film several times and could never have foreseen that ending, in other words never logically predict it from the premises or the (long) course of the film. We strongly suspect that it was not so much or at least partly a criticism of the outward appearance of the film industry. In the end, quite a few participants in this film, including not least the director and the top actress, all earned their bread and butter with it for the rest of their lives. While Italians have developed an exceptionally experienced form of theatricality, especially in their phenomenal operas, and pass it on endlessly – anyone who does not like opera, especially Italian opera, should investigate whether he/she is not related to the cold-blooded ... reptiles?! – we may certainly see that as an existential, symbolic mirror of this country, whatever differences there are in the many regions. At the same time, we suspect that this film "*Bellissima*" contains a criticism of the recently passed fascism and perhaps – we emphasize that "*perhaps*" – of the net and very broadly emerging communism

in the country. Because again; what is essentially different about black/brown fascism and red fascism? Just like an enormous number of Roman women with their children to the gigantic light box of Cinecittà, millions of Italians before and from large to small, have walked to the enormous political, social light box of Benito Mussolini (1883 – 1945) and his “*Fasci di Combattimento*”: all hoping for a better future. It all turned out to be fake, nothing “*Bellissima*” but “*uno tempore belli*”. It became/was one long state of war – and therefore an extreme amount of misery. It was one long and dramatic deception. Italian fascism was, in addition to all the misery it produced, an enormous outward show. It was one extreme outward appearance with a flood of words or promises (with ‘gestures’), uniforms or standardized, meaningful clothing, so-called tangible beauty through appropriate architecture etcetera.

If in growing up and in the rest of life the essence or the most important, the spiritual and physical the most important, indeed “*L'Arte dell'Amore*”, then isn't there a certain irony if not tragedy here? A person has to eat and drink and so on. So also have a roof over their head, or architecture. And also have a hat over their head with something more underneath, or clothing. In both cases we speak of ... fashion or style! Every content or function necessarily has a form, just as rain falls from above to below, as water flows to the lowest point. There is no escaping metaphysics. In other words; the almost hysterically moved by social progress mother Anna Magnani wants to give her little Maria the most beautiful clothes possible. That produces fantastic and very poetic as well as bitter scenes, or Puccini could have made the film score again and would have even surpassed his “*Tosca*” (1887)! But although Maria's father often walked around with a simple, especially very cheap undershirt – white of course or purity itself! – Maria needed something more to wear, as a girl, an ever-growing woman. Not only to protect herself but to identify with 'somewhere', to manifest herself through it. With a ... style. And then always via the same modality of metaphysics, because via the kind of provision of the medium of exchange money, the contrast emerges between on the one hand the unique clothing – self-made (you can do that too, madam!!!) or extremely expensively paid for via haute couture – or therefore via standardized mass production by definition or with ... uniforms. In the latter way, however you look at it, something like fascism is latent or already prominently present. On the other hand - just think in analogy of Goethe (1749 - 1832) and his famous saying “*In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister.*” - in a really very personal even (traditional!) self-made clothing sobriety is a perfectly considered choice, and then, at first, second ... sight, seem to be of financial importance - haha. All in all, it was not a bad thing at all that for centuries men, women and children were dressed in so-called traditional clothing, with now clothing that can be regarded as so-called folklore. May we make a joke, pardon a true story about la bella Italia and una bella donna there? So when we went to attend the longer appointment that Saturday morning in Ravenna in September 2022 with Lucella or Luce Caponegro, and would therefore 'stumble' upon her appearance with a unique, almost blinding dress, we went there deliberately, with simple shorts and a simple undershirt - all in the same green/brown color. Everything very 'casual' - oh well. To ... test her look at 'this', of course. And she passed that test - then anyway - hahaha. Although Tania couldn't help but remark: “*If you were an Italian man walking around in the city like that, people would look at you dead*”. Well, if we were walking around there in, say, a suit, people (women) would probably want to ... rip that form of clothing off - for the content? Sex in the city!? Or it doesn't always have to be on a stage.

The film “*Bellissima*”, dramatic and moving for sure. Seemingly simple too because what one calls; multi-layered!

8. Her soft cheeks with the introduction of “Le Bisou Bercant”. Or kissing on the way to heaven.

We were quite focused on Madame Moitessier's dress. Those who understood immediately understood why. Why actually? Purely formally, that dress makes up the largest part of her entire appearance. You can wander over that appearance. And then you almost get lost in that dress. But would you want to sniff that textile? Such interesting clothing or skin on skin, would you want to touch it? Even give it little kisses? No, because you want to give it to you either on her lips - which can give back! - or on her breasts. Or on ...? Maybe on her cheeks.

Those cheeks! So: we forget about the breasts and lips, the normally most obvious parts of an attractive woman to kiss, although there are still important parts like ... + ... + ... +.+.+.+.. Or de facto her entire body. We drop those lips and breasts as ‘kissable area’ because they are too obvious. Besides, her breasts are barely noticeable because they are too well hidden by – her dress, hahaha.

The cheeks. They are chubby cheeks. That is almost necessary to determine from a very modern point of view – the year 2024 in Europe – not flat cheeks, or not the cheeks of a woman who is supposedly exemplary to the public as a model/mannequin. They are somewhat fuller cheeks, clearly with the skin of a woman who never had to do physical labor but who therefore had even softer cheeks. Soft like a small child sometimes has on its bottom before it is talc-ed. Soft like a donkey and a horse always have on their lips. Whoever wants to touch the softest ‘thing’ in the world, even kiss it, must go to a donkey or a horse. At your own risk, even if you don’t want to kiss it but still want to pet it! The risk that the man – probably her husband or her husband – had with this Madame Moitessier, we do not know. We have not found any testimonies of that, which is strange because she was definitely famous. Famous because of her beauty, her external beauty. That is why she was also liked to be painted, as here by an absolute top painter like Ingres. He painted her in her full glory, rather stately, though seated in a distinguished manner and in a high bourgeois environment. We know that this portrait was started by this Frenchman in 1844 and finally finished in 1856. He made a kind of stopover with a second portrait of this woman, now standing, in 1851. Not much later and also in France and also by a great painter, Gustave Courbet (1819 – 1877), something painterly of certain importance happened. Courbet would clearly live a little less time than Ingres, but these colleagues must undoubtedly have known each other. This is not the place for a comparison between the two top painters, a subject for which we do not immediately feel called. There is, however, one important thing. In 1866, or ten years after the completion of the second, serene or classical portrait of Madame Moitessier by Ingres, Courbet made one work that would almost completely overshadow his oeuvre, with the emphasis on shadow. That painting – a kind of portrait? – is rather pompously or pseudo-intellectually called “*L’Origine du Monde*”. In our opinion, it is above all a sad, even silly work. We saw it once – and had almost forgotten it. See:

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%27Origine_du_monde

The painting “*L’Origine du Monde*” is of course a daring and even necessary work, socially speaking, after almost two millennia of Christian-sexual oppression and real persecution. You may know the saying: “*Du choc des idées jaillit la lumière.*” This saying – whether it always applies is another matter – comes from the mind of the French writer Nicolas Boileau (1636 – 1711). From the choc of the very close paintings by Ingres and Courbet, perhaps some lumière or light also comes? What light or what can we see with that light? Because although

light is more or less the essence of – good – painting, then we mainly feel like thinking here. Thinking about paintings, about paintings with so-called attractive women.

Let us first look at something important in the Low Countries, in Flanders at least. While we are getting a bit older – in 2025 brrrrr 62 years – we remember quite well the kiss dance that we also enjoyed at the time, albeit partly stressful. Apparently, it is still used here in Flanders at youth parties, a tradition that we suspect or hope will last until the earthly eternity. We found this recent and especially clear explanation of the Kissdance:

“Typically Belgian, the Kissdance”

Posted by Harry Fabel (Note: we do not know this figure, for which reason our ...)

“The dance is quit simple. When people hear the first notes of the song, most of them gather around in a circle and start walking in one direction. Some other people get inside the circle and start looking at the people walking arround. When they see somebody they like, they pick them out of the circle and give them 3 kisses on the cheeks. Why 3? Well that's another story. in Belgium people give 3 kisses when they meet. Once the 3 kisses are given, the people who did the kissing change sides, the one goes in the circles and the other chooses someone else to kiss. The whole dance takes about 15 to 20 minutes, After La Bamba other songs are added.”

Source: <https://www.amazingbelgium.be/>

We do not remember at all which songs are still played in the stimulating atmosphere of “*La Bamba*”. The famous single “*La Bamba*” (1958) is in any case the invention and playfulness of the American singer Ritchie Valens (1941 – 1959). He died very young indeed, in a plane crash. Fortunately after he left this henceforth immortal song for all of us. It can be more ironic. You can hear the song via here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BycLmWI97Nc>

The tradition of the kiss dance still exists. Undoubtedly, playing it is seen as an introduction to something else fun. Normally, the DJ on duty almost always continued with a slow, preferably with the indestructible classic “*Nights in White Satin*” (1967) by the British pop group “*The Moody Blues*”. See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nights_in_White_Satin

For the listenable version. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6xMOTjLlaY>

Such a slow dance was little dance and mainly slow or sticking to the girl you chose as a boy, and who then said yes - or no; the reverse happened much less in the past. You should know that in those Flemish times there was even separate education, at least in the dominant Catholic education. In order to come into contact with each other, such close physical and verbal contact, such a slow dance after such a kissing dance was quite strategically important. Folk dance still existed in Flanders at that time, but in terms of use it was already marginal, in contrast to today in European countries such as Slovakia - although we in Slovakia personally have never needed a folk dance to ... blah blah blah Let's not digress too much, but we remember a recent Slovak cheek very well because we are allowed to touch it more than once,

with a modest welcome kiss, fairly certainly again in the foreseeable future. It's about her cheek, about the cheek.

X-a's cheek is just like Madame Moitessier's. Again, we speak from a certain experience. Secondly, we remember with sharp clarity (sharp as a cheek does not exist in any language, fortunately – and do read on) the cheek of the sister of basketball friend XY, a girl of our age albeit particularly pretentious. For that reason we simply could not/did not want to talk to her. But her kisses ...! Her cheek was soft as butter, although we never actually held our cheek against butter. Moreover, we also ate margarine at home and at some point as students we started eating just dry bread, with toppings of course. But without that annoying fuss with butter or substitute butter. We may also add here that we have never participated in another form of butter use, with a lady. Secondly, there was never a single lady – whether in our dearly beloved Slovakia or in the dearly beloved rest of Europe – who asked us to use margarine for and with her butter, if necessary. The cheeks of the girl around 1980 in Flanders and of the lady in Slovakia in 20++ - 20++ had exactly the same property; driving a man wild. Now we have kissed the bottoms of our own children, also the still soft feet of those same children, until that was of course done by their growing up. That was very pleasant and funny for both parties. It goes without saying that there was not the slightest erotic aspect to it, although now, if we were in the same situation of such a kissing opportunity, we would probably look around two, three, four times to see if there were not the now usual informers, say wokists or employees of the modern Western morality police present.

The two ladies - one in Belgium and one in Slovakia - had the same cheeks as those of the French Madame Moitessier, although we had not seen that directly or certainly not in our initial selection of this painting with her as a historical example of an uncontested attractive woman. We have already claimed that we can seamlessly prove that this plump woman was considered just as beautiful as a very thin model, a professional ballerina no less. That was one very important discovery or so to speak undressing of this elegant woman, as an example for all especially younger girls of the world who at least themselves live in the Western or Western dominated (so in that perspective also for example China!) world or are elsewhere inundated by his images! We now come or rather are already at the second downright positive if not partly sensational positive point or characteristic of or around Madame Moitessier, the same as the Flemish lady at the time (never seen again in 40 years) and the Slovakian lady (who we will certainly see again soon, although we will of course have to show our good manners very much, also because she has a very steady partner and in that place there are other such as ...).

Kissing such a chubby cheek – and gentlemen and gentlemen, there are a great many, if we may express ourselves so quantitatively and very qualitatively at the same time!!! – is nothing other than a gift from God or, if you prefer, a heavenly gift. And for the atheists among you; that is why you would even invent a God to thank Him! For that multiple qualitative and quantitative reason and because the kiss is of immeasurable importance in the meeting of people, we have looked for a name for the kiss on this 'kind' of cheek. We baptize this kiss with a French name, which sounds much better than the English translation (which we give first, oh well) as "*The cradling kiss*". So: "*Le Bisou Berçant*".

Where Courbet looked down at the woman, Ingres looked up. Where Courbet looked at the delicious cunt – with, at least to our taste, a terribly hairy mons pubis as if it were that of a female gorilla, Ingres saw Venus herself. At least in Dutch they say about something that tastes very good – a drink, an ice cream, kissed lips or a licked pussy and so on – that it is "As

if an angel pisses on your tongue.”. Ingres must have experienced that, not in that of course very elegant skirt but above all; in the cheeks of Madame. We have known for a long time that Ingres only wanted to make this portrait, he was already becoming an older man anyway, when he was effectively confronted with the beauty of this lady. Although confrontation is really not the most appropriate word. Or is it? Supposedly another Frenchman later claimed that certain shadows on the skirt of this lady were due to stains – via the horny, painting Ingres. A bit exaggerated. A bit? That French thinker – we are now deliberately forgetting his name but he was a modern thinker and a man and a Frenchman, and that says a lot – could not see well. And did not even know his own French language well! He could not look or look along with the eyes of this wonderfully experienced and high-quality painter with regard to this top portrait. In other words, he did not see the cheeks, the wonderful but absolutely not unique cheeks of Madame Moitessier! We and certainly Ingres did!! But the blunt-haired man who saw spots as if Ingres had masturbated on his own painting – or something like that – did not even know his own language. Indeed, because what does “*moitessier*” mean other than ... ”*moist*”, “*Feucht*”, “*vocht*”, “*umido*”,! Kissing such a moist and soft because chubby cheek; it cannot but have made the old Freud (1856 - 1939) squeal with joy. As if the man could enter the by definition moist and protective ... womb via this cheek. It is not surprising that the aging Ingres did not paint this woman alone. He painted her portrait twice.

Now, the return to the womb is mainly a psychological desire for some men - certainly not for us. But one thing was/is certain, and it applies to every man who offers himself at least clean-shaven to the cheeks of a plump woman like the moist Madame Moitessier: *with these kisses you are on your way to heaven.*

9. Expressing attractiveness through language. On the noble art of euphemistics.

It was a rare experience in our lives, to meet a man who could give compliments – to ladies, perhaps especially or even only to ladies. His nickname was “*Yurek*”. He was a Polish veterinarian; a regular veterinarian next to a vital meat inspector. Now what is regular because he preferred to sit among the big animals, not like quite a few modern, Western veterinarians who only examine cats and dogs: the wimps pffffff. That is almost laughable, but it is the social evolution, isn't it, because where animals are at best on a farm or in the field nearby, people now speak of pets (in Dutch of “*huisdieren*” or “*huis-dieren*” or “*animals – dieren-from the house - huis*”). Yurek could have built a great academic career without the slightest doubt due to his enormous intellectual qualities and networking power. But he never felt like sitting there as an academical veterinarian. He wanted to be among the animals. And to stand among the people.

As a child of an unimaginably damaged Poland from just after WWII, and from 1939 onwards and destroyed by the Nazis and destroyed by the Soviets who even ‘liberated’ at the end, life was not easy, as one might say. His father had been a very interesting man but largely and definitively mentally destroyed. After all, he had been a partisan, a real partisan. Because. The Nazis had been engaged in a life-and-death struggle in that occupied country for years. For the Nazis, all Poles had to be turned into potato growers (Ei ns, Zwei .. Zehntausend) in their – German – “*Lebensraum*”. The rest of the Poles or in this case everyone who could read and write, had to be exterminated. In the meantime and afterwards, the Soviets did the ‘necessary clean-up work’. His mother was very simple but exceptionally rich at heart. Whoever knew her; she was gentle like the Virgin Mary, like in the Annunciations. Yurek had a hard time from the start of life and yet was rich at the same time. Very rich; he already got empathy at home and every day on the way to school, on foot. With his bag he learned to keep the wild

dogs at bay. And gradually learned to deal with them: the man could later exorcise the most vicious dog on every farmstead. Then he had become a specialist in caesarean sections. He was the only one who dared to approach a heavily pregnant panther, a circus animal that just like its desperate master howled in pain, and thus (sic) medically and technically perfectly relieve it of the pain - and of the baby panther.

We have always had a fairly great memory, also already or sometimes especially for smells and for visual impressions. Due to our brain crash of 15/12/2015, that memory has diminished somewhat. But there is still 'some' left, in deep impressions. We now – now, November 2024 – still see that one movement of his and also hear his accompanying remark, everything about/towards that Polish lady who ... We have no thoughts at all about that woman anymore and know absolutely nothing about the situation. What was so empathetic about this, in terms of content or humaneness? There certainly would have been a big, say better “apt” compliment, clearly with correct but humanly supporting body language – that smile and also a hand gesture (?) – towards a somewhat older woman, in our presence. In other words, we were not just there but a witness. By the way, we do not dare to claim with certainty that this woman was Polish. We have met the man once in the environment of our own mother, a Belgian, albeit also of Polish descent, although that was a serious number of generations ago. She certainly did not know a word of Polish. He could not speak a Western language: that was very difficult in that nasty communism, although not completely impossible. You understand why. That had nothing to do with the leading communism, but because the big red brother (...) was Russian. That brother/neighbour - twice unfortunately - had previously, because throughout the 19th century and now as a ‘real’ occupier or predecessor of the Nazis, also tried to completely eradicate the official Polish culture, among other things by no longer allowing Polish-language education. Where have we heard that recently? Those poor, albeit flexible, yet extremely tough and heroic, honourable Poles - who in 1919-1921 held back the Soviet invasion that had already started (then) in the rest of continental Europe - up to the Belgian coast! They have retained their language, their wonderfully beautiful, melodious, controversial and sometimes eroticising language. And not to forget because that is the core of the cultural matter here; they have kept their good manners, their conspicuous “*grzeczność*”! The behavior of most Russians on the other hand ... Compare! Just go and look at a traveling Russian in ordinary hotels. At least; before because with this war since the beginning of 2022 ... What will the future show?

It is quite self-evident that a person, however broad and intense his interests in culture may be, cannot have read or viewed ‘everything’, not even all the so-called classical books and paintings. Perhaps in his own culture but certainly not somewhat broader, in that of the neighbours and in European culture (including the great Russian writers – not hahaha!). Especially also; what is classical and in which domains should one actually or in principle speak of classical? Moreover, there is such a thing as general or informal culture, the culture that one mainly receives, albeit not only from home and immediate family, but also from the neighbourhood, the school and so somewhat less from important sociological fields in which one must constantly move. And all that until, say, the twenty-fifth year of life or the year in which, according to developmental psychology, one should finally be finished, be an adult. Note that Dutch is once again philosophically more interesting or mature than English because “*volwassen*” expresses much more than just the English equivalent “*adult*”. “*Adult*” comes from “*vol-wassen*” where “*wassen*” means to grow (it also means “*to wash*”! So adult or vol-wassen means to have grown completely (vol = full). German is closely related to this because “*adult*” here is “*Erwachsene*”, or diegene “*der gewachsen ist*” or “*the one who has grown*”. As a primarily academically trained philosopher, previously attending a Catholic

college for eleven years, we have acquired some specific cultural baggage. This includes many sets of norms and values, which have been partly verbally, partly non-verbally or through body language – to us, the ever-growing child. We know for sure not a single Flemish/Belgian example of a text, let alone a book or course in which one could learn about good manners, about something like body language, about something like empathy and the ways in which one could realize or use this in the life. Poland has in common with our Flanders that it is a European area that was immersed in the Catholic faith. However, we can say with certainty that something like “*good manners*” is much stronger or more central to Polish culture than to Flemish. To put it concretely and brutally; Poles are, so to speak, on average much, much better mannered than Flemish people. We recall the statement of this veterinarian about the depth or power of hospitality, according to Poles: “*Gość w dom, Bóg w dom.*” Or “*Guest in the house, God in the house*”. You don’t have to be Tadeusz Kotarbiński (1886 – 1981) or Alfred Tarski (born Teitelbaum, 1901 – 1983) or another international top logician to understand what conclusion follows from this juxtaposition! For another thing, compare that with the earlier story that “*We had saved six hundred euros because ...*” – in the Italian Ravenna or a city for fifteen centuries full of Christian art. Secondly, we find that Hungarians – not coincidentally historically great friends of the Poles – are also on average much better mannered than Flemish people. But there is one gigantic problem: the almost insurmountably difficult to learn Hungarian language, although a language with absolute world literature!

Let us return to the concrete, but very interesting experience around Yurek the vet. You understand that we cannot go into details, but even under communism it was possible for Poles to earn somewhat decent money. But. In other, say in completely economically ‘freer’ circumstances, this man, who was also politically engaged in a very old non-communist party, to be called the “*Peasants’ Party*” in all simplicity, could have become enormously rich through (the end of) the communist period, through his intellect and work ethic, his enormous empathy and friendliness and (as a result of various previous ones) also a gigantic network. In our estimation, money was more than important enough for him – again, having grown up in a hugely devastated and therefore extremely rebuildable country – but never a main issue. Money was a means for the progress of his fellow men and his country. This man could theoretically have scooped up money as if it were water, but in any case never through the slightest deceit of the other. Otherwise we would not have had the slightest respect for him because we have a special relationship with money: we will never understand anyone who worships that stuff. In our opinion, that means almost certainly that true empathy in fellow human beings cannot possibly be realized by a person who is interested in money above all else. That certainly does not mean in itself that that greedy person has no insight into fellow human beings. On the contrary, because even more, that greedy person will mainly have insight into the ways in which he can exploit the weaknesses of others. We have also seen that throughout our lives. So call that life experience!?

