

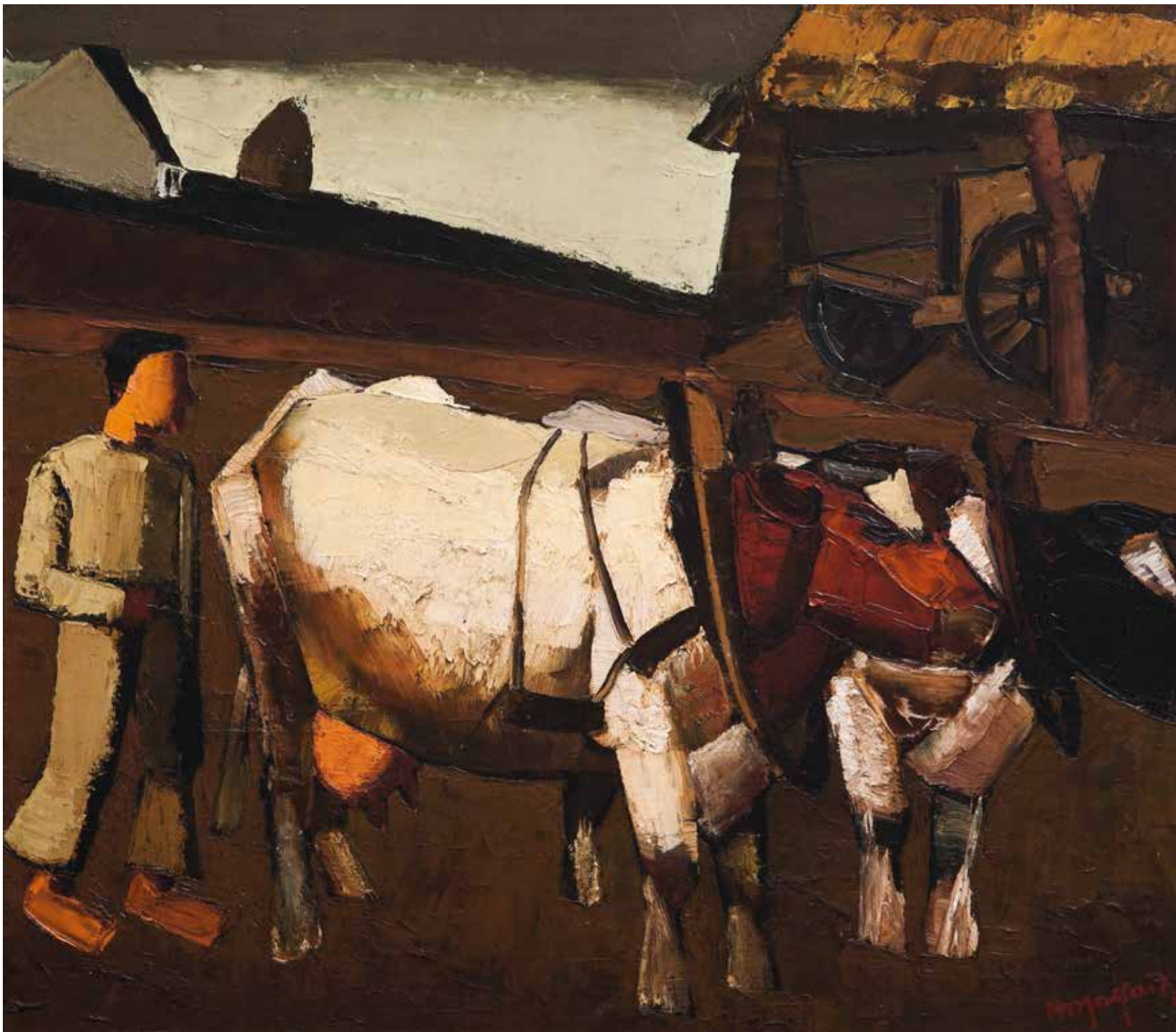
COMING

**FLEMISH ART
1880–1930**

HOME

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**WITH ESSAYS BY
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LUC VAN CAUTEREN
SVEN VAN DORST
CATHÉRINE VERLEYSSEN**



Hubert Malfait

Home from the Fields, 1923-1924

Oil on canvas, 120 × 100 cm

COURTESY OF FRANCIS MAERE FINE ARTS

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Dear Reader,

Just so you know, this book is not the Bible.

