

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

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

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

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## **Introduction.**

Text in stressstruction = T.U.S..

## **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, pseudolomitononym 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.

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

A monumental monument.

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.

#### Mmonumental but with the striking Nothing.

We were mainly trained as philosophers at the University of Ghent in the 80s, at a place that is somewhat further away than this moment. We had a lot of luck studying there with mainly interesting to very inspiring professors - while unfortunately the old-fashioned philosophical genius Leo Apostel (1925 - 1995) had just gone on mandatory health retirement. Could he have at least given us some private lessons!? Without a doubt - including him - this philosophical department in Ghent had one of the most fascinating academic philosophical educations in the world at the time, although everything can be better because ... blah blah blah. The smartest of them all was without the same doubt the German Rudolf Boehm (1927 - 2019); the man had previously refused proposals from Washington, among other places. Together with a certain Spinoza (1632 - 1677) and the modern Dutchman Cornelis Verhoeven (1928 - 2001), he belongs to the probably greatest thinkers who ever wandered around in the Low Countries - but there is still time to come. Rudolf Boehm is a philosopher who has apparently been forgotten at that faculty itself (to our slight astonishment, he once complained to us personally about "*Who reads me?*" + You can mainly read along in Dutch on [Fenomenologie | Rudolf Boehm](#) ). This deep thinker, this researcher into the guiding principles of Western thought, has been partly forgotten, not least because of the power of the personality of that other philosopher at the time, Etienne Vermeersch (1934 - 2019). And this professor was essentially the better or simply superior village philosopher because he was a great 'explainer'. But not a great philosopher himself, as he once admitted himself. This is not the place to write the history of that department. But one could learn to think, very much - and very independently. Without that education, in which special attention was paid to the history of science and paradigms or overarching changes in perspective of scientific thinking, we would certainly never have been able to invent our internationally groundbreaking historical-political work on a crisis like WWII much later. On the other hand, it is also not clear to us whether our groundbreaking work in this cultural field also yields important insights, now around painters - such as around an Emile Claus and ....? Are you going to judge?

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

These considerations about the importance of the principle and - therefore - the importance of nothingness can be made absolutely certain about the monument of Emile Claus by the woman Ivonne Serruys. In her twenties she reportedly received four years of lessons at the home of Emile Claus. It must have been pleasant there because that is how she knew, among others, the recently met, important Belgian and female artist Anna De Weert (1867 - 1950). And above all: that is how she knew Jenny Montigny (1875 - 1937) very well, about whom directly and finally and continuously further! Of course Ivonne Serruys 'also' knew the lady of the house or the wife of Emile Claus who not only brought around the biscuits and coffee at all these pleasant moments for a few years but also taught her to sniff the scent of oil paint for decades, as if it were lavender. That went so well that lady Claus had a personal grave monument made on the grave of her beloved husband by the phenomenon Georges Minne (1866 - 1951), And he was probably the only real world-class sculptor from the Low Countries since Claus (sic) Sluter (circa 1340 - 1405/1406) and fortunately a lot more productive. That grave monument, unlike the mentioned monument for her husband, can only be admired in the garden of Emile Claus' former home, "*Villa Zonneschijn*" - "*Villa Sunshine*". Unfortunately, we have never encountered that work in person because the domain seems to be private and so is that work; can't that sculpture, together with the grave underneath, be donated to the city of Deinze to be placed in the municipal cemetery there? It can be seen in any case via the Dutch Wikipedia page dedicated to Emile Claus. It would be called "*Opstanding*" ("*Resurrection*"), a bit strange since we assume that the couple Claus - Dufaux were liberal - besides mainly monolingual or by social preference French-speaking? Emile Claus 100% certainly used Dutch, possibly - of course spoken - with a West Flemish accent.

We have previously been somewhat dismissive of his enormous monument from 1926. On the bluestone sides of it there are certainly bilingual messages concerning the essence of his life! On one side it says in Dutch "*AAN KUNSTSCHILDERS 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 \(emile-claus.be\)](http://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 Verdammte Teutons invaded Belgium and later Ghent and surroundings in the summer of 1914, the family Emile Claus - Charlotte Dufaux - Jenny Montigny fled to Merry Old England. And of course they stayed there (?) until the end of 1918. Excuse me, now tell me yourself whether you would want to experience all that yourself, even if you cannot hold a paintbrush then still very clumsily to paint your doors and windows assuming that they are not made of that filthy plastic.

Unless stung by a wasp or tickled by the personal hormones going too jubilantly their selfish way, people are motivated or driven by goals. That does not mean at all that people themselves are aware of all their goals, or that on the other hand they want to reveal these personally very important goals to others. Just when the trio Claus - Dufaux - Montigny had started their strange triangular relationship somewhere from 1893, the aforementioned contemporary James Ensor had already been storming the world with his masks for a few years - and how! Apart from the fact that both painters loved light immensely, we can find no evidence of any mutual artistic influence. James Ensor was both too grand and too anti-bourgeois for that, at least until he became generally successful. The loser would even accept the title of baron in old age, something that Emile Claus was fortunately spared, although Emile had contacts with the Belgian royal family and was as bourgeois as the name of his villa: always sunshine - really never rain? In Dutch language, the internationally known word "*motief/motieven*" can be expressed perfectly or, to be honest, much better with the non-bastard word "*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 mmonumentality.

This portrait is a wonder and undoubtedly deserves a place of honour at that retrospective, with an old-fashioned ... halo around it: .. **LINK Ondrej Richter** ... I beg your pardon, a halo around a painting? It deserves a human place of honour. Because (always trying to motivate, like every little child constantly asks: "*Mama/dad, why are ...*"; have you remained that little child?). That we can discuss the content of this fragile, beautiful, albeit not totally world-shattering portrait, is indeed not a miracle from an art-historical point of view, but from a human point of view. After all, it was not destroyed by a jealous wife who later became a widow, and she had every human reason to do so. Artists sometimes destroy their own work because they no longer ... - which they usually deeply regret later for all kinds of reasons, not

only because of the lost money. But descendants, a wife, a mistress, friends, gallery owners (hihihi) ... ? This liberal milieu could not have been further removed in terms of philosophy or human and world view from the barbarism of the Nazis, who barely ten years later - in 1937 - held a resounding exhibition of the so-called "*Entartete Kunst*", where every stupid German (and there were many) was invited to come and laugh and scoff. The Nazis would soon afterwards sell a large part of this reviled art for a pretty penny. And would shortly afterwards burn the 'remaining' pieces, just as they would in the meantime murder their own German mentally ill, just as the well-known "*and so on*" a little later. Incidentally or not, it is unimaginable that just a few kilometres from the personal grave monument of Emile Claus by Georges Minne, the painter Albert Servaes (1883 - 1966) lived in his famous Servaestoren in Sint-Martens-Latem, a municipality where Georges Minne also lived. Albert Servaes was a so-called very well-known Catholic religious artist and became a fervent or 'religious' Nazi collaborator during WWII together with part of his family. Who in 2066, as now with Emile Claus - a country escapee in 1914 or in a way not too brave because he could at least have committed alternative resistance, or helped the countless directly impoverished sad people of Astene and surroundings, or ... but the man was already really old and had two wives to support ... Who is going to organize a retrospective exhibition of Albert Servaes? We wish you much courage in advance! Although we have had to conclude in detail through our own rather in-depth research into politics during a crisis such as WWII that liberals happily participated in the infamous black market and also collaborated economically, always for the little money, and that this conclusion is apparently taboo for normal historians, we must say something politically relevant. The liberals almost certainly belonged to the only Belgian philosophical pillar that never collaborated politically with the German occupier in WWII. In that political or more explicitly existential sense, the trio Emile Claus - Charlotte Dufaux - Jenny Montigny shared a lot intensely, built up a lot during their long form of coexistence and perhaps still a little after Emile's death. However, be careful: we do not know the precise provenance of this portrait. And we must not venture into any moralizing here. The relationships between the three intensely involved people are or were simply none of our business, which does not contradict the previous final consideration at all. In any case, we can be happy that it yielded some interesting paintings by Emile Claus: of his wife (at least three) and of this mistress Jenny (at least one). And? Or was there? Were there other portraits or of other mistresses?

We will not go into what one might call the psychology of a portrait or of almost any painting. Besides the wall on which it hangs, there is always 'something' to be found behind it, unless one starts thinking of floating paintings? No to psychology, then? Not because we don't feel like it today. But because we can't, even though everyone does: if one were to psychologize about any musical work as much as about works of the visual arts, then ... - hahaha! Even the otherwise internationally highly valued because - hahaha (again?) - expensive clumsiness of a Karel Appel has fallen from a tree, in this case from the Charles Apple Tree. Incidentally, a particularly large or dramatic to almost insurmountable problem of knowledge applies here, at least for us. We assume that most people who are interested in the visual arts, when they stop to think about things for a moment after the first, purely visual or viewing experience ("beautiful", "interesting", "junk", and the terrible "I can do that too", by the way a fairly popular reproach that we have never experienced with music), experience something special and very human: doubt! Once they go a little further than the first experience or start to consider something certain, this initial movement of thought almost always goes hand in hand with a feeling of inadequacy with respect to a targeted, viewed work. In our opinion, that is an experience that is in stark contrast to music that one can listen to 'more', that one can also dance to and enjoy: is dancing even possible without it!? We have seen the latter dancing a

great deal, but we have never seen dancing through a sculpture, a painting, a drawing. Perhaps through a performance by Marina Abramović (1946)? Let's give her a call! Many musical works move people with pleasure and joy (they also last a certain time, have a beginning, middle and end, sometimes even a real climax) without any additional explanation or knowledge of, even if they were only general notions about the musicological importance of this musical work in question. There is so much to know in pure knowledge and to interpret in meanings surrounding any successful visual work of art. But what is successful, because elsewhere we will have to admit that we do not understand a thing about the internationally adored painter Luc Tuymans (1958) and find his work genuinely horrifying when viewed purely contemplatively? As if one is even allowed to start stammering (the French "*balbutier*" expresses this onomatopoeically, as it were) even when one has studied all kinds of relevant sciences. And there are so many that are effectively applicable around the visual arts. Not least of which is the study of art history, a branch of scientific endeavour that we rate fairly highly because of its very strong interpretative capacity; see among others the work of the great Belgian art expert Bart Verschaffel (1956), erudite, stimulating and (or 'only') understandable, although we have only read a selection of the man; it can still be very disappointing. Of course we quietly admit to having read quite a few art historical studies, of which we do not understand a thing. For example, we once had to help a young art history student at the request of her friendly parents; how we ourselves toiled and honestly learned absolutely nothing from it! She had passed anyway ... Without going into detail in terms of study, we have from a very young age and then throughout our lives, albeit with more or less time, done our best reasonably broadly and deeply to occasionally understand something about the essence of man. While we always had more that feeling of "*not knowing knowing*" (although we are not sure whether we have summarized the thinking of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908 - 1961) with that). But especially in the field of psychology and psychiatry we have always remained reserved. Much of what we read there was/is completely beyond our comprehension, although the most incomprehensible was/is certainly Jacques Lacan (1901 - 1981), a psychiatrist greatly admired by many and regarded by us as a producer of rattle of words. Give us social psychology, while that is a relative of general psychology that we probably can't do much with here around Jenny and her Emile and his Charlotte? We can say that we simply (...) like to look at this portrait - and would even like to have it, as if Emile Claus could have grown a bit older and produced more - also for us who were born ultimately four decades after his death. Hasn't every good painter produced too little? Although we therefore make a fundamental exception elsewhere for the work of the purely objectively very successful but almost perfect deprimante 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.be/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 \(emile-claus.be\)](#)