We are 100% sure that this man Yurek, one of the most impressive human specimens we have ever met (and we look around us from a very, very young age, for examples, so to speak, of how it should and should not be/cannot be – for modern saints) has used appropriate language, more specifically euphemisms. That through a language that is not only international but also European because Slavic. With in addition or on top of that – analytically we can describe it that way but synthetically or existentially it always went together of course, with the appropriate body language, or cordiality and sincerity given physical form as somewhere only the body can express it so truly. Yurek was nothing but a

stretching example for us, and without a doubt for almost everyone who has ever met him, although there are always double-sided apples in surrounding trees.

We are now going to very concretely, because Polish-linguistically, albeit internationally (sigh), give up an exemplary euphemistic possibility through which Polish lends itself in our context, or how to deal with attractive women. We may walk on eggshells here or express ourselves so-called diplomatically. Right – no?

Do you remember paragraph 4 where we met the French art critic Théophile Gautier. The man could not take his eyes off our Madame Moitessier but also sat looking greedily – and at certain times very deeply – into the eyes of an Italian ballerina. We found that very important because it meant nothing more than that in a so-called European cultural top country like France around 1850 – or not so very long ago – a so-called member of the so-called cultural elite found a woman beautiful and attractive when she was both a bit fatter or plump, and therefore also when she was thin as a broomstick. You understand that we are not specialists in historical euphemistics, while the underlying art of euphemistics does not even exist as a science! Cultural proletarians of all countries (really of ALL countries), unite and invent or develop further, “*The noble art of euphemistics*”!

So we start from a wonderful, possibly idiosyncratic yet according to us – are you following?! – exemplary property of the Polish language, or how to create a euphemism via an ingenious but grammatically correct and therefore linguistically pre-existing construction. That special euphemism is very pleasant to experience as 1) speaker or as 2) listener or as 3) present or all possible participants in the relevant communication context! It is downright charming, is also multi-sex because it can be applied to women or men, and is simply very funny. And isn't humor always the best (language) sauce? If you get a woman laughing fairly quickly, you are already in the middle of foreplay! We repeat (already or again) that it is effectively exemplary or, due to its grammatical properties, perfectly applicable in all kinds of other let's say per se or potentially delicate circumstances. It works as a deminer without one ever being able to injure oneself because there is simply never a self-explosion: hurray!!!

Let's go. A lady looks a bit fatter when ... When? In short, she is not a broomstick but a bit more shapely. The same applies to a man, as if he were not also ... According to normal or current language standards, there are two situations:

1) In Dutch, you can say quite delicately that someone is “*volslank*” (in English it is very similar to “*full-figured*”). Literally, it comes from “*vol*” (“*full*”) and “*slank*” or “*slender/slim*”. You can see the difference in nuance. But to be honest; even this much ‘better’ or more diplomatic Dutch seems a bit forced. In English, in our opinion, you cannot make this combination of “*vol-slank*” at all. A literal translation would then be “*fullslender*”; ohlala.

2) We are getting there, albeit in and perhaps one day further than just via Polish. That is up to you to work that out further, if we can at least generate some enthusiasm here. It is about one word that is loaded or somewhat delicate at its core, but that becomes nicer, more pleasant, better because more euphemistic through purely linguistic processing.

First of all, it is important to state the original meaning of the word “*euphemism*”. As expected, it has its origins in Greek, for “*eúphēmos*” (εὐφημος) was a Greek word meaning “*uttering sounds of good omen*” or “*fair-sounding*,” It is a typical compound word, the first

part or prefix “*eu*” meaning “*good*,” as is also used in completely positive words such as “*euphory*” and so on. This prefix therefore immediately indicates – by the normal reading from left to right in our traditions – the nature of the following root word as an improvement of itself (!) or of a more pleasant experience with it. The reverse also exists and is called “*suffix*” and has the same function with respect to the root word. Here we must draw the reader’s attention to the fact that there is a certain delicate distinction to be made between Western European languages such as Dutch, French, ... and Slavic languages such as Polish. While all these European languages make striking use of linguistic adaptations to core words, which always results in relatively varied words and the language is literally culturally relativized or nuanced, there is an important difference between the language groups in Western Europe and the Slavic languages. And that difference is, in our opinion, a compelling reason why the average pupil in the EU should learn at least a number of EU languages thoroughly, including at least one from the other language group in addition to his mother tongue: Ursula/Urszula, you know what to ...! In our opinion – we are not linguists – Western European languages use the prefix more and Slavic languages use the suffix more. We will immediately give a characteristic example of the latter, from Polish.

The core of the word euphemism is the Greek word “*phēmos*” or “*speaking*.” You immediately understand that the word euphemism (or eu+phemism) must be completely non-existent in another cultural context. We are – almost – convinced that there must exist or have existed (too bad) cultures somewhere in time and on the globe that did not know this word because nothing euphoric or euphemistic or eutopian or eu... could ever happen. Because there was actually a state of general well-being that was culturally passed on as such through the mother’s milk of the mother tongue. That was then – always hypothetical – a state that could only exceptionally be interrupted by extreme climatological conditions, call it enormous disasters - such as a tsunami. We hope to be able to read and study an anthropological study that is as exhaustive as possible about the linguistic sedimentations of the happiness or, so to speak, ‘pure’ well-being of a culture, and/or of its opposite and/or the relevant intermediate positions in which, let us hope, above all hope, optimism and other feelings of happiness sound like culturally social stimulating factors. In particular, there must have been cultures that, for example, never knew the “*Book of Job*” because they never had any need for its (oral later written) wording. We have no idea whether there are specific socio-linguistic studies that have investigated, especially for existing languages, such as Western languages such as French, Latin, ... Greek (sic), Slavic languages such as ... and so many more languages from around the world, to the extent that these languages indicate more or less happiness and such mental states more. That is of enormous importance because although every language lives through the additional, even losing, activity of its actors, the language pool in which they have to swim is in any case this pool. In that sense, the language is always given in advance to every speaker of it. More to our subject – attractive women – this should have meant for some cultures that there were simply no euphemisms, because attractiveness literally did not imply unattractiveness, then again in very high exceptions such as violation by smallpox and other serious diseases. So there would only have been (or are) attractive women there; gentlemen, wake up and take those packed suitcases! By the way, even in those cases of deforming serious diseases, we do not rule out at all that precisely having such diseases, which of course in principle no one from such a culture could pursue and therefore could only get because it overtook this person, nevertheless gave a certain higher status, probably as a sign of a certain divinity. We are indeed not linguists and certainly – a thousand times unfortunately – not a former student of Latin-Greek, but of course everyone knows a similar albeit (almost) opposite word to “*euphemism*”, namely “*blasphemy*”. The Greek root of this is “*blasphēmos*” (“*Βλάσφημος*”) or “*uttering ill-omened words*”. You see that the meaning of euphemism

cannot simply be reversed and that here a future aspect is clarified, albeit completely negatively. Can we leave it at that?

On to the Polish euphemism, and admittedly used towards a man by a woman – but as we think it is typical for the enormous empathy of Mr. Yurek towards women and therefore must be evaluated literally as an example – and further elaborated (found or at least fabricated). For what in English is called “*a fat gentleman*”, in Polish one can simply call this man “gruby” or something like “*the fat one*”; mmmmm. Even a Yurek can’t get away with that. But then it starts because from “gruby” via “grubas” it even (!) goes to “grubasek”. Or in English; you start from “*the fat one*” and in the second instance go to “*the even more fat one*”. But that pure or objective augmentative works linguistically or in the concrete, existential language situation as ... diminutive! Brilliant, isn’t it!? “Grubas” as the actual thicker one than the “gruby” is in linguistic or communicative reality the smaller or finer thick one, or somewhere, actually, in essence not at all ... - thick!

So it can be even better, infinitely better, so to speak, although there is literally only one more language step possible. But with what result and in any case, this language step is completely non-existent in English according to our knowledge. That language step - the use of an augmentative but ... - was perhaps once or at least partly possible in Dutch, as in “*Hannekin*” or “*Big Hanne*”, a language feature that has only survived in the West Flemish dialect. Fortunately, Dutch can still diminutively quite properly: Hanneke or Hanneltje! Now let’s ? We start with “gruby”, go to the already fairly euphemistic “grubas” to end with the euphemism of all euphemisms “grubasek”. That, ladies and gentlemen, means nothing else in English than “*little big fat one*”. But really literally compare the word images next to or below each other: gruba/s/ek (1 word) - little (1) big (2) fat (3) one (4 words)! Or:

- + Polish: gruba/s/ek (1);
- + English: little (1) big (2) fat (3) one (4).

That should mean exactly the same thing in principle. You can see in this English translation that it is not only literally impossible but almost ridiculous in content. One must – indeed “*must*” – be familiar with this language, Polish, to a certain extent (emotionally, so first logically-linguistically)! We repeat the combination used with this chronological order in Polish: 1) CORE + 2) AUGMENTATIVE (which in itself works paradoxically as a diminutive!) + 3) DIMINUTIVE (which works doubly diminutive!). Or everything WITHIN one word and with double euphemism, without it ever seeming forced. That is not possible in (for us) important languages such as Dutch, French and English – of which the latter two are world languages! In other words, that is perfectly possible in the therefore very interesting Polish anyway – which should therefore in principle be a ... world language!? Apparently, Russian offers the same, if possible even more, possibilities in terms of suffixation, but that is food for specialists. We have always wanted to learn Russian for decades, but due to lack of time and that annoying neurological problem, it will have to be for the next life – amen.

From a purely linguistic-theoretical perspective, we still have to make this observation. We only know this intriguing euphemistic language phenomenon with suffixes or not with prefixes. Does that even exist? We also do not know whether the reverse is also possible with these prefixes, namely first a diminutive followed by an augmentative? And would that make much sense? All questions for language specialists. In any case, and that is the core of the matter, according to our own lived experience, this specific combination is not only unique but also existential or lived through, true or convincing! This complete, three-part

combination (core, augmentative and then diminutive) has something downright endearing about it! We never learned (grammatically) perfect Polish, but we can honestly say that we mastered this language to such an extent and loved it that we knew or recognized this language as an emotional language, and if possible could even make jokes in it. This language use belongs in an everyday atmosphere, in an intimate rather family environment. Of course, it is an important question whether this use also has an effect on the self-image during communication with a 'less slim' lady who one does not know, does not know well enough, does not ...? For example, during the crucial first meeting where, as is well known, one can best use a *captatio benevolentiae*!? These considerations may be the subject of study for linguists, writers ... - in Dutch, French, English ... We call on them to 'try something like that'. Now, every language changes more or less through strange words or bastard words, or through the creation of new words or neologisms. See the following list of neologisms:

https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lijst_van_neologismen_van_Van_Kooten_en_De_Bie

This impressive and also unique list, probably rarely to be equaled within the Dutch language, is the result of the enormous linguistic skills of the incomparable duo of humorists, Wim De Bie (1939 - 2023) and Kees Van Kooten (1941). This is our small tribute to these language and humor giants (not coincidentally, this combination?). Our perspective is probably even more difficult or complicated or delicate than inventing neologisms, which then have to be recognized 'somewhere' as euphemisms or better expressions for existing concepts. After all, it is not only about inventing a word or concept, or perhaps not, but about making or causing a grammatical intervention that makes it possible to have relevant because 'loaded' words "*euphemized*". Sufficient material for thought?

Epilogue.

This dress. From Madame Moitessier. What happened to it? Presumably it was passed on to the next generation as an heirloom for a short while. Unless it had already been eaten away by clever moths during her lifetime as a textile version of "*memento mori*". We have read very little of Roland Barthes (1915 - 1980) and it was a long time ago. We do remember his description of fashion: "*Le rythme d'achat est plus grand que le rythme d'usure.*" Or "*The rate of purchase is greater than the rate of wear.*" Do you know that feeling, bulging closets with mainly or only women's clothes? If not, you as a man and especially a partner with a woman living together, can count yourself lucky in a certain sense. But that is not what this is about – or is it a little bit? Everyone knows at least vaguely that there were many cultures throughout the world and history, even up to the 19th century, where, on the occasion of the death of the king/emperor (M/F), several members of the broad court were sacrificed or 'given along'. Less or not at all dramatic is the giving along of all kinds of earthly goods until the deceased could reach the heavenly; he/she could perhaps use them there – or exchange them if they had survived the crossing? We ourselves know an example in the NOW of someone who wanted to be buried with this or that piece of clothing in particular. Would that have happened to Madame Moitessier? More specifically, would the undertaker have draped this cloth on her washed and partly prepared corpse? As so often, we were not there, although we have only ever 'prepared' one dear person as a corpse - the corpse of Yurek. That was in any case an impressive and certainly horrible experience; let us here testify an incredible respect for those who do that daily and professionally.

Back to life and our great Ravennata, hopefully still alive and kicking for decades and in the meantime probably with the same or another super beautiful skirt!? Normally we would go to

the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna again at the beginning of May 2023, had already prepared a lot but decided to cancel all appointments and stay elsewhere. Then this happened in this region. An unimaginably dramatic flood hit a large part of the region and left it under water. See:

https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alluvione_dell%27Emilia-Romagna_del_2023

Literally on the edge of the city limits, the well-known Ravenna, where our Lucella resides, was spared. It was really close. Dozens of municipalities and small towns in the area were badly hit. You can still see many ever-captivating images on that internet. Of course, we remembered that one dress in Ravenna and wrote to the owner; why not organize something charitable among 'saved' women, and thus donate a few (sic) beautiful dresses, skirts and so on to women from the affected region!? Italian women will probably not be much prouder than other women, but when the flood water had receded, the first repairs had been made, one naturally wanted to pick up the thread of a life again to some extent; dressed, well dressed. We have no idea whether our proposal fell on good, at least still dry ground there, so that ... Oh, said a certain Jesus, still very popular in Italy, no suitable words about that, albeit short but powerful: "*But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.*" (Mathew 6:3)?

Source <https://www.biblestudytools.com>

We know that now. There are sometimes women who stand out by showing two faces, by two different appearances. There are also women with two hands! With equal hands. Or sometimes with different ones?

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, November 2024.

.....
Madame Salma Hayek, Sketches for her portrait as a gift for her 20th anniversary of her wedding with my biggest collectionneur, Luc Tuymans, the artist's personal archive, cabinet 22, shelf 7, will be released in 2026 in the Pinault Collection.

T.U.S.

.....
Malvina, Jakob (Jacobus Johannes) Smits (1855 - 1928), oil, s.d., Jakob Smitsmuseum Mol.

T.U.S.

.....
Mária s dieťaťom Ježišom (Maria with child), Ondrej Richter, behindglasspainting, 2022, private collection.

T.U.S.

.....
Mósa - Mohave, Edward S. Curtis (1868 - 1952), photograph, 1903, The North American Indian, Volume 2, plate 61 + and online.

In these modern times – and there are never other times than modern or they are past or future – billions of people are intensely engaged in something unique, social media: Twitter or X (who came up with that stupid new name?), Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok – are there others? We do not use any of these media and therefore cannot like anyone. Would we have started liking someone when these media did not yet exist? Although this is by definition a rhetorical because impossible, almost ridiculous question. In any case, we fully understand that liking, giving a thumbs up, a pat on the back, a wink, a ??? Although we would rather bow deeply to those few whom we are about to discuss.

There are some people for whom we, and you hopefully together with us or just alone, will greet while kneeling or bowing deeply. The Dutch multi-phenomenon Robert Van Gulik (1910 – 1967) is one of them. Although we would also have liked to pay tribute to his wife Shui Shifang (1919 – 2005). She was extremely graceful as well as categorically unique because none other than the daughter of one of the very last (Chinese) mandarins! For us there is that one creative human being whom we should like in every possible technical way, with our thumb, on his shoulder and so on - or with and on everything humanly physically permitted at the same time.

We think of none other than the incomparable Nobel Prize-never-winning-but-... Edward S. Curtis (1868 – 1952). He was a professional photographer. So what. But what kind!? Between 1895 and 1930 he took approximately forty thousand (40,000) photographs of North American Indian tribes, as well as ten thousand (10,000) sound recordings of their speech and music. Ethnologically this is unparalleled. By the way, what a decisive and committed man: he undertook this expedition on a completely personal initiative, albeit from a certain point on and quite necessarily supported by sponsors. Neither the American regional nor federal government, nor any of the American, let alone European, universities had any input into this unique and incomprehensibly important initiative! Generally speaking culturally and historically, this undertaking is of the most importance that all humanity has known, vertically throughout world history and horizontally across all kinds of peoples and cultures. Just look for something similar, especially for Africa and Asia. You will find little, far too little.

Various organizations are involved in the preservation and further dissemination of this qualitatively and quantitatively gigantic archive. On this excellent Wikipedia page you will find some references for further research at the bottom. Enjoy – and be sad:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_S._Curtis.

Various editions of the work exist on the market in every 'civilized' (sic) country under the title "*The North American Indian* (20 volumes)". See:

[Edward S. Curtis's The North American Indian \(northwestern.edu\)](#)

We have two short book editions of it, a small one in an easy-to-carry format (for travelling) and a very large one of which we only have the ... cover; no idea who we lent that book to and that person was clearly quickly and strongly attached to it. Thanks to an American university,

among others, the entire world, if it has a computer, internet connection and, above all, electricity, can read through the entire series at its leisure: see the previous link. Hopefully you have solar energy at home because that study will take a while. But what an experience, as if you were walking around with Edward Curtis back then, visiting unique and nearly completely lost civilizations.

We don't want to go into it any further, but we wouldn't have wanted to just thank this man Curtis, by kneeling in the loose sand of the Mohave Desert or anywhere else on that immense continent. We would have loved to help, to participate! That's metaphysically impossible, though we're glad we weren't born before Curtis' time, that more specifically we are born now, in this age of books and the Internet. We would like to share one more personal thing. How we would have liked to be an North American Indian ourselves, despite our lifelong interest in literature, art and all kinds of cultural sciences (philosophy, etc.) and certainly especially the European part thereof, at least for quite some time before the arrival of that (damned?) Christopher Columbus (1451 – 1506), a discoverer, a coverer.

40,000 photographs by Curtis of 'his' North American Indians. And we can 'only' choose one. From a woman. We selected this photo that can also be found on the Dutch Wikipedia page about Edward Curtis; it is clearly a loved or attractive photo + see

https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Sheriff_Curtis#/media/Bestand:Mosa,_Mohave_girl,_by_Edward_S._Curtis,_1903.jpg

This photo is available as a photo in various versions via the internet. You don't have to pay much for it and downloading is also possible, as here. Naturally, we have not conducted any research into which of the thousands of photos from this irreplaceable 20-volume series is the most popular, in terms of orders and certainly not in terms of visits to the websites that show these photos. Considering the date of the photo – 1903 – the girl from the Mohave or Mojave tribe certainly died, although that could only have happened about four or five decades ago. In theory, you as an older reader could still have met her. And, so to speak, you could have evaluated her aura and also spoken to her. Even the slightly older among you could have met Edward Curtis, because he died in 1952. We have no idea whether Edward Curtis was interviewed at the end of his life by a European researcher, or by someone simply genuinely interested in his work.

Every person has a name. In every culture. Unless one uses numbers; as in dictatorships. But almost all views of this irresistibly attractive Indian girl misspell her first name. After all, the original photo clearly says "*Mósa*" and not "*Mosa*". Fortunately, there is one European language that could help us because Polish has this "o" or better "ó". But, it doesn't really make any difference. For the sight and experience of this beautiful photo, this language fact is indeed unimportant and remains only a subject for the very rare language specialists.

However, this difference in first names is important because everyone knows very well how existentially important a correct name and name display are. It is incredible how much sloppiness the various American sellers of versions of this photo dare to allow themselves, also because previously there were countless Polish descendants walking around on what were once the plains of North America. There was that incredibly disdainful treatment of the Indians in both the USA and Canada, which meant that in many cases they were taken away from home as children and were never allowed to learn or speak their own language again; English! That is now definitely over and in any case the Mohave language is still alive to this

day. In addition, this striking sloppiness in this naming is to be criticized because everyone can also use the instrument www to display the correct spelling, as we were able to do after a few seconds. Can we say that this sloppiness testifies to a persistent remnant of the deeply degrading, even destructive attitude towards their civilization, especially since the correct(er) representation can be reproduced by computer in all Western books and internet publications!?

That sadness ("*tristesse*") in her eyes which look straight at us. That infinite sadness may have to do with the way in which the children of this tribe - and not only of this tribe - were supposedly civilized. As already mentioned and it should be emphasized again, many Indian children were separated from their parents and therefore (sic) raised in English. Many did not even know their own mother tongue. Or conversely, parents could no longer even speak to their own children, assuming they could ever meet them! That was the way the civilized West worked/works with - as cultural building blocks - almost two thousand years of Christianity and even older Roman and Greek culture. We know nothing more about Mósá than the important fact that she had - had retained - her own Indian ... Undoubtedly she knew from countless peers, from her race, from her population group, the fate described. Sadness from the hard experience, which cannot be denied by any ideology or anything else, of a beaten group, of a way of life almost doomed to death.

Sad eyes and therefore a sad sick person behind them - or not? -, this young Indian woman has an almost unearthly beauty or attraction. This human being, this young woman or girl - whose age we do not know - is nothing other than the concrete representation of a commonly desired, deeply valued ideal of human grace, refinement, nobility or pure, inner aristocracy. The word attractive clearly falls short here and is only a rough direction indicator. According to our increasingly fading knowledge of our own life, a previous encounter with pure grace took place that, ironically enough, came about itself shortly before the discovery by an Italian of the American continent. And everyone will recognize it in the unique at the same time innumerable reproduced painting "*La Primavera*" (circa 1478 - 1482) by Sandro Botticelli (1445 - 1510):

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a4/Sandro Botticelli 038.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a4/Sandro_Botticelli_038.jpg)

In addition, we must say - admit? - for both this girl and for "*La Primavera*" that we have never seen either of them live. For that girl, that is simply metaphysically impossible, although we do not walk around here with eternal prospects. One of those prospects certainly includes a visit to Florence/Firenze, where this sparkling painting is already waiting for us. That means that we can never be disappointed by an encounter with the 'real' Mósá. It is hard to imagine, but that experience could happen to us one day with "*La Primavera*". For example, we found the - in the meantime - restored "*View on Delft*" (circa 1660 - 1661) by Johannes Vermeer (1632 - 1675) a reasonable disappointment, about 15 years ago in the Mauritshuis in The Hague. We were apparently too conditioned by the countless times that we had seen it as a reproduction. Funny! Because hadn't the world-famous writer Marcel Proust (1871 - 1922) once called this painting the most beautiful work in the world? And he had seen it in 1902 or even before its restoration! So ...? Oh well, there were enough other unique viewing moments to experience on our day there, like that one Rembrandt - sempre Rembre! And perhaps we were a bit confused, because shortly before we had bought four second-hand chairs "*Vittoria*" by the Italian design phenomenon "*Poltrona Frau*" in that same The Hague. And only one of them was in very good condition, say without scratches (from a cat or dog). While the photos on the internet showed four out of four chairs without any scratches. Or four

times the same chair ... That was deception, through showing and selling, by this friendly Dutch family. And we were so happy with this purchase that it took a while before we realized that we had already paid, neatly, or the requested amount. Later we drove further confused because on the way home or to Belgium, our son Milosz once said: "*Dad, we are in Germany!*". So we should also take a few other roads and return to ... "*View on Delft*"?

