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Carl Cneut

Belgian candidate for the

Hans Christian Andersen Award 2022 (illustrator)

Nominated by IBBY-Belgium – Flemish branch

Biography

Carll Cneut (°1-8-1969) was born and raised on a farm in a small village on the Belgian-French border and is the eldest of three. It was clear early on that his future would be colourful. After seriously considering careers as a pastry painter and a circus artist, he decided to study Graphic Design at the Saint-Lucas Arts School in Ghent, the city where he still lives today. Following his studies, he worked as Art Director at a publicity agency. Carll made his illustrating debut in 1996 with a children's book called *Varkentjes van Marsepein* (*Piglets of Marzipan*), which was done in collaboration with Flemish author Geert De Kockere. They went on to make six more picturebooks together, mostly children's books in verse. By the end of 2000, Carll was illustrating full-time, mainly working in the field of children's literature. In 2002, he made his writing debut with *The Amazing Love Story of Mr Morf* (Macmillan Publishers).

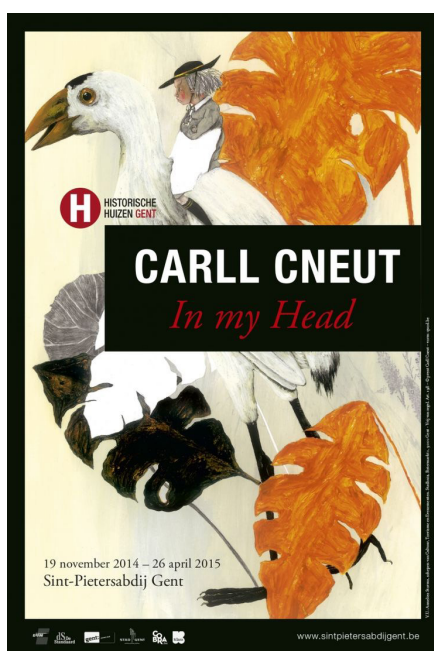
"I was flattered that such a large British house wanted to work with me, because my style was not mainstream. (...) I suggested Mr Morf to them, which I had written myself. They were enthusiastic, but then the problems began: they wanted to change all kinds of things, including basic aspects of the story in a way that I personally could not identify with. (...) So, it was a learning experience, yet a little traumatic as well. Since then, I have not written anything else myself. Still, that also has to do with my own fear that I'm not good enough at it. Call it a kind of cowardice. If I find myself feeling brave enough one day, I will start again."

In: *De Standaard*, December, 23rd 2011

In 2011, Carll Cneut was a member of the international jury for the Illustrators Exhibition in the Bologna Children's Book Fair. He gives and has given masterclasses in Belgium, Italy, France and Spain.

Cneut's popularity in his own country became abundantly clear during a retrospective exhibition 'In My Head' (December 2014 – May 2015) at St Peter's Abbey in Ghent, where he also had a temporary studio. The exhibition attracted more than 50.000 visitors. That same year, he won the most prestigious award for children's literature in Flanders (the Flemish Cultural Prize for Literature), awarded by the Minister of Culture.

He is respected in wider artistic circles as well. In 2018, the Antwerp WM Gallery held the world premiere of a sales exhibition of 45 artworks by Cneut, including his works from children's books but also some paintings specially made for the exhibition. No gallery or exhibitor had previously been able to convince him to sell artworks, although demand was high.



In 2019, the Antwerp Plantin-Moretus Museum exhibited his works of art in the exhibition 'De Grottesken. A fascinating fantasy world' alongside art of Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Bruegel and James Ensor. Inspired by the museum's whimsical, bizarre, monstrous and caricatured grotesque collection, Cneut created five new paintings especially for the exhibition.

Other exhibitions include 'Exubérances et Beauté' (Exuberances and Beauty) in the Musée de l'illustration Jeunesse, Moulins (FR) (July 2017 – January 2018) and 'La Fabrique des Contes' (The Fairy Tale Factory) in the Musée ethnographique in Geneva (SW) (May 2019 – January 2020).

"During the exposition, I noticed that many people called me Carll Cneut instead of Carll. It's just Carll, you know. People from outside make the distinction between Carll the illustrator and Carll the person, but there is only one."

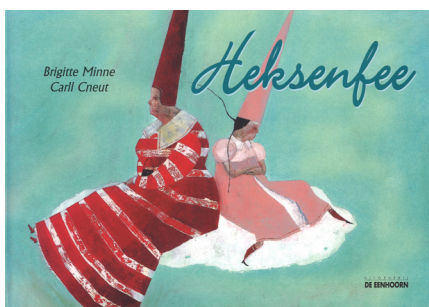
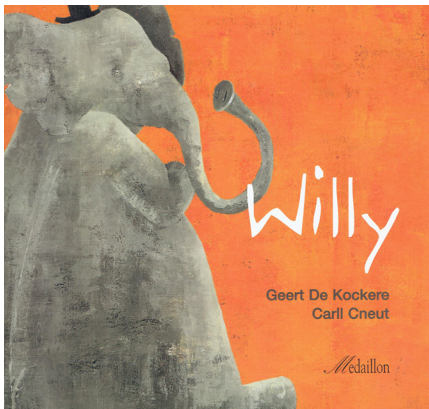
In: <https://www.lechaperonunlimited.com/author/carllcneut/>

A statement on Carll Cneut's contribution to literature for young people

Carll Cneut is an illustrator with a great and unwavering love for the medium of the book, with an enormous respect for his reader, who has the right to the best. For every story, he pursues the right form to bring about optimal communication between text, images and reader. In every project he undertakes, he always allows himself the space to expand his boundaries, although the overall concept is largely fixed before he begins to paint. He is like an architect who carefully designs the plan for a residential area and lays the foundations before giving free rein to his creativity. The result is a surprising and dynamic environment, which readers of all ages can go out and explore, together or alone.

COLOUR, FORM AND DETAIL

The newcomer Carll Cneut was still very much developing his style as an illustrator when he made his debut in 1996, but his sense of colour was spot on right from the start. His characters in picturebooks such as *Willy* and *Heksenfee* (*Witch fairy*) still had a rather static look. However, because of the illustrator's unerring sense of colour, the characters were never lacking in expression. For instance, the orange on the cover of *Willy* makes the grey, lumbering elephant appear warm and cuddly. The many shades of pink in *Witch fairy* never appear too sickly sweet, because of the many nuances and colours they are based on, both literally and figuratively.



When embarking upon his career as an illustrator, Cneut not only used the right colour balance to draw out emotion and narrative threads, but also proved to be a master at creating extremely effective compositions. The sense of tension emanating from his illustrations is the result of these compositions. He often placed his almost pictogramlike buildings quite isolated on the page, which makes it expand in the reader's imagination into a medieval city, a cosy treehouse, or a warm family home.