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 \(emile-claus.be\)](http://emile-claus.be)

It is almost laughable for those who know these regions. Fasten your seat belts, put on ten bicycle helmets at the same time and so on. Whoever tries to take the bends of the countless once so rural, winding roads there at even low speed, risks everything. Bicycle paths have improved somewhat in Flanders in the meantime but are non-existent compared to the king car and the queen residential street. We will not list them. The Netherlands - again - has had an infinite lead in this respect for half a century in terms of quality of life. What is gone (as a monument in particular) is gone. But what is in the way (as a house, ...) is in the way, is in the way. Jenny's small garden was absolutely certain then in 1902 and always before that and only for a few meager decades, a very, very large, extensive garden, their broad and everyone's shared rural living environment. And that was the reason why those artists liked to come there to absorb the light, the space, the air - and sing about it, in verses, sculptures, paintings.... It has been gone since 1945 at a furious pace because it has disappeared, built up - in-di-vi-dual and with the bringers of prosperity, an infinite number of factories and industrial estates. You know the expression: "The last one turns off the light.". In a certain way because in a quasi-literal way Emile, together with Charlotte, together with Jenny, ... Anna, ... - all of them luminists - have used the light again and again because it was borrowed for free because it was overwhelmingly present - and after him it was turned off. So came the executioners of the light, 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 \(Petra Thijs\) \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

*("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 + concluans)? 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 unequaled. We cannot go into details and differences. And to be brutally said, we are pour le besoin de la cause only interested in their form or appearance - in their exemplarity - and not in their worldview motivations. Their very old garden cultures are appreciated by very many people in the world and in already unknown cases imitated. But for further 'imitation' or introduction, more knowledge is of course necessary; why not through lessons in aesthetics or ...? Two things strike us throughout these gardens:

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

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

The Flemish Community is responsible for a great deal on its territory. The Belgian country is simply a very special construction. Many Flemish people are openly or semi-anti-migrant. There can be no doubt about that. However, we propose to tackle a serious Flemish/Belgian disease - the parcelization and many of its consequences - as it were to cure it by more immigration. Through the idea and preferably the application of oriental and/or Japanese gardens. As children we saw the first Toyotas and they were only small cars. You can see the difference in the meantime, quantitatively and qualitatively and statistically. The hundreds of thousands of gardens in Flanders that have been disconcerted by parcelization have a great future ahead of them. Away with the stupid grass and long live the intimate garden. Whoever

comes home from a stressful day, does not have to mow the lawn. She and he can relax, become normal children as adults, even become real children by, among other things, playing hide and seek in their own gardens, with their many quiet rooms. Rooms whose walls can be ... removed; one big garden!?! Oh, what will that bring to discussions in court, and to cases of adultery?

Everything is possible. We are now just past 60 years old, so we have some life experience. We planted our first tree (an oak via an acorn) when we could hardly walk. Once it had apparently grown too big, our robust grandmother pulled out the tree, roots and all, without a single word of explanation: that was how it was done then and for centuries before that. Later ... We planted hundreds of trees of a whole range of species with our own hands and an ordinary bucket and spade in the Central European country of WLV. But first ... As a student in the first year in Ghent - 1981 - 1982 - we lived in a room in the attic in the François Benardstraat. Through the dormer window we saw many tiny gardens; why not demolish those walls and ..? Fortunately there was some parking nearby with the emphasis on opportunity; of course that was/is nothing serious. From the following year onwards we would stay for a long time in a pleasant and then very cheap workers' house on the old industrial Stokerijstraat, no. 57, where there was no garden, three times nothing. That was a corner house of an old and then dilapidated workers' housing estate. And no green to be seen anywhere! We started building some boxes as flower boxes around our house and at some neighbours (one is probably still there, the flower box). We tried out some covering with ivy and climbing roses. The fact that all sorts of neighbours came to take out the gladioli; we accepted it because it indicated a need. A neighbour further down the street or the special Pascal was actually removing paving stones to let willows grow there, which worked out fine. Some time later we started thinking about an article as an architectural blueprint: what is possible in terms of greenery on facades? We wanted to write that together with our great friend architect-urban planner W14W17X. But unfortunately he never had time for that - and neither did we because we needed an architect to draw up plans. In the meantime, many people and cities even companies are busy with that kind of new greenery. With our unfortunately deceased and worldwide birdwatcher Wim Jourquin we were able to stop a huge development in the city of Ronse in two moves in 1999 - 2,000, well timed with a view to the municipal elections of that year. Eventually the city council took this over and turned it into the so-called "*Stadstuin*" (the "*City Garden*"), not entirely successful because there are far too few trees - but still... In the meantime, there are also such things as green roofs. What else? Are you not yet familiar with the groundbreaking work of the architect Hundertwasser (1928 - 2,000 + his first name does not even have to be mentioned): cute, isn't it! And inspiring! And hopefully those internal constructions will never collapse. In the meantime, we have started two more park projects. One was very small because on the ... driveway of our semi-detached house in Dendermonde. Strangely enough, we have never seen that variation elsewhere: a driveway garden?! It also means that the garage, for which the driveway is by definition meant to be used to park a car, is not used as such. More can be said about that later. The same applies to our much larger park project on almost half a hectare - quite a lot for Belgians but in itself far too little to do anything thorough - in the European country BVD1B where there is simply much more - affordable - space. Where we can experiment freely, not in the least, both in the artistic field - we are guided by no less than the work of Paul Klee! - and in the field of types of trees. We will leave it at that but also note that the relatively many Dutch people living there, with much more financial wealth, do not have such ambitions at all. They only like ... grass or large lawns; ugh. The Dutch real estate agents there earn a lot of money from their services but unfortunately have no interest at all in this garden or general green problem. Nobody among them thinks in the long term or literally -

green - growing term. In any case, using more open space for something like interesting gardens or parks is hardly possible in our own Belgium and also not in the Netherlands. It can be done privately so only when moving within Europe and then specific mainly age-related conditions apply; so when you are either winding down (older/or sicker), or as an emigrant (if you are younger). What we are trying is therefore rare and in principle almost impossible as if it were a figment of your imagination because trees simply need a lot of time. What about those trees if we drop dead; easy firewood for the next owner? In this case that is perhaps a possibility for Belgian and Dutch private and even government organizations to ... green space ... there? Let someone investigate that!

It is certain that the Flemish community may not be a sacristan or a communist: property rights are important and must therefore be motivated above all. "THE NEW GARDEN" is nevertheless not only necessary for pure beauty and fundamental general peace. It is also not new at all because it has been cherished for more than 2,000 years in ... Persia and then a little later in Andalusia. You know, and was perhaps already there as a tourist. In the meantime, THE NEW GARDEN has also become a very important instrument of general interest of the polis. After all, it is a strategically extremely important instrument against the undeniable global warming that everyone personally experiences. THE NEW garden is also of insufficiently known importance in local water management. Moreover, there is one extra powerful argument for more trees and real intimacy in THE NEW GARDEN: our children! Where and how can they be more moved and passionately touched than by butterflies, bees and those friendly mosquitoes in addition to the almost most important thing: the everyday birds in this kind of new, real gardens! Fresh, fruit-bearing small trees and berries of all kinds: a treat for half the year. Children get less and less natural stimuli and space, not so much to play but to grow up in general. And what about flowers - also or especially wild flowers! Didn't Emile Claus reportedly whisper these last words on his last bed: "*Flowers, flowers, flowers...*" - his eternal flower bed!/? Garden is life. Garden is growth, change and interesting or educational distraction Which pedagogue at which university in the Low Countries writes a vulgarized or well-readable "pedagogy of the garden"? Pedagogues, teachers, gardeners and parents: get to write and work please!

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

#### 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-blaspheous "*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 unspoiled, 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 full of love. And in this god they "*lived happily ever after and perhaps even got many small statues.*" Those alert employees of the city park services were not made of iron.

This story of the humming bronze is without a doubt one of the most romantic stories from modern Belgian times. We hereby ask our beloved and honored opera phenomenon Peter de

Caluwe (1963), unfortunately only one year the director of the Brussels somewhere more European opera house De Munt/La Monnaie, to make a modern (and listenable) version of this, if necessary or rather a children's opera or why not, a nice, modern operetta? Then mix in Emile and Jenny and Charlotte. Something for a modern version of "*Così fan tutte*" (1790) from a certain ... Amadeus!

### 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 pimpompom, 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 gleaners*", which is an impossible attribution based on precisely this peasant image. Hopefully we will find the correct dates this year via this exhibition. How we acquired this beautiful graphic work, we will have to discuss separately later because there was both a beautiful and very sad love story behind it with the seller. We have then actually been able to make it again or even more of a real, albeit somewhat mystical, love story. You know how it is, that you can jump higher than the ceiling, than the house or even into the sky when you have been able to acquire something unique. That uniqueness happened of course when, not so long later, we were able to acquire a beautiful lithograph of the eternal theme "*Mother and child*" via the fine Etienne. By, yes, Jenny Montigny. Those two lithographs were of course hung together from then on! It is striking that the farmer's wife who is apparently distracted from her hard work in the fields, reminds us of ... Charlotte Dufaux!? Why or why! She is wearing clothes that are a bit too nice without any sweat visible while this was terribly hard work - certainly for women. Her hair is fairly simple but still beautifully made up. But then again that looking away - always by the same painter! Oh, there is what you can objectively call a reason; she is looking at two people who are apparently passing by and it is certainly a man and a woman; also a couple? Of course we wanted and want to see that looking away to see HER or Charlotte as a farmer's wife in costume. And of course we would like to see the theme of "Mother and child" literally because Jenny Montigny would - prove the opposite via certificates from the Civil Registry - never be able to fulfill a desire for children, would regularly paint and etch children. First of all, her fellow acquaintance or competitor Charlotte Dufaux could not and never fulfill that either. She was probably liberal so .... and ... besides ... But such a desire for children for a woman; that is more than metaphysics, that is written in the stars. Later, much later and at the perceived end of her life, where the emptiness of children is felt more compellingly than ever, Charlotte Claus - Dufaux was able to donate all remaining works of paintings and drawings as her own children - to a local government, who gladly received that, as a young child on his own that would grow into a relatively mature museum. This means that the suspicion is sky-high or much higher than the many haystacks that Emile Claus has painted, that this painter or creator of hundreds of paintings, drawings and lithographs was infertile, perhaps even ... impotent? Isn't it a little, little or bigger bit striking that Emile Claus has indeed painted smaller children, but never a father with a child, or especially never a "*Mother and child*"? Always, always, almost without the slightest exception, a creative artist wants to live on, in the eternity of art history and history. We do not know - yet - whether creative artist Emile Claus has left behind writings or interviews about that. Secondly, why that expression "creative artist" or isn't every artist creative? That expression is like a pleonasm and therefore has its very important cultural-historical or existential meaning as a stylistic device. He or she was therefore not a creator of power or money or, however you look at it, two important motives that always distort or destroy man and society somewhere. And yet, very unfortunately, throughout this website we must use the term "deprimates" for some nevertheless world famous artists. Because they were/are so completely nihilistic or depressing or destructive or ... anti-creative or anti-human (...) busy.

