DUTCH the magazine
about The Netherlands and its people at home and abroad

The Comfort Bird
Hylke Speerstra’s riveting novel

Visiting Maastricht
The cosmopolitan city of the south

Panorama Mesdag
An artistic view of Scheveningen

+ The ‘Grand Old Lady’ of Rotterdam
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On the cover:
A view of Maastricht through the eyes of an artist.
(Photograph by Adrià Páez Forteza)
Impressive places and a must-read book

I will never forget the first time I visited the province of South Limburg and how the landscape seemed to suddenly fool me into thinking we had ended up in the Wallonia region of Belgium or even France’s Bourgogne. I was instantly smitten by the region’s beauty. Flatlands gave way to rolling hills and lush panoramic landscapes with far-reaching views. As much as I love living in the modern and vibrant city of Almere (see our November/December 2012 issue), an escape to the countryside always provides an enormous sense of breathing space… and all the more so in a place as beautiful as this.

Our destination was Epen, a charming village situated in Holland’s Heuvelland, (which literally means ‘Hill Country’). We were going on a camping trip and agreed to also explore nearby cities such as Valkenburg (see our September/October 2014 issue) and Maastricht. Our time in Maastricht was particularly memorable as we were there on a Friday morning and got a chance to walk through the fantastic market held on Markt, the city’s main square. I couldn’t help but notice how many languages were spoken. People were greeting each other in French, English and German. Not only does Maastricht attract more than three million tourists annually, but it is also the country’s most cosmopolitan city. For this issue of DUTCH, I returned to Maastricht. You can find the story starting on page 20. Perhaps reading it will encourage you to plan a trip down south during your next visit to The Netherlands.

Also included in this issue is an article on one of the country’s most original museums: Amsterdam’s Museum of Bags and Purses, or Tassenmuseum Hendrikje. What began with the discovery of an exquisite bag from the early 19th century soon grew into a collection of more than five thousand bags from all over the world. These fascinating pieces have been cleverly researched and presented. Each of them tells the story of the time in which it was produced and worn. The museum is certainly not only for fans of the common accessory! Ann Randall was very enthusiastic about what she discovered at the museum. You can read her story starting on page 30. And if you like Dutch art, you will enjoy reading Alison Netsel’s column on Panorama Mesdag, an impressive painting which goes far beyond the visual. It is literally a masterpiece that you have to ‘experience’. Turn to page 42 to find out why.

Another interesting read is the article on the history of the Holland America Line, which was headquartered at Rotterdam’s Hotel New York (page 26). During its existence, the historic shipping and passenger line transported 133 vessels, seventy-five million tons of cargo and nearly four million passengers (between 1880 and 1925, almost one million of them were headed to a new life in America). Today, Hotel New York welcomes people from all over the world and proudly attests to the city’s maritime history.

Last, but certainly not least, is our special attention to the recently published book, ‘The Comfort Bird’. Written by the most acclaimed Frisian author and translated by Henry Baron, the book tells the true story of two families whose descendants crossed paths during World War II; both families had their roots in the small village of Hichtum, Friesland. It is a brilliant piece of literary history which has proudly been released by our own Mokeham Publishing. On page 18, Tom Bijvoet tells you why it caused such an impression on him. And on page 40 you can read an excerpt of the book, which can be ordered with the form on page 51.

Enjoy the pages ahead and tot de volgende keer!

Paola Westbeek | Senior Vice President
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JULY

LEARNING TO SEE: RENAISSANCE AND BAROQUE MASTERWORKS FROM THE PHOEBE DENT WEIL AND MARK S. WEIL COLLECTION March 3rd – July 20th
St. Louis, Missouri, Saint Louis Art Museum. Featuring prints, drawings and sculptures that explore intellectual/spiritual currents prominent in Europe from the 15th to the 17th century. On display are Rembrandt works such as his ‘Hundred Guilder Print’. (314) 721-0072, slcm.org

68TH ANNUAL EDGERTON DUTCH FESTIVAL July 13th – 15th, Edgerton, Minnesota, 21st Street & Main Street The celebration of Dutch heritage features a fun concert in the park, food stands, raffles, parades, a soapbox derby and much more. Check the website closer to the date for further details. edgertonmn.com/events/dutch_festival.php

70TH ANNUAL HOLLAND FESTIVAL July 28th (3:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.) & 29th (9:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.) Cedar Grove, Wisconsin, Memorial Park Annual family event celebrating Dutch heritage. Featuring games, historical displays, Dutch dance and fashion, live music and ‘klompen’ (clog) dancing. hollandfest.com

JULY/AUGUST

MOOOI SHOWROOM & BRAND STORE May 14th 2015 – December 31st 2018, New York, New York, 36E 31st Street The first Dutch Design store to open in New York City’s NoMad neighborhood, an area that is home to stylish brands, luxury hotels and quality restaurants. According to the company’s art director, Marcel Wanders: “Moooi is an urban brand designing for a new world, delivering the coolest things together with a sense of surprise and expectation.” (646) 396-0455, moooi.com

VISIONARIES: CREATING A MODERN GUGGENHEIM February 10th – September 6th, New York, New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Explores the collections of six early patrons who presented some of the most distinguished artists of their time. Included are works by Piet Mondriaan and Vincent van Gogh. guggenheim.org

AN INNER WORLD: SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DUTCH GENRE PAINTING March 5th – September 17th, Williamstown, Massachusetts, Sterling and Francine Clark Clark Art Institute Showcasing seven exceptional genre paintings by Dutch ‘Fijnschilders’ working in and around Leiden during the Golden Age, including Gerard Dou, Gabriel Metsu and Willem van Mieris. ‘Fijnschilders’ were known for their precise way of painting and attention to detail. (413) 458-2303, clarkart.edu

AUGUST

SERVUS HERITAGE FESTIVAL August 5th – 7th, Edmonton, Alberta, William Hawrelak Park Festival showcasing Canada’s vibrant multicultural heritage. Come and savor Dutch delights at the Dutch pavilion. (780) 488-3378, heritagefest.ca

WELCOME AND COCKTAILS FOR NEW MEMBERS Check website for exact date and time, New York, New York, The Netherland Club of New York Meet fellow new members and share cocktails and finger food. (212) 265-6160, netherlandclub.com

IN THE NETHERLANDS

THE COLORS OF DE STIJL: Exhibition exploring the bright colors of De Stijl and its influence on contemporary art. May 6th – September 3rd, Kunsthal KAdE, Amersfoort, kunsthalade.nl

SENSATION AMSTERDAM: The best DJs come together to perform for dance fans from all over the world. July 1st, Amsterdam Arena, sensation.com

JULIDANS: Summer festival for national and contemporary dance. See performances, meet with dancers and take dance lessons. July 4th – 15th, Stadschouwburg & other venues, Amsterdam, julidans.nl

NORTH SEA JAZZ FESTIVAL: Number one jazz event in The Netherlands. A variety of artists perform on different stages. July 7th – 9th, AHOY Rotterdam, rotterdamunlimited.com

OVER HET IJ FESTIVAL: Theater festival featuring twenty-five shows in eleven days. July 14th – 23rd, NDSM Wharf, Amsterdam, overhetij.nl

TILBURGSE KERMIS FUNFAIR: Boasting approximately 240 attractions spread out over the city center and visited by more than one million people every year. July 21st – 30th, Tilburg, kermistilburg.nl

ROTTERDAM UNLIMITED: Enjoy a mix of music, dance, theater and carnival in Rotterdam’s inner city. July 25th – 29th, Rotterdam, rotterdamunlimited.com

AMSTERDAM GAYPRIDE: The biggest gay event in Holland features special movies, exhibitions, workshops and parties which openly give a face to the homosexual community. The unique parade attracts an estimated 500,000 visitors every year and is one of the event’s most anticipated attractions. July 29th – August 6th, Amsterdam, amsterdagmaagaypride.nl

WESTLAND BOAT PARADE: Sixty boats decorated with flowers and vegetables come together in a colorful floating parade. August 4th – 6th, Westland, varendcorso.nl

SNEEKWEEK: Biggest sailing event on the European inland waterways. Including a fair and a market. Opens with a naval show with boats and fireworks. August 5th – 10th, Sneek, sneekweek.nl

SKUTSJESILEN CHAMPIONSHIP: Skûtsjes are typical Frisian ships that were originally used as cargo ships by Frisian farmers. The event offers a great opportunity to combine watersports with Frisian heritage and fun. August 5th – 18th, Sneek, skutsjesilen.nl

GRACHTENFESTIVAL: More than 150 concerts held in gardens, canal houses and rooftops. The main event is the Prinsengracht concert. August 11th – 20th, Amsterdam, grachtenfestival.nl

NOORDERZON PERFORMING ARTS FESTIVAL: International avant-garde theater with more than eighty performances. August 17th – 27th, Groningen, noorderzon.nl

PREUVENEMINT: Four-day culinary event on Vrijthof Square with more than thirty food and wine stands and a large variety of live music. August 24th – 27th, Maastricht, preuvemint.nl
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In the first paragraph of The Comfort Bird, the latest of his books to be translated into English, famous Frisian author Hylke Speerstra (see page 18) laments that one stormy night, Friesland could no longer handle all her water. Friesland, one of Holland’s Northern provinces – with a unique identity and its own language – and water are almost synonymous. Three of Friesland’s most popular and archetypical sports rely on the substance: fierljeppen (literally ‘far leaping’, pole vaulting across canals), skûtsjesilen (racing on former inland water freight sailboats) and speed skating in several varieties. A testament to Friesland’s wetness is also the prevalence in the province of terps (artificial mounds on which houses, hamlets and sometimes complete villages were built). Terps were the first effective innovation in living in a flood-prone land. Raise the house, and your feet stay dry.

Over the centuries, water management practices saw many innovations: dikes, polders and windmills to pump water out of the low-lying land. The age of steam brought new opportunities and more powerful machines which no longer relied on a fickle resource like the wind. Now, in theory, pumps could handle all of Friesland’s water, as long as the capacity of the steam-powered pumps exceeded that of Mother Nature’s capacity to throw water at the land. The first steam-powered pumping station in The Netherlands was opened near Rotterdam in 1787. Without steam-powered pumps, the Dutch would not have been able to reclaim some of the larger polders. The Haarlemmermerpolder, home to Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, was pumped dry between 1849 and 1852 by three gigantic steam-powered pumping stations. The technology was so effective, that even in the waning days of steam, when most pumping stations were switching to direct diesel power and electricity, an extremely powerful steam-powered pumping station was built in Lemmer, in the province of Friesland. The Ir. D.F. Woudagemaal (D.F. Wouda M.Eng. Pumping Station) was built in 1920 – Wouda was the chief engineer of Rijkswaterstaat (National Water Management Agency), who designed the pumping station. In the winters of the 19th and early 20th centuries, Friesland would still commonly be unable to ‘handle all its water’, and floods were endemic. In 1913,
the decision was made to build the pumping station at Lemmer. It can displace two hundred million cubic feet of water a day, which translates to about 2500 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

The pumping station is designed in the Amsterdam School style of architecture, popular in The Netherlands between 1910 and 1930, which is characterized by the use of brick, rounded organic forms and a tight integration between exterior and interior form and function. The Woudagemaal formed Friesland’s most important tool in managing water levels until 1966 when a new electric pumping station was opened in Stavoren to take over that function. But occasionally Friesland still needs the Woudagemaal to handle all her water. It is a still-functioning support unit for times in which the new pumping stations cannot keep up. In the wet spring of 2002, it pumped for ten consecutive days to prevent Friesland from flooding.

The Wouda Pumping Station is the largest steam-powered pumping station in the world and the only one that is still used operationally. In 1998, it was added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage sites. UNESCO cites its importance thus: “The Wouda Pumping Station […] is exceptional as the largest and most powerful steam-driven installation for hydraulic purposes ever built, and one that is still successfully carrying out the function for which it was designed. It is a masterpiece of the work of Dutch hydraulic engineers and architects, whose significant contribution in this field is unchallenged. It was the largest and the technologically most advanced steam pumping station in the world at the time it was built, and it has remained so ever since.”