Delft, The Hague, Florence, Germany, = places to see. But please tell us. Where can we, can you meet this person, this image of inner aristocracy, the purest authenticity, the almost most graceful human being? And, much less sad, not sad at all; where to meet in a world dominated by the desire for money, for luxury, for power, for dominance, for ...? Although a little sadness, a little melancholy seems like never-stuck oil for the engine of the soul - until it closes its eyes.

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, August 2024.

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Nefertiti Bust, Thutmose, painted limestone, circa 1.345 BC, Neues Museum in Berlin.

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1. A famous bust but with so far not famous objections.

Much can be said about this famous bust. We do not need to repeat it because you can read it everywhere where something has already been said about it – about this bust. You know what a bust means, of course, because it is a form of portrait that only represents the upper or ‘most important’ part of a person. The feet of a bust are just as human as that bust. What’s more, they support the body of which that bust is the end. Without feet, no ... A representation of the feet as an alternative portrait of a person is therefore perfectly justifiable. It is also theoretically possible to represent it as perfectly as possible artistically. It is highly likely that it is also purely technically easy to make, at least if one aims for an ideal of equality between the object and its imagination. Although!? Every experienced artist who is also a portraitist can tell you how extremely difficult it is to represent hands accurately. Is it the same with feet? At least we cannot answer that because, to be honest, we do not know any representations of feet as a complete representation or portrait theme. And therefore we do not

know the problems of their representation. Or at least we know very little about it. The representation of feet as examples of portrayed forms is so rare that it almost borders on non-existent. For example, the well-known surrealist René Magritte (1898 – 1967), according to our long-standing feeling-thought a fairly overrated painter - apart from his "période vache" - painted a few variations on the theme as "something foot-like". It is completely unclear to us whether his motif had any association with the theme of portrait. And as an aside, we find the majority of the surrealists, with a few exceptions, hugely overrated as visual artists. With a few exceptions, those men and women could not really paint and a large part of their 'contents' consisted of nonsense or at best Spielerei. It was all very much time-bound or of little lasting value - except commercially and even in museums, hahaha - but that also has its art-historical time-bound value. So, when we encounter feet as the theme of their works - in Magritte, in Tatatitte and in ??? - , we should actually be suspicious of the relevance of this occurrence, right? Some young art historian should do some research into the presence of the foot in at least the Western visual arts. We are very curious what that will yield, because even though we do not know it, such research has certainly already been done for the human part of hands, even monographically with some artists (Van Dyck, ...?).

In any case, we have some reservations about the phenomenon of busts as immensely well-known by this sculpture of Nefertiti, almost to be called the (female) bust of (female) busts. Can you indeed name a more famous bust, a bust that in this way makes the woman it represents even more important, preferably attractive? That is of course possible, if you yourself would ... make such a bust! And if you can make that product commercially famous, very next. Because everything today is acquired until tomorrow.

2. The multiple almost infinite perspective on the bust Nefertiti.

It is true. Who is going to lift that statue to look at the bottom? Even those who would wish to do so would not be able to fulfill that wish because the statue is literally so precious that it is stored in a cupboard. And of course that cupboard is not only closed or makes that statue tactilely inaccessible, but fortunately the cupboard is mainly made of glass: it is a peep box, for you and for every Peeping Tom and Peeping Thomasina. So that you cannot look at the bottom of that statue, but you can ... The sculptural element bust, whether that is of this woman or of any other real or completely imagined being, can be viewed from any side and therefore theoretically offers every viewing person a maximum view. That is by definition impossible with traditional painting. A painting on whatever medium (panel, canvas or fresco, if necessary on iron or on all kinds of plastic, such as in the case of the formally rebellious but warmly mischievous Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven, 1951) is completely two-dimensional. Although, in turn, the Italian invention of perspective did allow a greater three-dimensional spatiality to be achieved. Here too, one encounters exceptions, at least among modernists and top Belgian artists! Are you not yet familiar with Wim Delvoye (1965)? Jump into a boat and sail far enough out to sea. And dive! Wim Delvoye is an eternally young deep-sea diver in the oceans of art history. He likes to surprise, so to speak, especially in terms of content, but perhaps more formally or in terms of art media. For example, you are undoubtedly familiar with his enamel-painted gas bottles and tattooed pigs: all more than two-dimensional media for art representations, and art representations themselves. Another intriguing and as yet internationally little-known Belgian painter who we should not ignore here is Roger Raveel (1921 - 2013). He is a rare example of someone who can both paint truly wonderfully and experiment in a credible way. As in the many times that he lets his paintings take on three dimensions, expressed in our simple way. The man worked and sold very intensively and ("but" we can't say, although we hope that the same thing won't happen to every important

artist, let alone as he wished here) has his own museum in his own village: see www.rogerraveelmuseum.be

In cases, such as here with the bust of Nefertiti, one can even view the sculpture from a normally almost impossible perspective: from directly above the work. Then you have to be big enough, or still be a small child and be carried by a strong, sweet, tolerant and somewhat childish father who is at least about two meters tall. And you probably still have to get permission from the hall guard. That viewing is an important contrast with a painted Nefertiti. Again; all paintings are until further notice two-dimensional or only have a frontal view, with relatively very few exceptions. It happens very rarely and then in our experience only and only in very modern art that either a frontal view or only a side view is used. According to our conceptual knowledge, there apparently is not even a name specifically for views of people depicted from behind, simply because throughout the tradition of roughly three thousand years there was no need for it. That is remarkable because people simply see from all kinds of viewpoints at countless times of the day, such as from their back. This is even more, albeit eerily strange, because quite a few people like to see the backs of other people. Or because they are glad that they no longer have to meet or 'see' these departing people. Or because they find this back very instrumental, to literally stab it with a knife or 'just' figuratively, with an actual and freshly sharpened knife or 'but' gossip. Or conversely, they are sad to see that fading back, as the characteristic of a person who disappears: via the almost always monotonous surface of that back that eventually becomes a dot - and then dissolves into the All of Nothing, of other themes that will emerge. The back is therefore also positive because it is precisely through the realization of that sad disappearance that it is a last visual bond with the disappearer. And the announcer of the wait: for a return of course. Although that is not very likely in this famous film with this famous scene. See this scene or "*The final scene*" from "*The Third Man*" (1949 + director Carol Reed, 1906 – 1976 + screenplay by writer Graham Greene, 1904 – 1991 + starring the multi-film phenomenon Orson Welles (1915 - 1985). See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l64JlCg-O-k>

Possibly our fellow East Fleming Michaël Borremans (1963) also watched this film well because in his slightly neurotectonic oeuvre with many portrait-like representations, one encounters several portraits seen and 'therefore' portrayed from their backs. Although in a traditional frontal view because on the literal back or spine of such a painting you can at most find labels, of the freight transport via air to Zwirner, New York.

We must certainly note that between the statue of Nefertiti and the drawn image of her throughout the many forms of Egyptian art there was a world of difference. Not only did that in time and content fabulous Egyptian art strangely enough never know perspective. But the figures drawn or carved on surfaces such as papyrus and stone were completely designed in a profile that was as flat as possible. You can see that several times in relation to our queen Nefertiti on this English-language wiki page: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nefertiti> It is remarkable to nothing less than bizarre that where Egyptian sculpture produced countless works of art for two thousand years - as three-dimensional and also colossal as possible - at the same time the faces/bodies applied to surfaces such as fabric, wood, stone, etc. had no depth effect whatsoever. We find this contrast so great that we even suspect that this was not even a coincidence, like the Incas, a civilization with phenomenal architecture, never knew the wheel while they worshipped the sun and the moon (both enormous .. wheels, although the moon has its quarter cycle!) Perhaps there is a theo-logical explanation to be found as far as Ancient Egypt is concerned for the contrast throughout its metaphysics and aesthetics? Let us know when you ... !

3. The eyes. Or the impossible representation by any sculpture.

Now, one can look at a bust like this from different angles, in a sense all the tried perspectives have this one question: either it happens with an eye-view, or it doesn't happen with it. In other words, when one walks 'sufficiently' behind that statue of Nefertiti, one will certainly not be attracted by her eyes at all for a while, for the simple reason that one cannot see them. Every human body part, also as it is materially represented here or expressed through the reality of a statue, is immanently opaque. But you know marginally that it is indeed present! Stupidly put; when you approach a human being for the first time and this happens from behind, you assume with absolute certainty that this human being has eyes, or at least one eye (and the other is covered with a cloth or ...). The films must be innumerable in which a main character is scared to death at that moment when he has to notice that the person he/she is approaching is blind, or even worse ... We will not describe the latter possibility because eyes that ... = terrible!!! It is without a doubt one of the most famous gruesome scenes in film history in which Luis Buñuel (1900 – 1983) in the short film “*Un chien andalou*” (1929 + in collaboration with Salvador Dalí, 1904 - 1989) suddenly had a so-called perfect eye cut off by a razor... - brrrrr. The position of an eye, the position of both eyes – preferably always together, and preferably not squinting, even partly, as was perhaps the case with Luis Buñuel? – is of the utmost importance in human encounters. Libraries are dedicated to this and of course we should not repeat this here in general. Let alone apply it a little.

Fair is fair. The bust may be as world-famous as the Egg of Columbus, as it was then inlaid or decorated to the fantastic by Fabergé (Фаберже, 1846 – 1920). The work of art may be as attractive to visitors or other admirers as nothing else in that gigantic museum. In any case, the bust does not reveal the slightest expression in the eyes. Just remember one of the painted top portraits that you once had the pleasure of actually encountering face-to-face with, to your heavenly moment of experience and then later stored in your earthly memory, of course preferably as alone as possible and therefore not as part of the crowds of spectators of the once again very prestigious retrospective exhibition of none other than ... Or of ... or even - please and you certainly took two weeks' leave to travel to the city ... - even the hyper-large ...! The great visual artists who like to make portraits, or who venture to do so on rare occasions – are there great painters, if possible, also great sculptors who have never made a single portrait? – are usually extremely good at depicting eyes. You know the expression that also contains great truth or experiential power in your daily experience: "Eyes are the mirrors of the soul". From a purely technical point of view, this is not well formulated because mirrors allow people to look back at themselves or at themselves. They do not allow us to look through, as with the simplest (non-coloured, non ...) glass windows. That is nevertheless what this expression means because through these instruments of the eyes we see the soul, which is hidden somewhere behind it!? But no one is bothered by this objectively incorrect but expressively striking expression, if that person even pauses to consider this? Of course, there is the problem that the statue of Nefertiti once lost one eye, or that the second eye was not placed in time: who is going to say that truthfully? In any case, it is not possible that this bust was unfinished, because otherwise it would not have been found as it was found. Can you imagine that a museum management decided to cover one eye of a work of art, of a painting or other plastic work, to scratch it out or to replace it with blah blah blah? We can imagine that and even with more than one eye because with both eyes, the head also at once and immediately the entire body, so the total identity of the man or woman in question. After all, that was a blessed (...) photo technique that was used by the Soviets, among others, on disgraced people, henceforth ex-Soviets. It was actually a technique that we ourselves were

'allowed' to experience when we gave a speech to all those present at the vernissage as the creator and main organizer about the start and launch of the Illustrale (later Picturale) in Ronse, Belgium in 2003, after which we were nowhere to be seen in a photo. And never mentioned anywhere else afterwards, and of course even less thanked. But is that kicking people in the teeth, according to the ineradicable moralists? Or is it just a modern example of how censorship can be done in an artistic (sic) way and is still done, by modern Belgian artists, in this case illustrators and/or writers of books for good children, because Flemish nationalist interests prevailed - and continue to prevail - while we absolutely wanted the Brussels and Walloon illustrators to be included from the second edition of this Illustrale ...?

Back to Nefertiti because there is quite a bit that goes fundamentally wrong! But don't be too sad because with this kind of artwork it can't be anything else! In other words: what appears to be fundamentally missing there, is not missing because it is ... fundamental! In our opinion, the problem of the eyes in sculptures is effectively 'reasonably' fundamental, in the sense that regardless of the material - marble, bronze, wood or ??? - one can hardly put anything more than the slightest 'extra' dimension in eyes. The proof of the pudding - here the hypothesis or statement - is in the eating - here the empirical checking or simply looking properly. What do you see in EXpression withIN even one eye of Nefertiti other than ...?! NOTHING! A better example of a later date? Let us now take the fairly well-known sculpture "*Moses*" (11513 - 1516) that was designed by the even more famous Italian all-rounder Michelangelo (1475 - 1564). Beautiful statue, congratulations Michele and molto bene, mio caro amico. And keep up the good work! But so: the eyes of this same Moses? Oh, fire doesn't shoot out of there. Not even a flame. Not even a little flash of flame. Then we find his "*Madonna with child*" (1501 - 1504) much more elegant because Our Most Noble Dear Mother and Virgin has somewhat more subtle eyes. They are made noticeably narrower. Moreover, the same applies to her beloved Child Jesus. But of any application of color, or nuance of the expression of the eyes - self-evident or by sculptural definition - there is no question. Not the best sculptor in history - which Michelangelo probably was - can express a real, human depth of the eyes of any depicted, sculpted person. Neither in stone, nor in bronze, in clay, steel, ... up to and including the future or yet to be invented blah blah blah! We would like to read a study about this important sub-problem of the appearance of people through their portraits through sculptures in particular; are there any existing ones or are you going to write one and finally? What are you waiting for?

4. The eyes. Or the inevitability of all visual art.

With this bust of Nefertiti we have an image, a statue. But that is only a partial statue because this form represents only the upper or most important part of the person depicted: the head with the face. Including – the eyes. Eyes - however one turns or twists the matter - mean the central part of an appearing person. Those eyes can simply appear, or be open. They can remain remarkably closed, although that is, so to speak, a coincidental moment of selection by the viewing painter. After all, every person has to blink every 0.3 to 0.4 seconds because the eye has to be kept moist as well as cleaned. That happens in a reflex or is a small, albeit noticeable part of the automatic nervous system. Undoubtedly, one sometimes sees people who are so nervous that they blink intensely, say much faster, but it is impossible that this lasts so long that a painter - a portraitist - is going to capture that, as if that blinking belongs to the visible reality of the given person. However, the human animal, especially the female part of it, is a cunning little creature. Blinking can be guided from a certain functionality, for example in a situation in which one wants to seduce. This can be very subtle, for example, and is hardly guessable through a form of information management. That is a part of being

human that the phenomenon Erving Goffman (1922 – 1982, and for everyone who wants to understand something of the remarkable fact of “society”, an absolute must!) wrote about in his pure classic *“The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life”* (1959 + we hardly dare say it, but in a later study on our Jewish manuscript we have to use this book intensively and ... er ... amend or ‘strengthen’ it a bit) with, among other things, the distinction between information that one “gives” and that one “reveals”. In the first sentence, the information is produced intentionally and in the second sentence, therefore, rather coincidental or caused by, as it were, independently of conscious being itself, as in principle happens with blinking. But the real human villains; they can, for example, blink much more intensely as an actual instrument to pretend (as a theatrical trick) that they are nervous, so that they can obtain one or more advantages.

Very rarely can one experience a scene like Harrison Ford (1942) who plays a good, decent, somewhat boring, apparently also attractive to some, professor of archaeology in a class in the classic film *“Raiders of the Lost Ark”* (1981), one of the countless jewels of goldsmith Steven Spielberg (1946). A student - a girl, a young woman - who sits in the front right, confuses the professor by showing him her closed eyes twice with written on them clearly legible for him: *“LOVE YOU”*. The first word was on her right eyelid so viewed by the professor on the left. And the second word ...; feel free to watch the clip *“Raiders of the Lost Ark. Classroom Scene”* on Youtube. The screenwriter was none other than the very intelligent or creatively versatile Lawrence Kasdan (1949). Had he ever experienced it himself before? Of course, there is also the wink, known to everyone, but not used by everyone: could the use of winks tell us something about the psyche of the user or not, and even more broadly about the nature of the culture in which winking is or is not used, or is or is not allowed? Nefertiti does not wink for one very practical reason. She has only one eye, and we will come back to that later. She also does not use tricks like that student from *“Raiders of the Lost Ark”*; what would one have thought of His Royal Highness? She does not even blink within a second, because she is as empty of life or as dead as the limestone from which she was carved.

The image is on a tripod and that tripod is high enough or at least at the average eye level. You can therefore look at this image from anywhere because you can walk around it – and keep looking. That is - do you remember? - a form of magic that no painting has, no matter what tricks a painter or draftsman tries. There is a form of middle way that we should not call a compromise at all. You have certainly experienced the phenomenon how a person who looks straight at you from a support, a photo, drawing or painting, keeps looking at you while you move yourself at least within that field of vision. That field of vision is actually illusory because for the person looking at the portrait it obviously does not exist at all or in reality. Simply put, there is essentially no looking because it is an image or the gaze of a dead person, even if that painting or photo or drawing was made barely a minute before. The person depicted really cannot look but you feel as if you are constantly being watched, even to the extent that you can even run away from this - in essence dead - gaze by leaving the painting's location. Just stand in front of a successful self-portrait, such as the one from around 1630 by Peter Paul Rubens (1577 - 1640) in Antwerp, a reason alone for a city trip there more than worth it (and the rest ..!? Make it an extended weekend, a week): see

[Self-Portrait \(Rubens, Antwerp\) - Wikipedia](#)

Ultimately you may decide to remove the painting, photo etc. permanently (not the one by Rubens of course since, unfortunately or fortunately, all his self-portraits hang in museums), and you may not only put the work away but even hide it there - turn it around! The power of

such an omnipresent portrait with a person always watching; nowhere else has it been depicted so powerfully than by none other than the Bach of the film world, bourgeois, good husband and good father, blond-women-frustrated and mighty film genius Alfred Hitchcock (1899 - 1980 + we would sincerely like to mention "*Sir*" before his name but we don't care about all that inflated nonsense ... - sorry, dear master and we bow deeply before you). That happened in his first American film "*Rebecca*" (1940), a production that was certainly more British than British, not least because it was based on the successful 1938 novel of the same name by Daphne du Maurier (1907 - 1989). We have not read that novel because-because and Daphne herself was not prepared to talk to us about the film/novel because dead as a doornail – and we can not even talk nailish.

It is quite difficult to find a more delicate woman and actress than Joan Fontaine (pseudonym of Joan de Beauvoir de Havilland, 1917 - 2013). We would grant such a woman to any man in the world, but such a candidate man - some lesbians will also be interested, although we say this purely theoretically or without empirical support - will have to search well and at least have to show the condition of being like that himself. We have very coincidentally not found a single painting or real portrait of this nevertheless beautiful if not delightful woman, never even in the catalogues of modern visual artists and not even on the www. That is a fairly common experience for us, at least, because very few of the 'former' film stars seem to have inspired painters and sculptors; we will certainly come back to it more intensely elsewhere on this website because we find this observation remarkable; Don't you? For the Pablo Picassos and co., Joan Fontaine was probably too angelic. And for the Mark Roth and Ko's she was too human - and with this juxtaposition we do not want to give the impression of an artistic equality of both famous painters; the name "*Roth and Ko*" makes that clear. Joan Fontaine played the wrong woman in the film "*Rebecca*" or the woman for the right man in the wrong place and especially at the wrong time. After all, she became the second "Mrs. de Winter" in succession to the shrew of a reportedly overwhelmingly beautiful first Mrs. de Winter. This dead lady was, among other things, by her permanent and centrally hung enormous state portrait on the very large domain of the de Winter couple - de Winter constantly or overwhelmingly, say overwhelmingly present. Like a harpy - the "*Harpia harpyja*" - compared to such a fragile bird as Joan Fontaine. It did not help of course that Mr. de Winter had not sent all his old staff away and replaced them with other and better ones. Above all, there was the apparently even worse shrew of the lady-in-waiting and housekeeper, Mrs Danvers, who had been eternally connected to the first Mrs. de Winter since her childhood. You may remember this one sentence from the beak of the little harpy that she gruesomely bit into the much too sweet, soft, elegantly wavy and always open or ready to listen ears of the second Mrs. de Winter. It reminded us of the one baton on the backside of another punished English schoolboy: "*Do you think the dead come back and watch the living?*" It was a biting statement from Mrs. Danvers, also perfectly gothic explained by the "*Master of Suspense*". It was a statement softly shouted by a woman who, with all obviousness, had not only not 'had' a man in centuries to her in principle by nature allotted femininity. But she was probably a lesbian or had been very forbiddenly madly in love (and was still) with her previous mistress. That in itself could also yield a website or book; a history of attractive women seen through the eyes of lesbian women.

The dead who come back to us, even to look at us, to stare at us - brrrr. We may claim with what professional philosophers sometimes call apodictic certainty - or more certain certainty than certainty normally is - that this statement of this human monster Mrs. Danvers is untrue because: the dead never come back. Therefore they cannot look either. Unless. Unless they are indeed first or after their death converted into images, with eyes - that pierce. Think again

of Rubens and ... and ... ! Yet nevertheless. You broke up with your lover - or even worse, you yourself got the jilting from your lover! And wait: there go the photos! Or rather not: You adore that photo, pardon your lover who is only still present here. With if necessary or precisely that impressively theatrical more, you literally beg on both knees before this photo to come back to you. And there are still variations to be found; just look around in your life or if you are a child of god, in that of ...! And so on. But perhaps you are so good, so genuinely naive, that you cannot see or experience such sadness, evil or obsession in centuries.