Five years ago to the day our mother Annie Bonkoffsky died, also and not in the least our only real parent. She sometimes said to us: "*Do you always have to go into everything so deeply?*" But she also said once: "*If everyone jumps into the Scheldt, will you jump with them?*" And took us with her as a small child, for example to buy the very successful painting "XXX562" by XFD5, which now hangs at her 'surviving' last partner - "*Because I like looking*



*at it very much; take it back after my death, please."* She took us even more to those cozy auctions in Dendermonde at "*Huis Leybaert*", with that unique mix of visual arts, Persian carpets and with whatever materially wanders around with a certain added value under the Flemish skies. That one tree at that newly purchased house in 1979 had, to our amazement, fallen on our return from school - cut down by human hands. It was even a "*Prunis ... persica*", an annual fruit-bearer - once from Persia or an immigrant, partly as she did through her great-great...parents from Poland - mind you! It apparently also bore leaves "*.... and they fall to the ground and ...*". Logic or the moving part of motives. One day you get that consciously, from home, from school, from ... Sometimes just from your inner conviction that you already have as a small child, as if you were driven before you were born.

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

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

T.U.S..

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

+ La Maja vestida, idem.

T.U.S..

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Le Baiser (De Kus - The Kiss), Frans Masereel (1889 – 1972), woodcut, 1924, 14 op 28, (this print in) Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Gent.

Value of graphics next to paintings or value of artists?

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

Frans Masereel was in a sense the Picasso of woodcarving because he is the father of a huge and - 'also' - valuable oeuvre. He was also a painter. That was an 'activity' to which he apparently enjoyed dedicating himself over time. Unfortunately, he could not paint at all because the graphic artist can be seen at work in every painting. We are happy to forgive him for that shortcoming. One cannot handle everything, except for the very few broadly brilliant artists such as Brueghel, Albrecht Dürer (1471 – 1528), Goya, Rembrandt and Monsieur Picasso: who are we still forgetting? These artists were in themselves unimaginably important painters or absolute world leaders: fantastic isn't it. But some of them are known for their incredibly beautiful or overwhelmingly important paintings, that their graphic work is actually forgotten – by most people. But what about our Frans Masereel? Throughout that long and

intense oeuvre of wood carvings, he created numerous masterpieces, with individual pieces, so to speak. In addition, he also became famous, and rightly so, with the publication of books or cartoons, which are the joy of every book lover - they are still easily available in relatively new editions - and of the true museum enthusiast. We just said that, at least in our experience, Frans Masereel could not paint at all, while his wood carving is of an unparalleled level, both artistically and - how to separate that analytically? - content-related. We deliberately mention this repeatedly because we note that graphic work is still worldwide considered less important compared to painting. We cannot elaborate further on this remarkable and partly comprehensible fact other than in two necessary ways.

Etchings, woodcuts and all possible graphically multi-formed art products - sculptures can also be reproduced several times and still be considered authentic, but that is another matter - are very rarely published in only unique or very small editions. There is even the technique - or artistic desire - of the monotype, or the one-off or unique print! The normal graphically produced art objects that are to be reproduced are therefore not numerically unique. This art production therefore differs diametrically - or dramatically - from paintings. This also happens when paintings themselves are a form of repetition or reworking - an extreme rarity, albeit not for some painters who, for example, give paintings the same name and shape and then number them. In addition, there is a very important argument to be made in favor of graphics as opposed to painting. That pro argument may sound a bit sad. At least we have had to conclude, through our fairly thorough knowledge of Belgian art between 1880 and 1950 and through roughly 50 years of art viewing, that artists very regularly make excellent graphics - usually etchings. And yet as painters they deliver inferior to much inferior even negligible quality. Surprisingly enough, we know of no art historical studies on this observation, even though we have about a thousand art books ourselves; maybe a taboo? In any case, it seems to us to be a delicate subject on the part of the artists themselves. Who among them would want to make such a comparison in a reflection on their own (life) work? At the same time, on this website we refer to Victor Delhez ... **See Victor Delhez ....** He was born just a few decades after Frans Masereel in the same exuberant painting country Belgium/Flanders. But - or does that "*but*" not even apply here? - he was also born and raised in Antwerp and 'therefore' a fellow citizen of an infinite number of excellent 'local' painters, including some of the absolute world top; Brueghel, Henri De Braeckeleer (1840 - 1888), Jacob Jordaens (1593 - 1678), Rubens, Frans Snyders (1579 - 1657) and Antoon Van Dyck. Although relatively little has been published about Victor Delhez, a man from two continents, first Belgian and later South American, we have been able to conclude through our studies of him that he has exclusively made graphics throughout his long life or career. These were almost always woodcuts in addition to a minority of linocuts. But. They were always graphic works. Comparing the (top) artist Victor Delhez with his - absent - work as a painter or with that of (countless) painters is simply nonsensical or ridiculous. In our opinion, both Belgian graphic artists - Victor Delhez and Frans Masereel - belong to the absolute world top, not only of their generation and of the last 150 years, but also for the entire history of art, although they face intense competition from the few world-famous painters and graphic artists just mentioned. At the same time, and this is the crucial point, they are fully present as graphic artists and have their absolutely deserved place among other world-famous artists, 'so' almost always 'just' painters!

Certainly for Belgian compatriots and probably also for French and Germans, it is very easy and relatively cheap to purchase a "*Masereel*". Although a very international artist, many of his woodcuts deal with subjects from his home country. Moreover, there are sometimes works that have been published in hundreds to 750 editions! The intention was, let's just say it

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

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

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

for decades or a lifetime? The truly versatile artists can literally be counted on one hand, such as Brueghel, Goya, Rembrandt and Picasso; who can offer another wonderful name?

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

*"Las! voyez comme en peu d'espace,  
Mignonne, elle a dessus la place  
Las, las, ses beautés laissées choir!"*  
(Pierre de Ronsard, circa 1524 - 1585, "*A Cassandra*", 1545),

In any case, shortly before his graphic "*The Kiss*", there was one very famous work of art that appeared in Europe, which he had probably seen himself within the borders of traditional Europe (Belgium, France, Germany, etc.). He had heard of it with absolute certainty and had already seen it as an image, in one of the many art magazines that usually circulated internationally for a short time. But before we go to that eternally famous example, we must point out "*The Kiss*" ("*Le Baiser*") from 1886 or before the birth of Frans Masereel. That "*The Kiss*" was by the sculptor's hand of that other art phenomenon, Auguste Rodin (1840 - 1917). By Rodin - the man, like many famous artists, hardly needs a first name - we once saw the statue "*Honoré de Balzac*" (1897) as a student in high school, in the highly recommended sculpture park or open museum "*Middelheim*" in Antwerp. We still remember as if it were yesterday how astonished we were. Practically every day we saw the - very traditional - statue of a missionary father at the main church of Dendermonde, right next to our college: you quickly look past it but you have it stored in your brain as an 'idea' forever - as an example! And here or then through the confrontation with the statue of Rodin in Antwerp!? We made a discussion of it for the aesthetics course of which we of course no longer have a copy; it was certainly extremely concise - humhum. Moreover, we got that course from an enthusiastic teacher ("*Lights out, spotlight on!*" - with the spotlight of the slide projector because fortunately we did not only get the images to be controlled from a small manual - blessed be this teacher Guido Triest!) only one hour a week. Fortunately, that did happen over two years, albeit the last two of six years of secondary education; compare that with the eternal two

hours of compulsory gymnastics - yuck - while we ourselves already trained extremely intensively basketball at school; or two hours purely wasted that could have been spent on ... aesthetics! The task of writing an essay about this sculpture must have been a mandatory assignment. So we had to fill in 'something' because what schoolchild doesn't want a little bit (half anyway) of the points? In fact, that work is still a milestone for our lives for what modern or new art is – should or may be? While we were fascinated by all kinds of applied art expressions from a very early age, in retrospect we have always had the feeling that we never 'really' understood art, even though we have one enormous preference for art: if the given work of art contains something tangible and mysterious or shows an intermediate stage between abstract and recognizable, as in the phenomenal work from the period circa 1900 - 1910 by the later creepy Piet Mondriaan (1872 - 1944). See, among other things, work from circa 1907, later used by a well-known - guess who - contemporary painter as an example, albeit without explicitly referring to it:

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

Or the almost perfect painting from a year later:

[Molen bij zonlicht - Wikipedia](#)

For all necessary clarity we have already read several books about the 'late' or so-called 'real' Mondrian; we regularly do/did/will do our utmost, albeit with metaphysical limitations in terms of (less) time and meanwhile (also less) health. But we understand absolutely nothing about that late or real Mondrian and we also don't get a rotten \*\*\*\* from looking at it. They can keep it (those late works also seem to suffer from a form of scabies partly due to poor quality) and give us any Italian fresco, more specifically a "*pesce fresco*" in an Italian fish restaurant, in good company; "*Better one nice, fresh fish in the mouth, than one rotten one on the wall*", says the well-known proverb. Apparently that final work of Mondrian is his most important, which we therefore very much doubt because just that thing before that; top and why didn't he say to himself; stop!?" "*The Kiss*" by the French sculptor giant Rodin dates from a decade earlier than his own sculpture around the literary giant Balzac and is clearly much more academic. There are various versions of Rodin's "*The Kiss*": in baked clay, white marble and bronze. And in the meantime there are certainly hotheads, say insincere opportunists, next to sincere airheads who have cast it in plastic or even ... uh ...: after all, the good is often imitated - hihhi. All those variations by the hand of the master himself; they are all very nice to compare with each other and simply to meet an example via à vis; petting unfortunately "*Verboten!*" That simply allows for the different possibilities of a sculpture. But those variations of this "*The Kiss*" in themselves tell us relatively little. We find this kiss rather bland, too .. normal - for Rodin, right?!

That is simply impossible to say about the next great sculptor, the Romanian and half-Frenchman Constantin Brancusi (1876 – 1957). His first version of the sculpture "*The Kiss*" dates from 1907 – 1908. That is relatively soon after 1886 or the year of birth of yet another "*The Kiss*" – by Rodin. And also relatively soon before yet another "*The Kiss*" – by Masereel from 1924. What was also produced around these wonderful times, with among other things the terrible events of the First World War and the rise of the extremely creepy world communism and its brown fascist variant, by candidate or recognized artists in terms of concrete representations of that ideal "*Kiss*" over and over again; we leave that to the academic art historians. Or is it more or better intended for that one true researcher in his or her attic room who likes to make a single image of the many dust that he or she has scavenged and sniffed from many cellars? We wish them, him or her (women are never in attic rooms by

rule, except "Mimi" in "*La Bohème*" (1896) but she will soon leave that - via the cemetery - for eternal salvation in heaven) all great success! It is of course no coincidence that we have to mention the blessed opera composer Giacomo Puccini (1858 - 1924). Both his work and that of his compatriot and partly contemporary and also predecessor Giuseppe Verdi (1813 - 1901) are full of tragic women who are abused by men - always men - and of course dramatically succumb to it, while they can still continue to sing exceptionally until their last note. Beautiful and ridiculous, but probably not to be solved otherwise, that singing on the brink of death.