Especially in the first 15 years of his career, he teased and challenged the reader, taking advantage of the human ability to complete pictures. His illustrations spill over, peeking cheekily over the edges of the pages.

“My illustrations continue into the invisible. My readers have the freedom to complete them in their heads. This often confuses adults, but never the children.”

In: *Bookbird*, 48(2010)2



Zo werd Greetje Greet, stoute Greet. En toen werd ze nóg stouter. En Greet werd Griet, een dulle Griet. Ze vloekte en tierde, ze stampte en klopte. Alles wat los zat en niet te zwaar was, nam ze mee. Ze spuwde en snoof. Zodat je niet anders kon dan aan snottebellen denken. Niemand wilde naast haar zitten. In de klas. Niemand wilde naast haar lopen. Op de kermis. Niemand wilde naast haar kruipen. In het donker. Niemand wilde met haar trouwen. Niemand. En dat maakte haar zó woest, dat ze nog harder vloekte. En schold. En tierde. 'Loop naar de hel!' riep ze dan. 'Doe het zelf!' riepen ze terug. En ze meenden het.



Tijd waarvoor? dacht Stach, maar zijn vader en zijn moeder renden weg en kwamen terug met een veldtas. Ze zeiden: 'Hier. Drinken. En eten. Voor onderweg. Je moet gaan.'
 'Wat?' vroeg Stach. 'Waarheen?'
 'Dat begrijp je vanzelf,' zeiden zijn vader en moeder.
 'Maar ik wil niet weg! En wanneer kom ik dan terug?'
 Weer zeiden Stachs ouders: 'Dat begrijp je vanzelf,' en ze duwden Stach het pad op naar het bos. Ze snotterden, ze wreven in hun ogen en ze riepen: 'We wensen je het aller mooiste!'



"He often placed his pictogramlike buildings quite isolated on the page."
 — respectively in *Mad Meg* and *One million butterflies*.

While, in his earliest work, his compositions are sparse, focusing on the characters – as in *Un secret pour grandir* – his love for details already starts showing itself in the way he dresses his characters: with great care, indulging his fascination with fabrics and textures in gossamer-thin, fanciful, elegant and even amusing patterns.

“But I think it was something I learned mainly from the Flemish Primitives: how fabric falls and folds. I find the patterns and prints in everyday life. I have a brain that’s very good at remembering those kinds of things.”

In: *De Standaard*, December 23rd 2011

Later on, his attention to detail comes into full bloom when painting luscious scenes of fauna or flora, as in *One million butterflies*, *The secret of the throat of the nightingale*, or *The sea-of-firefly*.

In his first books Cneut mainly captured emotions by his use of colour and composition. In later books, such as *Monster, don’t eat me!*, *One million butterflies*, *Whistle as you are* and *Ten Moonstruck Piglets*, the character’s body language has become an integral component of the story or poem.

Carll Cneut’s brush is becoming ever finer, in more ways than one. For every book, he makes detailed preliminary studies of the characters. He wants to know the characters and to have a sense of them, before he dares to consider himself their “spokesman”. One book after another, his characters have gained ever more expression.

“It’s just that I can draw lots more things than I could fifteen years ago and I think I sometimes want to demonstrate that. A bit of showing off: just take a look at all the things I can do on paper! Certainly my approach has become finer and finer. These days I do most of my painting with very thin 00 brushes and I’m glad I can’t get hold of any thinner ones.”

In: *De Standaard*, December 23rd 2011

The characters have gradually gained greater depth and dynamism, which often makes them look more vulnerable. Their appearance touches the reader and draws him into their experiences and emotions.

In this regard, it is quite interesting to have a look at the remake of *Witch fairy*. After a career of 20 years, the illustrator wanted to challenge himself by going back to his earlier work. The story of the little fairy who wants to be an occasional witch, is still relevant: we all must learn to embrace our dark side. In his remake, Carll Cneut shows how well he has mastered his lines and has learned to put expression in body and face over the years. As a result of this increased mastery of line and color, the illustrator dares to go much further in developing the world of the little witch. When, for example, he shows the heads of gossiping fairies and witches, there are many of them and they are dominant.



This plentitude emphasizes how strong and driven the small fairy is to go her own way, at all costs. In the final image, Cneut beautifully illustrates how mother and daughter, having been estranged from one another, have found each other again: their noses are in the same direction again – hereby referring to a Dutch proverb.

His most recent work, *The sea-of-firefly*, shimmers with emotion. The facial expression and body posture of the animals convey their feelings and thoughts in a very convincing manner. His colour palette highlights these emotions even further. The internal irritation and pain of the toad who likes to get agitated about things, is a telling example of this, as well as the resigned calmness with a hint of disappointment of the elephant.

INTERACTION BETWEEN THE IMAGES AND THE TEXT

Carll Cneut has taken on many challenges in his career. Rather than focusing on quantity, he has gone for quality, pushing the boundaries of his expertise by devoting painstaking attention to every picture in every book.

This illustrator explores the depths of the story, using the text as a starting point, supported by his own rich frame of reference and motivated by his desire to tell stories to an audience of people who love beautiful, rewarding books.

In the elaborate picturebook *The Golden Cage, or the true story of the blood princess*, Cneut succeeds in translating the underlying message of the story of the spoiled princess in poignant images. Those who only read the text, might be under the impression that the princess is just a spoiled and cruel brat. Nevertheless, her desire for a talking bird, a bird that could actually talk to her, suggests a lack of warmth in her life. Readers who carefully examine the images as well, discover an even more nuanced story. Cneut chooses to depict the birds that live in the imagination of the princess with naive, childlike elements and realistic details. When the servants arrive with perfectly styled birds, the reader knows that in this will never alleviate the desire of the princess. Eventually, someone offers the princess an egg, a symbol of hope. In the final image, Cneut shows that the princess is willing to wait a very long time for someone or something that finally will really talk to her. The illustrations therefore emphasize that this is not the story of a cruel princess, but the story of cruel adults, failing to nurture and embrace a child.