5. Protected by an Eye? And what about the Evil Eye?

It can't be a coincidence that just a little less than ten years after this magnificent film from 1940, another Brit came onto the market with a very even much more famous variation on the fear of or by the watching or the being watched. After all, you probably know that fear was an essential element of English education, for centuries and hopefully by now ... ? It is effectively about one book. The idea of "*Big Brother is watching you*" from the iconic book "*1984*" (1949) by Georges Orwell (1903 - 1950) is a very striking example of the fear through watching.

Now, English fear of looking or being looked at, and the accompanying excessive punishments, punishments and ... so again or permanent punishments, it is a small part of the seemingly ineradicable and universal idea of "*The Evil Eye*". One could write encyclopedias about this eternal and universal concept and of course we are not going to do that here. We do ask you the question whether the Evil Eye, which was also a part of the enormously old and actually well over a thousand years old Egyptian mythology, still had a connection with the new cult around and originating from the husband of Nefertiti (see further). It is impossible here to go into that new religious cult of that time but ancient Egypt already knew "*The Eye of Horus*", which has continued to live on for more than two millennia. This Eye of Horus would then be the exact opposite of the Evil Eye or offer protection against it. In houses of today and probably in public buildings of ancient Egypt, that One Eye (the Eye of Horus) was placed opposite the Other (the Evil Eye) that was considered potentially present and especially harmful. Presumably there must be both anthropological and art historical studies on this, for Egypt and the current Middle East. Are there also broader or deeper studies on the Evil Eye and apparently opposite the Good Eye through other continents, cultures and times?

We need to say something more about that special looking through something like a special eye or through the Evil Eye. And now not far from our bed. The Evil Eye was also very popular in Flanders from unknown times until recently, or at least very common. It was never so among freethinkers by definition exclusive in content and space. Until very recently and as such still pleasant to buy secondhand, it was encountered everywhere, although not among the freethinkers who were not common for a long time. Except for the very youngest among us, everyone still knows the - for the somewhat older - famous slogan: "*God sees you. Here one does not curse - besides unwritten here kissing, caressing and even masturbating let alone here you do not make love*". It was found for so long in the countless cafés in Flanders (also in Wallonia?) and in living rooms or kitchens of houses. These were all so-called viewing places or places where 'a special eye' or that of none other than the omniscient because all-watching God could be placed as an active viewer. See:



Source: [God ziet mij, hier vloekt men niet - Fotodatabank - Thomas - Godsdienstonderwijs.be \(kuleuven.be\)](http://God_ziet_mij_hier_vloekt_men_niet_-_Fotodatabank_-_Thomas_-_Godsdienstonderwijs.be_(kuleuven.be))

Note: “*GOD ZIET MIJ. HIER VLOEKT MEN NIET*” means “*God sees me (or you). One does not curse here*”. Linguistically, this proposition can be criticized. But everyone understood the imperative 'logic'.

To be honest, after having seen several thousand Belgian paintings, etchings or drawings from the last 500 years or so, we cannot simply name visual works of art in which this fear of or through looking is thematized. Surely there must be such examples! Elsewhere we discuss the internationally well-known - albeit regarded by us a mere deprimat - painter-filmmaker-curator-etcher-guest speaker and money grabber Luc Tuymans, who has painted quite a few “*Diagnostische blicken*” or “*Diagnostic Views*”. These paintings – some people call them works of art – are in our opinion rather signs of internal or psychological dystopia dispositions - we are still looking for the correct scientific term. In this, a kind of poignant look through the depicted image and thus at you as a viewer is apparently immortalized, among other things by the 'ingenious' inspiration to also depict people who actually wear glasses or some form of viewing apparatus (divers', racing and pilot's glasses are certainly absent) - well, eternally Luc Tuymans is a contemporary painter who has been working since roughly 1980 or on the edge of this century even of the last millennium. Does he mark an enormous substantive, let us hope 'better' or more intellectually and morally mature leap compared to all his Flemish, Belgian and other European artists - and especially with the first ones? Probably not because we remember having seen a relative report with the man by a Dutch organization on Youtube, in which the man - plus 60, or according to cognitive psychology in principle already fully grown, in addition to being extremely successful because both world famous and filthy rich - while walking with the reporting team in the Antwerp pedestrian tunnel suddenly says “*You must always be on your guard, because anything can happen.*”! Food for psychologists/psychiatrists for sure and even more for experts on the ... Evil Eye, right? In any case, how do we know, or do we not know, that the Belgians or their predecessors among the Flemish, Brabant, Limburg, Walloons and so on were immune - or not at all - to the view-related fears that nevertheless dominated their own, previous and later generations? This seems to us a nice question for a philosopher with an interest in art history, or even the other way around. In addition, this seems to us either very nice in collaboration or perhaps rather

very necessary - really viewed preventively! - research material for psychologists and/or psychiatrists in particular. In this way they can also research Western (and Middle Eastern) art in particular. In our opinion, one of the core pieces of painting in the Low Countries and indeed of the whole of Europe, which has been permeated or influenced by Christianity for so long, is "*The Carrying of the Cross*" (circa 1510 - 1516) by Hieronymus Bosch (circa 1440/1460 - 1516) relevant to this question: see

<https://www.mskgent.be/collectie/1902-h>

That painting is – in our opinion – a kind of symphony of looking, also – or especially – in the humble non-looking by Christ and Saint Veronica. It also shows – not to forget – the man who gets the cross of Christ on his stupid head and therefore has to give way or can no longer look or has become a ... follower of Christ because of that cross? In our small, albeit generally very well-received study "*De kruisweg van Edgard Tytgat (1879-1957). Een geslaagde vertelling.*" (Ronse - Gaasbeek, 2.000 + "*The Way of the Cross by Edgard Tytgat (1879-1957). A successful story.*"), we discussed the intriguing Way of the Cross (1955) by this important Belgian and European artist. That was a result of our political-cultural organisation "*De Fontein*" which exhibited this Way of the Cross (originals and preliminary designs) in the beautiful Romanesque crypt of the Saint Hermes Church in Ronse during Easter in the year 2000 – with many visitors. In that publication we had to point out almost systematically the importance of looking: looking around and at Christ and through Him to God through an act of resurrection such as that Way of the Cross culminates - also artistically! - in the last station. This study or especially the 14 (fourteen) stations next to the preparations we cannot place on the internet before 2027 due to copyright. Consequently we cannot place the appropriate 'viewing passages' here yet so that they can be discussed in an illustrative or explanatory manner. Hopefully you will find that little book somewhere in a library.

The fact that we just made an exception for freethinkers where this slogan or this variant of the Evil Eye would not occur, we must also put into perspective. Among those freethinkers there were "*Freemasons*". We consider them a group of fools for whom we have never been able to muster one gram of meaningful empathy. We thoroughly enjoy the opera "*Die Zauberflöte*" (1791) by the fairly well-known Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791). But we are not one iota interested in that story itself, we happily close our eyes when the symbolism or what the modern deconstruktivist like Romeo Castelvandolfucci (1960) make of it ... uh ... Indeed. But ladies and gentlemen. In the English branch of Freemasonry at least, that *** Eye is now making a comeback! It is enough to blind oneself with despair or even to poke Oedipus' own eyes out, although we advise you once again to regard all this Freemasonry as silly or simply creative nonsense: a sandbox for adults? Now consider this thought: "*The Eye of Providence is a symbol recognized by Freemasons everywhere as a beautiful representation of the watchful care of the Supreme Architect.*"

See: [The Eye of Providence: A Journey into Masonic Symbolism - GWMNMA \(gwmmnma.org\)](https://www.gwmmnma.org/)



Note: An all-seeing eye of freemasonry or the “*Eye of Providence*”: here one is allowed to ... curse!?

Incidentally, it is known that the majority of active Freemasons are people of a better class or strongly in contrast to the Flemish common people who until recently went to the pub en masse. Do such fine gentlemen ever swear, unless about the fall of their share prices – or after the loss of yet another young mistress?

So we are also back on the Egyptian course with that special perspective or the Eye of the Freemasons, although this Egypt of Nefertiti had knocked itself out of the ancient religious Egyptian course; it is difficult to look into one's own heart, and even more difficult to look into the heart of the darkness of history. That we may discover that happening, that almost dizzying presentation of shifting perspectives, through the image-being of Nefertiti, which fortunately is also a very small or humanly manageable image by Egyptian standards (just take a colossus of that damn Ramses The ... st/d/th!), is a magic that we personally discovered only very late in our lives. That can be read individually epistemologically so stupidly, since in our personal environment we were mainly surrounded by flat images: photos, paintings and prints. Our grandmother did have a few ceramic works that are still called "postuurkes" in the Flemish dialect. According to the “Vlaamswwoordenboek.be/definities” this concept would come from the French word “*posture/poster*” or “*to give a place*”. These were images of probably German origin and we vaguely remember some riders that did not take up much space. But we were clearly not interested in those extremely stupid things for a second, although we remember very well how enthusiasts almost fought over them in the days when it was clear that grandmother had become more than demented and therefore her house had to ... - and that therefore that oh so familiar house could (sic) be emptied. Fortunately for us, that drama for her and for us happened with the exception of her unique graphic work around the “*Sistine Madonna*” or “*Sistine Madonna*” by Raphaël! **See Raphaël**. Sculptures that can mainly stand alone or independently, that really take up space, are simply rather rare and especially very rare in private ownership. And if one does meet private owners of statues, among the better class, such as for our youth once with a medical specialist, they mainly have room for them in their own private garden. And that is a place where the usual third man/woman hardly or never comes, neither visually nor existentially. These are not conditions for an ordinary image encounter within the lower or middle classes of society, still the main part of civilization. What we describe here has value in itself in the analysis of a work of art. But we must concentrate even more on the phenomenon of the eye level, or rather on the phenomenon of the eye. Because, from looking through one eye or usually with both eyes, we must now stare blindly at her one eye - or is there again more than one eye can see?

6. Still about eyes till sweet words. And most of all: “The Ever Beautiful One” or “Bonheur”.

You know that movement. To try to see better, you sometimes close one eye. Every ophthalmologist will assure you that you are better off just taking a suitable instrument. There are enough of them available, such as a clothes peg, sorry, glasses, a ... Now, whether you simply look at this Nefertiti with both eyes, or whether you want to close one eye to try to see better with the eye that remains open, assuming you can figure out which of your eyes you should close better ... Because it may be that one of your eyes is a little weaker, in which case you would be better off going to the same ophthalmologist at once ... Even a blind person can see that the statue of the most noble Nefertiti has only one eye. Consequently, she looks at us – the viewer – with only one eye. It is quite clear that this depicted queen was indeed normal or ‘ordinary’ or had both eyes. But. Something has happened to this statue throughout the literal tradition. So she didn't pull a joke like “*Captain Jack Sparrow*” - sorry, he just has terribly thick eye shadow. In any case, many pirates are known for having only one eye or rather, they are known for having two eyes, one of which is covered in a very conspicuous or frightening way; with an eye patch, a pars pro toto for the real pirate. That is of course the classic stupid joke but perhaps quite a lot happened at the home of the pharaoh; pots and pans that flew around too much and her eye that was in the way? Or also purely perhaps she or her rather special husband - we will finally meet him later - was a bit bizarre, also a bit oversensitive, even too psychopathic like our later friend Oedipus (circa 420 BC), a little thousand years after our Nefertiti.

We like to find out in a more prosaic or logical way. That this beautiful statue, although the statue is somewhat less attractive because of that rotten eye that has probably been lost, has been in Berlin for the entire European period, is no coincidence. After all, it was a German team of archaeologists who found this bust in 1912, in Egypt of course. That took place in the important archaeological site of Amarna, or as it was then called, in Achetaton. That old name clearly referred to “*The Horizon of the Aten*”, and the Aten in turn was the – henceforth at the wish and command of her husband the King only! – Egyptian god, the Sun God. In this historically extremely important place the bust of Nefertiti was found, more precisely in the workroom of the sculptor “*Thutmose*”, who is also famous for this head. Unfortunately, we cannot give you his life dates, but we can tell you with our hand on our European hearts that he was a contemporary of Nefertiti and her husband. After all, this sculptor was known as “*The King's Favourite and Master of Works*”. So it is either a portrait from nature (of her of course, which does not exclude that she had an identical twin sister, or even a quasi perfect stand-in) or a copy of an earlier statue made after her. In this way we cannot say anything about the provenance of this statue or the changes of location, say owners of this work of art. It is nevertheless 99.9999% certain that the statue was simply not finished yet in this studio and that it never left this place until the studio itself fell into ruins. About the status of this statue, and more specifically the reason for the presence of only one eye, there are various hypotheses by what are called Egyptologists - or specialists. Possibly later archaeological research will provide more clarity about this.

Whatever hypotheses one uses, the absent eye is absent is absent is sent away and remains in its absence at the same time or forever an eye. There is never any talk of “*the hole*” or the empty space where there is ‘nothing’ where normally an eye should have been. These thoughts do not so much testify to respect for Nefertiti, but they do testify to respect for this bust – not coincidentally, of Nefertiti. The possession of this bust is, as is known, of unprecedented archaeological and touristic value because the bust is without a doubt one of

the most famous artefacts from the entire Ancient Egypt and therefore a tourist attraction for the Berlin museum where it is – still (...) - located. And that Ancient Egyptian civilisation is without the slightest doubt, partly due to its proximity to and contacts with the Greek and later Roman culture or with the foundations of the later European culture, for the contemporary European inhabitant one of the most impressive ‘vanished’ or ancient cultures on this globe. And that seen from the entire more or less known world history. The bust of Nefertiti is therefore iconic as part of an era that is in itself iconic or imaginative. If the famous pyramids of Giza are objectively the most important remains and testimonies of the very long and rich Ancient Egyptian history, then the statue of Nefertiti, together with the sarcophagus of Tutankhamun (circa 1,333 - 1323 BC), who was very close to her, represents the concrete Ancient Egyptian man, of course more specifically from the side of the rulers (although objectively historically speaking, “*Toetie*” was only a very minor ruler). Consequently, the non-presence or objective absence of one of the normally two eyes of the person of this statue is not a real problem. Or that normal problem is simply ideologically, albeit very honorably, thought away. One could call this a form of sincere or honest historical and tourist fraud.

Meanwhile, it is an undeniable truth that the same Nefertiti has lost one eye forever. And like every human being, she had only two, whether she was almost divine for her and the population – or not divine as for later people. Whereby, for the sake of certainty, which can now not be apodictic at all but precisely the opposite, one must suggest that Nefertiti actually or in her concrete life-world only retained one or only one good eye. Imagine if she had lost two! And that we can assume from our expectations of knowledge that it is somewhere an additional miracle (additional?) that she did not receive an eye patch – from the then so famous sculptor “*Thutmose*” or “*The King's Favourite and Master of Works*” and consequently also “*The Queen's Favourite and Master of Works*”. Was such an eye patch or whatever was suitable for masking, not aesthetically or existentially appropriate for her Highness? Did an aesthetic morality exist in that Ancient Egypt that continued so infinitely, albeit finitely, at least for the highest of society? What was actually obligatory in terms of aesthetics for that then situated human being? And what precisely was not or was forbidden? Did covering the body in connection with changes due to injuries or loss belong to the attempt to make the body more beautiful again or to preserve the body at a certain aesthetic level? Or was that change with loss of its originality – what’s in a word? – regularly accepted, also because in this case of the loss of an eye, one could never possibly restore its ‘most important’ function – seeing? Or was one thing or another accepted in terms of loss of one’s own physicality, that is, of the less attractive appearance, so to speak somewhat anticipating the later “*Insjallah*”? The important Belgian painter and sculptor Rik Wouters (1882 – 1916) and the even better known, merely painting Vincent Van Gogh (1853 - 1890) – both artists are not present on this website, but that can be attributed to coincidence; we simply cannot discuss/use ‘everything/everyone’ – are famous examples of the visible covering up of ‘flaws’ in the normal physical appearance. These were much later times and essentially ordinary people, at least socially speaking. They were artists or ‘beautiful artists’, both excellent painters who produced many impressively beautiful works. Rik Wouters suffered unbearable pains at the end of his life and as a result even lost one eye and shortly afterwards suddenly his life. Van Gogh had tinkered with his right ear and afterwards needed a bandage for a while to at least let it heal. We are familiar with this kind of dealing with partly physical loss. It is no coincidence that this concerns men, painters even, who have made relatively many self-portraits. Bad luck for them, but in the most attractive ... men in history we are not interested at all: give us ladies, ladies, women! The question of whether we would have taken ‘those’ portraits of them – with an eye patch, with a head bandage – is therefore not relevant here in that definitional way – hahaha.

From a purely physical point of view, Queen Nefertiti is half-blind or, if you like, half-sighted. We do not know the technical details of what happens to visual perception when only one eye is still functional. Can we simply assume that one then still has half of normal vision? Now the term "*half-sighted*" is lame language. The concept of "*half-sighted*" also poses a small and therefore smaller problem. Linguistically speaking, that is not a correct expression because when someone is called half-blind, they mean a person who has much poorer vision. Even if this person still has both eyes or eyeballs, he/she may simply have bad eyes. That is absolutely not the case here with Nefertiti, but there is no person and especially no viewer who will raise the alarm about that: the statue of Nefertiti will certainly not be moved to the museum basement because of our article - haha. The question may well be whether, if Nefertiti had effectively had only one eye, or if a matter of speaking was cross-eyed like a dragon, whether she would have been considered royally worthy to be depicted as a statue – publicly, even quite privately within her own royal chambers – let alone whether she would have been allowed to share life with her King - Pharaoh! - very privately and certainly publicly: definitely not! The question can then be asked purely hypothetically whether at a certain point as queen she had only one working eye. And that question is important because it raises the – in any case morally – more important question whether her Royal Consort would still have wanted to 'have' her, show her and so on!? Incidentally, all of her known frontal statues – with a perfect view of her entire face and therefore also or especially of her eyes – always show these eyes in full presence! On that very important, albeit statistically limited level – how many statues of her alone or together with her husband are still under the Egyptian sand? – there can be no doubt that the famous statue of her bust discussed here is a statue that has simply lost one eye. Or that for even more stupid reasons it had not yet been placed by a collaborator from the official sculptor's studio.

These are all considerations that have an importance on a moral and political level: could such an all-powerful man as a pharaoh ultimately reject his almost equally divine wife because for some reason she suddenly had a very noticeable defect, or a serious 'flaw' in the ideal of beauty at the time? That is a question we cannot answer, just as we can imagine that given certain, let us say, strict or compelling religious reasons, such a violation of the supreme woman could not be tolerated. But then the logic always applies whether such problems of ultimate exclusion could also occur for the supreme lord or the pharaoh himself? We are not experts in Ancient Egyptian history, but we have certainly never heard of this kind of striking incident. Moreover, the pharaoh was also a military head of state and military affairs are by definition dangerous. Therefore, it is very conceivable that certain early generations of pharaohs, or later the more daring among them, sometimes took on effective military leadership and were therefore seriously hurt – in very visible places! That too is a fact that must be taken into account in the assessment of human aesthetics throughout these older civilizations, possibly even up to the present day.

As for the great attractiveness of this bust of Nefertiti or more precisely of the actual queen Nefertiti, it seems certain that she was considered as such by her contemporaries. She was certainly considered onomastically very beautiful, at least from a certain point on, let's say strongly presumably shortly before her coronation as queen or official wife of the pharaoh. According to Egyptologists, the meaning of her name indeed perfectly matches the beauty of her bust: "*The Beautiful One has Come*". We suspect - may not say for sure - that she was not given this name at birth. We do not want to be naive, but as our great friend Jacky sometimes says "*All children are beautiful*", she probably did not have a face deformed by mosquito bites as a baby. Moreover, it seems obvious that her beauty was a decisive motive for her later

husband Akhenaten (his reign was during circa 1353 - 1336 BC) to take her as his wife. And therefore to have 'beautiful' children from her. Incest or marriage within the royal family was also known to be present in these circles. We have no idea whether in Ancient Egypt at the highest social level a motive such as great or true love played a role, although that could of course have been an 'additional' motive in this case. We know absolutely nothing about important themes such as love and fidelity or mistresses about the Ancient Egyptian court: did Nefertiti have, in addition to many maidservants, also a form of very tolerated competitors in bed? Did this court and even every court have a tradition of the harem – or whatever that could be called in Ancient Egyptian? We now know that from a certain point on Nefertiti was referred to as an enormously beautiful woman, very officially because through her address or name itself. We know de facto or archaeologically that she was depicted several times in both ordinary statues and in bas-reliefs together with her husband, sometimes hand in hand and sometimes even with their children. Of her husband the pharaoh we know 'on the other hand' no images with beloved mistresses. Furthermore, those ancient Egyptians appear to have been prudish in some way, when one compares the visual culture with Indian temple culture and classical erotic Indian writings. Furthermore, is there such a thing as comparative erotic studies between older civilizations, by anthropologists, archaeologists, historians alongside philosophers and art historians?

We repeat that the name Nefertiti meant in their language "*The Beautiful One has Come*". With that she was not yet sufficiently praised linguistically, stylistically and socially. Nefertiti also had a whole series of "*titles*" or distinguished forms of address. We give three of them that fit well in this context of the discussion of so-called attractive women in history:

- "*Lady of Grace*";
- "*Sweet of Love*"
- "*Lady of All Women*".