Though maybe it has more in common with Holy Writ than you'd think at first sight. Like the Bible, it's a collection of stories. Stories that are always personal, sometimes idiosyncratic, occasionally in agreement with each other and then completely at odds. A sop to future historians.

And like that other Good Book, these stories too are about people who have been dead awhile—though not long enough to have passed into legend. The artists in this book produced their most marvellous works somewhere between the end of the nineteenth century and the 1930s. Quite a few of them went on to reach a ripe old age, so there's barely a generation between them and you. There are people still alive today who knew and spoke to the painters and sculptors in this book; the works those painters and sculptors produced can be found in countless Flemish interiors. And though that makes their works much more animate, paradoxically it also makes it much harder to tell that one, ultimate story about those objects and their creators. There are too many ways to come at them; we still know them too well.

The very fact that we do still know so much about those artists and their art means that this is a selective history. It focuses on visual arts in a period that art historians tend to put in boxes with handy labels such as 'Belgian Symbolism', 'Brabant Fauvism' and 'Flemish Expressionism'. I suppose they have to call them something. But while putting things in boxes may make life simpler, it also tends to make things a lot less interesting. So in this book we've tried to avoid inside-the-box thinking. Some artists get an essay to themselves, others just a word in passing, and still others already have enough hefty volumes written about them. While this is a book about visual art, it also takes in music and literature and the broad cultural and historical context that underpinned it all. Because works of art are never created in a vacuum but in the midst of life.

An author is a child of his or her time. Which is why some interpretations in this book may seem quite similar and one author might almost be citing the other. These views are intentionally included side by side. They reveal resemblances and appropriately give extra emphasis to fundamental aspects. For what connects all the artists in this book is the way in which people looked at their works in the past and continue to look at them today. Even in these times of Luc Tuymans and Michael Borremans, those painters and sculptors are still relevant to the here and now. This is evident from the originality and quality of the collections from which the illustrations in this book were drawn, and—even more so—from the enthusiastic reactions and revealing essays we received.

Because, like it or not, we are shaped by our roots, and it's to those roots that we come home in this book.

KATHARINA VAN CAUTEREN

Léon De Smet

Woman before the Mirror, 1915

Oil on canvas, 68.2 × 50.6 cm

ANTWERP, THE PHOEBUS FOUNDATION



Edgard Tytgat

Happiness Disturbed, 1925

Oil on canvas, 61.5 × 74 cm

ANTWERP, THE PHOEBUS FOUNDATION

PREFACE

This is Me

The Flemish artists working in the period between 1880 and 1930 hold a very special place in my affections. And the reason for that fondness is that in their oeuvres I find myself. It's always a diverting experience, searching for yourself. In this case, the quest leads to works by Flemish masters in which I discover not only who I am now, but also where my roots lie. When I look at their paintings and sculptures, they not only appeal to my mind but touch my heart and soul as well.

Flanders was poor, very poor. In the towns a small number of well-to-do Francophone bourgeois lived in townhouses and millionaires' quarters, separated by broad avenues from the vast working-class districts and slums, where poverty was the only thing everyone had plenty of. In the countryside farmers and smallholders struggled day in day out to scrape a bare living from the soil. Flanders was made up of toiling countryfolk, proletariat factory workers and the bourgeoisie. Three social layers that formed the background for artists to work on.

I was born and bred in Flanders. My mother came from a very old farming family from Haspengouw. On the farmsteads, hard work and stern duty were the norm. My father came from Boutersem, a village on the River Velp where it winds and ripples into the Hageland. Coaxing anything to grow in that sandy loam demanded long hours of back-breaking labour. My grandmother on my father's side was a Baardegem innkeeper's daughter, brought up in the famous café known as 'Bij Maxens'—the name of her father, who doubled as the village philosopher.