Both sculptures and paintings are without musical accompaniment to this day, although there are quite a few contemporary artists who accompany their work verbally, although very fortunately not by singing; we are not suggesting anything!!! In other words, they cannot keep their mouths shut or feel constantly called upon to talk about their handiwork: do you know a carpenter, roofer or so on, who does the same? These double pseudo-pedagogues prefer to try to explain the "*layers*" or very deeper meanings of their work or of someone else's work that they now love. While these layers are either self-evident or not there or do not interest anyone because every pedagogue can explain to you that adults themselves like to understand something, or interpret something. There is absolutely nothing to interpret because it can only be stated that a series of masterpieces by both Puccini and Verdi are about love, and more precisely about the tragic element of on the one hand the exploitation of the man over the (loving) woman and on the other hand about the concept of understanding the truth too late: man seems to realize again and again too late that it is too late. Isn't every "*The Kiss*" by Auguste Rodin, Constantin Brancusi and Frans Masereel, not to mention those similar, kiss-rich artefacts by visual artists that have fallen through the cracks of our knowledge or through the cracks of history tout court, an equally necessary expression of the continuous yearning for each other that is doomed to fail somewhere by a certain power struggle or even game element of at least one of them (always the man, by coincidence?), psychologically or socially, even physically for one of them (always the woman, by coincidence)? In that sense, sculptures are more interesting from a purely material point of view because they cannot be separated. They cannot, of course, literally or physically, but not even through the gaze of the viewer. Just try to separate the entanglements within the two sculpted representations of "The Kiss" with a covered eye or something similar! You can't, even if you had thought of it! Something similar happens in the graphic representation "*The Kiss*" by Masereel. Consequently, a paradox or a form of insatiable hope or complete coincidence can be seen here. In musical masterpieces by Verdi such as "*Rigoletto*" (1851) and "*La Traviata*" (1853) and actually in all major works by Puccini, the same theme is touched upon as in all cited works around "*The Kiss*". However, in the meantime or in comparison with musical work, in the latter three the kiss or the intertwining or the connection remains eternal. The only alternative, so to speak, is to smash or tear the visual work of art itself; come on. And yet, yet.. Isn't there that limitless human creativity in ... destruction!?! That this image of entanglement can also very delicately see its situatedness fanned by a whirlwind into a storm fire of life, and thus be destroyed by a new, albeit chronologically consecutive, yet again inevitable reality, and that this is also understood in this way by quite a few people, is shown in the concept of the famous, rather infamous socialist fraternal kiss: see.

[Socialist fraternal kiss - Wikipedia](#)

Thus, the old East German supreme party leader Erich Honecker (1912 - 1994) functions as a famous image twice in such a famous kiss of comrades. Once it happened when apparently many red roses were still blooming with the URSS party leader Leonid Brezhnev (Леонид



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

Indeed. Just look around in your life and in life. Looking for images of separated kisses! Ultimately, almost everyone, every concrete person knows one kiss, from life, from the immediate world such as from family and friends where "*The Kiss*" no longer went through, now and above all absolutely not dead because "*The Kiss*" overcomes that border at least in the remaining personal memory, expanding within the family and even throughout society. There is simply (sic) a lot of separation, very formally through divorces but also through all kinds of ruptures between people, among themselves or as parts of organizations and so on. That means that for the most deeply hurt and embittered "*The Kiss*" no longer exists as an example for (their own) life, while let's say they can never physically bury or let their hormones - see opera - drown them out. And yet, yet ... In both a psychological and social sense, every more or less visually successful "*The Kiss*" is both a joyful recognition and - in so far mimetically necessary - an encouragement. It is where it touches the heart through the eyes and awakens it, much like a prick in the backside to shoot forward again and venture into that new but still the same kiss. This is one of the reasons why we are so strongly opposed to the - commercial and museum - glorification of deprimate artists such as Rott and Ko and Luc Tuymans, whereby the first probably not coincidentally buried himself in a kiss of death and the second always turns up again with his face and vocabulary of a gravedigger. That is not a plea for false images or an art historical department of "*Brave New World*". Quite the opposite, as we discuss in the introduction and further; .... see **Luc Tuymans** ...

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

However you look at it, Brancusi's "*The Kiss*" belongs to eternity. Once you've seen that image, it's incompletely completed. As in the wording of the Nicean Creed: "... *begotten, not made, ...*" You might ask what material it's made of, in which it uses the most powerful or figurative language: limestone, marble, plaster ...? All together, these are modalities. In substance, Brancusi's "*The Kiss*" can be called a primeval image, like relatively few works of

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

After WWI, Masereel lived mainly in France and briefly in Berlin in the early 1920s, where he reportedly became friends with the intriguing and, to say the least, provocative German artist George Grosz (1893 - 1959). Unfortunately, we do not know the provenance and publication history, and more specifically the origin of "*The Kiss*". The skyscrapers present in this work from 1924 have never been seen in the heart of Paris before that time. In New York, on the other hand! We can safely assume that the work either originated in Berlin or was inspired by it, together with a dash of New York. Berlin after WWI was a torn, impoverished city where suffering seeped or poured through windows and doors. On the other hand, it was a city full of life that was a point of attraction not only for the many and often extremely high-minded Russian emigrants after 1917, including and not least the almost incomprehensible phenomenon Vladimir Nabokov ... **see Sebastiano del Piombo**.... Life there bubbled like the ever better than better French champagne; who compares or has already compared Paris and Berlin from roughly 1918 - 1933? Not least, Berlin was the location of the famous and very influential film studios of "*Universum Film AG*", better known by the abbreviation "*Ufa*". It is unimaginable what talent flowed there from Germany itself and from Northern and Central Europe, not least the filmmaker and screenwriter Billy Wilder (1906 - 2002, born Samuel Wilder or in Yiddish שמואל ווילדער or Shmuel Vilder), who in 1934 would move to Hollywood or the safe USA for the known reasons after a short stopover in Paris.

Berlin was a city - and this brings us seamlessly to Frans Masereel and his "*The Kiss*" from 1924 - where films were produced on an assembly line including countless timeless classic films. There was that one famous film or "*Der Blaue Engel*" (1930) by Josef Von Sternberg (1894 - 1969) with some top German actors and above all the legendary Marlène Dietrich (1901 - 1992), a true diva - and no, we find her not attractive enough for this website. Since cinemas were incredibly popular in the interbellum - literally every village had a cinema and every small town even had several - millions of European women and men must have sung along with La Dietrich: "*Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Liebe eingestellt.*" ("*I am set on love from head to toe.*"). Attention: she sang that song wearing a .. hat, or did she still have something 'physical' left without - love!? More fitting to the iconic image from 1924 of Masereel and especially chronologically parallel to it, is the film whose screenplay was written in the same year 1924. Due to the astronomical costs of "*Metropolis*", this German

film would only be shown in cinemas worldwide in 1927. With this film, director Fritz Lang (1890 – 1976) made one of the innumerable city films of the 20th century, which can also be called the century of the film genre. At the same time, he would absolutely certainly introduce the city as a true player with this film. Fritz Lang would then repeat this city film with the gripping thriller with the telling title “*M. Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder.*” (1931 + “*M. A city is looking for a murderer.*”). With a human penchant for paraphrasing - and often imitating, just say more or less legally stealing (hihihi) - one could propose an alternative title for Masereel's “*The Kiss*” as “*Zwei Stadtbewohner auf der Suche nach Liebe.*” (“*Two city dwellers looking for love.*”); that is somewhat moralizing or a fairly ridiculous title of course. It can - metabatically seen - be no coincidence that just after the year 1924 - with “*Metropolis*” and Masereel's “*The Kiss*” - the city played a leading role in the field of art again, now in a novel or a piece of writing, by John Dos Passos (1896 - 1970) with “*Manhattan Transfer*” (1925)

This work of art by Ghent and European Frans Masereel is iconic because it is simply graphically exceptionally well or suddenly perfectly depicted. It is almost anti-artistic in these times because it is completely or easily recognizable, or just not to be situated or delineated as distorted (expressionism), mystical (symbolism) in colored forms (cubism) or form-seeking colors (fauvism). The work could just as well have been carved in wood and printed on paper five hundred years earlier. The work is more than “*The Kiss*” by August Rodin and also that little bit more than “*The Kiss*” by Constantin Brancusi an icon of longing for the buddy, the partner, that one love with which one thinks (thinks) one must (must) unite. It shows an improbably inexhaustible urge for a deep bond with one other. The philosopher Plato (Πλάτων, circa 427 BC - 347 BC and not to be confused with the exceptional writer of writers or at least one of the greatest political (indeed) analysts of the 20th century, Andrei Platonov - Андрей Платонов, 1899 - 1951) already spoke in his “*Symposium*” (circa 385 BC) about the universal “search for the other half”, a mythological representation of course, the reason for which we do not need to say anything here (the Gods who after all... blah blah...). That well-known text fragment was honestly far-fetched, but as is the case with all myths, it answered a fundamental human question: why connect ourselves to another person, and preferably and especially even forever to that one!?! Frans Masereel actually explains that question here like an old-fashioned, solid schoolmaster. Consequently, one needs zero “*layers*” to understand this work. Of course, one must first encounter or find the work concretely, which is physically much easier than with those stupid paintings of which usually only one was made, unless one, as a painter, was very happy to be tempted to make various “*own copies*” of coveted work for the precious money. Formally, Masereel uses the so-called environment or a very large part of the background in relation to the foreground of the two young people surrendering to each other (young is the future and everyone loves future-future-future plus those who remain young at heart are ... young!) to explain precisely this foreground in a strengthening way. That is no coincidence of course, because it is an art method that is doubly formally known as cold, ever-reheated tasty porridge. Not only had almost every painter since ab urbe condita and therefore long before the invention of perspective internally arranged representations so that one could, as it were, hold exercises for student surveyors. But in the meantime, something like Gestalt psychology had started around 1900. And those ... parts ... completely ... Well, you know how it is because if you are a man, when you are attracted to a woman you first look at ... then ... to finally ... And Frans Masereel did this even before you because he was alive and kicking then and absorbing impressions and emitting expressions, next to being a serious stud.

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

There are more blocks of houses than these two blocks framing the view, which at the same time make both sides extremely dynamic. You can try to count all the blocks because we don't; really don't feel like it. There was unimaginable construction here - and in height! It is chock full of blocks of houses, some of which approach the skyscrapers of New York. That city in what is still the New World - where is that new world now and is this world, if it exists, also given capital letters as initials? - was a place where in 1924 Frans Masereel had certainly never been and whose skyline he could therefore only know from images, in books, magazines or films. Those apartment blocks or skyscrapers of "*The Kiss*" by Masereel stand there similar to architectural pillars, an art element that had been used in various ways millions of times since the earliest Greeks. These pillars have a second meaning because pillars were there in these times and from the end of the 19th century in various, let's say deeply separated constructions and afterwards until about the eve of WWII in enormous development: the pillarization! Literally visible in striking architecture and concrete politics and present in all kinds of social ways in almost all of the then existing Western European societies, you had almost everywhere 3/4/5 pillars that carried the canopy of heaven above the territory of the pillar worshipers. There was the usually dominant Catholic pillar that was often double because it consisted of a more working-class next to a more bourgeois sub-pillar. Unless you were colorblind, you could not ignore the red socialist and blue liberal pillars. A little later, brown and red communist pillars emerged or would very soon even push away the other pillars completely, if not definitively. But let us first or only here look at our tangible or visible loved ones who were probably workers. Otherwise they would of course live in a posh villa or a townhouse or simply in the countryside. That from two different and literally

completely opposite buildings, say two real or philosophical/political pillars, two people - residents perhaps, visitors perhaps, even ... thieves, then heart thieves? - reach out to each other with their hands and lips and hearts, effectively kiss each other, it is of great and not just purely sentimental or cozy amorous importance.

