

## The Most Attractive Women in History

A Plea for the Art of Portaiture. Or .. Towards a Real Renaissance.

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Philosophus, EU.  
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## **Introduction.**

Text in stressstruction.

## **Objectives of this study. But, what about the ... unforeseeable effects?**

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## **Texts by ready delivery - without parcel services.**

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 Wisdome.

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.

.....

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

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

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 color, 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.

### Mmonummental 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 \(emile-claus.be\)](#)

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?

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 not shown in a detail because when Die Verdampte 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 "*beweegredenen*". 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 I 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.

#### Her shyness. Or the opposite of all monumentality.

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 two) 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 deprimate 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 [Oeuvrecatalogus | Emile Claus \(emile-claus.be\)](https://www.oeuvrecatalogus.nl/emile-claus)

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 color of her neck (light yellow) flows noticeably into the adjacent garden color (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 colorless 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 colors 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 colored. That procedure existed at the time, the coloring 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 color of the neck that we cannot explain? Of the color 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://Oeuvrecatalogus | Emile Claus (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?

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 colored 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'..."*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 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 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 neighbors 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** ....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 \(emile-claus.be\)](#)

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. 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, 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 ....?

### Le jardin secrèt.

We assume that the portrait of Jenny was painted by her golden 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 behavior 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 she 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: ... **LINK 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). She 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!! ... **LINK 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 cultures 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 WL.V. 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!!!

#### 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: ... **LINK 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 - 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. 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 a doctor were to consult with 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. 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 - 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. 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 neighbor'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 color 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 had during it ... 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 fill 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!

#### 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.

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 gleanders*", 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 "*Prunus ... 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 before you were born.

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

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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 officialy 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!

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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](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 \(northwestern.edu\)](http://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](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 *Mósa* 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' M $\acute{o}$ sa. 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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To be continued with a little help of female friends and much chocolate: see table of contents.