The pumping station is open to visitors. A permanent crew of fifteen keeps it operational and starts up the steam engines regularly for training and testing purposes and, of course, occasionally when needed. A visit to the station is always worthwhile, but to catch it under full steam is an especially impressive experience. An email newsletter announces days on which the engines will be running, so if you plan a trip to the area, make sure to sign up at the station’s website: woudagemaal.nl.
The threat to cybersecurity has grown at an alarming rate. In 2016, in particular, hackers left very little unscathed. Dropbox, Tumblr, the Democratic National Committee and Yahoo! were among some of the more high profile victims. At the same time, it has become clear that our ability to defend ourselves lags woefully behind.

“We’re talking about a relatively new phenomenon,” says Richard Franken, executive director at The Hague Security Delta, Europe’s leading security cluster, pointing to cybersecurity’s less-than-a-quarter-century lifespan. “We’ve only really been thinking about cybersecurity for about ten years.”

Fortunately, the onslaught of security breaches in recent years has compelled an increasing number of companies, governments and individuals to make proactive cyber defense a priority. Cybersecurity companies are working diligently to meet the demand, and cyber safety-minded start-ups are sprouting up at an impressive pace.

More and more, these enterprises are looking to expand into and work hand-in-hand with other countries to provide the best in cybersecurity solutions. In 2016, The Hague Security Delta in The Netherlands approached the Maryland Department of Commerce in the United States about a possible bilateral ‘soft landing’ exchange for cybersecurity companies.

“Cybersecurity is a key sector for the state [of Maryland] and we knew that The Hague Security Delta is a key cluster in Europe for the sector,” explains Jessica Reynolds, regional manager for Europe for the Department of Commerce. “We felt that a [‘soft landing’ program] sounded like a great idea, so we dove right in.”

By October of that same year, the Maryland Department of Commerce entered into a memorandum of understanding with The Hague Security Delta and InnovationQuarter, the regional economic development agency for the province of South Holland. The agreement establishes a three-year industry exchange program between Maryland and The Netherlands.

The program allows participants to set up temporary operations in their host country, which provides them with free incubator and mentorship services. “It gives them a behind-the-scenes look at how things work and assistance in understanding the culture of the [other] country,” Franken adds.

This past March, five Dutch companies and four Maryland companies returned home after a three-month trial period. The Hague Security Delta played host to the Maryland companies, providing them with office space, supplies and resources. In Maryland, Bw-tech, the cybersecurity incubator at the University of Maryland Baltimore County, extended the same assistance to the Dutch companies. Partners on the Dutch and Maryland sides offered additional support through networking and matchmaking opportunities, workshops and informational sessions.

“It’s difficult to start a business overseas, even if you’re already established in [your home country],” Franken says. “It takes a lot more time than you would think.” Programs such as this one seek to bypass some of those difficulties and streamline the expansion process.

Equipped with the connections and insight gained during the pilot, the companies now have the opportunity to determine whether they will establish a permanent presence in their respective host countries. Evaluations are pending, but Franken reports hearing nothing but positive things from both sides of the ocean.

“We’re responsible for both attracting foreign companies to the state and promoting exports from Maryland,” Reynolds says of the Department of Commerce’s Division of International Investment and Trade. “So this program is exciting for us because it serves both purposes at the same time.”

The whole process will be repeated in 2018 with a new batch of cybersecurity companies. Information about the application process is available through The Hague Security Delta and the Maryland Department of Commerce. “We’re looking for companies that will be committed to the program, have made sales in their own country and are ready to explore another market,” Reynolds says. Registration will open sometime this fall and extend through December.

The Department of Commerce is also open to working with other countries later on down the road. The Hague Security Delta, which had recently completed a similar exchange program in partnership with Canada, has expressed interest in partnering with other states and countries as well.

In September, the Hague Security Delta is holding a Cyber Security Week, complete with hackathons, accelerator programs, lectures and networking receptions. Participants from Maryland have already made plans to attend.

As Dutch ambassador to the United States, Henne Schuwer, put it during the memorandum of understanding signing in Maryland last year: “Our land has been protected by physical dikes for years. Now our countries and their data must be protected by digital dikes.” Collaborations between countries and governments, such as the ongoing cooperation between Maryland and The Netherlands, are crucial for defending cybersecurity.

**Security in The Hague**

Known as the international city of peace, The Hague is home to the International Criminal Court, Europol, and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons as well as the seat of the Dutch government.

The Hague Security Delta was founded by the city of The Hague in 2012 for the purpose of stimulating the collaboration of businesses, governments and knowledge institutions on security innovations and solutions. It now has the distinction of being Europe’s leading security cluster.

The Hague Security Delta consists of three regional hubs in The Hague, Brabant and Twente. The Hague region alone employs more than 13,000 people in the security sector and accounts for more than twenty-five percent of national turnover in the industry.

“The Netherlands is an excellent market for top cybersecurity technologies,” Maryland Deputy Secretary of Commerce Ben Wu said in his speech at the signing of the memorandum of understanding between The Netherlands and Maryland. “The Netherlands is a major trading partner for Maryland and is a top foreign investor in Maryland with over forty Dutch-headquartered firms in the state.”

It is also a perfect gateway to the rest of Europe, as the cybersecurity industry in The Netherlands operates much like that of the rest of the continent.

**Maryland on cybersecurity**

Maryland, America’s ninth smallest state, boasts an estimated 11,000 IT and cybersecurity companies. Seventeen of its higher-education institutions have been designated as National Academic Centers of Excellence in Cyber Defense by the National Security Agency. The National Cybersecurity Center of Excellence, the National Security Agency, and the U.S. Cyber Command are all located in the state. And then there’s Maryland’s close proximity to Washington, D.C., the seat of the United States government.

“Maryland has some of the most innovative cybersecurity companies and most talented workforce in the cybersecurity industry in the world,” says Stacey Smith, executive director of the Cybersecurity Association of Maryland, a nonprofit organization connecting buyers and sellers of cybersecurity products and services in the state of Maryland. “We’ve got some of the very best solutions and service providers out there.”

Tiffany R. Jansen
In good company
The following cybersecurity companies participated in a three-month ‘soft landing’ exchange between The Netherlands and Maryland, during which they received free incubation and mentorship services as well as on-the-ground experience in their host country.

The Netherlands
- European Cyber Resilience Research Network (cyber risk advisory firm)
- Compumatica (cybersecurity and encryption provider)
- Cybersprint (cyber hack and defacement detection company)

Maryland
- Ausley Associates (aerial data collection and analysis firm)
- System 1 Inc. (critical infrastructure cybersecurity management company)
- Canali Inc. (secure workspace platform provider)
- Credentialed Mobile Device Security Professional (mobile data security organization)
For me it started with an email from Professor Henry Baron from Grand Rapids, Michigan. He wondered if I would be interested in publishing his English translation of a book by Frisian author Hylke Speerstra. He suggested I contact Speerstra myself. I knew of Speerstra, of course. He is the author of a collection of immigrant stories called *Cruel Paradise*, which was also translated by Baron and published in 2005. It is one of the few books (maybe the only book) that captures the Dutch emigrant experience in all of its human aspects. Too often, unfortunately, emigrant memoirs are turned into hagiographies or rags to riches success stories that leave out the hardships, the intense homesickness, the regret sometimes, and focus predominantly on the positive myth of immigration. In his oral histories, Speerstra tackles the full palette of emotions, the good and the bad. *Cruel Paradise* is a book that had to be written, but had it not been for Speerstra, it might never have been. It is his interest in the human story and the human experience that drives him. As he said himself: "It has to do with curiosity. If you listen carefully, there are so many human histories that form life lessons. How often doesn’t it happen that you are touched deeply by true stories in which reality surpasses fiction? Okay, it is the art – or call it a craft – to record a story in a way that engages, draws in, the reader."

I knew that Speerstra had also published another collection of oral histories, about the experiences of veterans of the Dutch expeditionary force in the post-World War II Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). It was an unpopular war, and the veterans were reluctant to speak about their time in ‘Indië’. The subject carries a special interest for me because both my father and my uncle were among the 120,000 young Dutch men and boys who were sent to fight a stealthy, cruel guerrilla enemy in the tropics. An enemy that, in retrospect, had natural justice, and, of more immediate relevance, American backing on its side. Tricked, lied to, badly taken care of upon their return, and on top of that often pictured as imperialist war criminals, these young men (many of them involuntary conscripts and many of them suffering from lifelong post traumatic stress disorder before the term was even coined) were told to shut up and get on with their lives. Even if they had been willing to relive the trauma of their war experiences in words, no one wanted to listen to their stories. Until Speerstra did.

I was intrigued, to say the least. I phoned Speerstra, and we had an hour-long conversation that covered many topics: *Cruel Paradise* and the Dutch emigrants, oral history, his admiration for the
books of John Steinbeck and Truman Capote, the Indies, farming and, of course, the book that Baron had translated: The Comfort Bird, published in Frisian as De Treastfügel in 2011.

We also talked about book publishing. I explained that Mokeham is not really a publisher of books. Our core business is publishing magazines and newspapers. The only books we ever published are the wartime memories of our readers, The Dutch in Wartime book series. I decided to assemble that series because the readers of De Krant had been adamant that their stories had to be preserved for their children and grandchildren. I agreed with them, and if I did not publish them, no one would. So we published the series, and I really had no intention of publishing any more books. It is not a lucrative business at the best of times, and it is hard enough work to keep the newspaper and magazine afloat to be diverted from my core business. But Speerstra had a good argument: “If you do not publish this book, no one probably will. The translation is ready. All you have to do is print and sell it. I’ll help you. I’ll come over to North America to promote it. All I want is for people to read the story.” So I acquiesced: “Send me the original, and I’ll read it.” It was not the first time that someone asked me to publish a book, and it would not be the first time that I turned someone down, I thought.

A few days later, the package arrived. Two books, one in Frisian and the other the Dutch adaptation that Speerstra made himself. I did not have time to dive into it immediately, but when I had to make a cross-Atlantic flight a few weeks later, I packed the Frisian version into my carry-on bag. (I am not Frisian myself, but lived in the capital, Leeuwarden, for three years and decided as a courtesy to the locals to learn the language. I went to night classes and fell in love with the beautiful expressiveness of the language. I never really learned to speak it well, but I read it easily and with pleasure).

I opened the book as we taxied down the runway at Pearson Airport in Toronto and started reading. “Your mom has put her head down for the last time,” Ytsje Wytsma is six when she hears these words from a neighbor. The children in the village explain to her what that means. “Your mom is dead.” Thus begins the story of two families of Frisian farm laborers, which spans three generations. It is based on a true history, and Speerstra has used the original sources and the interviews he had with descendants to write a book that fascinates from start to finish. The visits from flight attendants with a snack or another drink, usually a welcome diversion during a long-haul flight, became pesky interruptions. And by the time we got to Barcelona, I had finished reading De Treastfügel. I knew this book had to be published, and if I did not do it, it could take the author and translator a long time before they would find someone who would. Not because the book is not worth being published (any editor and publisher will see that this is a fantastic book), but because selling the idea that a translation of a book from a tiny minority language covering the experiences of two farm families from an obscure corner of northwestern Europe makes for a good business decision is a stretch, to say the least. But I like a challenge. If I did not, you would not be holding this magazine in your hands right now.

I called Hylke (we had started using first names by this time) when I got back home, and work on publishing the book started. When I met Hylke in Leeuwarden on a trip to The Netherlands last November, I asked him why particularly this story, of the many he had heard in his eighty-one years. He explained: “Sometimes you run into a story by chance that seems almost unbelievable. It gets stuck in your head, but there’s something missing. You don’t seem to be able to connect the loose ends. And then suddenly it turns out that across the globe there is a very old witness who experienced the drama himself. That’s how I ended up being able to write The Comfort Bird.”

That witness “across the globe” turned out to be a Nanno (Nammen) Hiemstra, dairy farmer and World War II veteran, born in South Dakota and living in Ripon, Wisconsin with his wife, Alice (Aaltsje) neé Coehoorn, born in Iowa. Nanno was drafted into the U.S. Army after Pearl Harbor and took part in and survived D-Day, where he landed on Utah Beach. He fought his way through France and Germany for another three hundred days, when he had an encounter with his ‘counterpart’ in the book… Their ancestors came from the same little village in Friesland, Hichtum. His counterpart was a member of the feared German SS-troops. The story makes clear how fate can sometimes determine your life.