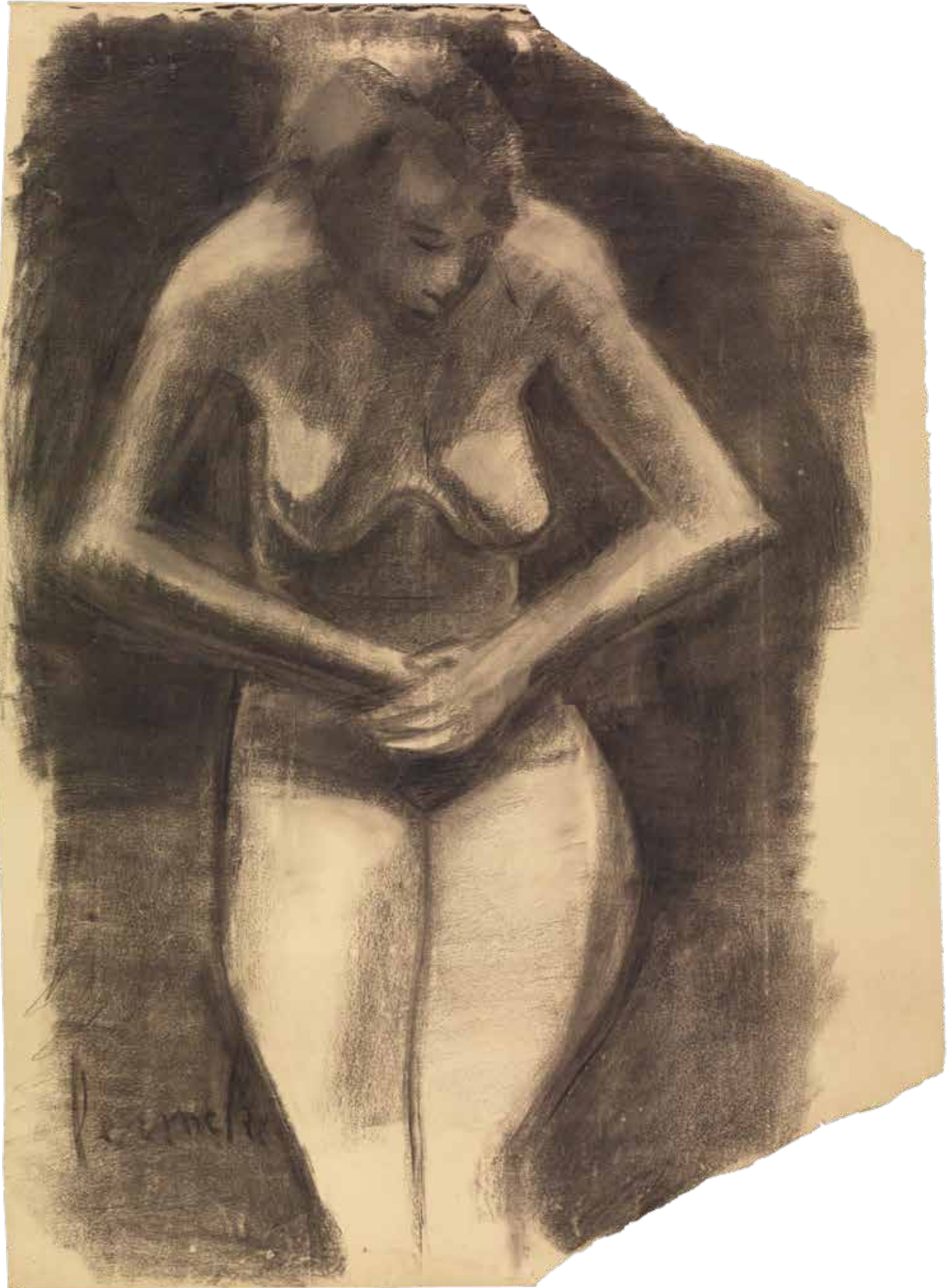
I grew up in the Seefhoek, the working-class district of north Antwerp adjacent to 'den Dam'. The socialist and Christian workers' movements had seen the franchise extended, and workers were earning a bread-and-butter wage, so that the miserable fog of direst poverty had already lifted somewhat. The Seefhoek was divided into two blocs, the *tsjeven* and the *sossen*—catholics and socialists—each with their own associations, unions, brass bands, clubs, social institutions, health insurance funds, and community or parish halls.