The title of this work is "*The Kiss*". And that is in Dutch "*De Kus*", as it is stated on the website page of the Ghent museum about this work. That is - we may say it now or almost confess - not correct. The correct or only title is "*Le baiser*" as one neatly even colorblind but not completely blind; no work of art is ever signed with braille, don't ask us why because we would do it if we happened to be visual artists. Just look at the bottom left in the pencil for the handwritten indication of the title, next to the mention "14/28" or the number of this edition. Masereel was certainly mainly French-speaking throughout his life, of course because as an adult he almost always lived in France; do you know a single Frenchman who speaks another language or wants to speak another language at all? French is a fantastic language that is apparently spoken by its natives while they think they are the center and more of the world. Masereel certainly knew Dutch. The fact that he gave this title in French was of course, besides something obvious linguistically, above all a lame joke. The French word "baiser" or "kiss" has the somewhat milder "*bisou*" as a synonym. But "*baiser*" as a French verb or written in exactly the same way as the noun "*baiser-kiss*" means a little more that happens while one continues kissing or has just ended up doing so: fucking. "*On va baiser?*" ("*Let us go to fuck?*") is something that is now easily said in dance halls and so on, but in free-spirited environments such as that of Frans Masereel, it was not pronounced but simply done. By the way, it has been known for centuries that French people - at least in the so-called higher circles - fuck each other like rabbits, something that pays off because "we know each other" or regardless of their respective ... pillars! The ever delightful and ideal son-in-law next to the reader at the hearth Bart Van Loo (1973) already wrote about it in his popular "*France trilogy. Eating! Reading/Making love!*" (2011). La douce France is also or even more la pounce France, if you mean what we read - or something like that. Further on we will make the connection between kissing and making love a bit more explicit, as it was certainly present here in this title and naturally flows from the work or the image of "*The Kiss*". However, the title of the work could have been somewhat moralizing: "*Make love not war*". But that was not interesting because then artist FM - the man cut those letters in his wood blocks in the blink of an eye - immediately gave a 'layer' to this work, through the title that somehow remained somewhat without complete concealment. Although complete nonsense or total non-conformity with the apparent content of the image in question is perhaps the most interesting for a title - quoi? Whether Masereel could mumble a few words of English, we do not know and we do not expect that either. But as said, he could do much more than mumble or stumble in Dutch.

"*De Kus*" is therefore the familiar or fixed title for this work for the Flemish - usually Dutch speakers - who, not coincidentally, en masse also know a lot of the almost always graphic work of Frans Masereel because they love it very much. We will just say that we are not Flemish nationalists at all, but it is undeniable that French speakers, at least in Belgium, can be called backward people, culturally or humanly speaking, because they look down on and sneer at almost everything that concerns "*le flamand*". One should hear them pronounce it so intensely disapprovingly or one almost wants to attack the speaker's throat, except that this .... - oops, and we will hold back because we do not want any complaints about racism or tralalala. Nevertheless, for once we do not have a language battle about the title of this work, so to speak. It is probably due to the great actual stupidity of the French speakers who hardly want to learn a word of Dutch, that up to now a culture war has never broken out about the

correct title: "*Le baiser*" or perhaps "*De Kus*". And if that had happened, we repeat that this is more of a coincidence, that would testify to enormous irony because it would completely go against the ideal of Frans Masereel, not only in his entire long and downright impressive life's work - what a man or a real or great artist!!! - but even within .... this one work!!! Indeed, every small child who at least speaks Dutch - and in this case even only or mainly a Flemish dialect - knows that a "kiss" has the word "zoen" as a synonym. The word "zoen" has the verb form "zoenen" and that means exactly the same as the verb "kussen": kissing! According to our increasingly poor knowledge of the language, "zoen/zoenen" has no similar alternative in French. "Zoen/zoenen" are seen as such as a bit more modest or less lustful than "kiss/kissing", do you understand? But. Always the eternal but or at least if you know Dutch, a knowledge that is therefore (???) not shared by the majority of at least the French-speaking Belgian compatriots or also residents of the EU. In any case, the Dutch word "verzoenen" means - as in "*een verzoenend gebaar*" - a lot because in English it should be translated as "*a concialtory gesture*". "Verzoenen" is not 'really' "zoenen" but it comes very close to it. But you know that! You know smoking the peace pipe! And if you are against tobacco, you know and have perhaps experienced the kiss of peace or the "*verzoening/reconciliation*!"

Then think of the blocks of houses or pillars from which both protagonists approach/hang/float/fly towards each other ... From the end of the 19th century, political and ideological pillars stood directly opposite each other. Something like forging coalitions was not possible in the early parliamentary democracy of the 19th century. It was a local and national battle that was often literally fought to the death with countless life-long, mentally, physically and/or socially horribly mutilated victims, including for "*the soul of the child*"! Let us think of the train of "*The Kiss*" that was of pure survival importance for leading Catholic Belgium in order to keep its electorate at home by the hearth and under the church tower, away from the godless socialism in the cities and heavily industrialized regions! Moreover, there was something else or the well-known "*more*" - and now even more! When publishing "*The Kiss*" in 1924, Frans Masereel had made incessantly and countless anti-war drawings throughout the terrible experience of 1914 - 1918, where French against German workers fought, especially among socialists; there was no International anymore because of all nationalism! No more .. EU! Or no EU already, as you wish. These blocks of houses, these architectural pillars were also the countries of old Europe. It was the Europe of 1919 - 1920 in which the treaties of Versailles and Trianon had inflicted immeasurable wounds, sometimes still unhealable for all those involved. 1924 was also precisely after 1919 - 1920 and 'also' after 1914 - 1918. Versailles and Trianon were without the slightest doubt the source of the outbreak of WWII. The well-known British historian Norman Davis (1939) calls Europe in a constant war from 1914 to 1990; he will extend that 'in the meantime' because from a perspective of 2022 - 2024/? By the way, we know the work of this historian reasonably well and certainly have a lot of respect for his work and intellectual capacity. But we therefore (sic) do not care about his clear disdain for "*small historiography*"; after all, we use both approaches and find that philosophically and democratically useful, if not necessary. His position is simply ridiculous and incomprehensible. Besides, each cow blows wind on her own udders. Frans Masereel was also such a double-decker. All his life he was, call it a do-gooder, idealist or whatever; he did his best to ... man .. society ... uplift. In addition, he liked to make some cozy love with his daily coffee and glass of wine. And descending to the arts, to that one work of art to be made again and again: here he flew at a high level, of something like idealism of course and at the same time at the so-called formal art level.

With the considerations around the meaning of "*kus/zoen/verzoening*", we must again - see **Jenny Montigny** - point out the fundamental philosophical character of Dutch, a language

that, like any other language, is difficult and yet learnable, even for .... er .... In any case, every ambitious philosophy department anywhere in the world can gradually start considering scheduling Dutch as a minor in the philosophy program. "*The Kiss*" is really - look at the image and compare it with the words - about a kiss, because the title of this work is not like the ultimately extremely stupid but oh so well-known and quoted to death title "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" by a certain ... er .... That title creator and so-called wit and actually a big little child or a form of eternal bedwetter or the gradually very much over-hyped René Magritte (1898 - 1967) was, for goodness sake, a fanatic of communism for a long time: even after the worldwide revelations in 1956 about leader Stalin? Oh dear, father Stalin did all that to get that gigantic and gigantically backward peasant nation into the industrial speed of nations. We still hear or read about this insanity or supreme cognitive dissonance to this day and undoubtedly again tomorrow. See the lifelong very interesting, hard-working amateur journalist Willy Van Damme from our dear Dendermonde, who can write beautiful, educational pieces about, let's say, ordinary life. But. Who, when it comes to big politics, is an ordinary servant of Russia, read the USSR (still alive with him!) and becomes schizophrenic. He has been a remarkable man, apparently for decades. Do you know "*Pasha Antipov/Strelnikov*" from "*Doctor Zhivago*" (fantastic book and film) then you know sourpuss and sour thinker Willy! Wasn't it the eternally sharp Henry de Montherlant (1895 - 1970) who once - in his beautiful French - said never to trust a person who can't laugh? What this driven journalist, undoubtedly enjoying a Belgian government pension that is ten to ??? times larger than an average Soviet - pardon Russian - monthly salary and who has therefore (!) never been seen to laugh for a single second as a true Parteigenosse, has been spouting off about 'big' politics on his website and in thousands of letters to the editor for years! He would not survive a single hour in his beloved Russia: cut off from the internet and thrown out of the nearest window beforehand, after which the entire contents would of course be plundered: see [Willy Van Damme's Weblog \(wordpress.com\)](http://Willy Van Damme's Weblog (wordpress.com)). If only Willy Van Damme, pardon René Magritte, had not continued working in the wallpaper sector, because that at least yielded democratic or almost everyone's affordable products, while in the end it could bring distraction and peace to the ordinary to occasionally unusual ones from the street or the moon, almost everywhere in their homes. As for the Suslov epigone Willy Van Damme - again, living richly with a Belgian government pension and probably previously appointed party politically in of course a government service known for its clientelism (or self-service for and by its own staff - haha) who ... But come on or are we now supposedly too 'personal'? Although he likes to shit from his fat villa and constantly on the corrupt and capitalist Belgium and its tralala and tralalie. What he has felt the need to write for two years now about the Ukraine affair is inhuman and purely crappy. Although we like to hear and stimulate other bells and have had serious problems with "*our big mouth*" professionally and privately, too much is too much and we have not read that blog of Willy Van Damme for a number of years. Yet we want to take another look because with the non-Stalinist hope of 'self-purification'; really. His work - an apparently life's work unfortunately - is, together with his previous years of whining about the also by him highly praised Bashar al-Assad (1965) in Syria, a real example for future academic historians and even philosophers about manipulation of 'truth', in addition to predominantly effective mainly beautiful reporting when it concerns local or 'halal' news. Or how one can be schizophrenic about political reporting. But long live the freedom of writing and speaking! Although a little straightforwardness or elementary honesty is in his place, right. Compared to a true art giant like Frans Masereel, René Magritte is the level of his shoe sweeper - or did Masereel walk around in the South of France mainly with feather-light sandals!? Frans Masereel has produced a remarkable number of intensely attractive and eternal works, although mainly in his first ten years after WWI; who is going to point this out to him as a shortcoming seen in the usually suffocating light of an entire oeuvre? Please! Not

only because of his extreme later expensiveness but even in the form of simply affordable reproductions, we have never seen walls of houses 'wallpapered' with a Magritte outside of student rooms; And there he hangs in his place or is what he means in itself; an artist on the level of cooing students. Masereel, on the other hand, who ... Inseparable from that - claim the opposite! - Frans Masereel was a different quality of person. After all, he was in word and thought, in action and deed a pacifist and internationalist, a bridge-maker or bridge-builder. No slave, no servant of political lords or capitalists but a simple very hard working man who made 'figurines' that appealed to top writers and almost every very ordinary to ... person. And where possible he was a pedagogue because he voluntarily taught young people. Effectively, just like his great friend Romain Rolland he would rave about communism in the second half of the 1930s and 'therefore' visit the USSR, then already the largest graveyard in the world for murdered compatriots, allies even countless other internationalists - but Potemkin was alive because the foreigners who only visited for a short time got to see nothing but something 'good'! Both raved about that communism from an anti-fascism but were never members of the party to our knowledge, the complete mirror image of fascism: brown next to red fascism.