Hylke interviewed the D-Day veteran in 2010 in Ripon, Wisconsin, where the family had moved to from South Dakota for better farmland. Nanno and Alice were in their early nineties at the time, but had clear minds and memories. “They were so looking forward to the English-language edition,” Hylke told me. But unfortunately, it was given to neither of them to witness its publication. Nanno died in 2015, ninety-five years old, and Alice died in March of 2017, only two months before The Comfort Bird was printed, also ninety-five years old. Alice did live to participate in a celebration to honor her husband, liberator Nanno Hiemstra, in Hichtum in 2013. Several American and Frisian family members attended the service in the eight hundred-year-old village church.

Nanno Hiemstra’s counterpart was Meindert Boorsma, who had fought on the Russian front with the SS. It has taken a long time, but now, more than seventy years after the end of WWII, it has become possible to tell a story that is more than the black-and-white of ‘good’ versus ‘evil’ in the war. The decisions made by the Boorsma family are made plausible and understandable in Speerstra’s book. A decision may not be right in the light of historical facts, but that may not make it misguided seen in the light of the harsh conditions of the time either.

As we read about the toughness of life in rural Friesland in the late 1800s; agricultural crises and the subsequent adventures of one family through economic depression and dustbowl in North America; and another through political turmoil, ruins and economic depression in Europe; we realize how much chance decisions and fate determine outcomes across the generations. Speerstra’s book is a not just a riveting read, not just a social history of migrant labor and not just a good story. It also gives us insight into what big impact small decisions by single individuals can have on many lives. And what makes it even more impressive and exciting: it is a true story.

I am proud and honored that Messrs. Baron and Speerstra chose Mokeham to publish The Comfort Bird. It is – and believe me, I am not just saying this because we happen to be the publishers (but by all means do have a look at the ad and order form on page 51) – a book that should be read by anyone who has the slightest interest in Dutch social history, emigration or World War II. And by anyone who likes a good read. Because Hylke Speerstra tells a great story.
Maastricht is decidedly 'un-Dutch'. Walk through the market on Friday morning, and you will not only hear Dutch (albeit with a southern accent or in the local dialect, 'Mestreechs'), but also German, French and English. Forty-nine percent of the students attending the prestigious Maastricht University are foreign. But Maastricht's cosmopolitan flair is just one of the many reasons why it is so appealing. Located in the south of Holland, not far from the Belgian and German borders, the dynamic city and capital of the province of Limburg is characterized by its lively atmosphere, 'Burgundian' lifestyle, historic center and hilly surroundings that are home to lush vineyards, castles and panoramic landscapes reminiscent of Wallonia and France.
Some history
Though excavations have shown that the area in and around Maastricht was inhabited at least 250,000 years ago, it was first permanently settled by the Celts around 500 B.C. and later conquered by the Romans during the first century A.D.. In the first half of that century, the Romans built a bridge at a strategic point across the Maas River. The city’s Latin name, *Mosae Trajectum* (meaning ‘Maas River crossing’), refers to that bridge. The bridge collapsed in 1275 and was replaced by the *Sint Servaasbrug* (Saint Servatius Bridge) which was built between 1280 and 1298 and was named after the first Dutch bishop and the city’s patron saint in 1930.

During the Early Middle Ages, Maastricht became an important religious center where Christianity thrived. It received Medieval rights in 1204, and by 1229 the first city walls were erected. From the 16th to the 19th century, Maastricht was repeatedly invaded. First by the Spanish in 1579, later by Prince Frederik Hendrik of Orange who took back the city in 1632, and then by the French in 1673, 1748 and 1794. After the French period (1794-1814), it joined the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. During the course of the 19th century, Maastricht became one of the most important industrial cities in the country.

Maastricht was conquered by the Germans in May 1940 and was the first major Dutch city to be liberated on September 14th 1944.

In 1992, Maastricht became the birthplace of the European Union when the Treaty of Maastricht was signed by the representatives of the twelve member states on February 7th.

Today, Maastricht is home to approximately 123,000 residents and attracts more than three million tourists annually. The handsome Dutch city boasts roughly 1600 national monuments, no less than four hundred bars and restaurants, one of the most prestigious universities in Europe and plenty of exciting events taking place year-round. Visiting Maastricht this summer? Here is a selection of some of the best things to see and do during your trip.

Stroll through historic Vrijthof Square
Vrijthof Square is the beating heart of Maastricht, especially during the summer months when people are out enjoying the many cafés and restaurants that line the streets. Its history, however, was not always as cheerful. Excavations show that the area was burial grounds until the early Merovingian period. Later, it became a mostly green, open field which also functioned as bleaching grounds. As of the 19th century, the area was paved, and Vrijthof Square was on its way to becoming the lively hub it is today.

There are thirty-eight municipal monuments in and around the square. Perhaps the most significant is the *Basiliek van Sint Servaas* (Basilica of Saint Servatius). Named after the city’s first bishop, who died in 384, it was built between the 6th and 15th century and has always served as a place of pilgrimage. Saint Servatius’s remains, stored in an ornate treasury chest, are kept in one of the four crypts along with many other relics from the Middle Ages. Next to the basilica is another noteworthy place of worship: the Gothic *Sint-Janskerk* with its prominent, red limestone tower. The Protestant church was dedicated to Saint John and dates to the 15th and 16th centuries.

Located in a 16th-century building with a bright red facade is one of the city’s top museums, *Museum aan het Vrijhof*. It was established in 1973 under the name *Museum Spaans Gouvernement*, underwent renovations as of 2010 and reopened under its present name in 2012. The museum is home to many 17th-century Dutch masters as well as painters from the Haagsche School movement of the late 19th century.

The city’s main theater, *Theater aan het Vrijthof*, can also be found on the square in the *Generaalshuis* (General’s House), a monument dating to the early 19th century.

Visit the fortifications
The city’s first fortifications were erected in the 13th century, and although most were gone or torn down by the late 19th century, some can still be admired today. The *Helpoort* dates to 1229 and was part of the first wall built in the city. It is the oldest city gate in the country. A spiral staircase leads to an information center.
Admire art at the Bonnefantenmuseum
The Bonnefantenmuseum has a history that goes back to 1884 when it was first housed in the sacristy of the Augustijnenkerk (Church of Augustinians) on Kesselskade. Throughout the years, it moved to different buildings in the city before settling at its current address on the banks of the Maas River at Avenue Céramique 250 in 1995. The flamboyant building, with its rocket-shaped tower measuring approximately ninety-one feet, was designed by Italian architect Aldo Rossi and is one of the modern gems of Maastricht’s skyline. The museum houses an impressive collection of contemporary art (especially concept art, minimal art, and arte povera); Medieval craftwork, sculpture and altar pieces; Early Italian painting from the 14th and 15th centuries; and Southern Dutch painting from the 16th and 17th centuries. Not to be missed is the Census at Bethlehem by Pieter Brueghel the Younger (approx. 1605-1610) and the wooden, Medieval statues on the first floor.

Tempt your taste buds in culinary Maastricht
The people of Maastricht are often said to enjoy a ‘Burgundian’ (Bourgondisch) lifestyle. The term is used to describe the good life and the pleasures of food and drink. It hints back to the time when the dukes of Burgundy (who revelled in a most opulent lifestyle) ruled over The Netherlands. There is certainly no denying that Maastricht is a paradise for gourmets. The weekly market held every Friday at the historic Markt has approximately 375 stalls offering a colorful variety of seasonal fruits and vegetables, fresh meats and fish, Dutch and foreign cheeses, delicacies from all over the world, flowers, home-
Experience Maastricht from the water
One of the most relaxed ways to experience Maastricht and its surroundings is from the water. Rederij Stiphout offers an interesting selection of tours departing from Maaspromenade 58. Highly recommended is their combination tour which starts with a forty-five-minute trip on an American school bus that takes you past some of the city’s main attractions and beautiful neighborhoods. The tour continues on a boat on the Maas River and stops at Sint Pietersberg hill where a guide will show you around Saint Peter’s Fortress and its caves. Tours begin at 11:00 a.m. (reservations are needed).
For those who prefer to stay on the water, the one-hour tour on the Maas River passes through the city center and goes all the way to the Belgian border. The boat sails past the Saint Servatius Bridge, a major Maastricht landmark where many tourists stop to take pictures or enjoy the panorama. Another option is the two-hour boat trip which passes through the inner city harbor, Het Bassin and includes vlaai and coffee or a light lunch. Located in the middle of the Sphinxkwartier neighborhood, the harbor was constructed by the city council between 1824 and 1826 to improve transport routes with the Zuid-Willemsvaart canal and the Maastricht-Liège canal. Though Het Bassin experienced a period of downfall after World War II, many buildings were restored in the 1970s and 1990s. Today, the buildings around Het Bassin are home to restaurants, art galleries and cultural organizations such as the Lumière Cinema which moved there last fall.

Shop
With approximately four hundred shops open seven days per week, Maastricht’s city center offers plenty of opportunities for some serious retail therapy. One of the city’s most charming shopping neighborhoods is Wyck. There, Rechtstraat and Hoogbrugstraat are home to trendy boutiques, antique shops and restaurants. Worth mentioning is Maastricht’s first concept store, De Verwondering, which opened in 1996. Located on Hoogbrugstraat 21, the store carries a colorful collection of items for the home as well as accessories and original souvenirs.

For more chic and elegant stores, head to the Stokstraatkwartier. It is hard to believe that the beautiful, historic neighborhood was a slum from the end of the 19th century until the late 1940s. From the 1950s to the early 1970s, however, buildings were renovated and exclusive stores found a home on what would become one of the country’s poshest shopping areas. On Stokstraat, the main street, you will find approximately forty-five monuments. The most noteworthy is the Onze Lieve Vrouwekerk (Church of Our Lady). The church’s main entrance can be found on Onze Lieve Vrouweplein, a square with restaurants and a vibrant atmosphere.

If there is one shop that you definitely cannot miss during your trip to Maastricht, it is Boekhandel Dominicanen on Dominicanenkerkstraat 1. The bookstore is housed inside the Gothic, 13th-century Dominicanerk (Dominican Church) and has been hailed as one of the most beautiful bookstores in the world.

Visit festivals and events
Besides the Preuvenemint, Maastricht holds various attractive festivals and events throughout the year. In March, the world’s leading art, antiques and design fair (the TEFAF, or The European Fine Art Fair), is held at the Maastricht Exhibition and Congress Center. The event brings together more than 250 international art dealers eager to present their treasures to collectors and connoisseurs. Coming in July is the fourteenth annual Andre Rieu concert series held at Vrijthof Square. The violin master and conductor, a native of Maastricht, attracts waltz fans from all over the world to his concerts. Together with his Johan Strauss Orchestra, Rieu is one of the world’s best-selling acts. Note that Rieu will be touring through the United States this October and November, so be sure to check out his website (andrerieu.com) for details!

During the month of December, the Magisch Maastricht Christmas fair is one of the most enchanting winter spectacles in the country and manages to attract approximately 500,000 visitors to Vrijthof Square.

And much more!
It wasn’t easy to narrow down our selection of Maastricht highlights! For a complete listing of what the city has to offer, see: visitmaastricht.com. And keep in mind that a day-trip will probably not be enough!
A TRIP THROUGH AMSTERDAM'S CANALS

In the summertime, Amsterdam's canals are the place to be for most people and all kinds of boats. Boats and UFO's (Unidentified Floating Objects) appear everywhere, allowing those on board to get a privileged view of our beloved city.

Recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2010, the 'Grachtengordel' currently boasts 165 canals and 80 bridges. There's plenty to see and do during a boat trip through the famous Canal Belt!

1. **Museum Het GRACHTENHUIS**
   Herengracht 596
   A stop at the Canal House Museum is really a must! Learn more about the history of the Canal Belt while visiting the monumental, 17th-century merchant house designed by Philips Vingboons.

2. **The 7 BRIDGES of Reguliersgracht**
   Take Reguliersgracht from Herengracht to admire one of the most beautiful views in Amsterdam: the famous seven bridges. At night they are all illuminated to make the experience even more outstanding!

3. **CAFÉ'T SMALLE**
   Egelantiersgracht 11
   Located on the latest canal in the Jordaan district, this is a great place to enjoy a beer in a real 'brown café' atmosphere. Gezellig!