Every Saturday, Dad would pile the whole family into his Chevrolet and drive us to Haspengouw and sometimes to Baardegem; that's where our roots lay. In fact—and without my being at all conscious of it—as a lad I was what might best be called a romantic. A rascal, too, and a ruffian on the squares of the Seefhoek, a schoolboy fond of Flemish and a member of the Catholic Students Action group, a scamp who romped around the farms and fields of Haspengouw, a true believer in the idyll of the countryside.

That romantic side of my personality is what draws me to the Flemish artists. They were enthralled by the primal power, the nature and the landscapes, the deeply human character of their Flemish environment. They painted poetry and beauty and powerful personalities, true to life, hard-working, and dogged. They painted deep emotion, simplicity, merriment, mockery, cynicism and death.

When I look at their work, I meet myself. In the persistence of the peasant whose whole life is toil (Gustave Van de Woestyne), in the winter landscapes and the farmsteads that remind us of our Bruegelian traditions (Valerius De Saedeleer), in the loveliness of walks along a slowly flowing river (Emile Claus) and the girl playing amongst blooms and blossoms (Gust. De Smet). And the Fool—him I like very much; I find his mockery, cynicism and sarcasm in Ensor.

But after all, who am I? You, the person looking at these works of art, you are the important one here.



This is You!

You look at a painting and get the weird feeling that you're kind of bumping into yourself. You look at another and meet yourself again. It happens time and again in the oeuvres of Flemish artists working between 1880 and 1930. It's as if it's you who are in these paintings—or the paintings that are in you.

And no, that's not possible, of course—but neither is it a joke, a myth, or a delusion. And you know why that is? Because that artist has painted or carved his surroundings and his fellow men out of his own personality and vision, that's why. Because in these works of art, real people and a real living environment are made manifest and tangible, that's why.

Every artist has their own approach, but all of them catch the essence of Flanders and its Flemings. And precisely because of their differences in approach, those many artists can represent the many facets of Flemish society. Painters and sculptors tell you what they saw, who the people in their surroundings were. In their works they create characters in landscapes so vivid and real that you still recognize them, that you feel at home there, that you feel your past and your ancestors still alive in those works, the cradle of your identity.

And you're touched by the tenderness of George Minne's sculptures, by the tragedy and tension in his plasters and bronzes. You're included in the intimacy and charm, the colourful Expressionism of Rik Wouters. Edgard Tytgat's playful subjects put a smile on your lips, surprise you by the realism of the situation he's painted. And in the fishermen, rowers, peasants and women of Constant Permeke you still see primal man.

Because Flemish art from 1880 to 1930—that's you!

FERNAND HUTS

**'I HAVE DISCOVERED
THESE PEOPLE,
OUR PEOPLE,
THEIR SOUL,
THE ETERNAL AND
THE EVERYDAY
IN THEM.'**

CONSTANT PERMEKE

Constant Permeke

Nude, 1922

Charcoal on paper, 450 × 800 mm

ANTWERP, THE PHOEBUS FOUNDATION



THE ROOTS OF FLANDERS

KATHARINA VAN CAUTEREN
THE PHOEBUS FOUNDATION

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PRELUDE

Flemings are not awfully good at being Flemings. Centuries of domination by someone else does little to encourage a sense of national identity. Nor does the fact that as a place 'Flanders' itself is hard to pin down help much in the matter of regional awareness. Add to that the tendency for 'Flemish' to be followed immediately by 'politics', and it's as well not to get on your high horse in the Low Countries.

And while we're on the subject, if you've picked up this book with the idea that it's going to be a beautifully illustrated party manifesto, think again. In these pages 'Flemish' roughly means everyone who lives in that small bit of land that today is called 'Flanders'. As to the language question, that hardly comes up either. Most of the main characters in this story spoke French as fluently as Flemish or vice versa. What this book is about are people who—regardless of where they were born or even the colour of their skin—share a culture. And though cultures are inherently dynamic and can determine the direction of the future, their roots are fixed firmly in the past.

Which brings us to the next thing. While American, English, French or even Dutch history can be summarised like the plot of a Hollywood film, the Belgian–Flemish past seems more like a season of *Game of Thrones*—to have any idea what's going on you have to wind back a bit. At least to the seventeenth century. When the northern provinces of the Netherlands have already formed a proudly independent Dutch Republic but the rest of the Low Countries—the southern part, roughly corresponding to modern-day Belgium—is firmly under the heel of the Spanish boot. It would need a spin-off prequel to cover the whys and wherefores of how that has come about, but the upshot of it is that the Low Countries are part of the Spanish Habsburg territories, subject to the rigidly Roman Catholic rule of a succession of kings of Spain named Philip (II, III and IV).