In a book like *One Million Butterflies* the illustrator displays his talent to combine different registers, so that children and adults can interpret the story in their own personal way. The

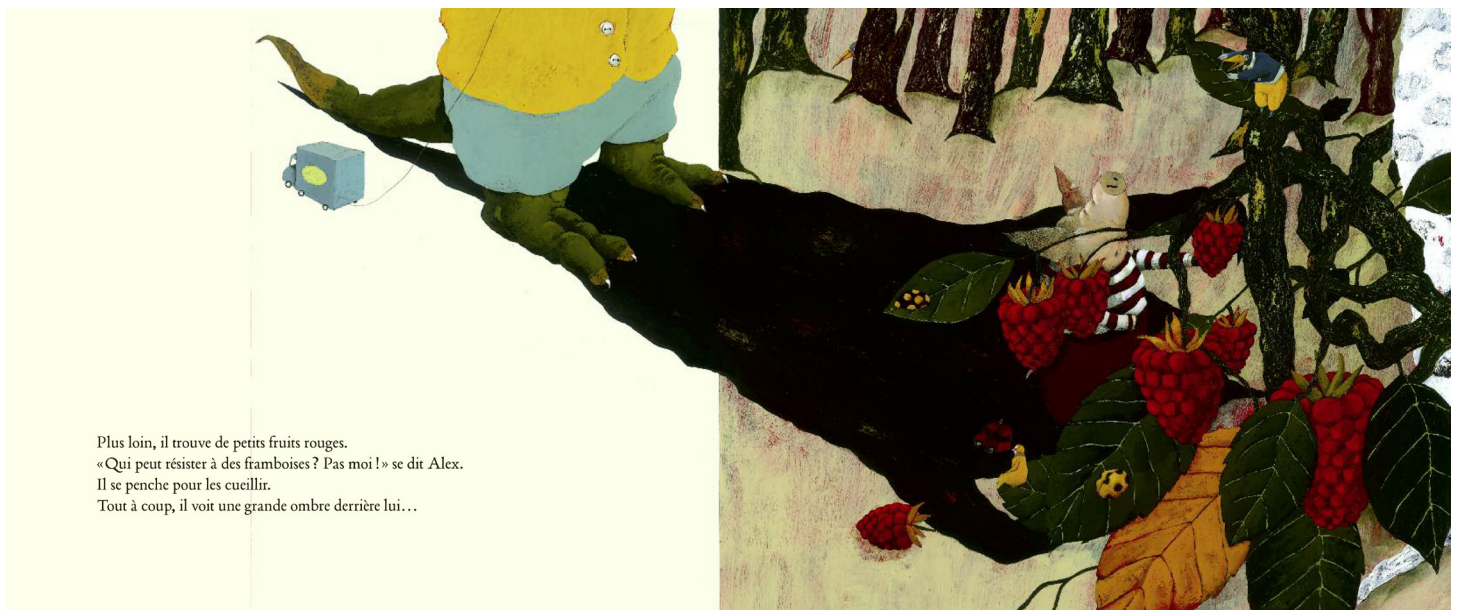


The elephant could not understand how the sun did that. There was nothing to climb up, was there?

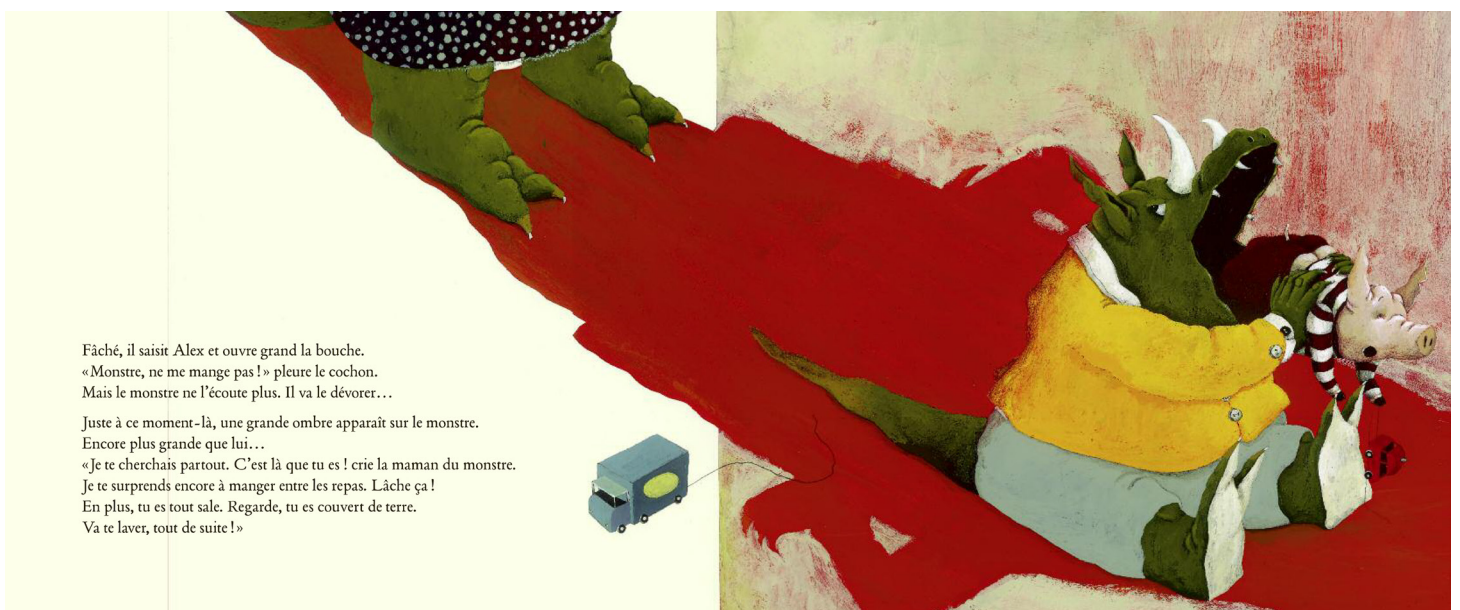
But, he thought, there are other things I don't understand too. Falling for example, I don't understand that at all.

old moose, for example, emanates worldly wisdom and compassion. Adults will probably identify easily with the moose, while children identify usually with the naive elephant that still has so much to discover.

In *Monster, don't eat me!*, emotions are accentuated by parallel images. When the shadow of the monster falls on the pig, it is black and ominous. A little further, the crimson shadow of the monster's mother covers the piglet and his attacker. An extremely threatening image is reduced unexpectedly to a comic confrontation by the text: an angry mother reminds her son to obey. Images that enhance images: Cneut has mastered it.



Plus loin, il trouve de petits fruits rouges.
«Qui peut résister à des framboises? Pas moi!» se dit Alex.
Il se penche pour les cueillir.
Tout à coup, il voit une grande ombre derrière lui...



Fâché, il saisit Alex et ouvre grand la bouche.
«Monstre, ne me mange pas!» pleure le cochon.
Mais le monstre ne l'écoute plus. Il va le dévorer...
Juste à ce moment-là, une grande ombre apparaît sur le monstre.
Encore plus grande que lui...
«Je te cherchais partout. C'est là que tu es! crie la maman du monstre.
Je te surprends encore à manger entre les repas. Lâche ça!
En plus, tu es tout sale. Regarde, tu es couvert de terre.
Va te laver, tout de suite!»

A BOOK IS A CONCEPT

Carll Cneut carefully selects the texts he wants to work with. He explores the content and boundaries of the story with the greatest care and conscientiousness, generously adding his own world and experiences. He acknowledges the author by creating room for the story within the concept of the book as a whole. As a result, the text and the images complement each other perfectly, from both a visual and a narrative point of view.