4. **THE SCHEEPVAART MUSEUM**
   Kattenburgerplein 1
   Learn about life on board a VOC (Dutch East India Company) ship at the National Maritime Museum. The VOC made Amsterdam one of the richest and most powerful cities in the world in the 17th century.

5. **BRANDENZAND**
   Westerdoksdijk 707
   After a day of sailing, I recommend a stop at Brandenrand café. From the small cabana on the beach, you can enjoy healthy and sustainable food while watching the sunset and the amazing view over the IJ river.

If you want to explore the canals on your own, there are two options: one is to exercise your legs on a pedal boat, the other is to rent a boat (from small electric boats for a few people, to large party barges, with or without a captain).

ENJOY!
Secrets of the KLM houses revealed

The ‘Grand Old Lady’ of Rotterdam: On the brink of the American dream

In his book *Little Kingdom by the Sea: a Celebration of Dutch Cultural Heritage*, author Mark Zegeling reveals the amazing stories behind Holland’s most iconic historic buildings, famously used as models for KLM’s highly collectable Delft blue miniature houses.

On Saturday, January 14th 1905, shortly after the first line of the New York City Subway opened, Austrian-Hungarian emigrants Peter and Elisabeth Weissmüller were about to start their American dream on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. The SS Rotterdam, a majestic steamliner moored at the Holland America Quay on Wilhelmina Pier, was ready to depart for the New World. At 35ºF, it was freezing cold in the harbor of Rotterdam.

Twelve days later, Peter, Elisabeth and their seven-month-old baby boy János disembarked at Ellis Island. The family arrived at the immigration center with only twenty-three dollars and fifty cents in their pockets.

Me Tarzan, you Jane

The son of Peter and Elisabeth Weissmüller later changed his name to Johnny. In the 1920s, he became an American idol as one of the world’s fastest swimmers. The attractive young man was the first swimmer ever to win the one-hundred-meter freestyle in less than one minute. Johnny returned to Holland in 1928 as a member of the U.S. team to participate in the Summer Olympics and secured two gold medals in Amsterdam. After his retirement from sports, he became a true American icon by playing the role of Tarzan and swinging on vines in twelve blockbuster movies. Johnny’s famous yell is a registered trademark, which according to the actor, originated in his youth when his father taught him how to yodel. Although the famous actor’s roots can be traced back to a small village in present-day Romania, it was the Wilhelmina Pier in Rotterdam that represented the springboard to a new life for him… and hundreds of thousands of other immigrants.

Between 1880 and 1925, almost one million people departed from the harbor of Rotterdam to New York. The first checks on aspiring emigrants seeking U.S. citizenship were performed in Rotterdam. After all, “paupers, criminals and polygamists” were not allowed to board, nor were “idiots, the insane and lunatics”. Settling in America had always appealed to Europeans, and a Rotterdam shipping company played a central role in this mass migration.

An American dream

Initially named ‘Nederlandsch-Amerikaansche Stoomvaart-Maatschappij’ (Dutch-American Steamship Company), Holland America Line was set up in 1869 by two young and aspiring business pioneers, Hon. Otto Reuchlin and his friend Antoine Plate. Their first steamship, Ariadne, left port on July 4th 1872 to carry a company of immigrants to America. In that same year, Rotterdam was given the decisive boost that would rank it among the world’s major ports, as the newly constructed *Nieuwe Waterweg* canal gave it direct deepwater access to the North Sea.
Emigration from the Dutch Republic to North America started early in the 17th century. On Saturday, July 22nd 1620, a group of fifty-seven people set sail from Delfshaven to the promised land. Having fled from persecution in 1609, the group of English Protestants (known as Pilgrims) had settled in Leiden, only to find that the Dutch had rather loose morals. This made them decide to make the crossing to the New World, and they would later be considered the founding fathers of the present-day United States.

There, they introduced concepts such as civil marriage, derived directly from 17th-century matrimonial law in Holland, while the tradition of Thanksgiving may well go back to the annual celebrations commemorating Leiden’s liberation from Spanish siege. The descendants of the Pilgrims include nine U.S. presidents, among them Barack Obama and George W. Bush. Twelve generations back, the two even shared a common Dutch ancestry, Elizabeth Blossom, who was born in Leiden. Her parents fled to the Dutch Republic in 1609, taking up residence on Pieterskerkhof in Leiden before immigrating to America.

A bridge across the ocean
By the end of the 19th century, Holland America Line was going full steam ahead. Thousands of people from The Netherlands’ northern provinces, along with large numbers of Eastern Europeans, made the journey to New York via Rotterdam for economic, religious or political motives. The crossing cost them between fifty-five and seventy guilders, depending on the travel class they could afford. In 1893, Holland America Line opened its own settlers’ hotel, which could accommodate approximately nine hundred guests. To speed up admission procedures at Ellis Island, the immigrants were already checked for hygiene, deloused and decontaminated in Rotterdam.

At the time, Holland America Line had commissioned twenty ocean liners to serve as a “bridge across the ocean”, and the company steadily expanded its operations. George, a son of founder Otto Reuchlin, decided to follow in his father’s footsteps, becoming one of the directors. In 1901, a new and robust head office was built close to the settlers’ hotel. It was designed by architects J. Muller and C.M. Droogleever Fortuyn. Boardrooms laid out on the second floor allowed the directors to watch their ocean steamers arrive and depart. A warehouse was built on the back of the monumental building, while one of its corners featured a thirty-eight-meter high tower crowned by a green copper roof, designed by architect C.B. van der Tak.

Tuschinski’s second thoughts
Many settlers flooded Wilhelmina Pier hoping to secure a place aboard one of the ships heading for the New World. Among them was seventeen-year-old Abraham Icek Tuschinski. Having escaped the pogroms in his native Poland, the Jewish boy traveled via Vienna to Rotterdam in 1904. But after a twenty-eight-day wait without permission to embark, he had second thoughts. Instead of immigrating to the United States, he took up residence in Rotterdam, establishing a clothing workshop and subsequently an inn (named ‘Polska’) for Eastern European immigrants. Movies were his great passion, however, and the young entrepreneur decided to open his first cinema in downtown Rotterdam.

The sinking of the Titanic
On Friday, September 13th 1912, it was so quiet that you could hear a pin drop in Tuschinski’s Olympia theater in Rotterdam as The Shipping Disaster of the Titanic was about to premiere, “a sensational spectacle in three parts, with a film of 1,500 meters’ length”. Just five months earlier, thousands lost their lives when the world’s largest passenger liner struck an iceberg and sank. As advertised by Tuschinski, the “deeply moving drama will now be shown in our theater in all its terrifying grandeur”. At the premiere, many in the audience knew one or more of the victims personally. Initially, Jan Wierdsma, Holland America Line’s president-director, had been invited by the White Star Line shipping company to join the Titanic’s doomed maiden voyage from Southampton to New York. But because his wedding anniversary coincided with the trip, Wierdsma decided to pass the invitation on to his fellow director George Reuchlin.

Rotterdam, a city in mourning
On Wednesday, April 10th 1912, one hour before leaving the port in Southampton, George Reuchlin watched as the RMS
Titanic almost collided with the SS City of New York (from one of his competitor shipping companies, Inman Line). It must have reminded him of a story his father Otto once told him about the disaster that befell Holland America Line’s liner, the W.A. Scholten, as another ship slammed into it in the thick fog off the coast of Dover in 1887. Within thirty minutes, the W.A. Scholten went down, with only seventy-eight of the 210 passengers and crew surviving.

Just before the Titanic set sail, George sent a cable to his wife and children, a last sign of life. After the Titanic went down four days later, flags were at half-mast at Holland America Line headquarters in Rotterdam and on all its ocean liners.

In the line of fire
In 1914, World War I broke out in Europe. Even though The Netherlands remained neutral, Holland America Line became involved in the conflict. Its flagship SS Rotterdam IV, with capacity for 3,200 passengers, was used to transport soldiers and ammunition from the U.S. to France. Another steamliner, the SS Statendam II, commissioned from the same Belfast shipyard as the Titanic, was requisitioned by the British government even before it was completed. Renamed SS Justicia, it served as a troopship until it was torpedoed by a German U-boat and sank in 1917.

‘De Halve Maen’ weather vane
Following the end of World War I, Holland America Line’s head office underwent a third extension. Both the building’s exterior and interior were decorated with Jugendstil elements. The reliefs on the wall contain references to shipping and exotic destinations, including Indians and people in Egyptian and Arabic attire. The new front façade was adorned with the words ‘Holland Amerika Lijn’ in large, gilded letters, as well as reliefs of the coats of arms of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, New York and Batavia (now Jakarta). To complete the extension works, a second tower was built, incorporating a four-faced clock. Crowning the green copper roof was a weather vane with the silhouette of the De Halve Maen (Half Moon), a VOC (Dutch East India Company) ship, as featured in Holland America Line’s corporate logo. This was the ship on which Henry Hudson attempted to find a northern passage to the East Indies in 1609, discovering Manhattan by chance.

The heyday is over
By the early 1920s, no less than fourteen million people from across the globe had settled in the United States, and the country was having a hard time coping with the massive influx. In 1921, attempts were made to ease the wave of immigrants, imposing strict quotas. As the reading and writing ability requirement proved insufficient, numerical limits were set for each country of origin. Holland America Line’s heydays appeared to be over due to the new immigration policy, and the Rotterdam-based shipping company decided to change tack, focusing instead on offering cruise travel in the Caribbean in the 1920s and 1930s.

In the line of fire once again
On May 10th 1940, World War II broke out in The Netherlands. The Germans dropped paratroopers in Rotterdam, occupying strategic positions. The next day, they took possession of the SS Statendam III, moored at Wilhelmina Pier, using it as a stronghold to take aim at the north bank of the Nieuwe Maas river. A Dutch marine company then opened fire, destroying the ship. Two more ships, the Boschdijk and the Veendam, suffered severe damage during the battle. In the Rotterdam Blitz four days later, several of Holland America Line’s barracks went up in flames due to the aerial bombardment, but the head office miraculously escaped destruction. Two weeks after the start of the war, the company relocated its headquarters to Curacao, with the executive board operating from London and New York. Between 1940 and 1945, the German occupying force confiscated sixteen of the company’s twenty-two steamliners for use in its warfare.

Again, many saw their new life start in Rotterdam
After the liberation from Nazi Germany, Holland America Line relaunched its operations, and in the following years it helped around half a million people begin a new life in such countries as Canada, Australia and New Zealand. At that time, its fleet numbered twenty-five liners. With competition from airlines heating up, Holland America Line decided to discontinue its regular transatlantic passenger service to New York in 1971. The Nieuw-Amsterdam II was the last of its passenger liners to make the crossing on November 8th of that year. One year later, the settlers’ hotel was demolished to make room for a container storage facility. Holland America Line then relocated to the United States in 1978, where it could serve the booming cruise travel market better. Nevertheless, the company’s departure was widely deplored, given its manifest significance in Rotterdam’s maritime and economic
During its century-long existence, its 133 vessels transported nearly four million passengers and seventy-five million tons of cargo. The distinctive building with its two green towers, at the head of Wilhelmina Pier, was put up for sale. After many years of dilapidation, the building was occupied by squatters in 1988. The City of Rotterdam decided to purchase ‘the Grand Old Lady’ for twenty-six million guilders a year later.

**Monumental celebration**

In 1993, the former head office of Holland America Line began its own second life. In May of that year, a bottle of champagne was swung at its facade, marking the festive opening of Hotel New York. At the time, Wilhelmina Pier was still poorly accessible, but with the iconic Erasmus Bridge constructed three years later, the entire Kop van Zuid district came to life. Hotel New York offers seventy-two rooms furnished in maritime grandeur, including the towers converted into splendid suites and the ornately appointed boardrooms. The former caretaker’s house on the roof was converted into a luxurious penthouse. Hotel New York is a monumental celebration of Rotterdam’s rich maritime heritage.