The Philips are followed by Charles (II). The princeling is named for his glorious Habsburg ancestor Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, whose vast global empire he inherits. He does not inherit the best mix of Habsburg genes, however. For one thing he has the famously prognathous Habsburg jaw, passed down from his imperial great-great-grandfather, and an oversized tongue; plus he's bald, epileptic, short-sighted, deaf, deformed, and daft. Fortunately, perhaps, he's also incapable of siring an heir to the throne, and on his death in 1700 'our' area, the so-called Spanish Netherlands, passes to the Austrian branch of the Habsburg family. They hold the territory (now named the Austrian Netherlands) for slightly less than a century, stamping out the short-lived Brabant Revolution of 1789–1790, only to be overthrown themselves by the French in 1794—and the Austrian Netherlands becomes a department of Napoleonic France.

Gust. De Smet
Peasant Woman with Hand on Hip (detail), 1929
Oil on canvas, 87.5 × 57 cm
ANTWERP, THE PHOEBUS FOUNDATION

Twenty years later, the French are ousted in turn by a shifting coalition of allies, and in the territorial carve-up that follows, the Spanish-then-Austrian-then-French-ruled Low Countries are tacked onto the Dutch Republic, and the United Kingdom of the Netherlands is created. In 1830—only fifteen years later this time—the Dutch are also given their congé when the Belgian Revolution breaks out and Belgium declares itself an independent state. By this time the population of the brand-new country has pretty much lost the plot and with it any talent for national or regional identity—far less national or regional pride.

For that matter, it's been quite a while since there was anything much to be proud about. It's true that for a time in the nineteenth century Belgium was an economic powerhouse and in the Middle Ages the Southern Netherlands were the cultural, financial, intellectual and economic centre of the world. But the quarter-millennium in between was not very nice. The European wars of religion and assorted other conflicts that washed to and fro across Flanders caused a massive brain drain. In towns like Ghent, Bruges and Antwerp, everyone who could afford it or had saleable skills upped sticks and skedaddled to Amsterdam. What remained was the ground-down peasantry.

Peasants don't have time for flag-waving. Peasants go on ploughing. They're maybe a little inward-looking—it's hard to have a decent conversation with a Brussels sprout. A bit thoughtful, perhaps, wondering if the rain will hold off till it's needed or if there'll be an early frost. And so the Flemings become simple hard workers, without airs and graces, often over-modest, rough around the edges, maybe even a bit crude; figures in a landscape, easily passed over by an outsider's eye.¹ They distrust authority; when nobody's looking, they're slightly anarchic. When they party, they do it Burgundian-style; when they laugh, it's usually at themselves. For peasants are people with both feet firmly on the ground.

Those earthy sons and daughters of the soil are our ancestors.
This story is about them.

ABBREVIATIONS

AMVC
Archief en Museum voor het Vlaamse
Cultuurleven | Archive and Museum of
Flemish Cultural Life

MSK GENT
Museum voor Schone Kunsten Gent |
Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent

KMSKA
Koninklijk Museum voor Schone
Kunsten Antwerpen | Royal Museum
of Fine Arts, Antwerp

KMSKB-MRBAB
Koninklijke Musea voor Schone
Kunsten van België | Musées royaux
des Beaux-Arts de Belgique |
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of
Belgium, Brussels

AHKB
Archief voor Hedendaagse Kunst
in België

KMKG-MRAH
Koninklijke Musea voor Kunst en
Geschiedenis | Musées royaux d'Art
et d'Histoire | Royal Museums of Art
and History, Brussels

Constant Permeke
Peasant (detail), 1929
Gouache on card, 750 × 620 mm
ANTWERP, THE PHOEBUS FOUNDATION





*Cross Section through the Meerhem Charterhouse (Ghent)
with Lieven Bauwens's Cotton Mill, 1808*
Lithograph, 820 × 1650 mm
GHENT, ARCHIEF GENT

I. THE STINKING CITY

'In Flanders, Ghent was the centre of what radiated as a black and scorching light.'