Cneut has a fine eye and ear for the rhythm of the story. Sometimes he supports and emphasizes the rhythm, but when the narrative calls for it, he goes against that rhythm, creating an interesting and sometimes unsettling friction that forces the reader to reflect on the story more deeply.

While creating *The Secret of the Nightingale's Throat*, Cneut needed to leave space for a substantial amount of text. He had to decide when to appropriate the story as an illustrator and when the text required more space for itself. Carll Cneut knows very well that words too have a unique colour. For every book, he looks for a suitable palette of colours to express the atmosphere, emotion and tension. In *The Secret of the Nightingale's Throat*, he went for *ombre chinoise* and

subtle variations of green and blue. Many reviewers have confidently stated that the illustrations are related to Chinese art, but closer examination reveals that Carll Cneut merely suggests this connection.

Carll Cneut decided to outline emotions in big dramatic scenes in this book. The picture of the Emperor, crushed by grief in his bed, would not look out of place on an opera stage. The imperial servants wail along, seemingly confined to the bed, making constructive action impossible. The pictures with the child as a spectator are more intimate, quieter. The child recognizes the drama but is not carried away by it. He is involved, but distant enough to evaluate the situation objectively and work on a solution. Through his images, Carll Cneut repeatedly shows unflinching respect for his young (and older) readers.



The emperor was lying in his bed.
He didn't see me.
He looked right through me.
I never saw him like this.

PICTURES ARE A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

Because of his natural ability to analyse and interpret a story, Carll Cneut taps into the deepest narrative layers in a way that seems almost easy, even playful. This talent allows him to communicate with a very diverse audience on many levels without ever losing his artistic integrity. Perhaps it is his ability to present universal emotions and themes by way of colour, composition and body language that lies at the heart of his international appeal. Readers from France, UK, Canada, Flanders and all over the world are equally affected by the rich artistic palette and impressive narrative skills of this illustrator, whose great ambition is to tell stories that we never tire of looking at.

Based on a text by Marita Vermeulen.

Two interviews

Happiness is a bag of chips in the sofa.

Jelle Van Riet

In: 'De Standaard der Letteren', September 20th, 2019

In *De vuurzeevlieg en andere verhalen* (*The sea-of-firefly*), the very first co-production of Toon Tellegen and Carll Cneut, quite a few animals like to be different until they realise how unique they are. A conversation with illustrator Carll Cneut, a unique and always hungry animal.

For Carll Cneut (1969), *The sea-of-firefly* is a dream come true. As a young illustrator he would have loved to be able to make 'a classic animal book' with the great Toon Tellegen. He put himself to work, because the king of animal stories naturally chose only the very best illustrators for his books. Not a dilettante like him. He had to practice, grow, mature. To draw and paint at least as hard as the woodworm drills: from sunrise to sunset. Only then. Who knows? One day. By 2014, Cneut had illustrated so many books and gained such praise, fame, awards, translations and (inter)national recognition that he was given a major retrospective exhibition at St Peter's Abbey in Ghent: 'In my head'. No fewer than fifty thousand people went to see it, including... Toon Tellegen. The king of animal stories himself said he dearly liked to make a book with this unequaled illustrator.



Throughout the illustrations of *The sea-of-firefly*, and its seventeen animal stories, the elephant pops up here and there, sometimes dancing, sometimes stumbling, but always lovingly drawn. Is he your alter ego?

Now that you mention it. I don't do it consciously – my work has been growing rather organically, especially recently – but of all the animals, the elephant is the one that is closest to my heart. I recognise myself in the elephant that climbs the oak tree to perform his newly rehearsed dance steps at the top, but then tumbles down, in all his clumsiness. And later he immediately climbs the same tree again. I know his foolishness and his clumsiness – if there is one stone loose in the city, I am guaranteed to trip over it – but also his cheerfulness, his lightness and his determination. When drawing that character, I always had a smile on my face.

For you it all started with an elephant too: for *Willy* you received your first Boekenpauw.

Thanks to *Willy* (with text by Geert De Kockere) I became who I am today. I had already made pictures for poetry collections, but I certainly didn't see myself as an illustrator in the future. Until I drew *Willy* and discovered that you don't have to portray literally what is written but can add your own story. That great pleasure of helping to tell a story was an aha-erlebnis that determined my whole life. In *Willy* you can already see what my basic principles and way of telling stories would become. Think of the two leg stumps and the piece of trunk in the beginning of the book, from which every reader automatically creates their own elephant in their mind. Later, I quite often allowed images to flow outside the frame, which was not done at the time and was also a stumbling block for foreign publishers for a long time. Of course, now I see how lumbering and ramshackle *Willy* was drawn and how I looked for graphic solutions to cover up my lack of drawing skills, but I love him despite his shortcomings. Perhaps my affection for the elephant goes back to *Dumbo*, one of my very first books. A big, three-centimeter thick, beautifully illustrated Walt Disney book. The story of *Dumbo*, the underdog, is a little bit like my own, apart from his big ears. I had to fight to claim my place. Fortunately, I had a publisher like Bart Desmyter of De Eenhoorn, who gave me time and space to grow.

The elephant in *The sea-of-firefly* wishes he were the sun; the firefly would rather be an awesome firefly and the centipede a centi-wing. Who would you like to be?

I would love to be someone who is able to let go easily. Because no matter how long I have been doing this, I remain very insecure. If anything, it only gets worse. The fear and panic when I started! Beforehand, I thought: oh, I've painted so many animals, I can just shake that out of my sleeve. Even after reading Toon's text, I still thought: piece of cake.

Until I started. It was then I really didn't know anything anymore: how do you make a picturebook again? In the past, I had only been paralysed in the run-up to a book, now I find myself questioning everything throughout the making of it. Perhaps that is because these days I have been throwing images onto the internet from the very beginning of my drawings. I used to be able to work in total freedom until a book was finished, now I get feedback along the way. Expectations are high. Moreover, my awe and admiration for Toon Tellegen got in the way. Well, of course, as always, I was mainly getting in my own way, like the bison.

'You have to make room for yourself', says the ant to the bison.

I would love to be able to do that. Just jump! But that's how it has been from the start: intense. Wanting to reach for the stars, again and again with every book, pushing back frontiers, doubting, struggling is really difficult. This immense endeavor is only related to painting and storytelling, because in ordinary life I can easily let go. Two totally different Carlls reside in me. People are often surprised when they get to know me. They expect a reserved melancholic, not someone who laughs, sings and acts silly all the time. Apparently, my dark side finds an outlet in my prints. The physicality of painting also gives me the peace

to go on living lightly. I am a cheerful person who is easily satisfied. Give me a sofa and a bag of chips, I'll eat the whole bag and get on with my life. That's what I call happiness. I am also happy with where I am and what I have. I don't need everything, and I don't fear missing something. I can go to the same shop, the same restaurant, all my life. If something is good, I don't see why I should change it.