**A world exclusive made of porcelain**

In the Dutch Golden Age, Holland became the warehouse of the world and the gateway to Europe. At the same time, Dutch scientists unravelled the mysteries of daily life while painters presented a new vision of reality and changed the world of art. In his book *Kingdom by the Sea: A Celebration of Dutch Cultural Heritage*, author Mark Zegeling tells the inspiring stories of courageous pioneers, innovative entrepreneurs, talented artists, old Dutch masters and other notable characters who have captured our imagination for centuries. In his beautifully designed high-end coffee table book, Zegeling reveals the hidden stories behind the iconic gables and heritage houses which served as an inspiration for the KLM collection of miniature houses. The Delft Blue miniatures are given to business class passengers on long-haul flights and represent approximately one hundred existing monuments and national landmarks across the country. On the occasion of the launch of KLM house No. 97 (a replica of Hotel New York in Rotterdam), the author also introduced a limited edition of his Dutch language book *Sterke Verhalen, alle geheimen achter de gevels van de KLM-huisjes* with a front cover made of real China porcelain. Such an exclusive cover has never been been made in book printing history. The tile on the porcelain cover depicting the image of the admiral ships the *Rotterdam* and the *Herreng* is based on an original tile panel from 1712. As a tribute to the maritime history of the city of Rotterdam, only five hundred copies with a porcelain front cover were made by artists of Royal Delft/De Porceleyne Fles (est. 1653). The numbered limited edition is carefully packed in a luxury gift box including a certificate of authenticity by Royal Delft. For more information: www.kingdombythesea.nl
Hendrikje Ivo's obsession with handbags began at an antique shop in Norwich, England when she spotted a leather purse with a tortoiseshell cover inlaid with mother-of-pearl and sporting a handle and closures made of cut steel. As a consummate collector of small antiquities, she recognized its value. "From a bag you can tell much about the time, the materials, the designs, the fashions and customs of when it was made," her daughter Sigrid recounted years later. Researching the bag's origins, Hendrikje discovered it was German-made sometime between 1810 and 1820. That serendipitous discovery in 1982 was just the beginning. Today Amsterdam's Tassenmuseum Hendrikje, (Museum of Bags and Purses), showcases a collection of more than five thousand handbags – the Ivo family legacy to Hendrikje's first discovery and the succession of purses, briefcases and suitcases they collected after it. Originally housed in Ivo's home in Amstelveen and open to the public since 1996, Hendrikje, her husband Heinz and Sigrid eventually found their expanding collection outgrowing their private residence. After a generous donation from Henk van den Broek (one of the owners of the Dutch supermarket chain Dirk van den Broek) in 2007, the museum moved into a historic canal house in the UNESCO World Heritage canal ring of Amsterdam.

Named one of the ten best fashion museums in the world by Fodor Travel, Tassenmuseum is also the largest of the only three in the world dedicated to the accessory (the other two are in Seoul, South Korea and Little Rock, Arkansas, USA). If you aren't an aficionado of purses, art or design, there is plenty of information in the museum to satisfy history buffs. Artifacts are displayed with researched educational explanations in English, the work of Sigrid, an art historian who now serves as the artistic director and curator of the museum.

The collection traces the evolution of purses and begins on the upper floor with men's and women's bags from the Middle Ages. On the ground floor, there are displays of modern bags used by celebrities and European royalty. There, the museum store sells contemporary handbags made by Dutch designers. Until the 17th century, handbags were mostly a male accessory worn on shoulder straps or belts. They were used to carry money, documents, Bibles, relics and chips for games of dice and cards that were popular in European courts. Tassenmuseum's oldest and most valuable exhibit is a men's 16th-century goatskin pouch adorned with eighteen pockets, originating in either France or Germany.
With the invention of the clothing pocket in the 17th century, men had less need for purses, and they became the accessory de rigueur for women. The displays make clear that purses had both a functional and a fashionable purpose for women. Those with means owned and used more than one.

The museum’s exhibit of chatelaines demonstrates the earliest efforts by women to find a functional way to carry life’s daily necessities around with them. Called ‘halters’ in The Netherlands, they were varying lengths of gold, silver or leather chains suspended from a belt on which to hang small purses, fans, knives, sheaths, sewing kits and watches. Found in early Roman sites and used elsewhere in Europe from the 16th to 19th century, chatelaines were not only functional, but also served as a status symbol.

The museum displays of 17th and 18th-century ‘tie pocket’ purses illustrate another type of bag with a practical function. Made of linen or cotton, a tie pocket was a loose bag that could be hidden under the voluminous skirts women wore. In it they could store a handkerchief, snuff box, coins called ‘bezemstuivertjes’ and sewing materials. Dutch women called them ‘thigh bags’ and would often wear one on each hip.

One of the most exquisite displays at the museum is their collection of two hundred years of beaded purses. The earliest examples come from the 17th century: small bags made from glass beads (some no larger than a grain of sand) strung on silk threads. The artwork of the bags was so detailed that, unlike tie pockets, these bags were worn as a decorative accessory on belts and waistbands and given as gifts among the upper class.

Contemporary handbags warrant a floor to themselves, many of them charming works of art. Examples include a 2014 French shoulder bag that resembles a puffer fish and is made of wooden beads and sequins, or the green and terra cotta leather purse designed as a three-dimensional potted plant complete with sprouting flowers. Margaret Thatcher’s famous gray handbag and a green textile Versace bag carried by Madonna at a film premiere are also found in the collection.

While admiring the handbags, visitors can also admire the interior architecture of the well-preserved, 17th-century canal house in which the museum is located. Originally the home of a succession of wealthy Dutch businessmen and mayors, the museum has spared no expense in renovating the Small and Large Period Rooms whose ceilings and chimney pieces were painted by well-known 17th and 18th-century Dutch artists Paulus de Fouchier, Jacob Smit and Louis Fabritius. The museum restaurant offers high tea and lunch, which can also be taken in the Period Rooms.

Plans are afoot to expand the museum’s function as a research location for historians and designers. The collection will be digitized and some of it made available online. Another location will house the museum’s research center and extensive library of books, magazines and digitized artifacts. The permanent exhibits in the canal house museum will be updated, and all of the functions will operate under the name The Centre of Bags and Purses.

Tassenmuseum’s curated collection of historical and modern purses is not the only focus of the museum. It also hosts regular expositions of young, international handbag designers and promotes a new generation of Dutch designers who create contemporary designs in the Dutch minimalist style: no fancy extra buckles or attachments that are not functional.

Time spent at Tassenmuseum makes a subsequent visit to any museum displaying art from the Golden Age of Dutch painting far more interesting. Handbags played a symbolic role in Dutch portraits and still-life paintings, particularly those from the early 17th-century Vanitas genre. An empty satchel such as the one featured in Willem van Aelst’s oil painting, Still-Life with Dead Birds and
Game Bag (1647) owned by the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, and his Still-Life With Hunting Equipment and Dead Birds (1668) seen at the Staatliche Kunsthalle in Karlsruhe, Germany, represented the fleeting nature of life. By contrast, full purses were a symbol of wealth. The bulging, leather talon purse (a money pouch attached to a short staff) plays a prominent role in Gerrit Dou’s Still-Life With Book And Purse (1647) on display at the USC Fisher Museum of Art in Los Angeles and is seen again in his oil painting, Moneylender (1664) at the Louvre in Paris. Edwaert Collier’s 1662 privately owned oil painting, A Globe, a Casket of Jewels and Medallions, Books, a Hurdy-Gurdy, a Bagpipe, a Lute, a Violin, an Upturned Silver Tazza and Roemer and Other Objects on a Draped Table is filled with symbolic articles including a talon purse. Look carefully at portraits made by other Dutch masters for their inclusion of symbolic purses or satchels. An example is Old Woman With A Candle painted by Matthias Stomer dating to the 1640s and housed at the Hermitage Museum. It features as its subject an elderly woman counting money while clutching her talon purse.

If you think a purse is just a simple fashion accessory to carry your wallet and keys or complement your outfit, Tassenmuseum is determined to change your opinion. A handbag is a global vestige of history, a stand-alone work of art and can be a cultural artifact representing historical figures, celebrities and events. If a trip to Amsterdam is not in your future, the museum’s informative, educational and beautifully photographed website allows you to learn about its history, virtually explore some of the collection and discover the story of handbags throughout the ages.

Museum Website: www.tassenmuseum.nl/en/
Address: Herengracht 573, Amsterdam
Museum hours: 10:00 – 17:00 pm. daily. Closed on holidays.
Restaurant hours: 10:00 -16:30 pm. daily (must be museum visitor)

Entrance Fee:
Adult: € 12.50
Student: € 9.50
Children: € 3.50
Free with iamsterdam City Card
If Thijs Chanowski was associated with one achievement in particular, it would have been producing *De Fabeltjeskrant* (*The Newspaper of Little Fables*). It was one of those unique television programs that was a genre in its own. It was also one of the most consistently watched programs on Dutch television during its run from 1968 to 1974, drawing between one and two million viewers every evening. A year before the premiere of *Sesame Street* in the USA, Dutch children were treated to a nightly show with speaking animal puppets that addressed current affairs and socially relevant topics of the era. And it was funny and entertaining, too.

But for Chanowski, *De Fabeltjeskrant* was just a particularly successful period in an altogether remarkable career, which was varied and highly creative, if not very lucrative. Chanowski was an inventor, a creator and a visionary, but he was no businessman. *De Fabeltjeskrant* alone, which was shown in more than forty countries, could have made him rich, but he sold the rights for ten thousand guilders to a young entrepreneur who made millions from them.

Chanowski was born in Hamburg, Germany in 1930, the son of a White Russian émigré father and a Dutch mother. When his father died, his mother returned to The Netherlands, and the family settled in Bergen in the province of North Holland, an artists’ colony in those pre-war years, where they rubbed shoulders with painters such as Charley Toorop and her son Eddy Fernhout. The latter taught Chanowski to paint, while the boy taught himself to play the double bass. Well, actually, a homemade bass built out of a tea chest and an old curtain cord, until one of his several sequential stepfathers bought him a cheap, but real, instrument.

He liked to tinker, and although he never completed any formal education, Thijs did enjoy his two years at the car mechanics school. But before long, he was working for his grandparents in Arnhem, who owned two upscale clothing stores. He went to Paris to learn more about the fashion trade and worked as a purchasing agent. His double bass joined him, and as he worked for his grandparents during the day, he played jazz in the evenings, jamming with legends like Don Byas and Stéphane Grappelli. Back in The Netherlands, Thijs was drawn into the nascent television scene. As a musician, he was the perfect candidate to produce and direct music shows. He worked with legends such as Thelonious Monk, Jacques Brel and Edith Piaf.

But when straight-up television began to bore him, he took his experiences from the worlds of fashion, music and television and created multimedia performances using a combination of new projection techniques that he merged into spectacular light shows.

An important sideline, which would occupy him until the end of his life, was the Shaffy Theater in Amsterdam. Ramses Shaffy, *enfant terrible* of the music and theater world, needed a place to perform. Thijs arranged for the abandoned film hall of the old Communist Party headquarters, decked it out with oak logs covered in Persian rugs and created one of the most popular avant-garde theater venues of the hippie capital of the world.

Forever dabbling in technology, Thijs ended up working for electronics giant Philips. In their lab, he developed the laser disc, precursor to the CD and DVD. Eventually, he also became an Internet pioneer, specializing in data and search algorithms. Long before Google existed, he developed a search algorithm that was more intuitive than the later de facto standard. As Thijs put it himself: “If you look for needles in a haystack, Google will give you the needles. I gave you the farmer’s daughter.”

In 1995, the autodidact (who had not completed elementary or high school, or had even ever considered going to university) was appointed professor in databases and search systems at the University of Amsterdam.

But despite his wildly varied and immensely accomplished career, in which he changed the world of both technology and the arts in meaningful ways, Thijs Chanowski is still remembered in The Netherlands mainly as the father of *The Newspaper of Little Fables*. He died on March 7th 2017 in Alkmaar. He was eighty-six years old.
Not only does the summer mean wonderful foods such as fresh strawberries, cherries, and watermelons, but it also a time for making beautiful memories. It isn’t any wonder that most weddings are held in the summer!

My father’s birthday barbecue has been a highlight of my summers for as long as I can remember. It takes place in the middle of July and is always a big family affair with a varied buffet of salads, breads, meats and plenty of garlic sauce. The Dutch love their sauces with barbecues and outdoor meals. Another popular sauce is *satésaus*, a thick peanut sauce which is slathered on meats and mopped up with chunks of bread.