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

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

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

We are going to say roughly that we like to refer to this lecture but because of only two arms and so on and even because of growing older or weaker somewhat less than two, we have not analyzed this lecture, not even looked at it. Undoubtedly an interested reader of this study and of that lecture can find parallels, in addition to also or only contrasts? We ourselves have a whole series of books about Frans Masereel that we have not yet been able to go through in their entirety, because we are waiting for a blessed moment when we have the time and desire to make a thematic study about Frans Masereel possible for us. The man did indeed live a long time and - therefore (?) - produced an enormous amount, always the same or making woodcuts on the assembly line next to some other and especially much less successful work. We do not want to repeat it too much but remain honest because Frans; a genius with the gouge but a klutz with the brush. So what because who can say that he is already a genius in one art domain? Elsewhere on this website we will attempt to make a small plea so that many, at least future, artists in the world will want to 'produce' a lot less. Fortunately, very fortunately, there are quantitatively a lot less 'real' artists than 'ordinary' people. Imagine if it were the other way around: more artists than ordinary people!? Although we would like to make a quick plea for more active art in passing, both in the areas of music and visual arts - including or especially during school hours where one is better ... In any case, an ordinary person has to look at all that artistic violence or even buy most of it (although the reverend artist Rubens was a great buyer of art, from before and from his own time). And that under the question; is all that really necessary, is every person, even a so-called creative person like a visual artist, called to always be busy and busy and ...? And wouldn't he or she be better off, entirely or from the well-known 'a certain' moment, occupying themselves as a nurse, engineer, garbage collector (of extreme importance!) etc. with more really useful things: in their free time they can also paint top works, sculpt, ...! That sounds a bit harsh, even cynical, and as far as the artist as a whole is concerned partly desperate, but it is simply a responsible



question. In any case, and we have already mentioned it, the relatively young Masereel, seen within his artistic career, was busy carving wood on the theme of the city in 1924. Later, one would get quite a fuss - we find little of it because both his subtlety and his strength are apparently nowhere to be found here - from him on the theme of the sea, which can't have been a coincidence for someone who lived in Nice for so long and from 1949 onwards. Wasn't that town still on the sea then? By the way, and certainly not to single out the just-quoted professor Steven Jacobs - we had not even heard of this man before this fragment from Youtube - there is, so to speak, a perfect parallel to be drawn with the international epidemic academic publication fuss of the last thirty years or so, which can be simply summarized as "*Publish or Perish*". The ever-present Gaussian curve tells us that excellent to actually groundbreaking work - both in the field of art and therefore in the academic field - is very, very small. We readily admit that we can be accused of a hidden agenda here, but several times over the last roughly 35 years (at our current age of 61) we have refused various in themselves beautiful offers for publications because-because. And that was our scientific view in cases that 99.999999% of people would have jumped on. Even (haha) regarding our - pardon - paradigmatic approach to human behavior in times of crisis such as WWII, we have hesitated quite a bit about whether to start letting go and in which parts. Secondly, at a very strategic moment like in the spring of 2015, we were actually stabbed in the back or simply sabotaged by our formal academic supervisor when we asked him to help us to finally start publishing; please. Incidentally, he would not be the only obstructor or suffocator at the so-called academic top level around that groundbreaking research. But now it is also about a really extremely sensitive political, moral, historical and ??? subject: politics around WWII. We will talk about that later and unfortunately necessary.

On the other hand, genius artists, next to similar scientists, almost without exception always stand at the top of a pyramid, or at a level where they are figuratively if not literally supported by so-called lesser gods, from their country and tradition. These lesser gods can in themselves be of a very high level, at least on a national level, as we may say with painter Emile Claus: see .. **Emile Claus/Jenny Montigny** ... It is extremely rare to have to deal with a form of one-hit wonders such as Evard Munch (1863 - 1944). That one hit really came out of nowhere, because from a Scandinavian desert in the field of visual arts. He himself would not even be the impetus for the formation of schools! Of course, comparative art is not about sprinting or basketball and such: try to give operational definitions of why this or that artist or scientist is better or more important than the other. In any case, through a fair amount of experience we are of the firm, motivated, well-founded, if never concrete opinion that, as far as Belgian visual artists in particular are concerned from the period that interests us a lot, 1880 - 1950, there are effectively hundreds of relevant or attractive artists; Flemish, Walloons as well as Brussels residents (many came from Saint-Josse-ten-Node or lived there; there is nothing left of that now, but it is only a matter of time before we are obedient to certain rules). One and the other have as a consequence ... No, we first make the distinction between intention and consequence. An intention is an idea that one makes in advance as an artist or scientist of what the importance of an attempt at a work of art or written thought within an article or book will entail. An effect is that idea that almost everyone can make afterwards or from the very moment after the appearance of a work of art or article/book of the then as well as future value. We find it of the utmost pedagogical importance that the 'youth' is taught logic in an introductory and above all illustrative way. The distinction between intention and effect must certainly be part of this, although we hope to read interesting analyses one day about whether effects cannot be partly conceived through intentions, while ... blah blah blah ... We add this mention of the future importance of something creative because from a moment that a certain breadth of society has established that 'something' as a creation is valuable, this will in

principle be even more important in the future. In this respect, a distinction can certainly be made between art and science, but we cannot go into that now. One consequence is that for Belgium there are nevertheless masses of very beautiful works of art for this period 1880 - 1950 - subtract a bit but do not add too much because with the living it is almost always expensive or just read on - available to, in other words; soft prices. It is often to be astonished by it and in any case it is one more reason to be very suspicious of modern, say living, especially established artists who charge prices - as is known almost never themselves because their instigators, next to later their parasites the gallery owners, who also have to ... - who are not only morally and so on insane and scandalous, but therefore unattainable for more than 99.9999% of the Belgian population. This observation is on the other hand a plea in itself - which we will discuss elsewhere later - to pay much more attention, so also financially, say when spending your personal art budget, to very young, not yet established artists.

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

To be honest, we have not investigated to what extent this graphic "*The Kiss*", a standard work of art of the Low Countries and of all humanity, belongs to the permanent, that is, hanging collection of the Ghent museum. The relatively many times that we have visited that super interesting museum over the last 45 years or so, we have, to be honest, no memory of a single graphic on the walls - as far as the permanent collection is concerned. For another thing, we have often looked at the floor there, certainly when "*Arte Povera*" was still represented there, something we laughed about for a long time at the time, but which gave us a great idea thirty years later or around our 55th birthday: with sincere thanks to "*Arte Povera*" and the museum! What are all those works hanging on all those walls doing? Every now and then a curator or director comes along who wants to tell a new story for bedtime and museum time and the docile foot soldiers of the visitors come in large numbers or not, attracted by this song of the New Lorelei, as long as it is not too new or the city or Flemish politics intervenes. Now everyone knows that Frans Masereel was a passionate world improver, someone who is normally remembered as the former teacher. Does that still

correspond with the 'modern', say current - and therefore ever changing, haha - image of a visual artist? Shouldn't they all be mainly ... or even ... or just ...? We wipe our feet on this presentation of all the curators and directors in the world and we always felt terribly cheated if we ever took the trouble to go and see a so-called super important thematic or curated exhibition. That was then put together by an unbelievably handsome curator - always world famous; was that person perhaps born that way? Wow, what a formidably wonderful woman, her mother!! That should be used to breed descendants, right!? - or preferably by a new museum director who had invented the hot water of art for the thousand and first time. One does just that with the knowledge of the difference between intention and effect, because from the choc of trials and errors comes the light.

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

The Cathedral of Our Lady of Doornik/Tournai is one of the most important buildings and churches in Belgium. It radiates world class as a whole and in all respects. It is in itself one of the largest churches in the world in Romanesque style. Unfortunately, in the middle of the 13th century it was decided to demolish the choir and replace that Romanesque style with the new modern style, the Gothic - apparently people did not know then that every modern thing is old tomorrow. That choir has an enormous stylistic inconsistency or does not fit with the remaining Romanesque main part, although such a mixture is often pleasant and even valuable in itself because it can be called very open to democratic. One cannot imagine that there were wishes to also adapt that rest to the modern/new. Fortunately, that wish never saw the light of day. The result of the Gothic choir is nevertheless impressive. The choir is truly stretched to the architectural extreme. It provides a breathtaking effect but gives structural problems that had to be solved early on by an enormous iron construction that literally holds that choir together. These reinforcements are not a pretty sight in themselves but the effect of the choir remains impressive in any case. It can hardly be a coincidence that the very

important comic book publisher "*Casterman*" started in that same Tournai. Anyone who takes a first step into the choir and, because of its uniqueness, wants to continue and walk the entire ambulatory, experiences nothing other than the experience of walking next to or through gigantic open strips. The cardboard of each strip naturally consists of the stone parts of that choir. And these, as building elements, as it were neutral or at least necessary to support the upper part or the roof, are actually nothing other than the reasons for the thing itself; the stained glass windows! Walk here on a normal, not even wonderfully sunny day, and the experience is indescribable and a walk through that entire choir, where of course the incidence of light partly changes, makes it completely unique. In Christian or at least Catholic churches, every square metre was ultimately an occasion or obligation to decorate something: from the floor over the walls and pillars along the purely tangible empty space (with hanging crucifixes) to the ceilings and roofs. The stained glass window is probably the most striking element in terms of architecture as well as art. To this day, stained glass windows are not only restored as carefully as possible, but are also continually made new. See, among others, multi-artist and excellent art critic Harold Van de Perre (1937). See [WERKEN | Harold Van de Perre](#) Harold is a man who gave a lecture with slides in the town hall of Dendermonde around Jan Van Eyck (circa 1390 - 1441) around 1980. And that lecture would remain with us so deeply that around 2005 it would also provide us with an article on art resistance in WWII, a case that has plunged us to this day and for much longer into analysis of political behavior around WWII with 'among other things' more than ten thousand pages of analyses and various internationally important scientific discoveries. How seeds can be sown. With certain consequences.

Indeed, Frans Masereel is in his own way and impressively throughout his entire career a maker of ... stained glass windows. Wait a minute. Stained glass windows are made of glass and iron; his work is (mainly) carved wood printed on paper. Probably every piece of glass ever made anywhere is multi-coloured; his graphic work is exclusively in black and white. And it is no detail that stained glass windows are representations of images but at the same time let light through or that they mediate it through their own presence. Every graphic work by Frans Masereel has an impenetrable support; paper. Very many stained glass windows, or at least in the most publically noticeable way, are located in churches. We have never seen a single woodcut by "*FM*" in a church, or it was a written-off, deconsecrated church that functioned as a museum. We have already said above that we want to study in depth in ways a religiosity present in the work of the freethinker next to liberal Frans Masereel one day; Lord let us live long to write much that is interesting! However, we may or must say here that there is one very important thing that all stained glass art of all in any case older churches, such as the cathedral of Tournai, have in common with the artist Frans Masereel: wanting to educate the people or is that no longer allowed in retrospect, even looking ahead? Does playing at school take place for a long time, albeit only between the ages of 3 and 18, even until the age of 25, and is it definitely over after that time? Isn't education and learning for every day, until the last day, the day of dementia praecox!? Will we - at least the believers - not also be asked at the Last Judgment how much we have studied? In our almost twenty-year research into political behavior around WWII, especially in the Belgian city of Ronse, we have done an extremely large amount of applied genealogical research for the period roughly 1800 - 1950. We could not help but notice that up until WWI people could not or hardly write/read. From the beginning of the glorious story of the cathedrals and other large churches to ordinary village churches and even chapels, the stained glass window was there to teach the good people something about the broad story of that building where they were or where they constantly and at least once a week came together to celebrate the story itself, that of Jesus. The stained glass windows were the comic strips of that time. Especially the earlier "*novels in*

*picture*" by Frans Masereel from 1918 to around 1930 are every time like the corridor in the choir of, among others, the cathedral of Tournai.