So you are pleasant to live with?

I'm a dream! (laughs) A faithful dog. No mood swings. Rarely sad. Rarely angry. I can count on one hand the number of times I've stood on high ground in the last ten years. But when I am angry, I really am angry. If someone suddenly ends a friendship for no apparent reason, I experience that as an injustice and I become rebellious. I really can't stand backstabbing and arrogance. And unlike in my work, where I am the most patient person in the world – painting with a 00 brush is a monk's work – I am horribly impatient. When there are three people in front of me in the post office, I already think: I'll come back later.

The mole finds the earthworm 'endearing'. How on earth do you draw an endearing earthworm?

When I read that word, I immediately felt guilty that as a child I used to cut 'tettingen' (West Flemish dialect for 'earthworm') in half. I also thought of those Swedish stories from the 1980s about an earthworm called *Karlknut* (Sagan om Karlknut). Although an earthworm has a simple form, it is a difficult animal to draw. I painted a lot of them before I got the hang of it. If the pink was too cold or the green too bright, it suddenly looked unlovable. In this book, I really wanted to evoke a very soft, fairy-like atmosphere to suit the forest where the light falls through the foliage and where all the animals live. This led me to a technique that was totally new to me, where I almost completely washed out some images and then painted over them again. You can hardly see it, but it does ensure that the background remains somewhat blurred.

You grew up on a farm among animals, but now you live in Ghent and don't even own a goldfish. Do you actually like animals?

If I didn't travel so much for work (Cneut has been translated about two hundred times into forty countries), I would certainly get a pet. When I lived on the farm, animals – I'm talking pigs, cows, horses, ducks, chickens, a dog and cats – were mainly work: I had to feed them. And yet I had a connection with them. I remember a strange moment at the petting zoo in Damme. I was ten years old. At the gate of a meadow bordered by a hedge, a group of people were yelling at two donkeys further on in the meadow. As soon as I joined the group, the donkeys came running to me. I have never forgotten that.

The beetle feels special, the termite feels unique, and the firefly is the only one that can give light. Do you know that feeling?

Yes, I was a cute little toddler who always had an edge with the nuns. In primary school, I blended in, I was just one of many, even a bit of a follower.

But then my father died, only 36 years young. I was seven and suddenly became very special: the only child without a dad, to whom everyone was friendly. I vividly remember the moment when I returned to the classroom – everyone was silent – and suddenly I was different. That lasted for about two years, until someone of a different colour came to live in the village. From then on, the Vietnamese boy was the most special one in the school.

Although my dad died young, I had a fairly carefree childhood. I was too small to fully realise what had happened. The loss only came later. And of course, my mother was very sad, but she did not pass on that sadness to us. My two younger sisters and I always hung out together. Teasing them was my favourite thing to do. (laughs)

50.000 people came to see 'In my head'. No other illustrator before or after you has achieved that. Is success as addictive as people often claim?

At the risk of sounding arrogant: yes! Once things start going well, you don't want to give it up. 'In my head' was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I did not expect such a success at all. Afterwards, I more or less experienced withdrawal symptoms. And I had to eat a lot, because I had lost twelve kilos.

It was intense and stressful. I had planned to work there, but it was as if I was in a kind of live 3D-Facebook. I was relieved when it was over and I could go back to work, but I also immediately felt the loss of that direct communication. People's reactions mean a lot to me. Recently someone asked me if he could put a drawing on his mother's funeral card. I did not know the woman, but apparently my work had meant a lot to her. I get a lot of reactions and letters like that. I am fortunate to be able to do something that occasionally triggers feelings in others. That appreciation helps me believe that I am on the right path. I also see awards as a thumbs-up from the outside world. The Gouden Uil Youth Literary Prize and the Culture Prize in particular touched me.

Is success as dangerous as people often say?

Success is risky, because if you don't pay attention for a while, it can lead to compromises you later regret. For *The sea-of-firefly*, I could easily have made illustrations that I know will hit the spot, but I don't give in to that, no matter how tempting it is. All I think about is how to make the best possible book for me. I am very careful about authenticity. I try to feel what I have to make and listen to that inner voice, not the voice that tells me what others expect. Once the book is finished, I also like to bring it to the public. After all, I make these books in the hope that others will want to read them. If my work didn't appeal to anyone, I would have become a baker long ago. A very good one, though, known for its good bread and beautiful cakes. The want to claim my place is rooted in me: like me please. You have to if you are going to expose yourself to that extent in your work.

You want to know what others think of you. Like the earthworm, but he is all-round curious. Are you too?

Very much so. In every house where the curtains are open and the lights on, I look inside. When a letter arrives, I immediately tear it open. I always promise myself not to take anonymous calls, but as soon as my phone rings and I see “anonymous” lit up, I answer it. I am far too curious about who it is and what he is calling for. Afterwards, I curse, because it is always someone who wants to sell me something. As a child, I used to eavesdrop on adults, and I still do. I always follow the conversations that take place at the table next to me. It’s stronger than me.

You recently opened a gallery. Do you now finally dare to call yourself an artist?

I have always said that the craft of storytelling is very important to me. That is still the case for books. But some time ago I had an exhibition at the Antwerp WM Gallery, for which I also made autonomous work. I tried that a long time ago, but apparently, I wasn’t ready for it then. Now it surprised me how intensely I allowed myself to indulge in just one image. I felt a new kind of freedom and was able to put everything I had learned in the past quarter century into it, both technically and in life. Truly a eureka moment. That’s when I felt like an artist for the very first time, yes.

For the cricket, the worst thing imaginable is not being allowed to count anymore. What is the worst thing imaginable for you?

Not being allowed to eat anymore! However essential drawing and painting are to me, eating is even more so. My biggest fear in life is not having any food. I cannot bear hunger. The slightest hunger makes me sneeze uncontrollably. I hate having an empty fridge! I always have a lot of snacks in the house, and I am very lucky to have shops nearby, including a supermarket and two night shops, so I am covered 24 hours a day. I always take something to eat in my suitcase, because imagine arriving in Paris and all the shops and all the restaurants are closed – I don’t want to experience that.

Supposing you could go to the school of the sparrow, where you could learn everything in three lessons, what would you still like to learn?

Cooking, of course.