But barbecues aren’t only saved for special occasions. Even in early spring, if the sun is out and the temperature is mildly pleasant, the barbecue will be brushed off and happily used once again after a long winter in hibernation. Supermarkets cater to the Dutch barbecuemania with special offers on staples such as meat, baguettes and the ever-popular Boursin (a garlic and chives cream cheese).

The recipes that follow are the perfect way to spice up your barbecue with a Dutch twist. The dishes are also great additions to any summer outdoor buffet. And the best part? They require almost no cooking at all, leaving you plenty of time to create beautiful summer memories of your own. *Eet smakelijk!*

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**Chicory salad**

Chicory is a beloved vegetable in The Netherlands. It is often served during the winter months as an oven dish with ham and cheese, but it is no stranger to the summer either. There is a popular chicory salad recipe that has been doing the rounds since the 1970s. Every Dutch family seems to have their own variation, but it definitely needs to have curry spices and apples to be called authentic! This is my favorite version.

**Serves:** 4

**Ingredients:**
- 4 chicory stalks (also known as Belgian endive or witloof)
- 1 cup roasted walnuts
- ¾ cup raisins, soaked and drained thoroughly
- 1 apple
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- ½ cup whole yogurt
- 1 tsp curry spices
- Salt and pepper, to taste

**Instructions:**
- Chop off the bitter ends of the chicory stalks, then chop the stalks into smaller pieces, and place them in a large bowl.
- Roughly chop the walnuts, and add to the chicory along with the raisins.
- Core the apple, and slice it into wedges. Add the lemon juice, then add to the salad.
- Mix the salad well.
- To make the dressing, whisk the yogurt with curry spices and salt and pepper to taste. Drizzle over the salad when ready to serve.

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**Ramona Venema**
Chilled cucumber soup

I was talking to an American sergeant in the Air Force a while back, and while we were having dinner, he asked me: "Why are the Dutch so obsessed with cucumbers? I haven't had a dinner without them!" Well, I didn't really have an answer, but his observation was certainly a keen one. We love our cucumbers and have huge greenhouses dedicated to them. Dutch cucumbers are available year-round and exported all over the world. The following cucumber soup is refreshing and has slightly spicy notes courtesy of a touch of sambal oelek, a popular Indonesian hot paste. The soup can be made in advance and stored in the fridge until ready to serve.

Serves: 4

Ingredients:
2 shallots, minced
1 tbsp olive oil
2 cups vegetable stock
1 cucumber
1 tsp sambal oelek
½ cup whole yogurt
1 cup chopped parsley

Instructions:
• Slice the cucumber in half lengthways, and scoop out the seeds using a small spoon. Chop the cucumber into small pieces, and set aside.
• Heat the olive oil in a heavy-bottomed soup pan, and add the minced shallots. Sauté until softened.
• Add the vegetable stock and chopped cucumber, and allow to simmer for approximately 5 minutes over a medium heat.
• Remove the pan from the heat, and stir in the sambal oelek, yogurt and half of the parsley.
• Using a blender or a handheld mixer, blitz the soup into a smooth consistency.
• Leave the soup to cool at room temperature before placing in the fridge to chill for at least 3 hours. Overnight is also fine.
• To serve, divide the soup over 4 bowls and garnish with the rest of the parsley.
Asparagus tart

It is believed that the ancient Egyptians loved asparagus so much that they even offered it to their gods in precious bundles. The Greeks and Romans enjoyed the vegetable as well and made the most of it when it was in season. Asparagus is also a Dutch favorite. Most of our asparagus comes from the province of Limburg where it is grown in neat beds. During the short asparagus season, which starts in March or April and ends in early summer, you will often find special asparagus menus in restaurants throughout the country. In this tart, I pair them with eggs, but you could also add ham for a classic combination.

Serves: 8

Ingredients:
16 oz. green asparagus, woody ends trimmed
½ cup crème fraîche
4 large eggs
1 cup grated Dutch mature cheese
¼ cup chopped chives
Salt and pepper to taste
9.5 oz. puff pastry

Instructions:
• Preheat the oven to 390°F, and line a baking sheet with baking paper.
• Cut the asparagus in half, and bring a large pan of water to the boil.
• Carefully drop in the asparagus, and cook for 3 minutes or until just tender. Drain well, and set aside.
• In a bowl, whisk the crème fraîche, 2 of the eggs, cheese, chives and salt and pepper to taste.
• Roll out the puff pastry to rectangle of approximately 16 x 7 inches. Fold in about 1 inch of the pastry edges, making sure to pinch them down well.
• Spread the crème fraîche mixture over the pastry, leaving the edges free.
• Distribute the asparagus evenly over the tart.
• Bake in the oven for approximately 15-20 minutes, or until the pastry is a nice golden brown. The tart can be eaten both hot and cold.
Summer ‘vlaflip’ dessert

‘Vlaflip’ is a layered dessert consisting of yogurt, custard and fruit-flavored syrup. These syrups are a staple at homes with children. They are often mixed with water to make a refreshing drink known as ‘limonade’ or ‘limo’ for short (note that it does not have anything to do with lemonade!). It is believed that the vlaflip became popular in the sixties, but its precise origin is unclear. To make this vlaflip extra special, I have opted for homemade orange syrup and added some fresh, summer fruits.

Serves: 4

Ingredients:
½ cup water
¼ cup freshly squeezed orange juice
Zest of ½ an (untreated) orange
½ cup sugar
2 cups whole yogurt
2 cups Dutch vanilla custard (vla), or use any other thick, cold custard or even pudding
2 cups summer fruits, such as melon and strawberries, chopped

Instructions:
• For the syrup, combine the water, juice, zest and sugar in a saucepan. Bring to a boil and leave to simmer for at least 10 minutes or until the syrup has thickened. Leave to cool completely before using.
• In four nice glasses, assemble the dessert by first adding 2-3 tablespoons of syrup to each glass, then layer with half a cup of yogurt followed by half a cup of custard or pudding.
• Finish off by decorating with the summer fruits.
Online presence

Even a humble, ethnic niche publisher of printed materials cannot escape the brutal reality of the day: an online presence is essential. And not only do we need a website, we really should overhaul it every few years, as is customary. Our current website was developed and launched in 2012. It was our second; the first was launched (for our Dutch-language sister publication De Krant only) in 2008. So we have already exceeded our four-year renewal window, and it is high time we make a move again. Our current website has become unwieldy to manage and is also beginning to show its age. In addition, it is not entirely suited to display on mobile devices such as phones and tablets.

Our last website aimed to integrate all of Mokeham Publishing’s products – DUTCH, the magazine, De Krant and The Dutch in Wartime Book Series – into a single site (mokeham.com). However, we have decided that our different publications have enough of a unique flavor to warrant separate websites. So we have embarked on an ambitious program of renewal which will see the launch of several websites over the next year. While we are doing that, our current site will remain online.

The first order of business was to ensure that there would be continuity in our ability to sell online. To that end, we have launched an online shop that will function as our e-commerce hub. It is there that you will be able to purchase Mokeham products and renew subscriptions. No more, no less. In effect, it will serve as our store shelf and checkout-line. By doing this we open up the opportunity to more easily resell other Dutch-related reading materials not published by us, such as the Kingdom by the Sea books and the UnDutchables calendar. It also makes it easier for us to branch out into other publishing activities ourselves, such as our English translation of The Comfort Bird by Hylke Speerstra (see pages 18 and 40 in this magazine). Finally, the new shop site enables us to supply our publications in electronic format. The site will have digital copies of our magazines available. Over time, we will upload the entire collection of back issues in digital format. Thereby those long-elusive first two issues of DUTCH will be available for collectors of the whole series (we have been asked for those two issues many times, but they were printed in relatively low numbers and have long been sold out). It also gives us the opportunity to sell in markets that have been difficult for us to serve because of high mailing costs from Canada or the USA to overseas destinations for printed materials. Digital downloads, of course, do not require mailing, so now our fans in The Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and elsewhere globally can enjoy the magazine, too.

So we have started with the shop, our online e-commerce hub. You can find it under the millennial-friendly name of dutchreadz.com (note the funky ‘z’). In all honesty, that name never occurred to me until I found that ‘dutchreads’ was taken, and I started thinking about alternatives. I have to admit: I actually like dutchreadz better. The shop is live, but still relatively empty. It will take us a few months to make all our products available and to upload our back catalog. But our very first issue (September/October 2011) is there in PDF format, in case you are interested!

Work on the other websites has started, and we will see a number of launches over the next year, including sites for DUTCH, De Krant, The Dutch in Wartime Book Series and The Comfort Bird. We will also continue to use our Facebook page for announcements and links to events and recent news from The Netherlands. We will announce on Facebook when the latest issue of DUTCH has been mailed and when the digital issue is available for download. So if you do not follow us on Facebook yet, this would be a good time to start!

But despite the flurry of activity online, please rest assured, DUTCH, the magazine will continue to be printed. We are strong believers in print and have no intention of moving away from the printed form. But we need a solid online presence to keep the print business viable. And we thank you for your ongoing support, in whatever format you choose to receive our publications!

“...we have embarked on an ambitious program of renewal which will see the launch of several websites over the next year.”
“For many young Americans, The Netherlands (and Amsterdam especially) has an aura of extreme liberalism...”

Jeroen Dewulf

Jeroen Dewulf is associate professor at the Department of German; director of the Institute of European Studies; and director of the Dutch Studies program at the University of California, Berkeley. Their Dutch Studies program, one of the oldest in the United States, was founded by the illustrious Professor Johan Snapper in the early 1970s. There are seven universities in the United States that offer Dutch Studies. That means that out of the circa twenty million undergraduate students in the United States, a few hundred will study Dutch language and/or history. Dewulf is proud to say that there are seven PhD students in his program. He recently published his book, *The Pinkster King and the King of Kongo: The Forgotten History of America’s Dutch-Owned Slaves.*

The Netherlands is a small country where everybody speaks English. Why would someone want to study the Dutch language?

Mostly for practical reasons. Some students have an interest in the language because they study the history of Southeast Asia (Indonesia in particular), and a significant amount of the source material is in Dutch. And then there is also a group of art history students who study Dutch art, mostly painters.

Are there many people from Dutch descent who attend your classes?

I would say that about a third of our students are people who have an interest in their own heritage. There is also a group who wants to learn about The Netherlands because of its reputation.

Which reputation?

For many young Americans, The Netherlands (and Amsterdam especially) has an aura of extreme liberalism which has spiked their interest.

Dutch Studies entails research focusing on Dutch-American heritage. Are there typical Dutch traits that have survived throughout generations?

A recurring trait seems to be our business acumen. For example, after the English took over Manhattan, some Dutch people settled in the Hudson Valley and Northern New Jersey to start farms and businesses. They lived in small communities where they maintained their own language and culture. By being pragmatic and working hard, they did very well. Some of these families are still very wealthy.

The topic of your book is slavery in the Dutch community. Would you say that the Dutch treated their slaves differently than say English or German slaveholders?

Most Dutch farmers had a few slaves whom they knew well, and some contemporaries claimed that the Dutch tended to treat their slaves better than the English. But such statements can easily transmit the false impression that slavery among the Dutch was a benign system.

What was your most interesting find?

What I thought was very interesting is that as late as the mid-18th century, about twenty percent of the slaves in New York and New Jersey still spoke some Dutch. Several of them were native speakers of Dutch.

Can you explain?

Slave owners would offer a reward for runaway slaves and placed an advertisement in the newspapers. In the description, it stated that the man or woman in question only spoke Dutch. You might have heard of the famous abolitionist Sojourner Truth. She was born a slave in Swartekill, New York, grew up speaking Dutch and had to learn English at a later age.

Are there any remnants of this to be found in the language today?

Interestingly, the word ‘boss’ is derived from the Dutch word ‘baas.’ Slaves would call their masters ‘baas.’ It is one of the many examples of how the Dutch language left its mark in English.

For more information, visit: http://dutch.berkeley.edu

Interview by Gerald van Wilgen
Five adults stand with eight children in the middle of America on a nearly forsaken platform. Each one looks around cautiously, one even more worn out than the other. The shortage of diapers was supplemented in the train with pieces from Grandma’s flannel undershirt and underpants. And still the old lady acts as if she knows nothing of the letter in the pocket of her undershirt.