The latter is so obvious as husband of the pharaoh that it is almost not worth mentioning. Yet we think it is a beautiful title, for her and as an example! Ultimately, that should also be the name or at least the reality for every woman who is in a relationship with a man, is it a marriage or a previous or more or less similar nature - yes indeed! Of course we do not know who came up with these titles. But not so secretly we may dream and think that one of these titles - imagine all of them!!! - was thought up by her Akhenaten. You immediately understand where we are going with this. Not everyone can become a poet of a certain level. Outside of periods - or at least that one (?) - almost every lover has a poetic mood now and then. From the results of this one can usually not expect impressive literature, or preferably not even? In any case, the sweet words so 'titles' that a man expresses to his wife - and vice versa please - and that throughout the entire relationship; is this famous example of a real woman from the top class not worth further say eternal and universal encouragement! The point is to follow Akhenaten in particular in relation to his Nefertiti – you know, that wonderful woman from that old bust – and to use these formulations authentically ourselves – and of course preferably vice versa! We deliberately did not put a question mark after the previous sentences! Even more, we would like to see these examples – here three successful ones, but there were more in relation to Nefertiti – as truly exemplary, so that you, your sister, your daughter, your neighbor and so on are encouraged to also use ... in relation to her .../...! Secondly, we know one wonderful woman who was French-speaking and who regularly called her – only – child, a son, "*Bonheur*" ("*Happiness*"), while that was certainly not his real first name. It is not even a socially known or real first name.

You allow us to use a well-known but still always moving word, if spoken authentically, from a rightly very famous and beloved Dutch (Flemish) poem. More: we give up this unique poem at once:

“De lenige liefde.

*Middenin de vlakke van juli
kwam ik je tegen. Ik woon hier, zei je.
Ik keek naar de bloemen. Ja, dat zie ik,
zei ik, en waar leerde je de kunst
om niet lang te duren? Ook hier, zei je.*

*Je was lenig; en je woorden waren zo
doorschijnend, ik kon je er helemaal
door zien.*

*En daar lag ik al in het gras
en wat hield ik in mijn hand?
Een oortje, waarin ik het lange woord
'lieveling' uitgoot, zonder morsen.*

Herman de Coninck (1944 – 1997)

See <https://www.hermandeconinck.be/gedicht-lenige-liefde-3.php>

For obvious reasons we do not want to translate this Dutch poem – into English. Feel free to do it yourself. In any case you understand the word “*lieveling*” as “*my beloved one*” or “*my darling*” or ... – for example. And in what a unique way it is used here between lovers!

After this title splendor, let's return to the meaning of the first name Nefertiti or "*The Beautiful One has Come*". We looked up the following on probably the best website in the world regarding the meaning and occurrence of first names:

<https://www.behindthename.com/>

We then had to conclude to our surprise that the Arabic language, geographically a successor of Ancient Egyptian, does not seem to know any names in which the core is the word "beauty". Please convince us immediately that we are wrong - and with pleasure! In any case, in some languages that we know a little bit, we do not know a single example! Unless it is "*BO*"; see a further paragraph. That does not seem to be a common first name but itself comes from "*Beau*", which comes from "*beautiful, handsome*". According to the referred website, this would nevertheless be a very late, 20th century invention and moreover also applies to - men! Can we find this very, very remarkable, certainly with regard to the history of naming women!? After all, that is just as much a history of attractive, beautiful women. Let us keep our amazement short here and go straight to a conclusion with force. Let us indeed take this opportunity to call upon all readers to finally create or invent such a name in at least Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, ... languages, a name that not only sounds

authentic or is motivated as such – but also to invent a euphonious name and preferably as an onomatopoeia. Of course, to propagate this beautiful or necessary first name – for women only, right? – via via (media or mediating means).

We repeat once more that the meaning of Nefertiti's first name was "*The Beautiful One has Come*". After all and after the previous sentence, it is certain that the repetitio was also one of the most important figures of speech for the Ancient Egyptians. That beauty/Beauty of her/Her had come one day, as a queen perhaps. Unfortunately we were not there yet, neither on her young day but certainly not a while later or on her old day. We naturally hope for her, for all those who loved her even worshipped her, and ultimately even more naturally for all women who somewhere for a man, a father and mother, a neighborhood, for a ... That all these women were also like Nefertiti so that ... We indeed hope that the name remained, albeit that it changed that little bit. Just as Nefertiti bore a whole series of titles, she could now also bear this new albeit old his eternal first name: "*The Ever Beautiful One*." Because isn't that the essence of life!? Stay beautiful and attractive, on and through the waves of the world!?

7. The Happiness of the Perfect Absent. A bust is not a rose, not a ..., not ...

You may not realize it but Nefertiti was very lucky. Or even more: the "*Neues Museum in Berlin*" had, has and will forever have that great luck that Nefertiti came to you all as a bust. And not as a normal, adult or still very young woman. That Nefertiti looked so-called beautifully slim, is quite self-evident but is not at all. Undoubtedly she had a small army of servants just for her, of whom the toughest had the uniquely illustrious job of waving Her Majesty a lightening wind. And that was not so much done to overcome the oppressive hot air of the Egyptian desert by an ancient form of air conditioning. But that was done mainly to chase away all kinds of Nile mosquitoes by incessantly moving all kinds of things - which then had perfect thing names in ancient Egyptian - so that that eternal light wind waved around her. Her adornment as *fond de teint* has long since been lost or had not even been applied by the painters who had to give this sculpture a finishing touch, it is certain that there are no traces of mosquito bites on her face. We know from, among other things, the Old Testament stories and a fairly impressive film such as "*The Ten Commandments*" (1956 + director Cecil B. DeMille, 1881 - 1959) that quite a few insects flew around in that very old Egypt of, among other things, 1,345 BC. You can bet that tens of thousands of slaves or free Egyptians who built the many and mostly gigantic temples, let alone the unimaginable pyramids, were black with the stings of the countless types of local insects. Presumably they came to this part of the Old World as a kind of economic migrants because a lot of blood and sweat was more attractive there than on, say, the barren soils of darker A...a.

But *fond de teint*, mosquitoes or other insects. There was something more that is not visible at all in the thereby even more or at least rather attractive Nefertiti. There is after all the joy of Nothingness There is/was/will be the Happiness of the Perfect Absence. When you see a beautiful actress on the silver screen or the not at all white but nevertheless transparent screen, you can hardly contain yourself as a male animal and already start dreaming of "*If only I were there!*" or a more sensual cry like "*Me and you, we ...!*", then that dangerous moment arrives. The actress has to drink, "has to" because the director and screenwriter have foreseen it while they apparently never have foreseen anything 'else', or the actress "*wants*" to eat an ice cream, bite a piece of chocolate, or even - which has not been allowed in American films for some time now - take a drag on her cigarette, something that is all an indication that she wants to give her male co-star a good lick, bite and so on. And then it comes! The great danger! The possible and often certain moment! The moment of the great unmasking, of "*La Grande*

Désillusion" or "*le Moment Sousprême*". Licking her ice cream, taking a light drag on her cigarette, taking a bite of her apple, and so on; they are all actions in which she has to put one hand, if not both hands, to her mouth. Where even without a close-up those hands are central and can be seen. We are sometimes very diplomatic and we will proceed in this way in particular because we are not even going to name one example of an actress, certainly not a current one and certainly not a classic one because she may always remain classic, who is a wonderfully delicious animal, pardon, who is a very attractive one, who may soon be a hopefully lovable woman. But, that eternal but. But that could also be (...) an actress with ugly, even terribly ugly - hands. We are certain that there are men whose erection at such a moment shrivels up to unusable dimensions as if by an ice shower. And so on. You understand that we cannot here proceed to empirical elements from our own lives. Although we are happy to turn a blind eye, except as far as deceit is concerned. Deceit, you say? Or the art of diplomacy, in the bath, bed, at the table and ...? Or an art of looking and not looking through something like love!

There are a great many film critics throughout the still relatively short history of film. One of them must have noticed one or two things and almost certainly some film giants among the screenwriters, directors and even (most of all!?) the producers must have told themselves and their film crews as a mantra: "*If necessary, show her pussy that is heavily hairy - but not in a close-up!!! - but never those kinds of hands (even hairless)!!!*". Indeed, we once saw the beginnings of beard hairs on a female relative who was no longer taking such good care of herself as she was getting older. And we certainly did not find that a pleasant experience. While we quite naturally only had family and artistic reflections on this lady because it concerned our own grandmother. While we always felt something democratic or relativizing bubbling up inside us.

We know a friend who is nice to us and very gallant to the ladies, who looks at ladies' toes. To e-v-a-lu-rate? He is certainly not Chinese in whose tradition sex and feet are very intimately connected. Until just a few decades ago, people were still busy binding the feet of young girls so that they would not grow too much: a means of torture as an ideal of beauty! Do you still remember the overwhelming "*The Last Emperor (of China)*." (1987, director Bernardo Bertolucci, 1941 - 2018). During a lovemaking scene, the Chinese spectators in the cinemas did not turn a blind eye due to a form of collectively formed age-old shame because the censorship had prevented that: kissing the feet - of a woman by a man - was very nice for those involved (the actors) but not for the Chinese authorities. Or how Chinese communists still wear age-old Mandarin clothes or glasses. In any case, we have seen – somewhere ‘up there’ – attractive women with ugly hands and fingers but never the same kind of ladies with ugly feet or toes. And that is purely cultural because we have no cultural interest in toes and also purely pragmatic because we ourselves are quite tall and would have to bend down deeply and look, to be able to see the feet/toes, assuming that the lady in question is already wearing sandals or is simply barefoot. These are therefore some important conditions in which the general denominator of attractiveness is not easy or almost impossible to apply to the human component feet/toes. Unless it is so bad that the person concerned has colossal flat feet that it is noticeable from far away. Funny enough, there are various types of feet of which the most important of the three most common types is precisely the so-called. "*Egyptian Foot*". That seems to be by far the most common type of foot, with in decreasing order of occurrence the "*Roman Foot*" and – it was to be suspected – the "*Greek Foot*." See:

https://www.podexpert.com/en/blog-pathology-type-feet-pxl-151_159.html

<https://voetenbeweging.nl/welk-voetype-heb-ik/>

These types of feet are, as expected, only characterized by the nature of their toes. The Egyptian Foot is the type in which the big (left) toe is the longest, after which all other toes become slightly shorter, as if a perfect straight line has been drawn next to them. With that almost eerily straight or 'perfect' appearance of the mutual position of the toes, something is suddenly touched upon that is established in nature and culture as the standard, that is, as the beautiful or to be striven for: the straight line or the perfect shape (in addition to the circle, which one may also call a kind of straight line, but then not ... straight through - haha). And not to forget; that straight line is or is processed on both sides in the ideal of symmetry, or approximately the size of all observable things. Now of course you will immediately object; so much attention for types of feet/toes, what about the hands/fingers? We have to disappoint you right away because the study of hand types does not seem to be separate from ... palm reading or palmistry. And that is a subject that we do not want to dedicate ourselves to here at all. Let us limit ourselves to two remarks on the matter. For example, someone who loses a thumb, for whatever reason, does not only have extreme problems on a daily basis because the thumb has unique functions due to its opposable function. And also purely aesthetically and existentially; it will 'stand out' or make a person less attractive. The same applies to someone who has lost one or even several other fingers, or even 'only' one or more of the obviously upper phalanges. This is something that one continues to see occasionally as an intimate, as we had to experience with a family member. But what about a really 'somewhere above' attractive woman – who has 'also' lost a finger, even just a phalange? We are not specialists in the now innumerable mannequins, but we have worked professionally with a series of mannequins for a long time as a student, at least we did as one of their roadies. Admittedly: we have never seen a single lady there who had lost either a toe, a finger, or one of their phalanges. That could be statistical coincidence. But who believes in that coincidence? Now, of course, no one should become a professional mannequin or model. Or maybe the opposite: *"Every woman a model??!!!"*

8. Those hands. Nothing to do about it?

We must return or continue with the hands - of Nefertiti. We know for certain that despite the initial deception of this reasonably well-made bust in Berlin, that she had hands on her body for a time before, during and hopefully also after the year 1,345 BC. That she, even if she did not have to do anything in the household (that is certain), never had to roll up her sleeves except to massage the prick of her venerable pharaoh (that is certain). After which she continued with her, always visible on the same bust, albeit completely still closed mouth. Sultry lips indeed of our Nefertiti! But let us not distract ourselves further also or especially because there is so little to deduce from a bust or a statue without tits nor toes! Of that throng of female servants who waited on her to put her at ease in everything - for she had of course had a terribly boring life of permanently doing nothing but the saying *"Soi belle et tais-toi et baise-moi"* (*"Be sexually desirable to me from early morning until especially at night and keep your mouth shut to me for the rest of those long hours - because then I must rule, you understand; rule!"*) - there was at least one who stood in for Her Majesty's hands, besides a stand-in and so on: there were enough servants at this kind of higher courts! It was extremely busy there at many daily moments in the wide, nicely cooled and mosquito- and other insect-protected rooms of Nefertiti.

If the muscular, bronzed and perhaps also eunuch Nubians really had to keep blowing the wind every second so that, among other things, Nefertiti's face and hands would never fall

prey to insect bites, then those hands could experience the opposite or the ultimate better; manicure! It is absolutely certain that this Very Old Egypt was the cradle of at least this form of body care, or the beautification of the body! Undoubtedly, the top of this society, which was impossibly rich in all areas and paid an extreme amount of attention to the beautification of all lower and upper parts of their living environment, took the lead in this part of physically bound beauty. It is an interesting hypothesis and probably very difficult to investigate archaeologically, especially archivally, to what extent the example of the top of this unique society also had a concrete effect on the level of their subjects, both qualitatively (of lesser quality if possible with all kinds of further creativity) and quantitatively. Thus, we do not know whether there were classes or groups in that Ancient Egyptian society that either had a ban on beautifying their appearance, or simply had no interest in it! It is certainly common knowledge that in all kinds of so-called older or vanished civilizations there were strict rules that reserved the use of certain colors exclusively for the elite. It is highly likely that this was also the case in Ancient Egypt. This demand for a top-bottom influence on this kind of fashion behavior seems almost absurd for a society that naturally had to do without social media, even images from television and printed press (fashion magazines!). However, let us not forget that Ancient Egypt had an enormous number of temples in which numerous representations were very prominently displayed. These were not only about the deities but also showed the elite of society, such as more precisely and most prominently this queen. There was therefore a lot of relevant material to be gleaned for the viewers to then imitate examples to the extent that was materially or financially possible. What do we actually know about the knowledge sociology of those old, vanished civilizations or how social knowledge was distributed and controlled? We cannot discuss the physical counterpart of the manicure – the pedicure – here, because there is much less to be seen of that counterpart of the feet and toes than of the hands and fingers, right!? Besides, to what extent could manicure and pedicure have differed in essence: both fingers and toes have prominently present nails that can be painted in the same ways!?

We assume that Nefertiti was given extended or artificial nails, although we have never seen anything ancient Egyptian to indicate that. We may be absolutely certain that her toenails were painted perfectly, although probably never with any extensions such as on the fingernails! We must take a closer look at those feminine inconspicuous sometimes very conspicuous body parts when we see Elisabeth Taylor (1932 - 2011) play for the umpteenth time in "*Cleopatra*" (1963 + director Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1909 - 1993). Although we must admit that we did not only want to look at and briefly touch the toes of our voluptuous Elisabeth, we must also honestly admit that we were also charmed by the sonority of the voice of Richard Burton (1925 - 1984) who, as an actor, did cheat because he was a chain smoker; only for that more or deeper timbre, Richard? Although we are not really jealous of that now because we are full of sincere admiration where fortunately we only very occasionally have a squeaky voice like our late mother had much more often. Strangely enough we now suddenly think that we have certainly never paid attention to the toes of our own mother, but also not even to her hands or especially to their fingers! Those fingers were probably what one could call 'normal' or therefore not too long (they were certainly not hands suitable for playing the piano, something this woman never tried either) nor too short (they were not stumps, something striking because we have relatively short fingers compared to our strong or large palms; probably a gift from our ... natural father, a man eternally unknown to us?). One would, from the logic of the leptosome or elongated head of Nefertiti – as the main part of the bust or the only thing we have of her as an appearance, a simultaneously meager representation of a human being, albeit always the essence of that same human appearance, right? – may deduce that she also had long or slender fingers, with which she could also

pamper Her Husband in all sorts of ways every day, smoothly and yet firmly, or sometimes even ... tease Him? It is no coincidence that the leptosome appearance of this queen is formally reinforced by her slightly open or widening crown towards the top, according to experts called the "*Nefertiti cap crown*". This royal or rather queenly crown is without a doubt one of the main reasons why this bust has become so world-famous. For some ladies, and among them very famous ones, this crown is a challenge to make something similar, in order to appear as a Modern Queen Nefertiti themselves. They are all gladly allowed to do so! And should more happen under the motto "*Every woman in her own way – queen!*"?

We - at least besides the Egyptologists we know it too - we know that the very Ancient Egyptians performed brain drilling or attempted a minimal form of brain surgery. Well done, one must then sincerely suggest. But? What about the lengthening of - found to be too short - hands! There ... never ... heard!!! Also the changing, or rather making less noticeable, of the blood vessels on the upper side of Nefertiti's hands, to make them more and more attractive for her husband for that one time or even several times a day that he wanted to make love to her, we have never read anything about that from all those same Egyptologists either. In short, something like the reasonable nonsense and mania of so-called aesthetic plastic surgery was never known to Nefertiti so that her immensely rich husband and Lord of Lords of that Ancient Egypt could not hang tons of gold on it. Plastic surgeons could not become terribly rich then because they simply could not earn a single cent because they were completely non-existent - yet. The very Old and as a civilization very old Egyptians could, so to speak, go to the Moon because they could certainly build enormous high and internally extremely complicated pyramids. They could work basalt as if it were fresh clay and so on and much more. But a hand was a hand and remained a hand. Whether that hand was of the slave as a servant or of the wife of the pharaoh herself, nothing could be done. Or at least; nothing could be extended!

That was a terrible thought for such a Nefertiti who, like some time later and also somewhat higher up in the world Sissi (the famous pet name of Empress Elisabeth of Austria and Queen of Hungary, 1837 – 1898) mirrored herself ten times a day - up to more! She could of course never tolerate one mirror as the Highest Woman of the Empire! The human mirror of the unreal beauty of just one of her servants was never to be accepted, while that lady would of course quickly come into the field of vision of her husband so that that lecher would quickly want to possess this lady. Neither a beautiful woman unequalled in terms of face, nor even in terms of her own plump hands, was ever allowed to approach her queen Nefertiti, let alone take care of her, comb her, massage her, manicure her, and so on, such as fingering her, because if her husband had to reign for far too long, such a High Lady also wanted some physical distraction: her chosen pets simply could not provide for that, although fortunately there were still - and always nearby - eunuchs! Ah, that eternal Jealousy even or still among those so-called Lucky Ones or Toppers of the Earth – was it now at the Equator or far above, far below or even as far away as on the planet Venus! Not a single lady among her servants, not even a single lady among the higher companions was allowed to come even one Meter, one Kilo, one Ampere in the vicinity of the self-evaluated beauty of Nefertiti, or she would have them She probably had these desperate ones thrown a little further on in the Nile to the hungry crocodiles - although it had to be far enough away so that she could not hear any horrible screams as a result of her decision driven by her ideal of beauty: such an auditory stupor and disruption of too much beauty immediately caused physical nausea. That event was then a very applied form of plastic surgery or the plastic elimination of those who came too close in beauty, almost surpassed Her Highness. Unfortunately, we have not yet found any papyrus scrolls containing advertisements along the lines of: "*Wanted for the daily and*

therefore eternal care of the beauty of our Queen Nefertiti, but strongly requested that they themselves be a bit uglier, but at the same time not so ugly that it could frighten Her Majesty that She might suffer a miscarriage because of it, because Everything, absolutely Everything for the Preservation of Our Dynasty – Long Live Aton!”.

But those hands, those Most Eminent hands of Her Majesty? She will certainly never have held a microphone in her hands. Probably not an ice cream either because it was blood-warm there, already in Very Ancient Egypt. Many of our readers will of course only look drooling at the two main components of the female appearance for them - the head and the breasts. And therefore, mesmerized by it, like rabbits at a light box, that important female part - are there otherwise unimportant, not attractive parts for the phenomenon woman? - will miss: her hands! We do not give ages of women unless they are nicely dead and preferably buried. So we also do not give names of attractive women with rather stump hands. When those stumps can clearly - at least for a keen observer like us - be determined when that female specimen is holding a microphone. When she is eating an ice cream or holding it. Holding an ice cream alone seems to us to be a risky event for a woman who is meant to be attractive!?! We do not know many women who eat ice cream and then want to have their picture taken; we can't remember a single one at the moment unless... Oh, we're never going to say or write that in public. And we're not even going to say it to her, if we as ordinary mortals were ever allowed to experience the divine moment of meeting this attractive woman and – horresco refrens!!! – even 'have to' greet her with a ... kiss on the hand. But women who have the ambition to torment or sing in public: there are many of them, countless to infinite. Ambition ... So there's plenty of work if plastic surgeons want to transform the stumps or other more or less deformed hands of future or already born world stars of music into leptosome, slender, elegant and other so-called attractive hands. Hopefully these surgeons will mainly have fingers that, by their simple appearance, could start to enchant the listeners themselves. Make-up probably won't help much here, although there are endless accessories to think of or apply. We know that the members of the apparently undying Rolling Stones have seduced women on a regular basis. We are not aware of anything similar from our female world stars from the music world. Did you, as a lucky one-night stand chosen by them, suddenly feel cheated when you undressed and groped her when her fingers seemed like real stumps, completely out of proportion to the divinity of her voice and even angelic face? All objections from the fairly devastating image and ideal of truth or beauty of Nefertiti, all in all nothing more than a ... stump of an apparition because only a bust!