KAREL VAN DE WOESTIJNE

SPINNING JENNY

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There are no flies on Lieven Bauwens (1769-1822). A shrewd entrepreneur, born and bred in Ghent, quick to spot a gap in the market, quick to diversify. Moral principles are fine things but they don't put food in your belly, and so he sells shoes to the occupying French when Flanders is ruled from Paris, and textiles for their uniforms—soldiers are so much more credible with clothes on. When those same French empty countless churches and shut down abbeys and monasteries, Bauwens adds ecclesiastical silver to his stock-in-trade.

But still he's not content. In 1764, in Lancashire in north-west England, the Spinning Jenny is invented—a machine that enables a cotton spinner to produce yarn far faster and more cheaply than the old-fashioned spinning wheel. Further improvements follow, and by 1780 the 'spinning mule' is in operation, a high-tech apparatus driven by water power and almost fully automatic. Ever-increasing mechanization leads to the factory system and the Industrial Revolution that turns Britain into an economic world power. The British, a pragmatic race, jealously guard their industrial technology from foreign spies. But what is an entrepreneur if not enterprising? From 1798, in the guise of a trader in colonial wares, Bauwens makes thirty-two trips to England and each time smuggles home another part of the spinning machine, hidden amongst his bales of cloth and boxes of sugar. Eventually he's found out and—in absentia—sentenced to hang. But from the safety of the Continent he thumbs his nose at his accusers, and all the frustrated Londoners can do is hang him in effigy.

History is rarely fair, and ultimately Bauwens's business goes bust. But his industrial espionage does launch Belgium as a global economic power. Barely a decade after his spinning mule is introduced in Ghent, the town has eighteen cotton-spinning mills, twenty cotton-weaving mills and twenty-one cotton-printing factories that together provide around 11,000 jobs. In 1829 there are 800 weaving machines, nine years later no fewer than 5,000. When the French novelist Alexandre Dumas visits Ghent in 1838—travelling by steam train, another ultra-modern invention—it has already become the most important industrial city on the European mainland. To Dumas's dismay, the Ghenters have even turned the Gravensteen—the venerable castle of the counts of Flanders—into a cotton mill. Nevertheless, he gazes in wonder at the speed and efficiency of the machines and at the fact that a child of five can operate two looms and turn out eight full lengths of cotton every eight days. Such is progress...²

THE STENCH OF HUNGER

Outside the city, peasants are putting two and two together. Why live in constant dread of the thousand things that could ruin the harvest—beetles, bacteria, mildew, moulds, mites, untimely frosts, too much or too little sun or rain—when a job at the mill would yield a regular pay packet? Before long the countryside is empty and the city is full. Overfull. Bursting at the seams. Between 1800 and 1866, the number of people living in Ghent more than doubles, from 55,000 to 115,000. The mass of manpower causes a kind of human depreciation: wages are ludicrously low while the number of families living in grinding poverty gets higher all the time. It's at this moment that Karl Marx pens his *Communist Manifesto*. Written in London, it could as well apply to the Belgian situation. Revolution is needed, revolution and change. 'The proletarians have nothing to lose but chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!'

The workers do indeed unite, but not in the way Marx envisages. In the towns the ever-growing mass of people is squeezed into cramped and fetid slums, labyrinthine warrens of wretched jerry-built dwellings into which daylight barely filters. The narrow lanes are filled with the stench of rot and decay from the open sewers that run down the middle. The stagnant water attracts infestations of insects and other disease-bearing vermin, leading to epidemics. In a single year—1866—cholera kills nearly 3,000 souls. In Aalst, writer Louis Paul Boon quotes the description recorded by Flemish priest Adolf Daens: ‘There were narrow alleys and cramped courtyards [...] where mountains of rotting refuse were piled up at the entrance. Hanging in the air was the smell of falling plaster, of saltpetre and onion sauce [...] the stench of hunger and want. In these squalid neighbourhoods they herded together like animals, in a single room for the whole family of nine to ten children. A hutch whose floor consisted of stamped-down earth and in which everyone lived together, eating, sleeping on straw pallets or amongst rags, and begetting new children [...] I saw from the 1870 census that 1039 families lived in just the same way. And ten years later, I could compare that with the census of 1880: the number of people living there had risen by three thousand but they were still all crammed into the same number of slums.’³ In Ghent, the authorities take action. In the area known as Waalse Krook they cover over the Scheldt and put up a statue—of Lieven Bauwens. Who says there’s no irony in history?