Interview by Book Island, UK

Please watch: <https://vimeo.com/237620779>

Uploaded on October 10, 2017



List of awards and other distinctions

“I’ve taught [now] for seven years, and I love this job. I try to be as good a teacher as I can. (...) My students keep me alert and don’t let me lose my edge. Even though I wish great careers on all of my students, I still want to be better than them! I was once nominated for an award in Belgium; I usually don’t pay much attention to awards, but this one I just had to get because some of the other nominees were my students. And I won!” (*Self-consciously chuckles.*)

In: “I Find My Freedom in That Which Isn’t Written Down”: An interview with Belgium’s Carll Cneut, illustrator of children’s books / Agnese Čivle, <https://arterritory.com>, 23/12/2014

2020

- Flemish Candidate for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, Sweden
- Zilveren Penseel for ‘De vuurzeevlieg en andere dierenverhalen’ (Querido), The Netherlands

2019

- Flemish Candidate for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, Sweden

2018

- Flemish Candidate for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, Sweden

2017

- Flemish Candidate for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, Sweden
- Prijs voor Letterkunde Provincie West-Vlaanderen for ‘De gouden kooi’

2016

- Shortlisted for Deutsche Jugendliteraturpreis for ‘Der goldene Käfig’ (Bohem Press), Germany
- MGIP Book Award Best Children’s book for ‘Der goldene Käfig’ (Bohem Press), Germany
- Flemish Candidate for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, Sweden
- White Ravens selection for ‘De jongen, de neushoornvogel, de olifant, de tijger en het meisje’ (De Eenhoorn), Germany

2015

- White Ravens selection for ‘De Gouden Kooi’ (De Eenhoorn), Germany
- Die Besten 7 Deutschlandfunk voor ‘Der Goldene Käfig’ (Bohem Press), Germany
- Flemish Candidate for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, Sweden
- Cutting Edge Award Best Translated Book for ‘De Gouden Kooi’ (De Eenhoorn), Belgium

- Cutting Edge Award Best Lay out for 'De Gouden Kooi' (De Eenhoorn), Belgium
- Boekenpluim for 'De Gouden Kooi' (De Eenhoorn), Belgium
- Audience Award of the Boekenleeuw for 'De Gouden Kooi' (De Eenhoorn), Belgium

2014

- Vlaamse Cultuurprijs (Cultural Prize of the Flemish Community), Belgium
- Flemish Candidate for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, Sweden

2013

- Flemish Candidate for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, Sweden

2012

- Flemish Candidate for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, Sweden

2011

- Flemish Candidate for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, Sweden

2010

- Shortlist Hans Christian Andersen Award
- Boekenpluim for 'Fluit zoals je bent' (De Eenhoorn), Belgium
- Flemish Candidate for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, Sweden
- Zilveren penseel for 'Fluit zoals je bent' (De Eenhoorn), The Netherlands
- Prix Ecolire for 'Brooklyn Baby' (La joie de Lire), France
- Premio Tribu dei Lettori for 'Il segreto dell'usignolo' (Adelphi Edizioni), Italy
- Nominated for 3rd CJ Picturebook Awards International Competition, Korea

2009

- Gouden Griffel for 'Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal' (De Eenhoorn), The Netherlands
- Plantin-Moretus Publieksprijs voor het Beste Boekomslag for 'Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal' (De Eenhoorn), Belgium
- Woutertje Pieterse Prijs for 'Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal' (De Eenhoorn), The Netherlands
- Boekenpluim for 'Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal' (De Eenhoorn), Belgium
- Boekenwelp for 'Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal' (De Eenhoorn), Belgium
- Gouden Uil for 'Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal' (De Eenhoorn), Belgium
- Die besten 7 for 'Das Geheimnis der Nachtigall' (Boje Verlag), Germany
- White Raven 2009 Special Mention for 'Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal' (De Eenhoorn), Belgium
- Flemish Candidate for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, Sweden

2008

- Nominated for the Vlaamse Cultuurprijs (Cultural Prize of the Flemish Community), Belgium
- Longlist Boekenpauw for 'Eén miljoen vlinders' (De Eenhoorn), Belgium

2007

- Winner of the Grote Prijs Picturale 2007, Belgium
- Selected for Original Art Show 2007, best illustrated books – Society of illustrators US: 'City Lullaby' (Clarion Books), USA
- Selected for the Kollektion zum Österreichischen Kinder- und JugendbuchPreis 2007: 'Monster, friss mich nicht!' (Residenz Verlag), Austria
- Selected for Illustrarte 2007: 'Eén miljoen vlinders' (De Eenhoorn), Portugal
- Nominated for Prix Chronos: 'On se reverra?' (Editions du Rouergue), France
- Nominated for Prix Versele 2006-2007: 'Pagaille' (Editions du Rouergue), Belgium
- Flemish Candidate for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, Sweden

2006

- Finalisto Premio Andersen for 'Greta La Matta' (Adelphi Edizioni), Italy
- Longlist Jonge Gouden Uil for 'Dulle Griet' (De Eenhoorn), Belgium
- Longlist Boekenpauw for 'Dulle Griet' (De Eenhoorn), Belgium

2005

- Golden Plaque Bratislava Illustration Biennale for 'Dulle Griet' (De Eenhoorn), Slovakia
- Flemish Candidate for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, Sweden
- Longlist Thea Beckmanprize for 'Dulle Griet' (De Eenhoorn), The Netherlands

2004

- Boekenpauw for 'Mijnheer Ferdinand' (De Eenhoorn), Belgium
- Flemish Candidate for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, Sweden
- Longlist Kate Greenaway Medal for 'Antonio, on the other side of the world' (Walker Books UK / Candlewick Press US), UK
- White Ravens selection 2004,
 - 'Mijnheer Ferdinand' for Flanders (De Eenhoorn)
 - 'Un Secret pour Grandir' for the French speaking part of Belgium (Pastel – l'Ecole des Loisirs)
 - 'Zie ik je nog eens terug?' for the Netherlands (Querido)
- Shortlist Jonge Gouden Uil for 'Zie ik je nog eens terug?' (Querido), Belgium-The Netherlands
- Longlist Jonge Gouden Uil for 'Mijnheer Ferdinand' (De Eenhoorn), Belgium-The Netherlands

2003

- Golden Plaque Bratislava Illustration Biennale for ‘Mijnheer Ferdinand’ (De Eenhoorn) and ‘The amazing Love Story of Mr Morf’ (Macmillan publishers UK), Slovakia
- Silver Brush for ‘Het ongelooflijk Liefdesverhaal van Heer Morf’ (De Eenhoorn / ‘The amazing Love-story of Mr Morf’ (Macmillan Publishers)), The Netherlands
- Selection Society of Illustrators ‘Original art 2003’ for ‘Antonio on the other side of the world, getting smaller’ (Walker Books UK / Candlewick Press USA), USA
- EselsOhr for ‘The amazing Love story of Mr Morf’ (Sauerlaender / Macmillan publishers UK), Germany
- Buch des Monats for ‘The amazing Love story of Mr Morf’ (Sauerlaender / Macmillan publishers UK), Germany
- Prix d’Illustration Rueil-Malmaison for ‘Un Secret pour Grandir’ (Pastel – l’Ecole des Loisirs), France
- Selection Illustrarte 2003 for ‘Un secret pour Grandir’ (Pastel – l’Ecole des Loisirs) and ‘The amazing Love Story of Mr Morf’ (Macmillan publishers UK), Portugal
- Mention honorable Prix Chrétien de Troye for ‘Un Secret pour Grandir’ (Pastel – l’Ecole des Loisirs), France
- Mention honorable Prix d’Illustration for ‘Un Secret pour Grandir’ (Pastel – l’Ecole des Loisirs), France
- Longlist Jonge Gouden Uil 2003 for ‘Het ongelooflijk Liefdesverhaal van Heer Morf’ (De Eenhoorn / The amazing Love-story of Mr Morf (Macmillan Publishers)), Belgium-The Netherlands
- Shortlist ‘Fureur du lire’ for ‘Un Secret pour Grandir’ (Pastel – l’Ecole des Loisirs), Belgium
- Shortlist Kinder -en Jeugdjury 2003-2004 for ‘Het ongelooflijk Liefdesverhaal van Heer Morf’ (De Eenhoorn / ‘The amazing Love-story of Mr Morf’ (Macmillan Publishers UK), Belgium
- Prix Octogones for ‘Rougejaunenoirblanche’ (Pastel – l’Ecole des Loisirs / ‘Roodgeelzwartwit’ De Eenhoorn), France

