

Bruxelles, ma belle!

'*Bruxelles ma belle*' are words that go really well together: you'll see that's true when you leaf through this book of photos of Brussels' past and present. Obviously, the city has evolved and changed over time. Nonetheless its streets, boulevards, monuments and squares have retained all the elegant grandeur of the vibrant city that Brel captured so eloquently in his songs. Pedestrian areas and one-way traffic – each with their proponents and opponents – have made the city less car-dependent. These days, you really need to know the lay of the land to get where you want to go by car. The cyclists and walkers that make their way through the city every day are much happier for it, however.

My love for Brussels has remained constant throughout the years. In my opinion, it is the only city worthy of the name in this country. Brussels is a melting pot of races and nationalities, which it embraces, and who find a refuge and a new home and future in her arms. I enjoy sitting at Le Cirio near the Bourse, sipping my *half-en-half* spritzer (equal parts of white wine and sparkling wine) and watching the colourful world walk by, wondering where they are heading, what's their story, who they are.

Many of the commuters who make their way to and from their home town every day have a love-hate relationship with Brussels. Those who take the time to really visit the city, however, will be surprised to discover how welcoming, diverse and beautiful it actually is. Art lovers from all over Belgium flock to the cultural institutions of Brussels. Treasures await in its theatres, fine arts museums and comic strip museum.

As a young man, I too sought refuge in Brussels. Here I found anonymity, security and an alternative to the narrow-mindedness of the village that I was raised in: the city was my window on the world! In Brussels, I left my youth behind, venturing out into the world. These days I live outside of the city, along the River Lys, but I often miss Brussels. I find myself wanting to trade in the lovely Lys for the stench of the River Senne, the peace and quiet for the crowds and the maddening traffic. I could have never become the singer that I am today without Brussels. Which is why I am eternally grateful to her, I love her: *zeen ik de tet van Koekelberg, den stoat maain hoar recht in posieze* (I get goosebumps when I see the tit of Koekelberg looming up in the distance).

The stunning photos in this book are a tribute to the city of my heart: enjoy them. If you're looking for me, you can find me on the terrace at Le Cirio indulging in some people-watching. Santé, cheers!

Johan Verminnen



← The Chapel Church at **rue Joseph Stevens / Joseph Stevensstraat** and the houses around it remained virtually unchanged in the previous century. The old school chip shop that opened here has since become part of the cityscape. →

← De Kapellekerk aan de **Joseph Stevensstraat** en de huizen rondom zijn de afgelopen eeuw zo goed als onveranderd gebleven. Het oldskool frietkot dat er later kwam is ondertussen eigenlijk ook al erfgoed geworden. →

← Au bout de la **rue Joseph Stevens**, l'église Notre-Dame de la Chapelle et les maisons qui l'entourent sont restées pratiquement inchangées au cours du siècle dernier. La friterie rétro, arrivée plus tard, fait désormais aussi partie du patrimoine. →





← The Heysel/Heizel hosted the world fair twice: in 1935 and 1958. **Boulevard du Centenaire / Eeuwfeestlaan** was specially built for the 1935 Expo, exuding a sense of grandeur and triumph, among others because of the water staircase with 8 (!) fountain basins. Unfortunately they did not withstand the test of time. →

← De Heizel is niet één maar twee keer het toneel geweest van een grote wereldtentoonstelling: in 1935 en 1958. De **Eeuwfeestlaan** werd speciaal aangelegd voor de Expo van 1935 en straalde grandeur en triomf uit, onder andere dankzij een watertrap met maar liefst acht fonteinbekkens. Helaas hebben die de tand des tijds niet doorstaan. →

← Le Heysel a été non pas une, mais deux fois le théâtre d'une grande Exposition universelle: en 1935 et en 1958. Le **boulevard du Centenaire**, spécialement construit pour l'Expo de 1935, rayonnait de grandeur et de triomphe, entre autres grâce à une cascade de fontaines comptant huit bassins. Ceux-ci n'ont malheureusement pas survécu à l'épreuve du temps. →





← Bassin des Marchands/Koopliedendok had already been partly filled in the 19th century. In the 20th century, the last bit of water also disappeared. A cast iron market hall was erected on the site of the former dock, which was used as a fish market until 1955. The elongated shallow dock in **quai aux Briques / Baksteenkaai** was built here in the early 1980s, to commemorate the old dock. →

← Het Koopliedendok werd in de 19de eeuw al deels gedempt, in het begin van de 20ste eeuw verdween ook het laatste beetje water. Op het voormalige dok werd een gietijzeren markthal opgetrokken die tot in 1955 dienstdeed als vismarkt. Het langgerekte ondiepe bassin dat hier vandaag op de **Baksteenkaai** te zien is werd aangelegd in het begin van de jaren 1980, als herinnering aan het oude Koopliedendok. →

← Le bassin des Marchands était déjà partiellement comblé au 19e siècle et le dernier filet d'eau disparut au début du 20e. Une halle en fer forgé a été construite sur l'ancien quai et a servi de marché aux poissons jusqu'en 1955. Le bassin allongé et peu profond que l'on peut voir aujourd'hui sur le **quai aux Briques** a été construit au début des années 1980 pour rappeler l'ancien bassin des Marchands. →





← This 99-metre-tall building in **boulevard de Waterloo / Waterloolaan** was inaugurated in 1969 as a Hilton Hotel. The yellow cabs gave Brussels a bit of a New York look and feel at the time. Many of the buildings in this part of the city, which is called quartier Louise/Louizawijk, have been perfectly preserved. →

← De 99 meter hoge toren aan de **Waterloolaan** werd in 1969 ingehuldigd als een Hiltonhotel. De gele taxi's gaven destijds een New York-gevoel aan Brussel. De meeste gebouwen in dit stuk van de stad, de Louizawijk, zijn perfect bewaard gebleven. →

← Cette tour de 99 mètres de haut, sur le **boulevard de Waterloo**, a été inaugurée par la chaîne hôtelière Hilton en 1969. Les taxis jaunes de l'époque donnaient à Bruxelles une allure new-yorkaise. Dans cette partie de la ville, appelée quartier Louise, la plupart des bâtiments ont été parfaitement conservés. →