While the whole group trudges to the exit, the last snowflakes float from a lone cloud in a nearly cleaned-up sky. Douwe and Nammen adjust their watches to the time on the Sioux Falls station clock. The clock strikes twelve. High noon. Grandma walks with the bow of her bonnet still straight under her chin. “We are now deep in America. Don’t we have to unload our own moving crates here?”

“No,” answers Nammen, “the railroad porters take care of that.” He sticks a fresh wad behind his cheek, and with that he’s out of tobacco. Douwe is kind of quiet, worries about a good outcome, walks ahead of the group. “There are supposed to be two covered wagons waiting for us here with two pairs of horses.” He shouts it out while he strides around the station. A bit later he meets the forlorn company again with an unsteady step. “Not a soul! No covered wagons, no horses, nothing! Are we at the right place?”

His question is silently processed, till suddenly the bewilderment oozes out on all sides. When the delegation somewhat clumsily enters the lonely station house through a couple of narrow folding doors, the doleful feeling overtakes them that they have indeed exited at the wrong station.

“Wait, damn it! Wait!” Nammen hollers as if he’s yelling at a horse, but the train keeps going. “Our moving crates!”“Too late, there go their belongings, the whole kit and caboodle.

“I believe we should’ve stayed on the train, but when it stopped here, Nammen thought he knew it all.” Fortunately it is Nammen’s Lys who says it. It takes a while before the confusion turns into dismay.

“I was thinking, those crates are not getting unloaded.” Nammen kicks the double folding doors open, sees the train getting smaller and smaller, spits out his last wad of Jouster tobacco on the tracks, and again kicks open a self-closing door. Little Anna, the oldest of the group of kids, starts to scream like a mother who’s lost her child; her play doll is still on the train.

“Shouldn’t we have gotten out in Sioux City instead of Sioux Falls?” Geartsje asks herself aloud.
Pressing the right buttons

Eva Lebens

In my last column, I wrote about juggling time and discussed the kind of work I was looking for. I concluded by saying that I firmly believed I had found the right job. I mentioned it had something to do with signing up for a course in Amsterdam, but now that I think about it, the seeds were already planted in the United States.

Eva, seriously, what are you talking about? (I can hear you thinking that.)

We used to live in Bentonville, a tiny city in Arkansas with a population of about 38,000 people. It also happens to be Walmart headquarters and, more importantly, the city where I could have stayed forever because of the amazing group of friends we had. But small-town living makes you long for an escape to the big city every now and then. The closest big(ger) city to Bentonville is Kansas City, a city which has great barbecue restaurants, amazing coffee places… and Ikea. The latter proved to be extremely important when we found ourselves in desperate need of some European-ness. We didn’t even mind the three-hour drive.

One time, I remember discovering something new and very interesting in Kansas City. I walked past a store displaying beautiful cards in the window. Cards you can send, but that are also so pretty you can even frame them. The store clerk told us that they printed all the cards themselves. They weren’t regular printed cards though, but cards printed by hand on heavy quality paper. The back of the store was completely taken over by huge machines. They were original Vandercook printing machines, the young owner told me. He enthusiastically showed the children the machines and even allowed them to push some buttons. It was then and there that I fell in love with letterpress craftsmanship.

I bought a few cards, and from that point on, whenever we visited a new city, I made sure to always stop at stores with hand-printed cards. I also researched letterpress printing on the Internet. I read about the wooden and lead letters, about the printing process and about how books, newspapers and pamphlets used to be printed in the exact same way ages ago. Letterpress printing is pretty, it has a fascinating history, and it can be a way of expressing yourself in a unique way. Imagine a hand-printed business card, for example?

The machines, however, are heavy and take up a lot of space. When I started to toy with the idea, we were still living in the US and weren’t sure how long we would be staying there. I could have bought a machine, but what if they were not compatible with Dutch voltage? And what if I couldn’t manage to master the skill? So many ‘what ifs’! To make the long story short, the idea just lingered in the back of my mind.

And then we moved back to The Netherlands where we were busy settling in and thinking of buying a new house. The house we chose was built in 1920 and came with an old bakery in the backyard. Quite a big old bakery with enough room for me to work.

Wait a minute.

Things started to fall into place…

I love to write, I love to draw, and I love letterpress printing. What if I could combine it all?

I searched the web and found an amazing letterpress teacher in Amsterdam. I can’t even begin to tell you what being in the center of Amsterdam does to me; the vibes, the atmosphere, everything! A theater group also works in the same building, which makes me feel extra creative and grown-up.

Writing this down at the age of thirty-nine (when you read this, forty!) seems a bit strange, but it really feels like I’m giving my career a new swing. My teacher is inspirational and willing to share all his knowledge, experience and craftsmanship, which is mind-blowing.

Yes, we still need to renovate the house, and I have to search for machines, but the most important thing is that I took control of my professional life by combining the things I truly love to do. Let the journey begin!

PS: The card shown on this page, which reads ‘zoen’ (‘kiss’ in Dutch), was my first attempt at letterpress. I will send it to the first person to respond to this column. 😘
When an artist receives a commission for a work, it is rare that the artist is free to choose the subject. Yet that is exactly the position Hendrik Willem Mesdag (1831-1915) found himself in when he was hired by a group of Belgian entrepreneurs in 1880. Their only requirement was that it be a “painting without borders”, otherwise known as a panorama. With the freedom to choose his own subject, Mesdag turned to his beloved sea and Scheveningen, the coastal city near The Hague that he called home. The result is Panorama Mesdag, now the oldest surviving panorama in its original location.

**In the round**

Panoramic paintings are images that offer wide, all-encompassing views of a subject. The term was first coined by Irish artist Robert Barker in 1792 to describe his paintings of Edinburgh, Scotland, done on a cylindrical canvas. This style of painting lent itself well to depictions of cities, landscapes and seascapes, and military battles.

With the growth in popularity of this style of painting, purpose-built buildings and rotundas were created to display them. Visitors came in large numbers to see these paintings that often seemed to blur the edges between painting and reality. The specially designed rooms helped strengthen the illusion by hiding the edges of the canvas with complementary materials on the ground in front of the painting and special lighting overhead or covered viewing platforms.

Panorama Mesdag measures more than forty-five feet high, with a diameter of approximately 131 feet and a circumference of 393 feet. Working with his wife, Sientje, as well as Théophile de Bock and George Hendrik Breitner, he completed the painting in roughly five months. On August 1st 1881, it was put on display in the purpose-built structure in The Hague where it is still on view today. Sand and scattered coastal debris cover the ground between the painting and the central covered observation point. The combined elements of sand, cylindrical painting and raised, covered platform create the feeling of viewing Scheveningen, the beaches and sea from the raised viewpoint of a sand dune.

**Career change**

Mesdag was born in 1831 in Groningen to a prominent banking family. Although he showed an early aptitude and interest in art, he worked as a banker until the age of thirty-five. His wife, Sientje van Houten, came from a wealthy family with their own artistic connections. One of her cousins was the renowned painter Lawrence Alma-
Tadema. Sientje was always encouraging of her husband's passion for art, and after her father's death, they used her inheritance so that Mesdag could leave the banking world and dedicate himself to painting full-time.

Mesdag had taken art classes previously, but once he became focused solely on painting, Alma-Tadema recommended that he go to Brussels and study under the Dutch painter Willem Roelofs, who would play an influential role in the development of the Hague School and the emphasis on nature paintings. It was during this three-year period with Roelofs that Mesdag and his family took a vacation to one of the Frisian islands, where Mesdag discovered his true passion for painting seascapes.

After their time in Brussels, the family moved to The Hague in 1869, where Mesdag would have easy access to the nearby coastal city of Scheveningen. It was in The Hague that Mesdag joined up with other like-minded artists who believed in painting nature as they saw it, though often with a soft, muted palette. They would become known as part of the Hague School.

In Panorama Mesdag, the muted tones and elements of gray are a reflection of his involvement in the Hague School, where the goal was not to create an absolute reality, but to create an atmosphere and impression of the outdoor setting. In his panorama, Mesdag creates a soft landscape made hazy by the atmospheric perspective implied in the distances, while still giving a feeling of a moment in time of daily life.

End of an era

For Mesdag, the panorama represented not only an opportunity to preserve the beauty of Scheveningen, but also to paint his greatest seascape. Sadly, the passion for panoramic paintings was declining by the time Mesdag finished his in 1881. Five years after it opened, the panorama closed in bankruptcy. Determined to save his grand work, he bought it and the building that housed it at auction and continued to show the panorama, despite a considerable financial loss. Panorama Mesdag and its purpose-built home remain in their original location and are still open for public viewing. Scheveningen has changed over the years since Mesdag created his grand panorama, but visitors can step back in time and feel as though they are viewing the city as it looked more than one hundred years ago. The panoramic style, along with the atmosphere Mesdag created, draws the viewer into the painting. Mesdag's talent and approach invites calm, quiet contemplation of a landscape that he clearly knew and loved deeply.
There’s good cheer and plenty of reasons to smile since this, for me, is a jubilee contribution: I’ve been dishing up the Dutch for you in twenty-five consecutive issues of this magazine. I love writing this column, and it is a pleasure to be part of DUTCH. Luckily, I haven’t run out of ideas yet. There’s still so much more to dish up. Like what this time, you ask? Cheese!

How Dutch can it possibly get? Cheese is the pinnacle of Dutch-ness. Everybody knows that when Hans Brinker saved the country by putting his finger in the dike, he held a round of Edam cheese in his other hand for balance, right? OK, I’m making that up. Time to get serious.

For cheese is serious business indeed, and therefore (you might see this coming) sometimes a source of controversy. In The Netherlands, more than anywhere else, not all cheeses are created equal. I’ll be wise to supply an explanation.

You see, the pride of Dutch cheesemaking is boerenkaas (farmer’s cheese). You may have occasionally seen cheese labeled thus in the US or Canada. Except that it is probably not proper boerenkaas. In The Netherlands, the legally protected name status is reserved for cheese made from raw milk, from cattle milked at the same farm where the cheese is made. Nothing less may be sold as boerenkaas. There is a spectacular flavor difference with the cheaper Gouda-style cheeses one finds in Dutch supermarkets. It takes considerable craftsmanship to make such a cheese as lots of things can go wrong. I know this well enough. I was once allowed to assist Marijke Booy of Streefkerk in making her wonderful cheese. And every year in March, I am a jury member at Boerenkaas Cum Laude where awards are given to the country’s best farmer’s cheese. Both have certainly been quite humbling experiences.

Yet, a number of years ago, a new protected name status was introduced: ‘kaas van de boerderij’ (farmhouse cheese). Farmer’s cheese or farmhouse cheese, they sound so much alike. However, there is this one subtle yet fundamental difference: for the new variety, the cheese farmer is allowed to heat the milk to a temperature not exceeding 72°C or 162°F – not quite pasteurizing.

Yes, this was compromise. And a badly needed one, too. Because of the difficulties in making the product and market pressure, more and more farmers were pleading to be allowed to make boerenkaas from pasteurized milk. However, lowering the bar would have probably put an end to one of the most unique food products the country has to offer.

Should you be traveling to The Netherlands in the future, do make sure to get a taste of our authentic boerenkaas. When touring the beautiful Green Heart (roughly between Rotterdam, Utrecht, Amsterdam and Haarlem) be on the lookout for farms with signs that read ‘boerenkaas’. The farmers will be all too happy to tell you about their product and offer you tastes in its different stages of maturity. Treat yourself to a sizeable chunk. Chances are it will be gone in no time. Now that’s something to smile about!
The Englishman who spoke good English

After working and living in Amsterdam for a few years, I have become very good at spotting tourists. It’s not just their maps, suitcases and general look of confusion that gives them away. There are other signs, too. For example, tourists will be the only ones wearing any item of clothing with the word ‘Amsterdam’ printed on it. They will also be the ones who are most fascinated by wooden shoes and are unable to resist the temptation of having their photo taken while sitting in a giant novelty clog. Plus, despite the many photo opportunities offered by Amsterdam’s beautiful canals, stylish architecture and impressive museums, they will be the ones excitedly taking photos of the FEBO snack machines. English tourists, especially, are the ones who will look the most confused when Dutch waiters ‘forget’ to put milk in their tea. It is not very hard to spot them once you know how.