9. The love for the Imperfect Present. And its logical Upgrading!?

You have undoubtedly heard that Germany was divided into West and East Germany, that it was Nazi Germany before that and that there was a bit more, albeit not all that long before that, an imperial Germany: *“The times they are a-changing”*. The last and also one of the first emperors, of this dynasty, was a certain Wilhelm II, with his real name blah blah blah. Well, you know that right away. The man lived between 1859 and 1941 and would be emperor of the partly imperial Germany for a fairly long time. Until he had to retreat there because of the situation caused by the insane misery of the First World War - to the then very neutral Netherlands. The man was a country bumpkin of the highest order and that is a high order because German country bumpkins are terrible ... He did have his origins in his favor because otherwise he would not have become Wilhelm II. He could use those genes in that dynastic way, but with all those centuries of European noble inbreeding, things did go wrong; see further in the case of Goya. What went wrong with him, you can literally see if you look closely, because every portraitist, whether it was a traditional painter or a modern

photographer, did – or rather had to do – his utmost to hide that one relatively minor handicap of this Wilhelm as neatly as possible. What was the problem, which in principle was almost impossible to hide, because it was certainly not about the length, not even about the strange color of his dick? As far as is known, no nude portraits were ever made of him. The man had, like most people, two arms, with the difference that it was clearly visible that the left arm was shorter than the right arm. Those big guys of that time, and certainly in military circles, they liked to shoot real game, whether or not it was set out for them in a pleasantly hidden way. And to shoot with a proper rifle – and even more so with a bow and arrow if the young emperor wanted to play “*Cowboy and Indian*” as a boy – one needed both arms. After all, the Paralympics had not yet been invented; that only happened after WWII. And at that blessed moment Wilhelm was ad patres. To this day we do not know whether he has risen or is somewhere in heaven or hell, and from our perspective especially not whether he would have arrived there with two normal arms. And we wish this inhuman being and his inhuman regime nothing but good – although it is far too late for that – but we especially wish him, wherever he may be, simply two normal arms, even if he is mainly or only pure spirit.

Given his top position at the head of a European top country like Germany, then in multiple energetic development, many portraits were made of him. A well-known portrait in what is called a theatrical (and therefore normal German) position, is by the German painter Max Korner (1854 – 1900) and dates from 1890. See:

https://de.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Kohner_-_Kaiser_Wilhelm_II.jpg

We don't like it artistically and so on - but that is not the issue here because we are only discussing and attractive women. In any case, from this painting it is overwhelmingly clear that Wilhelm II almost completely hides his Second Arm. Incidentally, he is also standing there with two but especially very shiny and very long boots. And! That is now without a doubt a part that when put on by a reasonably interesting woman - with preference for an African lady from deep Africa in particular - while she prefers to remain completely naked for the entire rest, that for approximately 85% of men of whatever nature and so on, is a signal to start getting horny and so on. We may admit here that we can confirm this hypothesis from the first source, especially because by the way, with quite a few repetitions it concerned a completely pitch-black woman - a mixture between Congo and Cameroon if we may be so precise - who was also reasonably tall, fortunately for us she was a few centimeters shorter than us. Wilhelm II would certainly have been turned on by this sight and would have immediately called upon his best physiotherapist and other experts to help him with the possible next sexual act, assuming of course that this beautiful lady would have wanted that with such a stupid ass of a Prussian. Painter Max Korner must eventually or “en route” have developed abnormalities himself, in his painter's arm or in his best painter's eye or in both successively. After all, he reportedly painted no less than thirty (30) portraits of this Wilhelm II with II Arms, in addition to dozens of portraits of the German aristocracy of the same 19th century times. As you can deduce from our website, we really have the greatest pity for the Belgian painter and so-called world citizen Luc Tuymans because of his self-invented, albeit often self-borrowed, but always depressing works of art (well, yes). Then logically one should also think and feel the same about a painter like Max Korner. In any case, the man would earn very well from it, by the way just the same as with Luc Tuymans, although we do not understand now how many so-called top collectors, so insanely rich people, can throw away so much money on such trivial to purely objectively viewed worthless art. Just as we assume that during these and ever-advancing times, no one outside of historians and perhaps

psychiatrists is interested in the dozens of portraits of the German aristocrat painter Max Korner.

There have, however, been very important painters – and there will certainly be more – who have painted deformities in, so to speak, an elegant or human way, while they were indeed giants as visual artists, and have remained so to this day. Amen.

A very striking example is the Spanish painter and world-class guy Diego (Rodríguez de Silva y) Velázquez (1599 – 1660), who is loved by almost everyone. Just say Velázquez because the man needs no further introduction or extra. The man was a court painter for a very large part of his life or very much comparable to the portrait painter Max Korner a few centuries later, albeit in the colder German North. Velázquez painted a lot and extremely elegantly, often intriguingly mysterious. Among his fairly large number of works there is what one could call a form of subgenre. It concerns part of the court staff or the dwarfs and jesters at that Spanish court. Unfortunately, we do not know of any broad European-oriented art-historical and historical study that focuses on this subject. As Flemish and Belgians, we certainly do not know of a single painting or etching or drawing that depicts a dwarf at something like a royal or noble Flemish, Burgundian, or similar court. That may be a complete coincidence, but we can objectively say that we have seen ‘a lot’ of our general visual culture – live and especially through art books – and that, if they do occur, the appearance of dwarfs in these regions must have been very minimal or rare. There was more in Europe than Flanders and Belgium. What about the important Italian noble courts, in particular, where for the European continent relatively the most because hundreds of excellent to brilliant painters and sculptors worked? From this specific perspective, and to be honest only and solely through the Google search function, we have found the important Italian painter Agnolo Bronzino (1503 – 1572). We ‘of course’ already knew that man, if only ‘but’ (but!!??) because of his superior painting “*An Allegory with Venus and Cupid*” (1503 – 1572 + you can find this masterpiece in the insane “*room 9*” of The National Gallery, London, a completely insane museum: unimaginable that so many people waste their beautiful, precious life time scrolling). So Bronzino probably painted a dwarf only once; the circumstances are of no importance here. One is as good as none, as a proverb sometimes says, although “*zero*” is the absorbing or all-destroying number while “*one*” is the beginning of all counting – for both the many infinite and the few finitely thinking mathematicians. So in the extremely important Italian painting a dwarf or ‘something similar’ would have been depicted only once? More precisely, it was the dwarf “*Nano Morante*” (1562), a dwarf who was effectively employed at yet another court, in this case a top place because it was the court of the famous Florentine “*Cosimo I de' Medici*” (1519 – 1574). This suggests that at this court, before, then and later, as well as at other Italian and all kinds of other European courts, there were still dwarfs. And that in turn suggests that there must still be works of art about them or at least with them – as a ‘part’. So for us that is a question to which we would like to receive an artistic and historical answer one day.

Of essential importance is that the well-known and multiple portraits of the dwarfs and jesters at the Spanish court of that time and reproduced or forever immortalized by the gracious artist Velázquez, are nothing other than sincerely elegant or very human and therefore not at all mocking or hurtful. A completely different conclusion, we think we may state, should be drawn at the same Spanish court by yet another Spanish painter who in turn may/must be called one of the greatest artists in human history. He is a man of whom we honestly literally never get enough. Of course he knew a great deal of work by his predecessor Velázquez (1599 – 1660), who had died in 1660 or about a century before our man saw the light of day.

Goya (1746 – 1828) did indeed see the Spanish, French and worldly light of day a century later and would himself become very old and experience an incredible amount in those times. During a few consecutive decades, Goya would become the second and then the very first painter at the Spanish court. He became court painter like Velázquez so that the Spanish court, which could also almost hire a certain Rubens as house painter because he would produce a lot for it, de facto had the three best court painters in the entire history.

But dear Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes; what have you been up to there? Where the elegance or great humanity, say the aristocratic portrayal of your predecessor stood out so much in relation to the manifest ugliness or unattractiveness of a part of the Spanish royal court, you have placed very big question marks about the absolute top of this court ...? Regularly and hurray Wikipedia comes to our aid here on this website, without us having to list the works themselves or as an appendix and while very nice additional information can also be found there. We are certainly thinking of the famous, pardon infamous portrait of the royal Spanish family – we repeat the ROYAL family of a then relatively important European country – that our great friend Goya was able to portray in large format. An enormous portrait as it has been handed down, or more precisely as it was not destroyed - by the clients or the portrayed of course! And that can still be seen today and tomorrow – in the equally amazing museum of the Prado in Madrid:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_IV_of_Spain_and_His_Family

It is absolutely unnecessary to give here and now even a short explanation or description of the royal portraits present. That royal family appears as one whole of ... scarecrows, right!? We really cannot believe that they themselves, or at least the adults among them 1) did not see this themselves and 2) consequently did not ban this work or even have it destroyed all at once. The work dates from 1800 - 1801 and it is absolutely certain that Goya continued to work at this court. That is necessarily a strong additional argument for the non-rejection or gracious acceptance of this court and family portrait by the then Spanish royal family by the hand of Goya. That Goya, so to speak and in any case on the other hand, could mercilessly and extremely ironically to sarcastically or bitingly creepily denounce all kinds of aspects of Spanish society, in deservedly very well-known series of etchings as well as in equally very famous paintings, is very well known. Even more, surprisingly many art lovers know Goya only or mainly from this biting aspect. We know him from his softer side and discuss him in this website and at the same time twice around a Spanish attractive woman; see Goya.

In any case, and pending further research that contradicts us, we may say that in this famous family portrait Goya did not change anything about the - crucial - faces or the postures of the family members. He did not flatter, improve or embellish these personally and collectively most important elements. He did not use his own Photoshop, which would have been perfectly possible for a painter of his incredible technical, artistic genius. It seems to be the case - see the referenced Wiki page - that Goya used royal attributes in this group portrait. But we consider that a normal thing, because without that use he would certainly have had serious problems with his completely omnipotent client. May we make one important, substantive suggestion in this regard - for which thanks! This painting dates from 1800 - 1801 or is only one year older than the famous etching "*Linda maestra*" ("*Nice teacher*"), which dates from 1799. This is also known as "*Plate 69*" from the even more famous series of 80 engravings "*Los Caprichos*", from the miracle year 1799. That was therefore – again because it is very remarkable! - only one year before this equally famous painting, or a group portrait of the Spanish royal court. See this engraving;:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1848-0721-81

Compare 'so' the present witch from this engraving from 1799 with the ... queen from the painting from one year later. Q.E.D.??? The least pardon, the most we can or may say here is that all at least all the adults present at this state portrait were 'somewhere' aware of their not very pretty, of their rather unattractive appearance. That they in other words never asked, and apparently never thought of, maestro Goya – who could technically do everything in painting, etching and drawing; everything!!! – to polish the whole thing up a bit, at least the wife and mother the queen, can only arouse lasting amazement. We hope to one day be able to read more information, more explanation about the abnormality on the one hand and at the same time normality of this famous Spanish state portrait. Again, this was not about all the dwarfs from the court who were gathered for a group portrait. It was about the closest or highest members of the Spanish royal court. And the latter were, together and, if you like, continually one by one, presented as much less, infinitely less attractive, elegant or human than a century before as regards their staff, the dwarfs and jesters!

Spain was and is a European country. It shares, among other things, and above all, the crucial Christianity, although in Spain, and indeed from very early on, this had a particularly black variant with the centuries-old overwhelming Inquisition. It was therefore historically and politically no surprise at all that the Spanish Civil War would then involve extreme mutual violence. At the same time, the country had/has a tradition of extreme animal abuse, as is still the case today against quite a few 'useless' dogs. We will not go into all that any further, but must include it in what follows. In any case, Spain is a country of very important saints, also very mystically inclined such as Teresa of Ávila (1515 – 1582). It is completely impossible here, and we would also need a great deal of applied study, to analyse her own famous writings for their importance in the appearance of a person in relation to the Other. Her approach was above all mystical or her goal was the journey to the inner through the means of prayer and meditation. These human means are at first sight very far, even rather opposed to the appearance as attractive towards others, all others and especially others, let us say, of the opposite sex. But these mystical insights do not at all mean that if one effectively achieves forms of it or books results through it, assuming of course that one is not a nun or a priest but an ordinary believer, one cannot, so to speak, radiate a kind of holiness or beauty. That one produces an aura that is nothing other than really very attractive, even for 'less' believers. Even for ... unbelievers?

At the same time, there is of course every charitable recognition of the so-called physical shortcomings of a believer (even of the unbeliever) in the sense that these shortcomings – such as the defacement of a child's face after experiencing the serious disease of smallpox – are not de facto recognized as moral, let alone socially important shortcomings, but on the contrary, they are supported insofar as they entail dysfunctions. We give a concrete or contemporary example of this, and the reader must judge for himself insofar as this is not only generally humanely acceptable from a clearly Christian perspective, but possibly even fits in with a Spanish mystical tradition as it is known as we have mentioned here.

For our now very sadly deceased somewhat older friend Marie-Jeanne X. we once experienced a special birthday party twenty years ago. She was a proud woman but with a special problem, which was also an extra problem precisely because she was so proud. At the beginning of her retirement - she had always been involved in art as a teacher of visual arts - she developed a terrible brain problem which she fortunately survived for the most part as a

healthy person. That in itself was almost a miracle, call it a huge blessing in disguise. She could no longer walk properly or constantly needed a walking stick. For the special birthday party, an artist friend of hers made a card with a photo of her next to the dates of the party. And we added a text: "*What is a walking stick but the urge to walk the earth twice?*" ("*Wat is een wandelstok anders dan de drang om de aarde tweemaal te willen bewandelen?*"). We received general appreciation for that and apparently made her happy 'somewhere'. We did not ignore the handicap that was clearly visible and known to everyone, but rather upgraded it, as it were. We did not downplay the handicap but on the contrary named it as a better quality of the same woman. Literally anyway, but it was not only written or printed but was shared, it was in a human not ironic or uplifting way a push in the back - not too hard though because she had a ... walking stick, hahaha.

What we have applied here, to our and above all her own joy, is nothing other than an application of a core Christian thought that has been drilled into us, so to speak, by circumstances that we do not want to go into now. But that was/is a thinking that we naturally stand behind very deeply, as an existential part because it is a central part of our thinking and acting. That famous Christian thought part or the pericope is this: "*The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'*" (Matthew 25:40). Source: <https://www.biblegateway.com> And you know the sequel with a list; "*I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was ...*" And so on. All works of mercy or call it humanity.

In this case of painters, that would mean working in the spirit of charity or humanity, at least when portraits are made: "*I am/was very ugly but you have my portrait ... erm....*"?! That can be interpreted historically, probably through an awful lot of portraits and times, also or especially before the time that something like Photoshop existed – for photos then and then think immediately of the internet and its social media. It is personally irritating and unfortunate for us and hopefully only a little bit unfortunate for you that we no longer remember the correct term used for the following, nor the exact name of the famous British painter where we found that term and especially that way of portraying. Fortunately, we are not yet completely demented and also have so many art books that we of course constantly or daily browse through; keep getting out of there!? It must have been by one of the two contemporaries and British compatriots, the very distinguished gentlemen painters Thomas Gainsborough (1727 – 1788) or Joshua Reynolds (1723 – 1792). One of them – we are sure of that (...) – must have exclaimed after he had received yet another portrait commission that he had really had enough of painting those "*faces*" all the time. We are quite convinced that we read that funny remark in one of our art books. But because we probably like to browse through a thousand art books regularly, we hope to provide the correct information one day before we become completely demented. That would first have to include the name of the painter, the year in which he said something and preferably the exact formulation, if possible the reason why he said it. And even more: whether he continued to make portraits and how many, not least in statistical comparison with his other paintings! But of course it was not just about that, because we would have found that a bit arrogant but still irrelevant. In the end, he – once again, one of the two top painters! – must have earned an incredible amount of money with it, certainly more than enough to be able to go through life as a gentleman himself. What was so special was that he (he or the other he) said something very specific about one of his models. That was definitely about one Lady, a lady of higher, better standing, who could afford a lot because her Lord not only had a lot of money but also, let's say, "*connections*". In other words, if he - the Lord - had been dissatisfied with the portrait of His Lady, that could only have had consequences for the entire further career of this famous British childer from

the 18th (and 17th, 19th, 16th, 20th, ...) century! That almost certainly also means that this remark - we will reproduce it in our own words immediately, please, just wait a moment! - must have been made by him de facto or in principle from an early stage in his career and therefore in principle and probably never again de facto throughout the entirety of that career. In other words, he was forever and ever during his painting career, in which portraying almost exclusively rich people such as the people of the upper English class was an essential part of the job, bound to the same attitude as a portrait painter! And that attitude was nothing other than ... Thus we remember precisely that a certain Lady said or suddenly decided during various sketches or let us say the first attempts to make a - striking (...) - portrait of her that "*The portrait was now beginning to look like her!*". Time and again he - one of our two important British painters and therefore almost certainly for him! - had, so to speak, deviated further and further from such a realistic or normal representation, via again and again actually by his own dexterous hand and excellent technique forms of ... Photoshop. Until she actually decided that it was enough, that she was now attractive enough to hang that portrait, of course intended for her own home or at least in another house of the closest family! Until we find the real painterly or artistic term of that time, let us now use the term "*upgrading*", although we do not think this concept is entirely successful.

Of course, there were also limits to the flexible, to the upgrading, for both parties - the portraitist or top painter and the wealthy portrayed person. You know the expression: "*You can't make a horse out of a donkey.*". That is about being able to walk fast and even faster, about being clever or cleverer, about ... Things or qualities that are measurable or comparable somewhere. Does that also apply to beauty, attractiveness? Incidentally, these were certainly first sketches, usually as a drawing or watercolour, sometimes as separate paintings. We assume that for all parties involved, a real or finished painting was too expensive or valuable to remove it, in any way, if it was indeed not to the taste, or rather to the 'likeness' of the portrayed person. That certainly meant that, if an agreement had been reached or if the real painting - or portrait work - could be started, the actual or real or very last painting would certainly be even better, as far as (therefore) the appearance of the portrayed person was concerned. Purely painterly, the result or the portrayed person looked even better. Because isn't that one of the unique properties, just say super magical moments or properties of a painting, of a painted portrait in particular!? Which makes this finding (we don't speak of a hypothesis anymore!?) one of the main motives in itself of this entire website - right!?

So! The original, the real because visible or tangible physicality - when it concerns a blind person who wants to 'see' her - is deliberately because at the explicit request rather a coercion (financially and in terms of the entire career of the painter involved) aesthetically or concretely painterly at the same time also art historically adapted - because upgraded. In principle the reverse is possible but that will of course never happen on the orders of a person involved. That will therefore happen by an opponent, especially in the presence - with a very long tradition - in caricatures! If the upgrade is an attempt - almost always or always successful - to achieve a certain ideal image, the caricature is just the opposite; here one has to laugh and so the literally lowest or worst of the humanly conceivable qualities is brought forward, be it the best or - oh irony - for maximum effect also in an artistically excellent way! The strange thing is that the ideal image that is used by a portrayed person - that "*The portrait is now starting to look like her/me!*" - does not necessarily have to coincide with that of the painter, but that he must concretize it, say, simply paint it *pico bello*. Here lies an extremely small possibility of deviating from the ideal of the portrayed person by representing 'something' differently, either in a very small corner or in an extremely small, barely

noticeable detail, at least if it were to be noticed by the payer, that it is so ambiguous that it could be presented by the painter as a coincidence or unimportant.

People love truth. They like/prefer the authenticity they are confronted with. With the exception of the statistically probably approximately one percent of the population (where else in the world would it be less - more?) of real psychopaths. One will never be able to escape these people and their deforming worldview. Now, 'ordinary' deception can be fun because isn't everything from theatre and film by definition a form of deception!? A portrait that deviates because it has been upgraded, is that ultimately or in real essence not a form of deception? But how can one find out about this so-called deception, just if this portrait is the only one that remains of someone? And if one knows anyway that this painter was once so loose-lipped as to tell 'one and another' about the true, rather sad appearance of this lady; does that then make any difference to our judgment of what we knew from the portrait now know further? Can we mentally, let alone literally see a difference 'somewhere' if we only know this situation, so without a point of comparison with another 'real' portrait, a photo,!? Purely objectively, that is to say purely according to the perception of the painter – and the portrayed and relevant others – the painted representation can be improved towards an ideal. We now know that potentiality of the portrait with certainty. But: is that so bad, is that really deception or something human normally very negative? Purely objectively seen, one can effectively speak of a form of deception, if it mainly – or only? – concerns those physical characteristics that can only and exclusively be improved, represented by the hand and technique of the person who first looks and then thus - better or more appreciatively - represents the materially seen representation. With a painting one can also 'retouch' in particular, as a photographer can (by the way, for much longer than the existence of computers, let alone Photoshop). For example, one can make a face with a striking pimple or something even more striking 'purer': the pimple disappears, forever because from now on for (art) history! And so on! Now a portrayed person can hardly be limited in his or her representation to the 'pure' face. A portrayed person and let us continue to talk exclusively about women, can otherwise be organized quite a bit theatrically; the setting with for example a child or an animal, the clothing, the make-up of course, jewelry, the hair and/or a headdress - is there another one and so on? See indeed also the all in all very sober bust of Nefertiti.

The modalities (always as improvements unless one aims at caricatures, but that is not our subject on this website!) of adjustments or upgrades through portraits, can be debated intensely. We do not want to do that here. On the contrary, we do want to make a small, albeit general or principled plea for "mildness". For a certain form of humor of course, although the moral-aesthetic limit can quickly be reached from irony and preferably never to sarcasm (once again, we are not discussing the very important art form of caricature here). We want to make a plea for the knowledge and use of "euphemism" in the visual arts, at least as far as portraits are concerned. That is a concept that is normally or only used in verbal communication. Aren't all visual works of art also communicative objects? Yes! The meaning or etymology of the concept euphemism leads us directly to the right, artistic track. It is composed of the ancient Greek words "εὖ" ("good") and "φῆμη" ("message"). A euphemistically made portrait would then have to represent a more elegant or softer form of representation of the portrayed. It is then about something – now expressed in certain more delicate social contexts – like a diplomatic act!? Or do you want war and conflict again and again, perhaps?

We ourselves are primarily trained as philosophers and are therefore, so to speak, conditioned to be interested in fundamental themes such as truth and justice, authenticity, and deception or fraud. We can briefly approach this immensely broad subject from three perspectives.