2002

- Boekenpluim for ‘Roodgeelzwartwit’ (De Eenhoorn), Belgium
- Shortlist Kinder -en Jeugdjury 2003 for ‘Roodgeelzwartwit’, Belgium
- Mention honorable Prix Fantaisie 2002 for ‘Willy’, Switzerland

2001

- Honourable Mention Bologna Ragazzi 2001 Award for ‘Woeste Mie’ (De Eenhoorn), Italy
- Mention honorable Prix Octogones 2001 for ‘La Fée sorcière’ (Pastel- l’Ecole des Loisirs / ‘Heksenfee’ – De Eenhoorn), France
- Shortlist Kinder -en Jeugdjury 2001 for ‘Heksenfee’ (De Eenhoorn), Belgium

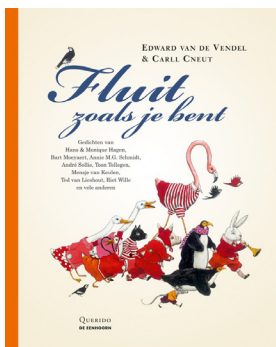
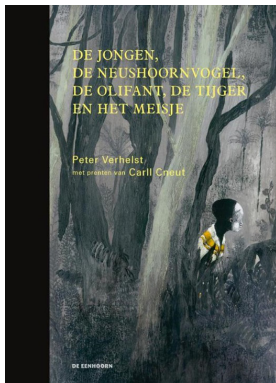
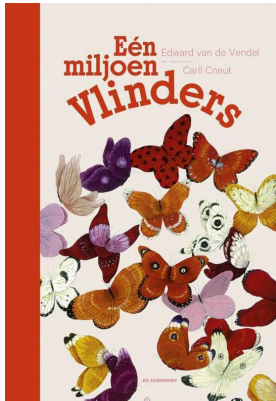
2000

- Boekenpauw 2000 for 'Willy' (De Eenhoorn), Belgium
- Longlist Jonge Gouden Uil 2000 for 'Heksenfee' (De Eenhoorn), Belgium

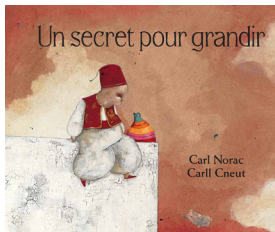
1998

- Honorable Mention Boekenpauw 1998 for 'Straatje zonder eind', Belgium

Complete bibliography



- *De vuurzeevlieg en andere dierenverhalen (The sea-of-firefly)*, Amsterdam (NL): Querido, 2020
- *Eén miljoen vlinders (One Million Butterflies, new cover)* / Edward van de Vendel en Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2019
- *Dulle Griet (Mad Meg, remake)* / Geert De Kockere and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2017
- *Heksenfee (Witchfairy, remake)* / Brigitte Minne and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2016
- *De jongen, de neushoornvogel, de olifant, de tijger en het meisje (The boy, the hornbil, the elephant, the tiger and the girl)* / Peter Verhelst and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2015
- *Vogels: tekenen, krabbelen en kleuren met Carll Cneut (Drawing, doodling and coloring birds)*, De Eenhoorn (B), 2014
- *De gouden kooi, of het waargebeurde verhaal van de bloedprinses (The golden cage, or The true story of the blood princess)* / Anna Castagnoli and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2014
- *Slagveld van gebroken harten: verhalen uit Chaucers The Canterbury tales (Battlefield of broken hearts: stories from Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales)* / Ed Franck and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Leuven (B): Davidsfonds, 2013
- *De blauwe vogel (The blue bird)* / Maurice Maeterlinck, Do van Ranst (ed.) and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2011
- *Nachten vol angstaanjagende schoonheid (Nights full of terrifying beauty)* / E.A. Poe, Ed Franck (ed.) and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Leuven (B): Davidsfonds, 2011
- *Ten moonstruck piglets* / Lindsay Lee Johnson and Carll Cneut (ill.). – (USA): Clarion Books, 2011
- *Verboden liefdes: verhalen uit de Decamerone (Forbidden love: tales from the Decamerone)* / Boccaccio, Ed Franck (ed.) and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Leuven (B): Davidsfonds, 2010
- *Fluit zoals je bent (Whistle as you are)* / Edward van de Vendel (comp.) and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn and Amsterdam (NL): Querido, 2009
- *Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal (The secret of the nightingale's throat)* / Peter Verhelst and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2008
- *Te veel verdriet voor één hart: vier tragedies van Shakespeare opnieuw verteld (Too much sorrow for one heart: four Shakespeare tragedies retold)* / Ed Franck and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Leuven (B): Davidsfonds, 2008
- *Eén miljoen vlinders (One million butterflies)* / Edward van de Vendel and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2007
- *City Lullaby* / Marilyn Singer and Carll Cneut (ill.). – New York (USA): Clarion Books, 2007
- *O monster, eet me niet op (Monster, don't eat me)* / Carl Norac and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2006