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

We have already seen *"The Kiss"* as a political window, through our analysis of the phenomenon of the columns. We can use the idea of a window, of a special stained glass window again, both on a purely human and universal level, but also politically. In the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo (1475 - 1564) had man meet God, not with a kiss 'obviously' but with that other form of touch or almost touch - see those fingers. They lay/hung at - almost - the same height and with completely identical size, say equality. That in itself was unprecedented because that in the Holy of Holies of the Vatican, also at a command of his heavenly jubilant overlord of the Church, the Pope. That equal descent on the one hand or elevation on the other hand between God and man had naturally become a complete equality between the two people in *"The Kiss"*, which took place somewhere in Berlin, somewhere in New York, Calcutta, ... Yet the aim was identical or a real encounter. Admittedly, God is situated a little higher in Michelangelo's work than man - Adam, and Eve could also be considered, although she was not given a place, possibly because Michelangelo was probably in favor of male love? - then the young woman and the young man of *"The Kiss"* are to be found on completely the same floors, although not on the ground floor. But they are present in other blocks, in other columns. Okay, this was the new city, even if it was as old as the Roman street, because Old Rome in particular had been an extremely large city. Loneliness and longing were in urban areas of all times and regions, whether it was the Old World (Rome), Old Europe (Berlin, Paris, Ghent, etc.) or the New World (New York, etc.). In effect, the city had long been, and certainly in the spirit of Frans Masereel, a place for relative or, at that time, maximum possible freedom. Let us not forget that he spent his youth growing up and his education as an artist in the proud city of Ghent, also with a top artist who had been imbued with Ghent and its traditions all his life, such as Jules De Bruycker. Ghent had always been

one of the most turbulent, rebellious or free cities in all of Western Europe, until the end of the 16th century - except in ... 1302, hahaha. That was an incredibly deep tradition that lived on in everyone who was born there or especially would grow up there. In our long article from 2006 "*Een zwaar gewapend tapijt met een subtiële vingerwijzing naar de vrijheid. Een wandtapijt rond Ronse als voorbeeld van symbolische verzetskunst uit WOII.*" ("*A heavily armed carpet with a subtle reference to freedom. A tapestry around Ronse as an example of symbolic resistance art from WWII.*"). We were immediately asked by a certain professor of history Bruno De Wever UG to shorten the article for publication in the magazine BTNG as well as to expand it through a doctorate in art history on similar ambiguous art resistance in Western Europe. Because we wanted to go 'further' and did not feel like taking side steps, we declined those offers, but the fact was that the Ghent tapestry weaver Gaston Woedstad (1886 - 1950) discussed in that article, was deeply influenced by the very long tradition of Ghent rebellion in that tapestry from 1943 or the full occupation period.

But city air made it free, it did not make you happy. Conversely, it did not mean at all that village air or the environment of the countryside automatically meant that one was much less free there but still more happy. Being born, growing up, making love and getting married and having children; it was all fairly fixed, rock solid until death. The country person was, as the Dutch say, "*honkvast*", bound to his house or "*homely*". There are countless studies on the changes or transitions from a person as a resident of the countryside to a city person or resident of and - mainly - factory worker in the city. The most famous example or expressed in an artistic here literary-theatrical way, about the mental gap that was created in the 19th century and for decades afterwards between the Flemish countryside and a city (in Belgium, Northern France, New York...) is the play "*Het gezin van Paemel*" ("*The Paemel family*", 1903) by Cyriel Buysse (1859 - 1932), a particularly intriguing possibly by too many still underestimated even forgotten writer. We are (have been) huge film buffs and have only rarely been moved by theatre productions, but our fondest memories are of a performance of this iconic play by theatre group NTG in an inspiring direction by Dirk Tanghe (1956). The journey to and further life in the city brought with it terrible social misery. We ourselves would live for a very long time from 1982 in a very old workers' house in Ghent - Stokerijstraat 57 corner Bandelierstraat); halo! - where it was very pleasant with, among other things, some great neighbours (and only one lesser one). But it was a neighbourhood that must have been rotten with poverty for decades. Many people must have felt terribly displaced, like drowning people in a sea of stone and smoke. The enormous cloud of smoke from the locomotive in "*The Kiss*" by Masereel certainly stood for itself, but also for the unimaginable filthy smoke development due to the burning of masses of coal, both for the housing and for the countless factories and innumerable small workshops. One cannot imagine it, but for the nose and other human parts all these cities must have caused daily certain discouragement and simply health breakdowns. Nevertheless, and even more so for the fortune-seekers who finally wanted to taste the fruits of a better life via the medium of the city, the hormones raged continuously or daily at the sight of other interesting appearances like this woman. "*The Kiss*" is a "*Big Yes*" for life - also or especially ultimately in the city that all together yielded enormous advantages for most of its inhabitants.

We said that we would touch upon a political dimension in this paragraph. We ourselves have no idea how long we have known the work "*The Kiss*" by Frans Masereel - a very long time - or when we first encountered it. You undoubtedly have one or more memories of when you first met a person or event, such as the birth of the first child, or ... Our personal memory contains an enormous number of images, so much so that we can sometimes recognize works of visual art that we had never seen before but of which we certainly recognize the style or the

hand of the master. We have no idea where studies exist on something like the psychology of the image, but it goes without saying that probably every person, at least in our Western culture dominated by images for two millennia, has been influenced and marked by one or more images from a very young age. In our study on Emile Claus, we give an analysis of the comic strip work of the famous duo "*Suske en Wiske*" in which we try to show the connection between the portrait of Jenny Montigny by Emile Claus and this comic strip "*Het brommende brons*" ("*The humming bronze*" + 1971). We read that comic strip at the time itself or were between seven and nine years old. That reading and especially one image from that comic strip clearly made a lifelong impression. It goes without saying that what happened during the Second World War throughout almost all of Europe left an indelible impression on every person. WWII came barely after the end of the First World War; there were only 22 years between them! That means nothing other than that an incredible number of Europeans were confronted twice by these terrible events. Frans Masereel was known for his entire life - which can be ridiculed or respected - as a world improver: he wanted to contribute to the ideal of a better, that is a more beautiful and more just world. With no place for war or room for healing its wounds. His and our "*The Kiss*" dates from 1924 or very shortly after the end of WWI at the end of 1918. Is it too much to ask of the human eye and then the human memory to have received this image with the greatest possible sensitivity and ... political processing!? We have been able to read or study relatively little throughout our lives, not least in picture books such as art books - often, although not always, with much 'text'. In Belgium or at least in Flanders, the publisher Mercatorfonds has been at a very high level since 1965 and others such as the Davidsfonds, Lannoo, Ludion ... have also contributed their share to artistic popular education. As mentioned, we ourselves do not know of any studies on the reception and further effects of images. Of course everyone knows something about the value or especially the power of what is called propaganda; Nazis and Soviets were formally masters in their times. And what is (capitalist) advertising other than a very intelligent and successful, because it absolutely certainly achieves its goal (increasing sales) continuous brainwashing with images and some text? But we ask you directly: what reception and effect have images by Frans Masereel, internationally at least in the then Europe and especially most in Western Europe, had on at least sensitive souls?

The question can be asked differently. Did art like this discussed "*The Kiss*" function as a stained glass window, as a window, as glasses, as a telescope ultimately with a view of or insight into the so-called better future? That future meant for this Europe finally better international structures or mutual cooperation - or negatively and at the same time unimaginably positively formulated with "Never again war!". We are not thinking here of the foundation of the UNO at the end of WWII. We are thinking very precisely of the beginning of the Benelux between 'only' a few neighbouring countries, including Belgium, the country where Masereel was born and grew up but where he was not wanted until the end of the 1920s because of his anti-war attitude and actions and even entering the territory was "Verboten!". Did Masereel, as that great and very productive graphic artist and by very many famous European writers beloved because by them asked as an illustrator, leave a deep and lasting impression on a number of interesting readers? Somewhere now people are, and are constantly influenced, simply overwhelmed by information. The internet is very interesting but scrolling and rolling with a smartphone makes countless young and old people extremely stupid. It is also both ridiculous and tragic as well as fundamentally undemocratic and inhumane that the algorithms that constantly control and manage these people may not be consciously or openly communicated to them, so that they would get to know themselves better in this scientific way! Talk about irony over sarcasm. By the way, try to view even one interesting image or important work of art on such a ridiculously small screen of a

smartphone. That alone is a reason for us not to purchase such a technical thing. It will probably have all kinds of really useful functions, such as in the field of advancing care of personal health and certainly for older and disabled people. It is theoretically interesting but almost certainly in terms of intellectual, personal archaeology unachievable, to examine the Bildung of the following people, the Frenchmen Jean Monnet (1888 - 1979) and Robert Schuman (1886 - 1963) and Konrad Adenauer (1876 - 1967). After the eternally reasonable Belgians, willing to compromise, had given the starting signal with the Benelux, these gentlemen, among others and very strongly inspiring, would be involved in the establishment of first the "EGKS" or "ECSC" or "*the European Coal and Steel Community*" (1952). Which would therefore (...) result in the EEC later EU. And the latter is without the slightest doubt, although of course doubtful and constantly discussed in terms of the 'modalities', the most important political organization ever on the wide European continent. Do you not like peace - and prosperity? We ask you further: do these three extremely important European politicians consequently - we reason the other way around? - among others, have especially read and watched images of Frans Masereel, in addition to the books of his friends like Stefan Zweig? In addition to of course their own extremely penetrating personal and political experiences throughout WWI and WWII.

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

#### North by Northwest - next to all cardinal directions?

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



Doesn't the covering or "*die Beschränkung*" make the covered thing even more attractive? Isn't eroticism, among other things or especially, at its most spicy when not depicted or of course through the use of suggestion?