Firstly, there is – at least for Belgium and many countries on the European continent – the extremely important, if not compelling, legal civil law, in which the concept of damage (the famous article 1382 of the Belgian Civil Code) is central: “*Every act of man, which causes damage to another, obliges the person through whose fault the damage occurred, to compensate for it.*” Let us say boldly that no person will suffer damage from an upgraded portrait, assuming that one already realizes that this portrait also does not fully correspond ‘somewhere’ – the woman who one might meet in her own bed early in the morning, for example, without making up. We have no idea how this important legal issue, touched upon here only very briefly, can/should be approached in Anglo-Saxon law. Perhaps a complete lunatic, alias totally powerful man like King Henry VIII (1491 – 1547) was once fooled by a too cautious, say diplomatic, portrait of this or that princess who had to/wanted/would marry him? In any case, court painter Hans Holbein The Younger (circa 1497 – 1543) was never beheaded to our knowledge! But we live in more modern times ...

Secondly, we ourselves, but not here on this website, write very intensely, around the problem of truth/justice versus the reverse or the opposite, through our political-philosophical analyses, mainly around political behavior (and not to forget the historiography about it) concerning WWII. May we refer you there please. For which thanks and understand that the work there is a work in progress.

Thirdly and finally and here the most important. What is ‘real’ deception, in the visual arts? In order to establish, so to speak, genuine deception (hahaha) in, among other things, or especially in painting, as far as modern times are concerned, we will refer to two very important painters from the last fifty years, elsewhere on this website: see Fernando Botero + Luc Tuymans. Both very important because in any case very famous painters – in our opinion they are artistically worth little or nothing – have each in their own unique way genuinely deceived the art lover, as we will try to demonstrate in the referenced pieces. Strangely enough, as can be observed very widely, they have had a tremendous amount of success, with the top or the leading circles of the organized art world, or with the top collectors, curators, museum directors and so on. That is of course a unique contrast or both philosophically and socially extremely remarkable and really very sad. Both have, moreover, not produced a single interesting portrait worthy of the name.

10. To rate a woman ten out of ... ten. Or is she the most attractive?

What you might lie awake about, and if necessary you might wake up tossing and turning terribly and bathed in sweat after terrible nightmares, is the question whether the attractive Nefertiti was just as attractive, or just as beautiful, apart from her beautiful head and neck. You don't even think about her character, at least the important philosopher Edmund Husserl said nothing about that, although he was more human, deeper, because socially engaged, because with European motives or foundations: what a guy, because who dares to dig so deeply! Now tell me, as an indulgent macho; even with an unbearable witch who is irresistibly attractive for everything, would you like to spend a night or a weekend in the “*Ritz*” hotel in Paris, or ...? At least, if your wife allows it, or at least if that woman allows it herself and you are also single, washed and shaved, have brushed your teeth neatly and so on. And have enough money for everything - haha. We can repeat with 100% certainty that in the army of servants of Nefertiti there was a mob of women present for the perfuming, massage and so on of madam. That nevertheless allows us to conclude, even empirically considering the entire depictions of her in frescoes, among other things, that she suffered from all kinds of

physical abnormalities or at least from that one. That one physical abnormality that made it easier for her husband to go to bed with one of those female servants of his wife or, if necessary, to have coitus in the divine Nile with this or the next candidate. Ultimately, in the entire more or less documented history, there has only been one woman who received a "*Ten out of ten*". That happened in the romantic comedy with the very surprising title "*Ten*" (1979, director Blake Edwards, 1922 - 2010). The leading role or the bearer of "*Ten out of ten*" was reserved for the American film star or Mrs. Bo Derek (1956). You know by now that this first name is the English version of the French "*Beau*" or "*Beautiful*", that it is rarely used and is even given to men. Bo/Beau was not born under that first name at all but as "*Mary Cathleen*"; it could have been much worse, although we cannot imagine how much worse. Apparently she came up with that new first name herself because apparently men were attracted to her – to her appearance – from her relatively young age. What a wonderfully clever idea and first observation, right! Back to that film in which she mainly or rather only has to be so-called beautiful or at least attractive. We were not there as assistants or whatever during the recording of this film and have never had intimate contact with Mrs. Derek, who is only seven years older than us or certainly not an insurmountable problem – for us anyway because ... blah blah blah ... Therefore we could never empirically confirm this numerical strength, say refute it because downer loading (hahaha). "*Ten out of ten*"! For a human being that is quite a lot. And for an ordinary woman, because ultimately a very simple Hollywood actress, that seems to us very much - say unachievable.

How much on a scale of ten would our Nefertiti have received from her husband, and then in ascending order (of course!) from all the others in her realm, all subjects or submissives (In English, one naturally notices the same nucleus in both words, if you like – not entirely correctly expressed linguistically – the identical prefix "*sub-*". In Dutch, this distinction between "*subjects*" and "*submissives*" is hardly distinguishable; one speaks of "*onderdanen*" and "*onderdanigen*" where a below is assumed to be submissive. Again, we can point out with a certain pride and also the philosophically very interesting character of the Dutch language, at least if one masters and uses that language properly. We do not know that value indication – x out of ten – as far as the beauty of Nefertiti was concerned, given by her own population. Because we have not been able to decipher that papyrus roll until now; We will call you personally when we are done with that deciphering! We do not even know if the Ancient Egyptians could count to ten! That they could count is certain because to be able to build such buildings and that for several millennia, you needed a lot of practical knowledge such as calculating the amounts of stones. And they had big, very big dreams.

To ask the question is to try to answer it. Sometimes you hear that there are no stupid questions. There would be stupid answers. However, philosophically or existentially that is just the opposite! An answer can be right or wrong, and that is about the majority of answers (to stupid questions) in education. Because an answer can also evade, if it is a 'special' question and if you have room to deviate. In that case, just think about what you would do if a KGB or a Gestapo stood in front of you and asked where exactly your son is hiding – for example – is now? As you immediately understand, his life depends on that answer. But perhaps also yours! But well, there are many situations in the entire life of even the seemingly unthreatened, so-called (more) free person in which he or she genuinely feels unwell when asked a question. Because it concerns indelicate, inappropriate or far too curious or simply far too stupid questions. In other words, the question or the questioned topic can in quite a few cases be completely unimportant or very important for the person questioned. And that in such a way that he/she would want to get rid of it because it is purely tiring (would never have wanted to hear the question) or in such a way that he/she de facto or especially in principle

does not want to give an answer to it (would never want to really answer the question). That means, if we have briefly given a reasonably understandable explanation here, that not the answers but on the contrary (many) questions can be incredibly stupid, terribly inappropriate, irritating, distasteful, ... (can). So be on your guard if you ... someone ... that question Please! So whether our stubborn Akhenaten gave his own lovely wife Nefertiti a certain number on the scale of ten - assuming that the value meter ten was the normal maximum for all calculating ancient Egyptians - is a question that we should in principle be able to deduce from his new direction in the religion he introduced! Now we know very little about that, also because the papyrus rolls in question are still in Egypt, or are under far too much scientific dust or under the Egyptian sand that is just as exuberantly disrupting the thinking. What we do know is that a time after this ruler of sturdy Egypt or at least a nice 1,300 years later, in the very nearby Judea a certain Jesus Christ walked around. And he could count damn well because even the calendar would actually start from his birth. He was clearly a very multiple miracle or god child! – at least for the greater part of the coming humanity!

That was a great act by the newly born Jesus: He could count before He could walk because “*On the Flight into Egypt*” He was carried by His mother who herself was carried by a donkey! It goes without saying that no one would ever imitate Him again, although there were some attempts to introduce other counting of years, such as by the terrorists of the French Revolution. That is another matter or therefore of no importance here or we will not ask you a question about that anyway! Jesus would not become really old but according to the standards of that time something over thirty years which was indeed statistically quite successful. That was admittedly too little to have children of his own but more than enough time to eventually and fairly soon after His disappearance – by resurrection – get countless followers. Until today – or preferably two thousand years after His own era! And those followers can all read one of His many sayings, in a book that is about and about Him; the New Testament. As mentioned, due to the lack of papyrus archives, we have no knowledge of whether his predecessor and neighbor Akhenaten also left a kind of Testament, in the form of life wisdom and the like. We can probably reserve a year or two to study similarities between Christianity and ancient Egyptian cultures; a mass of studies must have been devoted to that already. We will not do that now because we have some other attractive women to discuss than this Nefertiti alone, such as a certain Jewish lady and therefore neighbor Mary Magdalene, a lady who was very closely connected to the life of the aforementioned Jesus and especially to His end. SEE **The Penitent Magdalene, El Greco.**

And what did Mary Magdalene not hear from the mouth of the Most High? Among other things, she must have heard this passage about “measuring is knowing” – or maybe not yet? Read along and after a few words, you will undoubtedly be able to recite this passage – this pericope – yourself without reading it: “*1 Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”* (Matthew 7, 1 – 5).

Source: <https://www.biblegateway.com>

Crudely translated or applied: be quiet if you find this or that – woman, man, child, cow, horse, ... – beautiful and well on a scale of, for example, “TEN”. And damn it, take a look in the mirror yourself first, or ask someone else and preferably more people to play your mirror.

That can be considered a moralizing approach because a moral judgment in principle seems to dominate an aesthetic judgment, while for centuries it seems to be a Western tradition that aesthetic judgments stand on their own, are so-called autonomous or dominate the thing being looked at through looking. However one twists or turns this moral because Christian view of judgments – of beautiful or attractive people or less or even not at all! – and therefore wants to look at it from all possible perspectives, there is absolutely certainly one perspective with which this way of judging must be viewed. However so-called autonomous or more independent visual artists – including and especially painters and sculptors – became from the earliest Renaissance, they would with absolute certainty live until at least the 18th and even the 19th century and still strongly through the beginning of the 20th century in a time in which Christianity and therefore the Christian and therefore also this saying of Jesus was central, dominated social life and thinking. To put it concretely, we take two of the undoubtedly ten greatest painters in world history – although that is of course far from over so that ... ; the gentlemen Rembrandt and Rubens. We will also discuss both gentlemen in this website and in the latter case even twice. Without the slightest doubt one must say of them that they lived in a time – the 17th century – that was completely dominated by Christianity, in their case in any case remarkable by two types of variants of it, Protestantism and Catholicism. Rembrandt was, as is very well known, familiar with a series of Jewish dealers for whom he would work, and with whom he would apparently also have problems with regard to content or art history: SEE **The Jewish Bride, Rembrandt**. What we want to raise here as a question or theme is the possible combination, with all the nuances and compromises that entails, between the very clearly moralizing and at the same time soothing and even humorous judgment about the judgment by Jesus, and the so-called artistic (and social via of course the system of economic market development) becoming more autonomous with and through these artists. You will immediately understand that we cannot simply try to answer this question here. But. We may or must repeat that we, as a trained philosopher among others or primarily, may/must ask this very important or guiding question. How this question was operationalized or artistically and also discursively (to the client in question) answered each time by either Rembrandt, or Rubens, next to van Dyck, Jordaens and so on, is a terribly fascinating subject to which we too cannot give an answer here.

11. The Amarna style, plastic surgery, Photoshop, anorexia nervosa or just looking for an “ETHICS of ATTRACTIVENESS”.

What is all this about? What triple idi.... came up with such a title, such a long title? Isn't that a violation of every sense of style? Is this nothing more than a bloated, completely unhinged pa-the-ticism? We can perhaps put it positively like this: the title is the content (of what it announces).

We really have to write that well-known 'more'. We can be brief, very brief, about the Amarna style or the new style introduced by the husband of our beloved Nefertiti. We have found some material and indications. Of course, we have looked at that famous bust countless times – although never ... life; Berlin, one day we come! But the photos from many perspectives are fine. By the way, you have understood two important things for a long time:

1) You understand that Nefertiti is depicted as quite slim, but that this was almost certainly not an exception for all Nefertitis from the entire very long-lasting Ancient Egyptian civilization. In other words: this new (later abandoned) Amarna style must not have made any difference to her or more precisely to the representation of her head and neck. She was certainly not depicted à la ... Botero – woehaa! SEE **Ferando Botero**.

2) You understand that we mainly want to think and write about this famous bust. There is hardly anything to say about this image itself, also because it is a statue. How much or rather how little can statues really be called human portraits? We are of course talking about the expressiveness of the eyes. Is there anyway one (known or not) sculpture somewhere in the world that has roughly the same expressiveness as the painted eyes of - ... and ... and ...? Voilà!

However, we immediately have to raise a negative or warning finger to? To all those parents of young girls who with extreme insistence want to look very leptosome or simply ultra-thin. So thin, like this lady Nefertiti. Was she very, by the way, perhaps a first historically or archaeologically definable example of anorexia nervosa? As thin as countless models of today, yesterday and hopefully not too many or hardly at all tomorrow. The model "Twiggy" (1949), certainly still famous for the older ones among you and for the very young ones among you a terrifying example of anorexia nervosa. That model – a word that etymologically means "example", is hopefully definitely a thing of the past. But as macho and aging men we do not keep a pulse on fashion and all its side effects. In any case, we realize that very many and usually very young girls follow role models via social media and other possibly still relevant news channels. Among those role models are stars of the silver screen. By the way: have you also seen the commercials in which truly world-famous movie stars actually advertise for ... coffee makers and so on? Unbelievably sad, isn't it, for them, for ...- Like Georges Clouney (1961) and? Furthermore, pardon, you certainly follow famous models. By the way, just a quick note: unfamous or unknown models (like your neighbor girl?) are of course not eligible; perhaps beginners or the stars of tomorrow are much, much more interesting to follow because .. evolution ...? Oh, we mustn't forget; there is a form of 'creatives' for which the nomenclature or social category did not even exist until a few years ago. Behold, a true categorical invention of the internet or the so-called "influencers". That is once again very by the way, a term that we find quite ridiculous. By chance, we recently heard from a – Dutch? – young lady annex influencer, that she apparently did not have large enough breasts and was looking for an enlargement. Of course (help!) she had to blame it on the weeweewe and so on. We assume that the "reverse" or the breast reduction will not be promoted by her later, as an in-fluencer? Or then as ... out-fluencer? Apparently she had too small or too ??? breasts. But where did she get the nerve and arrogance to inform and encourage her fans or followers – regarding her 'normal' products such as ??? and especially ??? – about something as personal as her ... or ... breasts? Internet! It is in many ways a blessing for knowledge, science and sincere entertainment. And at the same time a garbage dump full of arrogance and lack of general culture and humanity, as with these kinds of 'successful' losers.

In short, we don't feel like talking about the phenomenon of plastic surgery. That's not because we simply don't have time for it right now, because we still have to boil the potatoes for this afternoon next to ... But due to foreign moving problems, we can no longer find our own course on the subject (it is hidden in one of the more than a hundred still unpackable banana boxes with books and files). That course dates from about 20 years ago and was given to the final year students of the Sint-Barbaracollege in Ghent. Traditionally and we suspect still to the always very interesting present - stay current, ladies and gentlemen, always current! - two types of plastic surgery are known. But so (our eternal but). We remember (concerning ourselves) that we (as teachers) discussed three variants of it at the time - or apparently detected an extra one. That is either not discussed at all later in a second version of

this study on the venerable Nefertiti as non-existent. Or we hope to find those lessons again in the foreseeable future and with sufficient energy, and possibly apply them here.

What concerns us most here, but which we should nevertheless be ashamed of, with great hesitation but in all honesty, due to our current lack of knowledge on the subject, is the following. Of course, you know the philosophers Jean-Paul Sartre (1905 - 1980) and Emmanuel Levinas (1906 - 1995) much better than we do. They were clearly contemporaries, but no famous thinkers could be further apart. These thinkers have written more or less extensively and especially more or even more incomprehensibly about the “gaze” (“regard”) and the appearance of the Other, and what that appearance would therefore mean for us. Sarte, himself one of the ugliest men in all of history and not just because he looked completely cross-eyed with one eye (so the man himself had a double ‘regard’), appeared to see the gaze of the other mainly (or was it only?) as an attack. What a shitty guy and fortunately we were only born in 1963 and then mainly in provincial Ghent and so on. So we have been spared from the intellectual rheumatoid Jean-Paul! Fortunately his parents did not call him Jean-Marie after all. Also fortunately we studied philosophy in Ghent and not in Leuven because there they were and still are imbued with Levinas and his now positive “regard”. We find his approach quite interesting and to be honest we adopted something of the main idea in our aforementioned course once, without however quoting Levinas. And that has the rather annoying reason that we really do not understand a thing of this man’s writing. Let us shyly admit that we ‘feel’ something about this man. Or at least we understand something essential about this man. If we may express ourselves so delicately and without quoting – for which thanks. In the meantime there is a Belgian painter who likes to play the Antwerp next to the universal philosopher and also – once again!!! – seems to want to talk about the essential about the/a “regard”. Although he does not use French but uses a language that offers many more commercial possibilities, so German and English. He speaks of “*Diagnostische blicken*” or “*Diagnostic Views*” and in this respect also likes to paint men (never women?!) with glasses. See **Luc Tuymans**.

Of that last thinker (the man speaks endlessly about art and life through many channels; shouldn't he paint better and especially better?) we understand nothing or we look at him rather as at least an amateur psychiatrist. So we will keep briefly to the first two. With all those moralities or moral systems that Sartre and Levinas keep us busy, we have, to be honest, felt too meager, not yet experienced any encounters with what we now want to call ad hoc "*a morality of attractiveness*". Let us try to say for the sake of clarity what "*morality*" itself means. There have been many attempts at that, for more than two thousand years. The very first one we ever encountered more or less scientifically was of course a little less long ago or during our somewhat later youth, after a bike ride from the very provincial town of Dendermonde to the admittedly somewhat less provincial city of Ghent, where we had stumbled into some bookshops. We found a book about ethics there, probably “*Introduction to Ethics*”, by the otherwise unknown Dutch ... er ... thinker ... er And of course we didn't understand anything about it then either. May we be hopeful and trust the explanation of our very own Wikipedia:

“Morality or morals is the division of actions or behaviors, within a society, into two types of rules of conduct. On the one hand, there are the actions that are seen as correct or desirable, and on the other hand, there are the taboos: actions that are not.”

Source: <https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moraal>

More precisely, a “*morality of attractiveness*” is nothing other than morality or customs in the division of actions or behaviors within a society, in the following two ways:

- 1) First and preferably, there are the actions or expressions in which the person concerned is considered attractive. This can be about himself/herself (he/she recognizes himself/herself as attractive) in addition to, of course, the position of others on this theme (people find him/her attractive);
- 2) Then there are the taboos: the actions or expressions in which the person concerned is considered unattractive. Naturally, we notice here the two possible parties involved; a person who finds himself/herself unattractive, and the others who label someone as unattractive.

So one can have four theoretical possibilities concerning the (un)attractiveness of a person:

- a) One finds oneself attractive + others confirm that;
- b) One finds oneself attractive + others deny that;
- c) One finds oneself unattractive + others confirm that;
- d) One finds oneself unattractive + others deny that.

You notice that now again purely theoretically, in only one of the four possible positions concerning un/attractiveness, as it were, complete or double attractiveness is presented (the first position). One out of four; that is not a great result, is it? Note of course that it concerns both individuals and sociologically speaking groups or societies, in which in turn individuals or small groups naturally act. In any case, attractiveness seen in this way is a moral issue around which we personally do not know any real theory formation, and for the time being we will not formulate any theory formation ourselves. We propose that – “*a morality of attractiveness*” – to you just as naturally! And wish you much luck and first inspiration besides perspiration.

Let's return to the phenomenon of "*influencers*". It's really not our thing or we look at it from afar, to be honest and especially fortunate. We have no idea of any relevant domain of and for our own lives to which someone could make even one suggestion, via a fairly superfluous yet overwhelming medium like the internet. We are always open but ... We do like to read reviews of books, for example. And we are especially and specifically still eternally grateful to Geert Van Istendael (1947) for his wonderful review of a book (which one then?) by Leo Perutz (1882 - 1957); that must have been around 1983? The reading of the novel he recommended at the time, and all the others we have read by this remarkable writer, have stayed with us for the rest of our lives like food: no TV chef aka cooking ... influencer can compete with that! We eat - we are Belgian for something, aren't we!? – like fries (“*Belgian fries – no French fries! - PLEASE!*”) and chocolate and as a Dendermonde resident even horse meat, both raw and prepared. In all those domains that we certainly share with countless Belgians on the one hand and several tens of thousands of fellow countrymen on the other, we do not know a single influencer and we do not need one if he or she still wants to give it a try. If a new shop or butcher opens in or around Dendermonde with products relevant to us, we simply go and buy them - because we want to taste them! On the other hand, we look with undisguised contempt and vicarious shame at this fairly new but apparently very drastic or for many people popular media phenomenon; “*influencer*”, brrrr. By the way, the word is very similar to “*influenza*”, an annoying disease also abbreviated as “*flu*”: brrr or shivering. So “*influencers – influenza - flu*”; influencers are mainly or only disease spreaders = question mark and exclamation mark?!

Unless! Unless. Always stay calm and up-to-date and keep thinking, about all possible aspects of a phenomenon! Maybe this worldwide “*flu*” also contains some real specialists, people who have either studied thoroughly on a certain subject, or have gained a lot of knowledge about it through experience! How else can you appreciate people who apparently want to influence you in that area, change your behavior or of course (...) supposedly want to improve it? By the way, do you know of any “*influencers*” in the field of the music of Bela Bartok (1881 - 1945), one of the most important or deepest or most engaging composers in Western history? Of course ... not, because the work of this artist is simply too difficult to explain in a few catchy words, and too interesting or constructive or contemplative or ... In a word; influencers are only concerned with superficial or easy matters, although not unimportant ones at all. There is NEVER an influencer who makes direct or direct contact, in other words confirms (or not) whether you – as a fan or follower – are already attractive, or who wants to help you in terms of attractiveness by... Influencers only want to sell, enrich themselves and in the meantime play a central person, who is important but in essence hopelessly egocentric. We believe that this phenomenon is something of real losers or concerns people who really have nothing else to do than enrich themselves in this relatively new public way, while they are very conspicuously fundamentally nothing new and have absolutely nothing to say. This means that there is, so to speak, a gap in the market for influencing – especially or only? – young people: see further. For people of level, in terms of content in all areas of style (clothing and so on) but also with, call it style or level or depth of thinking, intellectual (creative) and morally responsible thinking, there is not only an opportunity for sincere influence in addition to a pedagogical and humane task.