This is why I was easily able to spot a lost tourist couple wandering around the back streets of Amsterdam one afternoon as I made my way home. In this case, it was the map that gave them away. The husband was clutching the map and trying to do his best ‘I know where we are’ impression (it wasn’t a very convincing impression). The wife was looking around for street names or anything else that might help them figure out where they were and where they had to go. I knew they were about to ask me for directions. I probably knew before they even knew themselves. We’d almost passed each other when the wife suddenly seemed to notice me, and I heard her speak the magic words.

“Excuse me… do you speak English?”

I turned to face them and did my best to hide my smirk. She even spoke very slowly, over-pronouncing each word in her Yorkshire accent in the hope that ‘the Amsterdammer’ would understand. She had no idea she had just asked an Englishman (me) if he could speak English. I could have told her the truth straight away, but to be honest, that seemed like a wasted opportunity. For a moment, I considered putting on a fake Dutch accent, but decided against it (mainly because my Dutch accent isn’t very good). Instead, I simply gave her the directions she needed. I did use the occasional complex English word though, just for fun. During all of this, her husband continued to keep his head buried in the map, determined not to break the unwritten rule of manhood: never ask another man for directions (especially if your wife can do it for you).

After listening to my directions, she seemed confident enough to find their destination. I kept expecting her to work out that I was English, especially when I managed to fit the words ‘hither’ and ‘saunter’ into the conversation. However, just as we were about to part ways, she responded with a line that made the whole thing perfect.

“Thank you,” she said, “And can I just say… your English is very good.”

I could have hugged her. I almost did. She had made my day. Not only was the whole situation hilarious, but it proved that I could pass for Dutch. It had not required me to do anything particularly Dutch (such as speak the language), and it had come from a rather confused tourist, but I was still going to count it as a victory. I ran through a quick mental list of witty comebacks and decided that simplicity was best. “Thank you. I am English,” I replied with a smile.

She looked embarrassed for a moment at the revelation, but we both chuckled about the funny situation. We bid farewell to each other and parted ways. From the beginning to the end of the conversation, the husband had not looked up from the map once. Now he attempted his best ‘I was not listening but I just worked out where we are for myself’ impression and set off in the direction I had just given them. I hope they found their way and didn’t have to stop any other English people to compliment them on their English.
Indo-Dutch cuisine includes many dishes that are suitable for vegans. *Oerap oerap* (also known as *oerapan*) is a side dish from central Java which is often served with *nasi koening* (yellow rice). The dish is made with grated coconut flesh. Coconut is frequently used in many different ways: young coconut flesh, coconut milk (pressed from grated coconut flesh), coconut oil and grated coconut. Another popular side dish made with grated coconut, and often used as a rice topping, is called *seroendeng* (dry toasted coconut mixed with spices and palm sugar).

*Oerap oerap* is simple to make and a satisfying meat-free meal.

Serves 4

**Ingredients:**
- 7 oz. string beans OR *katjang pandjang* (garter beans/Chinese long beans), cut into bite-sized pieces
- 7 oz. *taugé* (bean sprouts), trimmed (tails removed)
- ½ cabbage head, shredded
- 1 cucumber, peeled
- 2 garlic cloves
- 3 shallots
- 1-in. piece fresh *kentjur* (aromatic ginger/kaempferia galanga) OR ½ teaspoon ground *kentjur*
- 1 *djuruk purut* leaf (kaffir lime leaf), sliced into thin strips
- 1 small chunk *asam* (tamarind) diluted with 2 tbsps hot water
- 1 tsp fresh *terasi* (fermented shrimp paste) diluted with 2 tbsps hot water (omit for vegan or substitute ½ mushroom stock cube)
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tbsp *sambal oelek*
- Salt
- 7 oz. unsweetened, desiccated (grated) coconut

**Instructions:**
- Bring a pan of water to the boil, and blanch the string beans, *taugé* and cabbage until ’al dente’.
- Drain well, and set aside.
- Halve the cucumber lengthwise, remove the seeds with a teaspoon, and slice thinly. Mince the garlic and shallots.
- To make the spice paste (*bumbu*), crush the fresh *kentjur* and *djuruk purut*, and mix them with the diluted *asam*, diluted *terasi*, sugar, *sambal oelek* and a pinch of salt.
- Bring ½ cup water to a boil, and add the dessicated (grated) coconut. Simmer until the water has been absorbed.
- Mix the spice paste with the coconut.
- Add the blanched vegetables, and fold over until everything is evenly distributed.
- The dish can be enjoyed hot or at room temperature.

Jeff Keasberry is a Los Angeles-based entrepreneur, food writer, photographer and author of two popular cookbooks published in The Netherlands (2012 and 2014) in which he makes the Indo-Dutch cuisine more accessible. Jeff was born in Amsterdam, The Netherlands and raised in his late grandmother’s once renowned Dutch Indies restaurant Djokja, of which he became the owner at the age of eighteen. Following his move to Los Angeles in 2005, he started craving his comfort food and realized that little is known about the cultures he belongs to and the food he grew up with. His passion to pursue the taste of home turned into a mission to preserve and promote his culinary heritage. He currently hosts cooking events, produces videos and writes about food on his blog keasberry.com.
When one thinks of high fashion, countries such as France and Italy usually come to mind. The Netherlands, however, has left its mark in the fashion world in many ways. The country is home to two of the most renowned fashion academies (The Design Academy in Eindhoven and ArtEZ Fashion Design in Arnhem) and has brought forth leading designers such as Mart Visser, Christian Lagerwaard, Frans Molenaar and Marlies Dekkers. But clothing is more than a fashion statement. It is also a reflection of society, culture, habits and customs. The following books will explain why.

Costume & Fashion
Bianca du Mortier
By the middle of the 19th century, an interest in the study of antiquities (including clothing and accessories) had reached its peak in The Netherlands. This resulted in the 1854 Exhibition of Art and Craft Objects from Former Times (Tentoonstelling van voorwerpen van kunst en nijverheid uit vroegeren tijd) which was held at the Amsterdam artists' society 'Arts et Amicitiae'. Thereafter, other costume exhibitions followed, paving the way for museums to include garments as part of their permanent collections. The founding of the Netherlands Museum of History and Art (Nederlandsch Museum voor Geschiedenis en Kunst) in The Hague in 1875 marked the beginning of the Rijksmuseum's collection of costumes. The museum and its collection became part of the Rijksmuseum when it officially opened ten years later.

Today, the Rijksmuseum boasts an impressive collection of costumes, the oldest of its kind in the country. Each piece not only tells the story of those who wore it and why, but it also helps shed light on developments that took place during its respective time. In the beautifully illustrated book Costume & Fashion, edited by the museum's curator of costumes, Bianca du Mortier, eighty of those stunning garments are presented. Ranging from outfits that belonged to the Frisian branch of the Orange dynasty, to 20th-century haute couture designed by the likes of Lanvin, Dior, Balenciaga and Yves Saint Laurent, the book bears witness to the international character of fashion worn in The Netherlands throughout history. Read about the buff-coat worn by Hendrik Casimir I, Count of Nassau-Dietz and Stadholder of Friesland, when he was fatally injured; marvel at the incredible detail and rich materials of elegant women's gowns from the 19th century; see garments that were actually featured in paintings; and much more. It is a book that is both informative and a pleasure to leaf through.

Rijksmuseum, in association with nai010 Publishers, 2017

Delft Blue to Denim Blue: Contemporary Dutch Fashion
Anneke Smelik, et al
In the richly illustrated book Delft Blue to Denim Blue: Contemporary Dutch Fashion, Anneke Smelik, professor of visual culture at Radboud University in Nijmegen, delves deeper into the subject of Dutch fashion. Together with field experts, she presents an in-depth analysis of the cultural roots of fashion in The Netherlands and explores how it has left its mark in the country's identity and cultural heritage. The thought-provoking and informative volume provides an overview of famous Dutch designers and fashion brands including Viktor & Rolf, Iris van Herpen, Claudia Sträter, Marlies Dekkers, G-Star and C&A while placing them in a historical and cultural context. Also covered are interdisciplinary themes such as style, fashion photography and clothing production. Discover interesting facts (for example, all of Dutch fashion is made outside of the country) and become acquainted with a subject that Smelik believes deserves just as much attention as Dutch design. While the book is the first scientific work on fashion in The Netherlands, it remains accessible and a pleasure to read.

I.B. Tauris, 2017

When one thinks of high fashion, countries such as France and Italy usually come to mind. The Netherlands, however, has left its mark in the fashion world in many ways. The country is home to two of the most renowned fashion academies (The Design Academy in Eindhoven and ArtEZ Fashion Design in Arnhem) and has brought forth leading designers such as Mart Visser, Christian Lagerwaard, Frans Molenaar and Marlies Dekkers. But clothing is more than a fashion statement. It is also a reflection of society, culture, habits and customs. The following books will explain why.
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Jesse van Muylwijck

I imagined this temporary departure hall in Schiphol differently...

We will go and tell him how brave you were!

Laugh!

Invading Holland

Stuart Billinghurst

AAAAAGGGGGHHHHHHHH!

What happened to him?

I offered him some drop.

AAAAGGGGGHHHHHHHH!

Double salt?

Yeah.

AAAAAGGGGGHHHHHHHH!

Did you tell him what it was?

No.

Rembrandt

Rumor has it that you have connections with key figures from criminal organizations.

Certainly not.

I'm just a simple portrait painter.

No.

Did you tell him what it was?

No.
The Comfort Bird (De Treastfûgel, De Troostvogel)

The latest book by famous Frisian author Hylke Speerstra now available in English translation!

The Comfort Bird follows the experiences of three generations of two families of farm laborers from Hichtum. One family moves across the ocean to seek their fortune in the Dakotas and eventually Wisconsin. With perseverance and faith they build a life for themselves in the USA. The way back to Europe for one of the family members, goes through Utah Beach on D-Day. The second family is too much rooted in the heavy soil of the old country to emigrate. They keep their head above water by performing seasonal work in Germany. Rebellious and always searching for social justice, they make decisions which will put them on the wrong side of history.

In a strange twist of fate World War II brings the families together again, on opposing sides of the conflict. (Newly published by Mokeham Publishing.)

The Comfort Bird is based in fact and author Hylke Speerstra traveled extensively in the USA, Germany and The Netherlands to research original sources and interview descendants.

Cruel Paradise weaves together the firsthand stories of men and women who emigrated from the Netherlands throughout the Twentieth Century. Hylke Speerstra, a master in recording oral history, interviewed Dutch emigrants in Canada, the USA, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

Published in English translation in 2005, we have a limited supply of copies still available.

Buy The Comfort Bird and Cruel Paradise together and save significantly on purchase and shipping!

Hylke Speerstra will be visiting Canada and the USA for a book and lecture tour in late June. Come to one of the events to meet in person and purchase signed copies of his books (and save the shipping and handling charge!). Listen to an interview with him on Dutch Touch Radio (ad elsewhere in this paper) on June 24.

JUNE 24, FROM 11:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M. THE DUTCH SHOP
3019 NEW ST, BURLINGTON, ONT. - BOOK SIGNING
JUNE 26, 2:30 P.M. HOLLAND CHRISTIAN HOMES
7900 McLaughlin Rd, Brampton, Ont. - Lecture/Q & A
JUNE 28, 8:00 P.M. CAANS, ALUMNI HALL, U OF T
121 St. Joseph street, Toronto, Ont. Lecture/Q & A
JULY 1, ALL DAY, FRISIAN PICNIC/FRYSEK DEI
PINEHURST LAKE CONSERVATION AREA
468 Pinehurst Rd, Ayr, Ontario – Meet and Greet

Additional Events to be announced
Check DUTCH the magazine’s Facebook Page!
Gezellig

/ heh-SELL-ick /

adjective

origin: Dutch

1) can be translated as convivial, cozy, fun, or nice atmosphere.

2) can also connote belonging, time spent with loved ones, or the general togetherness that gives people a warm feeling.

3) a term that encompasses the heart of Dutch culture, that does not have an English equivalent.

Traditional Boerenbont; exceptionally hand painted tableware.
First made over a century ago. One of the rare remaining Dutch basics!