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

Frans Masereel came from a liberal background and met, among others, as a teacher the very important Belgian - Ghent graphic artist Jules De Bruycker (1870 - 1945), a giant among European graphic artists who is apparently not well-known internationally. That seems to be the fate of many great artists because in a quantitative way there are actually too many qualitatively important artists, certainly in an art historically insanely rich region like this part of the North Sea; how can we continue to pay them all a certain amount of attention? In any case, Jules De Bruycker was a man who was technically certainly much smarter or more capable than Frans Masereel would ever become. Former pupil and soon great and famous master Frans Masereel would always keep it somewhere reasonably rough, albeit very plastic or swirling or full of life. Both had one substantive thing in common throughout their lives: the attention and love for the common people. Jules De Bruycker would de facto never leave the three towers of Ghent while Frans Masereel (who much later after WWII would have these Three Towers printed in no less than 750 copies!) would also be forced by the circumstances of WWI to become an internationalist. He was without a doubt a true European avant la lettre of hard, institutional politics. In that sense he is nothing more than a forerunner or even a pioneer of the ... EU. And that EU is, despite all the justified criticism and the tons of cynicism also within European politicians, without the slightest doubt the most important political and economic achievement on this continent. That EU is much more important than what one could call a form of shadowy predecessor with the "*Pax Romana*". In the relatively short history of this EU, a number of political founding fathers invariably come to light, which goes without saying. But let us not forget the role of artists, great writers such as Stefan Zweig (1881 - 1942) and Romain Rolland (1866 - 1944), and not least the visual artist and their mutual friend Frans Masereel. We see current European top artists - often, mostly or always starting out as world improvers or 'critical' minds - do nothing 'on this extremely important political and value level, other than play the intangible cynics with 'comments' or internally masturbate artistically by openly or implicitly admitting to copying great previous masters and above all; profit from the gigantic free internal market or make money galore if they are not already licking the soles of the super-rich, especially in the USA or, God forbid, in Dubai and the surrounding area. Human. And pathetic. And un-Masereel. And un-Brueghel.

Just like this unique and to this day at least in Flanders very beloved artist Jules De Bruycker, Frans Masereel did not remain an unworldly artist throughout his life, now purely formally seen. That was also impossible because both wanted to tell stories, indeed, in the drastically deep yet broad and far-reaching footsteps of one of the top graphic artists in history, next to almost en passant because for only ten years the most important painter of all time, the one and only Pieter Brueghel (the Old, circa 1525 - 1530 - 1569). ... see Pieter Brueghel .... Frans

Masereel would like to return to this Brueghel in all kinds of work. Throughout the crushing experience of WWI, Masereel was a pacifist in heart and soul and drawing and engraving hands - just like ... Just like Pieter Brueghel indeed. And despite that obvious attitude, that is to say, giving not the most pleasant messages for those in power, he was enormously popular because he was very quickly gathered by the great and the good of the European world, read the absolute nobility, read the gentlemen of standing who led armies and death squads through cities and regions. We strongly suspect that Frans Masereel would never experience that remarkable phenomenon.

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

We just talked about that, more specifically about the architecture of the images within this image. We used the term "*pillars*" both literally and figuratively. There are people who move because they are on their way. There are stars who move because they shine with their light and will soon disappear. There are no less than seven pieces of rotating figures (can one give that a professional name? We thank you in advance for the next edition in 20xx), in themselves images of the globe itself that turns and turns - including every day around its axis, with light and dark, work and sleep ... Frans Masereel knew his formal classics, including the horizontal line and something like visual rhyme. So many visual rhymes or metaphors for the movement of life, life in the city! Moreover, Masereel had moved from Belgium before WWI, but he knew his country inside and out and knew it, among other things or especially, as a country with the most densely populated railway network in the world, something that would never be repeated elsewhere. And that had, besides the possibilities of pure travel to the countryside and the other glorious cities of Flanders, that advantage that was purely political and clerical; keeping the workers in industrial areas where the absolute majority had become red and also somewhat less liberal, in the countryside and

therefore under and in the church tower. For a long time after WWII, masses of Flemish commuters would experience incredibly long hours on trains every day to go to work in Walloon industrial areas. A few hundred thousand of them could not cope with that and would - together with quite a few Flemish farmers - settle permanently in Wallonia alone or with the nuclear family for a better life. The losers would almost immediately put their own language aside instead of trying to be bilingual ...; Flanders, after 1585 a breeding ground for artists and ... collaborators? That is also an irony of history because in the meantime, however you look at it, Wallonia - until half a century ago one of the richest regions in the world because of - has become economically a half-lame horse that is largely kept alive by Flemish subsidies on a drip, so to speak. But let us stay with the train, of which the well-known motto is also spread in these times: "*The train is always a bit of a journey.*". That was also the case in 1924 and partly or largely pure and hard economic reality. In both perspectives, however, it was the means for smaller people, from the countryside or from smaller towns or dormitories, to get to the fully alive city - even if it was for a short day's journey, with friends, with family, indeed with the sweetheart or already the mistress. It was also no coincidence that in the larger cities next to the most important stations - in any case not the freight stations - there was an almost explosion of brothels; or they were - also - located on the edge of the large ports. The train in this famous 1924 performance by the ever-looking and sketching Frans Masereel was at the same time a purely sociological given or image that literally had its functional importance in any representation of an urban scene. It was just as naturally at the same time a metaphor for something like what one could see as the unbridled freedom of the smaller person. The really rich already had their cars then. It was above all that more or more intense of a metaphor because a person cannot live on images alone - although he can get very seriously excited by images, at least used to a certain extent because there is always the second law of Gossen (Hermann Gossen, 1810 - 1858) or the (declining) marginal utility. However. Remain hopeful and realistic! To Gossen or not to Gossen, one can never get enough of love, beauty and silence.

Frans Masereel was a man of flesh and blood, full of life with quivering flesh and boiling blood. He was known all his life for his sexual lust for life or a healthy person. Where the heart is full, the sketch pads must overflow and the train was therefore something for Masereel to laugh with say somewhat - somewhat - to go and sublimate with. But he didn't make it too difficult or without too many "*layers*" (hahaha) for his target audience. That target audience was ... everyone. In the meantime, in 1924, there had been city trains for a while, call them trams and metros. Trams and of course metros had one extra special characteristic: they liked to dive into the depths and needed shafts, tunnels or large tubes for that. We must then take a step further chronologically and mention another giant of an artist annex chronicler of the 20th century. This train as part of "*The Kiss*" by Frans Masereel, a performance that has a kiss between two people as its main subject, is nothing more than a formally proposed but substantive doubling or reinforcement of this kiss. More; it is the next stop; trains simply have multiple stations on their railway! We are now referring to the daily final phase of this kiss! Indeed, we are thinking of nothing other than the famous final kiss between the actors Cary Grant (1904 – 1986) and Eva Maria Saint (1924) in "*North by Northwest*" (1959). Director Alfred Hitchcock (1899 – 1980) has them lie down in their train carriage, kissing, and then ... Then their train enters a tunnel! You understand. Masereel was, as just mentioned, generally and lifelong known for his fairly large libido, while he was also reportedly a loyal friend of former girlfriends. You can read that and much more in the exceptionally good biography "*Masereel. Een biografie.*" ("*Masereel. A Biography.*") by the Belgian Joris Van Parys (1944). This biography was published in 1995 and has already been translated into German (1999) and French (2008) for the international reader: fine and you

can still expect it in English, in the year AD 2??? As we hope! Joris Van Parys has more bio arrows on his strong bow, by the way.

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

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

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

An afterplay - very short.

Now – for how much longer? – in communist China there is a camera hanging on every possible and especially impossible street corner, on every floor of the countless apartment blocks, in every public building that also has a corner (and where there are toilets, separate for women, men and male party members), on ... - you can go on if you like but we are fed up with it by now. With excellent facial recognition of course: someone is doing something well – or it is done even better! The ancient medieval town of Kortrijk, which is unsightly on a Chinese scale, has also introduced this fuss. Under a liberal mayor, no less. We wonder how a free-born, free-spirited and open artist like Frans Masereel would have depicted his "*The Kiss*" under these circumstances, these cameras. Pardon: would he have dared to depict it? Pardon: he would never have depicted it anyway because he had been in prison for a long time in both China and Kortrijk – from the inception of the idea of this work.

Jean-Marie, EU, september 2024.

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

T.U.S..

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

T.U.S.

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

T.U.S.

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

T.U.S.

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

T.U.S.

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

T.U.S.

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

T.U.S.



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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 \(northwestern.edu\)](#)

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 Mósá than the important fact that she had - had retained - her own Indian ... Undoubtedly she knew from countless peers, from her race, from her population group, the fate described. Sadness from the hard experience, which cannot be denied by any ideology or anything else, of a beaten group, of a way of life almost doomed to death.

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

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a4/Sandro\\_Botticelli\\_038.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a4/Sandro_Botticelli_038.jpg)

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

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

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

Jean-Marie De Dijn, EU, August 2024.

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

T.U.S.

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Out into the World, Maria Catharina Wiik (1853 –1928), oil, 1889, Ateneum, Helsinki.

T.U.S.

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Riekend III (Fragrant III), Victor Delhez (1902 – 1985), woodprint (épreuve d'artiste), signed version - 1 of probably only 8 editions, s.d., private collection.

T.U.S.

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Saint Georges and the Dragon (and a Woman), Paolo Uccello (1397 - 1475), oil, circa 1470, National Gallery, London.

T.U.S.

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Sebastiano del Piombo (Sebastiano Luciani, 1485 - 1547), Ritratto di giovane romana con cesto di frutta (La Dorotea) or La Veneziana by writer Vladimir Nabokov, circa 1512. oil, Gemäldegalerie Berlin.

T.U.S.

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Self-portrait (presumed) as Saint Catherine of Alexandria, Barbara Longhi (1552 - 1638), oil, 1589, Ravenna Art Museum.

T.U.S.

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Sistine Madonna, Raphaël (Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino, 1483 - 1520), oil, 1513 - 1514, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister Dresden.

T.U.S.

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Sofonisba Anguissola (also known as Sophonisba Angussola or Sophonisba Anguisciola, circa 1532 – 1625), Berardini Campi painting a Portrait of Sofonisba Anguissola, oil, circa 1559, Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena.

T.U.S.

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The Artist and His First Wife, Peter Paul Rubens and Isabella Brant, in the Honeysuckle Bower, Peter Paul Rubens (1577 - 1640), oil, 1609, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, München.

T.U.S.

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The Penitent Magdalene, El Greco (Doménikos Theotokópoulos or Δομήνικος Θεοτοκόπουλος, 1541 - 1614), oil, 1576 - 1578, Szépművészeti Múzeum Budapest.

T.U.S.

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The Rokeby Venus, Diego (Rodríguez de Silva y) Velázquez (1599 – 1660), oil, 1647 - 1651, National Gallery London.

T.U.S.

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Venus and Cupid with a Honeycomb, Lucas Cranach The Elder (der Ältere + circa 1472 – 1553), oil, circa 1531, Galleria Borghese Roma.

T.U.S.

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Virgin and Child in Flower Garland with Angels, Peter Paul Rubens (1577 - 1640) and Jan Brueghel The Elder (1568 - 1625), oil, 1621, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

+ Pierre-Joseph Redoute's School of botanical drawing in the Salle Buffon in the Jardin des Plantes. Julie Ribault (1789 - circa 1839). Watercolour and graphite on paper, 1830, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, United Kingdom.

T.U.S.

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Virgin and Child with Two Angels, Sandro Botticelli (born as Alessandro di Mariano di Vanni Filipepi, 1445 - 1510), tempera, circa 1490, Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien.

T.U.S.

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Virgin of Gósol (the inspiration of the face for the portrait of Gertrude Stein by Pablo Picasso - 1881 - 1976 - during 1905 - 1906), wood and polychrome, second half of 12th century, Museo Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona.

T.U.S.

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Woman reading a letter, Johannes Vermeer (1632 - 1675), oil, circa 1662 - 1663. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

T.U.S.

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Žena s vtákmi a jablkami (Woman with birds and apples), Valeria Zusana Benáčková (1924 - 2021), Reverse glass painting, s.d., private collection.

T.U.S.

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