We hope that you will help build “*an ethics of attractiveness*” wherever you are in the world. May we give you some tips about the two most important target groups? Thank you for your permission and let’s go straight away and very briefly.

We have already pointed out that a great many young people, and almost certainly predominantly girls, are infected by the influencer flu, and as it were, keep sneezing like crazy and constantly. Especially an incredible number of young girls across a huge part of the world, but a slightly smaller but certainly also very large part of the young guys in the world, are all more or even more concerned with questions: how may/can/must/want/will we come across as attractive? What else would we expect because we know that young people – male or female – are strongly evolving towards what everyone hopes; an adult, say more or less balanced and reasonably satisfied, even happy person. It goes without saying that the objective appearance or the perceived and experienced attractiveness or especially not, is of essential importance. We don’t need to go into that any further. On the other side of life there are the so-called ‘older people’, or plus-...-ers. In a way, true beauty is to be found there, sure and rock-solid through the eyes: whoever is truly happy, radiates that – through the older but in that way eternally young) eyes! In any case, attractiveness is certainly an important theme for this population group, certainly for women – who, statistically speaking, are already in increasing excess of men from the age of about 50.

12. Nefertiti, her girlfriend the Venus de Milo and the ass dance.

This statue of Queen Nefertiti was of course intended as an official statue. There will undoubtedly have been countless statues of her in circulation in that Ancient Egypt. Money to order them on the one hand and expertise to make them on the other; those were more than sufficient conditions present at that Egyptian court. Some examples of sculptures dedicated to

her that have survived to this day - usually very small or domestic in size and sometimes together with her husband who was of course also the real ruler or crucial social as well as personal figure for her - can be found on the excellent English-language wiki page dedicated to Nefertiti: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nefertiti>

Were there any images of her that only had an erotic or bedroom function, like we know quite a few also artistically important paintings from the European upper circles? We have had a lot of interest in Very Ancient Egypt during certain periods of our lives, through books anyway because we never got there ourselves; too expensive and certainly too hot. Fortunately, with our class from Dendermonde we saw an exceptional exhibition in Cologne around 1980 of Egyptian treasures, around Tutankhamun. A statue of Nefertiti was certainly not to be seen there, even though she was/is extremely close family. Again, who has ever seen an intimate, erotically radiating Egyptian queen, not in person of course? Although in the film "*Cleopatra*" (1963) Elizabeth Taylor (1932 - 2011) was slightly irresistible. Unfortunately, we were only born in that year 1963, and then in the Low Country of the Belgians or geographically and chronologically much too far from Hollywood. Besides, what is erotic or hormonal or sensory stimulating or especially attractive about a bust? And here again, a bust with only one remaining eye!

Let us admit that you – man or woman or transvestite – are missing breasts here. The expansion of her bust – in Dutch also aptly called a "*borstbeeld*" (or statue – "*beeld*" with breast or breasts ("*borst*")– the presence of breasts, must have made her appearance much more attractive, if that were allowed according to the standards of that court. Probably so because on the just mentioned English-language Wiki page two full nude statues can be seen, one even holding hands with her husband. But look. There is the all-saving internet again because none other than the singer Beyoncé (1981) – we have never heard her sing but she is apparently extremely popular – can be found there as ... Indeed, "*as*" because in this context it is so predictable, like Nefertiti. Beyoncé shows herself in the form of this famous bust. But she does not do so perfectly similarly because she appears au grand complet, with her entire body, with all (sic) her breasts, buttocks, legs, arms We do not show these photos due to copyright and blah blah blah; you can find them yourself. Anyway, apparently this modern and very concrete representation of our Egyptian queen is the only one on offer, or the only one that has survived the ravages of time. Although that ravages of time cannot really be called old because this famous bust was only found in 1912, so that bust must have spent at least two thousand years underground: unseen, unknown, unloved. But even in the kind of life version by Beyoncé, who uses a long cape, we miss something so feminine, something exceptional that is attractive to many men. Many men do not just want to look at it. They want to hit it, stroke it, tickle it, ... But don't do that, unless it is your own partner - or something will follow! It is about the backside that once in motion can also sway during the movement; only when walking do you see the backside or the hips come alive!

Before you read on, feel free to take another look at the helpful web. To this page: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venus_de_Milo

You know of course the "*Venus de Milo*", a younger cousin of Nefertiti. If you don't know her name, you undoubtedly know her statue. If you don't know it yourself, then at least her ... name. In short, you can't go wrong with this woman. That literally dumb woman because that untalkative old aunt – a fine two thousand years old and for what remains of it made entirely of marble or lifeless material – has kept almost her entire body, although a lot of cutting and pasting had to be done. The statue was namely dug out of the ground in pieces and chunks.

This was done by a combination of a Greek farmer and a French officer or by just men. They found the statue or the pieces of marble in the Greek town of “Milo”, while they would have been better off calling her the “*Venus of Milość*”. But the fools apparently didn’t know Polish; “*Milość*” is Polish for Love, just like the famous Amadeus (haha) is also Miłośz (“*The Loved One*”). Although in this unique musical, genius case it is honestly love with the greatest possible degree; loved by no less than Deus! God!!! By the way, tell me for yourself: by whom are you loved the most, by God or by a human being? Well. The female Ancient Greek human being was guaranteed to have arms at some point in her better pictorial times. Or maybe we should do some more digging because those arms are probably still there - hopefully with all the fingers? Well, the statue has been in the Louvre museum for two hundred years. And from there it is a symbol of exceptional elegance or beauty, while it does not even have arms. The statue is therefore officially handicapped and actually belongs in a Paralympic Museum! And while it is also only viewed from the front. In other words, the Venus de Milo has retained 100% of her backside and her hips. But! Not a cat interested in that behind. Not a second to infinity cat interested in those hips!

And yet this Venus de Milo or the Venus of Love has something that you can see if you look closely. You can see it quantitatively only on one rare photo of her in all art books, or on photos and representations on the worldwide web; her backwork, her ass. Of this back view we found at least one representation. You yourself can perhaps do better, but presumably you can count the available photos on your own fingers, and choose in advance which hand. How could that be? Who looks closely that ... But who looks closely? Who thinks without a prejudice or the judgement preceding a (the ‘real’) judgment? Who looks without a prelook before the investigative and judging look? Who looks closely nevertheless sees the groove, the cut of her ass. It is absolutely clear that where her front is covered by a cloth, at the level of her female parts - in this case the vagina - here at the same physical height that same cloth has dropped, not completely but ‘sufficiently’. Probably – but we prefer to read “*Tintin*” rather than Freud, even though he is still readable in contrast to, say, a successor like Lacan – this sagging cloth and thus the beginning of a view of the bare backside of this elegant woman, is nothing other than the sublimation by the sculptor. The sculptor wanted to earn a pretty penny with this sculpture, but undoubtedly still wanted to copulate as much as possible with this model. A model that or a concrete woman who had a front like this backside, with the lips, the arms, the breasts and the vagina on the front, all four together the four-leaf clover or the most attractive form of a woman for centuries. Although – always trying to provide maximum objective information! – quite a few Ancient Greeks and Ancient Romans were hole lickers and even deeper: ass fuckers, also with men and younger guys. Had this sculptor perhaps had a little anal sex with this Venus after all or was the subtle but clearly present golden ratio of her behind an indication of his eternal after-sculpture-party-dream?

A four-leaf clover? We still have to invent a five-leaf clover? Or is that already there! Nefertiti has very little to offer us. The Venus de Milo has almost everything to offer us, although she is on her way because she probably lost her arms underground. This Greek Venus certainly has a nice but still partly suggestive behind. Unfortunately, she is also made of marble - in addition to being two meters high. No man wants such a tall woman and especially: a man likes to see a behind, adores swaying hips. In contrast to the frontal view of Nefertiti and the almost one-sided frontal view of her colleague from “*over the water*” Venus de Milo, we understand the man who likes to look back. What’s more, the ideal of the man or the most attractive woman for him, is not the woman who appears as an image of a woman - certainly not a statue (“*standbeeld*” in Dutch; from “*stand*” from “*staan*” or a ... standing statue). The ideal or the most attractive woman is that woman who sways her hips, who shows

a wonderfully plastic but not static behind. That is a behind that is, as it were, of no size and certainly not the fruitless or almost absent behind of the aimless corpses of the models on the catwalks, living corpses that move with cola and cocaine in their veins and are a disgrace to humanity, and nothing other than pure deception for the countless, especially younger women who 'have to' mirror themselves on these models.

Indeed, the ideal looking of the man, at a supposedly attractive woman, is not a viewing or looking at this woman. It is a looking back, a looking behind. That is a paradoxical looking because the further the woman distances herself from a man – that viewer – the more attractive her behind becomes, the more it sways and dwindles in the light of his ever-increasing imagination of the true fusion.

The classical Greek women were almost certainly stiff female beings, not very mobile, without somatic-musical plasticity. In any case, they are depicted infinitely and always statically, even – horresco referens – as physically (!!!) super strong women, because they are truly caryatids. And those women too – we simply remain silent about the Greek men because we have no interest in them at all – then became the examples for dozens of generations of artists and even more viewers and buyers from the time that is called the Renaissance. Pffffftt or what a lack of taste!!! Because. How more contradictory can that classical Greek image of women be compared to almost all African women! These ladies wear or wore all kinds of things on their heads – textiles, gourds to = you saw/see it = you name it! And always so graceful at the same time as if it were a hat by Coco Chanel (1883 – 1971), a genius fashion designer next to oh irony if not some sarcasm a beanstalk or a scarecrow of a concrete woman; no wonder that mainly Prussian generals wanted to beep beep beep with her. From a very young age, African ladies are known for their divinely swaying hips. Everyone understands why hundreds of thousands of white, European men were so eager to play the colonial in Africa! And still: there is not a single white racist who does not secretly dream of touching and thus following the behind of an African woman. And wasn't Nefertiti 'already' an African woman!? Smart guy, that Akhenaten of hers! He didn't think of taking on an ancient Greek weightlifter, discus thrower or wrestler annex let alone Xanthippe as a lady-in-waiting, more precisely his Most Noble Lady and Night Sleeper! Presumably it is no coincidence that, due to the historical scourge of the slave trade from Africa to Latin America in particular, Latin American ladies are also known for extremely rhythmic or plastic body expressions. And perhaps somewhat universally but above all Olympic - in bed. You understand that we do not want to go into this, let's say empirically or logically-positivistically-optimistically. Or feel free to test it yourself before you are bound in the chains of marital fidelity. And even to a modern Xanthippe. We also understand that zealot neurotic and world-famous painter as a pastime - we do not understand that aspect now - Luc Tuymans finally stumbled upon a South American beauty. And keeps on stumbling. When will he make a cheerful and sultry work irrigated by her genetically quasi-infinitely heavenly joy and pleasure-giving source, his very personal henceforth also universal "*L'Origine du Monde*"?!

Some of the high-jubilant attractiveness of African and Latin American women can be acquired by any other worldly woman who finally learns to sway her behind. That certainly cannot be learned via the internet and especially not by looking at social media; to scroll with one finger, does not make one's hips roll. It can definitely be done and preferably from the earliest age when one teaches them dances – one at a time -, especially one or more of the well-known Latin American dances: salsa, rumba,... And the white men can of course not

remain aloof in addition to or with that. Let us think in particular of the tango, the tango d'amore! Listen to the eternally young, sultry and melancholic Rocco Granata (1938):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_GIXYzvSX8

Note that to the tune of this sultry song you might just try out a variation, of your personal, family ... ass dance. But wait a minute! Of course it can't just be about women who are allowed/have to start dancing: how would they do that without men!?? Boys too are allowed to hit the dance floor from a very young age, first learning, then learning further, eternally learning – with one regular dance partner, with several in one evening and so on! We are thinking of the centuries-old folkloric dances in most Western countries that have been extremely regular and therefore popular. Those were the occasions when young women and men could approach each other in a dignified or respected way, touch 'even' and get to know each other in this way. We are not going to make a plea here for making folk dance popular again where that tradition has almost disappeared. After all, we believe infinitely more in learning Latin American dances as a means – of pleasure and relaxation of course – but therefore effectively for the initiation and development of a culture of touch. However you look at it, almost all of Christianity has reduced the faithful person to a touch machine solely for procreation, or sex in bed solely for having good, Christian children. Who is going to write some persuasive texts for a revival or rather for the emergence of a real touch culture, with respect, tenderness, concentrated lust and so on? It is about time. Elsewhere later on this website we hope to be able to write a little more about this, but we certainly do not feel qualified enough - motivated though! - to write about this and certainly persuasively or with a chance of public success.

Of the examples of the catwalk, no person has anything positive, unless this concrete example fortunately bears the name of Waris Dirie (1965). The fashion industry is largely a human-deforming industry but big business or paradoxically extremely successful; if it only brings in money, then it is ... valuable? It is very distorting in the worldview of countless women. That last aspect is especially true with regard to very young women who are still in full - mental - growth. Now those models do like to walk back sometimes, although they often disappear in one line behind each other; they regularly literally retrace their steps - so that you can at least observe their behinds from one perspective. We advocate here for a universal asswalk. It has been a fashion for a decade now – a horrible keeper apparently – for mainly women to wear trousers with all sorts of pieces of fabric torn off at the knees (there are quite a few variations and it is simply a stupid, ridiculous variation of the punk habit around 1976, ... Act normal! And make huge holes or disappearing fabric – on your behinds + if it is raining or cold; there are zippers!). Finally walk like the Milo de Venus albeit with slightly larger or more naked grooves! If it is allowed by one of the most famous Greek/Parisian women, admired daily by ... and so on, then now you are allowed to do it too, on the street, in the tram/metro, on your bike... And at home! Only best not at school and especially not if you are a female teacher. Unless you no longer want to use a blackboard – and you can explain and dictate everything – in frontal view.

You see. It is dulce et decorum to study history and art history. From the bust of Nefertiti to the Venus de Milo along the fashion model catwalk – to the universal asswalk!

13. “Pour vivre heureux, vivons cachés”? Or: “If you want a happy life as a woman, don’t be too”?!

You know them, the French fables. You know in particular or especially that one legendary French writer of fables, Jean de la ... (1621 – 1695). The French fable was practiced as a genre for a long time. For example, half a century later there was a fable that has been almost forgotten for the rest of the world in which a cricket complains about the beauty of the butterfly that overshadows him. But then the cricket remains sober. He sees how children chase the butterfly for its striking beauty and that it perishes because of it. Apparently the cricket finds the value of life – survival – much more important than the value of beauty precisely because of its lack of striking beauty:

*“Il en coûte trop cher pour briller dans le monde.
Combien je vais aimer ma retraite profonde!
Pour vivre heureux, vivons cachés.”* (Jean-Pierre de Florian, *Fables*, livre II, “*Le Grillon*”, 1793).

It is that last verse that has taken on a life of its own. In the sense of: just act/be normal. Because. That is how you get the furthest, the easiest, the least problematic, the longest, the ... through life. In addition, we have heard this Flemish expression: “*You never have a beautiful woman alone.*”. That expression is of course said here from the point of view of the man – who ‘has’ a beautiful woman or aims to ‘have’ her. You can just as naturally turn it around or look at it from the perspective of a – beautiful/attractive – woman. To put it most bluntly, that certainly does not mean that as a woman you have to look as ugly as possible, because then no man will look at you. In that case you could well be the target of ridicule. So life is never good? Too attractive literally attracts too much positive as well as negative attention. Too unattractive also attracts too much and certainly negative attention! In the second case, there is certainly the pernicious mocking and belittling, by men as well as other women. In the first case, it is fear and jealousy in men and certainly and very frequently, there is the legendary female jealousy. But is that not all reasonable or just far-fetched, too defensive, not constructive enough or not hopeful enough?

The fabulous, legendary, iconic final sentence – which has become a standard expression in itself – of “*Pour vivre heureux, vivons cachés.*” may perhaps be cautiously interpreted as follows!/? The sincere attraction that a woman can exert lies in a quiet, inner beauty of this woman. This woman radiates classical values such as goodness, wisdom, justice, unaffected simplicity, helpfulness without wanting to be a slave, and so on. Although we see less rather than more possible positive characteristics: simply wisdom, is that not enough, not even ‘everything’?! True beauty is on the inside and attracts. There is certainly humor or rather mild irony here. This true, because inner beauty is so convincing that it attracts, that it draws the gaze of men, women, birds and all other elements of nature to her. As if the whole world were singing a song of the sun for Her! That is indeed mild irony because without wanting to exhibit, without wanting to make an object of her beauty and certainly not in a commercial way (model or mannequin or whatever derivative), she cannot possibly hide, she shows herself as she is: powerfully calm and softly overwhelming. And oh, only in fairy tales does such a Snow White encounter a terrible woman, a bitch - who tries to destroy her. But. Even there it ends well in the end! In this way, true, sincere, unsought even fundamentally uncreateable not even purchaseable beauty fulfils two social functions: 1) it is both a pleasantly concrete example of being human through the encounters with it and an inspiring

example; 2) it is the best remedy against all ‘remnants’ of jealousy because it is, as it were, a solvent for it.

The real task of the attraction through true beauty is not to show that beauty but to let it be experienced or, as artist and art connoisseur Harold Van De Perre would say: to let you as a viewer, speaker, ... travel inside this person (see his book: Jeanne De Dijn, *Sculpturen Reizen naar binnen*, Dendermonde, 1994, “*Sculptures. Traveling into the inside*” + NB: the Dendermonde artist Jeanne De Dijn is not related to us despite sharing a family name and origin). The famous, apparently inspiring image of the bust of Nefertiti generates its ideal, its ... opposite, by thinking about it. By thinking about it, it causes its own opposite in the ideal or image of the tranquil, inner beauty. From this logic, the bust of Nefertiti is indeed very valuable, now from a purely archaeological point of view. So feel free to visit the Neues Museum in Berlin. Zum Wohl!

Yet something important about the life and especially the end of life – or the fate – of the writer of this fable, a so-called didactic poem. Jean-Pierre de Florian was born first, in 1755 and as could be expected that happened in France. He would also die not so much later in that same France, in 1794. And that happened sometime after or during the famous French revolution that started in 1789. And those turbulent times liked to eat all kinds of children, hers and the others. Jean-Pierre de Florian would also be arrested together with countless French contemporaries. He would not be beheaded for once but would die quickly of tuberculosis after his release. And that was a disease that he nevertheless suffered from some time earlier but from which he would be fatally weakened by the hardships of his captivity. Somewhere. He. Had. Written. And. Published. His. Fable. Knowledge. But. Not. Applied. It. Himself?

Moral of that and therefore also our story: do what you can't help but do! Be!

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, October 2024.

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Out into the World, Maria Catharina Wiik (1853 – 1928), oil, 1889, Ateneum, Helsinki.

T.U.S.

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Riekend III (Fragrant III), Victor Delhez (1902 – 1985), woodprint (épreuve d'artiste), signed version - 1 of probably only 8 editions, s.d., private collection.

T.U.S.

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Saint Georges and the Dragon (and a Woman), Paolo Uccello (1397 - 1475), oil, circa 1470, National Gallery, London.

T.U.S.

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Sebastiano del Piombo (Sebastiano Luciani, 1485 - 1547), Ritratto di giovane romana con cesto di frutta (La Dorotea) or La Veneziana by writer Vladimir Nabokov, circa 1512. oil, Gemäldegalerie Berlin.

T.U.S.

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Self-portrait (presumed) as Saint Catherine of Alexandria, Barbara Longhi (1552 - 1638), oil, 1589, Ravenna Art Museum.

T.U.S.

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Sistine Madonna, Raphaël (Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino, 1483 - 1520), oil, 1513 - 1514, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister Dresden.

T.U.S.

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Sofonisba Anguissola (also known as Sophonisba Angussola or Sophonisba Anguisciola, circa 1532 – 1625), Berardini Campi painting a Portrait of Sofonisba Anguissola, oil, circa 1559, Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena.

T.U.S.

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The Artist and His First Wife, Peter Paul Rubens and Isabella Brant, in the Honeysuckle Bower, Peter Paul Rubens (1577 - 1640), oil, 1609, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, München.

T.U.S.

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The Penitent Magdalene, El Greco (Doménikos Theotokópoulos or Δομήνικος Θεοτοκόπουλος, 1541 - 1614), oil, 1576 - 1578, Szépművészeti Múzeum Budapest.

T.U.S.

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The Rokeby Venus, Diego (Rodríguez de Silva y) Velázquez (1599 – 1660), oil, 1647 - 1651, National Gallery London.

T.U.S.

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Venus and Cupid with a Honeycomb, Lucas Cranach The Elder (der Ältere + circa 1472 – 1553), oil, circa 1531, Galleria Borghese Roma.

T.U.S.

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Virgin and Child in Flower Garland with Angels, Peter Paul Rubens (1577 - 1640) and Jan Brueghel The Elder (1568 - 1625), oil, 1621, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

+ Pierre-Joseph Redoute's School of botanical drawing in the Salle Buffon in the Jardin des Plantes. Julie Ribault (1789 - circa 1839). Watercolour and graphite on paper, 1830, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, United Kingdom.

T.U.S.

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Virgin and Child with Two Angels, Sandro Botticelli (born as Alessandro di Mariano di Vanni Filipepi, 1445 - 1510), tempera, circa 1490, Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien.

T.U.S.

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Virgin of Gósol (the inspiration of the face for the portrait of Gertrude Stein by Pablo Picasso - 1881 - 1976 - during 1905 - 1906), wood and polychrome, second half of 12th century, Museo Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona.

T.U.S.

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Woman reading a letter, Johannes Vermeer (1632 - 1675), oil, circa 1662 - 1663. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

T.U.S.

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Žena s vtákmi a jablkami (Woman with birds and apples), Valeria Zusana Benáčková (1924 - 2021), Reverse glass painting, s.d., private collection.

T.U.S.

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