IT’S SIMPLY NOT DONE.

As the mill chimneys belch, the looms thunder, and the town’s stench stuns those not inured to it, the bourgeoisie turns up its genteel nose. The entrepreneur is now a man of independent means. In town he withdraws behind the safe walls of his grand townhouse. But he prefers, when possible, to spend his time in one or other charming rural retreat outside Ghent, in Drongen or Oostakker, or perhaps somewhere to the north by the quietly flowing waters of the Ghent-Terneuzen canal. Far from the stinking city, in an oasis of repose... Until 1903, when the port expansion programme requires the canal to be enlarged. Later on, thinking of the old waterway as it used to be, Maurice Maeterlinck (still the only Belgian winner of the Nobel Literature Prize) recalls in his memoirs ‘an enchanting canal, shaded by a double row of tall elms. Sometimes it seemed as if a “transatlantique” was sailing through the garden, and then the children ran outside and begged the skipper for coins.’⁴

Sometimes history repeats itself very literally. The escape to the countryside seems like a copy-paste of the seventeenth century, when past masters such as Rubens and Teniers would take themselves off for a spot of bucolic R & R—an ancien-régime practice assiduously copied in the nineteenth century by the nouveau riche. From his little place in the country, the bourgeois looks down upon the worker: replace ‘worker’ by ‘peasant’ and even without a Tardis we travel a couple centuries back in time. Country bumpkins or the stinking scum of the city, it makes no odds: they’re accused en masse of being no better than the beasts—drinking, gorging, copulating, and generally surrendering to their awful animal urges.







Piet Van der Ouderaa
The Sjongers Family on the Veranda, 1907
Oil on panel, 113 × 149 cm
ANTWERP, THE PHOEBUS FOUNDATION

In the nineteenth century, Victorian attitudes imported from England produce paroxysms of prudery at the mere thought of such brutish behaviour. The thicker the varnish of civilization, the better. To keep the Inner Beast safely chained, one must observe the proprieties, obey the rules of decorum, master a whole set of hyper-sophisticated manners. Certain things are permitted, most are required. A single faux pas will be punished by titters, sniggers, sneers, or even social ostracism. It's a desperately delicate path to tread. There are so many things that are simply 'not done', so to avoid social solecisms girls must go to school until they're twenty-three to have drummed into them just what is done. It would seem that the Beast is not so easily tamed.

STIFLING CORSET

Visual art is the offspring of the bourgeoisie. For centuries, townsmen and burgesses have looked up to the nobility and felt themselves to be lesser mortals. Now, however, their time has come. They exorcise their cultural hang-ups with museums and theatres. The world is no longer the asset solely of the owners of castles or palaces, and every middle-class home has art on the wall. Art schools appear overnight and set about straightjacketing the visual arts into a stifling corset of rules.

Just as young ladies learn what is and is not done, so artists study what does and does not do when manufacturing beauty. Strict rules and conventions are the answer. Take colour. So seductive, so dangerous. It appeals to the senses, and that's where the Beast lurks. According to the mode in Paris, colour should only evoke light, not feelings. But why take the risk? Line is much safer. Line is rational and intellectual. Your self-respecting academician therefore concentrates on outlines and corrals his colours safely inside them. Belgian art schools religiously follow the diktats of the Paris Académie, where votaries of neoclassicism vow obedience to the rule of the line. For a short while in the nineteenth century, Antoine Wiertz, a Belgian painter prone to lurid Romanticism, is allowed to have a say, but his loyalty to Rubens is quickly classified and Bruegel remains safely covered with dust. A picture should be obvious: a person should be able to see at a glance what it's all about.

Subjects that set a moral example are preferred at first—something from the Bible or classical mythology is just the job. Yet bit by bit *la vie moderne* worms its way into the canon of permissible subjects. Stray beyond that, or disregard the 'rules of art', and you can forget any notion of being hung at the triennial Salon, the pre-eminent art exhibition. If you're not shown there, you're not worth much, and if you're not worth much, you won't sell. Taking a stand against this artistic tyranny will merely result in poverty, and notwithstanding the popular romantic image of the starving painter in his garret, your average artist appreciates regular meals. So he diligently turns out unexceptionable pictures, edifying and uplifting, a sentimental flight from the grim reality of the industrial city.⁵





II. THE SUN PAINTER

‘The enemy of all painting is grey.’

EMILE CLAUS

Since 1883 Emile Claus has been living in Astene, a village just south-west of Ghent, on the River Leie. Once settled in, he soon sheds the academy’s rules for respectable painting. To the academicians’ consternation, he goes outdoors and paints in the open air (tsk-tsk!). The subjects he chooses are neither edifying nor modern but actual peasants doing peasantry things (tut-tut!). He paints what his eyes see, not what his brain tells him they see (good gad!). His figures are not neatly outlined (monstrous!). And to cap it all, in Claus’s paintings, the sparkling lead is played by light (collapse of stout party!). *The Gossips of Bachte-Maria-Leerne*, one of the earliest works in what will later become his very recognizable style, is never sold.

Nevertheless, his contemporaries must have seen Claus as a kind of hybrid between Monet-manner Impressionists, Seurat-style Pointillists and Courbet-class Realists. And Claus certainly made no secret of his admiration for Monet. Cyriel Buysse gives us an endearing description of how he and ‘Clauske’ visit the home of the French painter, now in his eighties, in 1923. Within hailing distance of his elderly hero, Claus—no chicken himself by that date— is suddenly overcome with nerves. Too shy to ring the doorbell, from Buysse’s car he cautiously peers over the garden wall, where his eyes are met by a profusion of flowers and, in the distance, Monet and his daughter. Later that evening, everyone finds this hugely funny, but as Buysse recalls, ‘Only our friend the Painter sat motionlessly staring and uttered not a word. As twilight fell he was still dreaming of what he’d seen.’⁶

Yet Claus is more than just a local version of his French contemporaries. Unlike the Impressionists and Pointillists, he never goes in for high-flown theorizing. Even though later he’s sometimes accused of still clinging too tightly to the Academy’s teaching (you can’t win!), his paintings give the impression of direct experience. What you see is what you get. And what you get is not an idealistic scene designed to appeal to bourgeois taste, nor is it a pictorial experiment or social pamphlet. Claus’s pictures are true to life.

Afterwards, Claus’s style is somewhat unimaginatively dubbed ‘Luminism’, *lumen* being Latin for ‘light’. But in fact Claus is much more than a Luminist. He’s a descendant of Jan Van Eyck, for a preoccupation with light has been in Flemish artists’ genes since the late Middle Ages. He’s also a symbolic second cousin of David Teniers II, who in the late seventeenth century started a craze with his charming genre scenes of Flemish peasant life. Above all, he’s a grandchild of the later Peter Paul Rubens, who limned lyrical landscapes with light and colour, odes to the gentle Flemish countryside. Looked at like that, Claus is no mere Luminist but a new Rubens—a ‘sun painter’ who, in his turn, paints lambent lays of the Flemish countryside in shimmering notes of colour.

And there you have the reason for his wistful attraction, for by the end of the nineteenth century Claus’s peasant life is already under threat from expanding cities and toxic modernity. His paintings are the last sighting of a Flanders that even by 1900 is almost extinct. And so in a rainbow of colours he paints what Buysse describes in words: ‘How lovely Flanders is on an early soft May morning! The tender wheat is ripening on every side, tall as a man. Hanging over it in the distance is a translucent silver haze and all around are the small farmsteads and cottages [...] like silent islands of colour and abundance in that endless grey-green sea of wheat. The church spires point heavenwards, the old mills stand with naked sails as if quietly musing and dreaming, and everywhere smells so fresh and so healthily of fertile, rising sap.’⁷

Emile Claus

The Haymaker, 1896

Oil on canvas, 130 × 97.5 cm

COURTESY OF GALLERY OSCAR DE VOS



Emile Claus

The Gossips of Bachte-Maria-Lerne, c.1890

Oil on canvas, 110 × 220 cm

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pp. 28–29 Emile Claus
Peasant Girls beside the Leie (detail), c.1893
Oil on canvas, 75 × 118 cm
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Emily Lewis