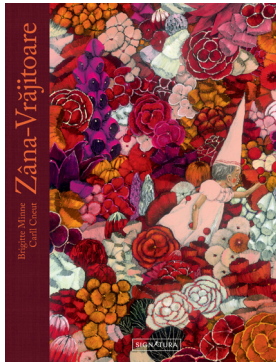


- *Hou van mij: de mooiste verhalen over de liefde (Love me: de most beautiful stories on love)* / Ed Franck and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Leuven (B): Davidsfonds, 2005
- *Dulle Griet (Mad Meg)* / Geert De Kockere and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2005
- *Under The Spell of the Moon: Art for Children from the World's Great Illustrators* / Patricia Aldana (ed.). – Toronto (Can.): Groundwood publishers, 2004 (Contribution)
- *Jack and the Seven Deadly Giants* / Sam Swope and Carll Cneut (ill.). – New York (USA): Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2004
- *Zootje was hier (Zea was here)* / Edward van de Vendel and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2004
- *Coeur de papier (Heart of paper)* / Carl Norac and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Paris (F): l'Ecole des Loisirs, 2004
- *Mijnheer Ferdinand (Mister Ferdinand)* / Agnes Guldemont and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2003
- *Lines in the Sand: new writing about war and peace* / Mary Hoffman (ed.). – London (UK) : Frances Lincoln/UNICEF, UK, 2003 (Contribution)
- *Zie ik je nog eens terug? (Will I see you again?)* / Ed Franck and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Amsterdam (NL): Querido, 2003
- *Antonio on the other side of the world* / Malachy Doyle and Carll Cneut (ill.). – London (UK): Walker Books, 2003
- *Un secret pour grandir (A secret for growing)* / Carl Norac and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Paris (F): l'Ecole des Loisirs, 2003
- *En toen kwam Linde (And then Lindsay came)* / Brigitte Minne and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2003
- *The Amazing Love Story of Mr Morf* / Carll Cneut. – London (UK): Macmillan, 2002
- *Roodgeelzwartwit (Redyellowblackwhite)* / Brigitte Minne and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2001
- *Woeste Mie (Wild Winnie)* / Geert De Kockere and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2000
- *Heksenfee (Witchfairy)* / Brigitte Minne and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 1999
- *Willy (Willy)* / Geert De Kockere and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 1999
- *Niel (Neal)* / Geert De Kockere and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 1998
- *Een straatje zonder eind (A street without an end)* / Geert De Kockere and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 1997
- *Koetje in de klaver (Cow in the clover)* / Geert De Kockere and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 1997
- *Varkentjes van Marsepein (Piglets of Marzipan)* / Geert De Kockere and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 1996

List of translated editions

2019 – *De vuurzeevlieg en andere dierenverhalen (The sea-of-firefly)*, Querido, Netherlands, Toon Tellegen

2020 – Rights sold to Topipittori, Italy



2016 – *Heksenfee (remake)*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Brigitte Minne (Picturebook)

2017 – *La fée sorcière*, Pastel – Ecole des loisirs, France

2017 – *Hexenfee*, Bohem Press, Germany

2017 – *Rosmarino*, Topipittori, Italy

2018 – *Witchfairy*, Book Island, UK

2018 – *Zâna-vrăjitoare*, Signatura, Rumania

2018 – *Nigma*, Russia

2019 – *Labyrinthe*, Bulgaria

2014 – *Vogels: tekenen, krabbelen en kleuren met Carll Cneut*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium (Picturebook)

2015 – Petrel Publishing House, China (Simplified Chinese)

2015 – *Komische Vögel, malen und zeichnen mit Carll Cneut*, Bohem Press, Germany

2015 – *Oiseaux, dessiner, griffoner et colorier*, Pastel, France

2015 – *Uccelli da disegnare e da colorare con Carll Cneut*, Topipittori, Italy

2016 – *Pájaros para dibujar pintar y colorear*, Barbara Fiore, Spain

2016 – *Ptaki*, Wydawnictwo Dwie Siostry, Poland



2014 – *De gouden kooi, of het waargebeurde verhaal van de bloedprinses*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Anna Castagnoli (Picturebook)

2015 – Petrel Publishing House, China (Simplified Chinese)

2015 – *Der goldene Käfig*, Bohem Press, Germany

2015 – *La volière dorée*, Pastel, France

2015 – *La Voliera D'oro*, Topipittori, Italy

2016 – *La pajarera de oro*, Barbara Fiore, Spain

2016 – *Złota klatka*, Wydawnictwo Dwie Siostry, Poland

2018 – NAHL, Iran (Farsi)

2018 – *The golden cage*, Book Island, UK

2018 – *Colivia de aur*, Signatura, Rumania

2019 – *Auksinis narvelis*, Leidykla 700 eilučių, Lithuania

2020 – *Labyrinthe*, Bulgaria

2020 – *Popuri*, Russia

2011 – *De blauwe vogel*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Maurice Maeterlinck, Do van Ranst (ed.) (Reading Book)

2011 – Jakkajungsin Publishing Co., Korea

2013 – Rights sold to Brazil

2011 – *Ten moonstruck piglets*, Clarion Books, USA, Lindsay Lee Johnson
(Picturebook)

2011 – *Dix cochons sous la lune*, La joie de Lire, Switzerland

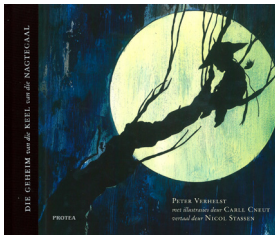
2011 – *Tien bolle biggetjes*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium

2009 – *Fluit zoals je bent*, Querido/De Eenhoorn, The Netherlands/Belgium,
Edward van de Vendel (Poetry collection)

2012 – *Hier wohnt mein Glück*, Bloomsbury Verlag, Germany

2012 – *Tout bêtement*, La joie de Lire, Switzerland

2013 – *Liberò come una nuvola*, Topipittori, Italy



2008 – *Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Peter Verhelst (Picturebook)

2009 – *Il segreto dell' Usignolo*, Adelphi Edizioni, Italy

2009 – *Le secret du chant du rossignol*, Pastel, France

2009 – *El secreto de la garganta del ruiseñor*, Barbara Fiore Editora, Spain

2009 – *Das Geheimnis der Nachtigall*, Boje Verlag, Germany

2009 – *Skrivnostno grlo slavčeve*, Narava, Slovenia

2010 – Korean translation, Sun & Tree Publishing, Korea

2011 – Portuguese/Brazilian translation, Cosac & Naïfy, Brazil

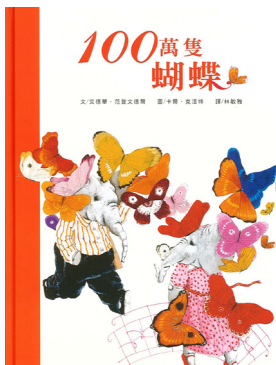
2011 – *Hemmeligheden om nattergalens stemme*, Turbine Forlaget, Denmark

2011 – *Die geheim van die keel van die nagtegaal*, Protea Boekhuis, South-Africa

2011 – *Hemligheten med näktergalens sång*, Turbine Forlaget, Sweden

2011 – Alfa Print Publishing, Armenia

2020 – Antalog, Macedonia



2007 – *Eén miljoen vlinders*, De Eenhoorn, Edward van de Vendel, (Picturebook)

2007 – *Un milione di farfalle*, Adelphi Edizioni, Italy

2007 – *Um milhão de borboletas*, Edições Kual, Portugal

2007 – *Un million de papillons*, Pastel, France

2007 – *Un millon de mariposas*, Barbara Fiore Editora, Spain

2007 – *Milijon metuljev*, Narava, Slovenia

2008 – *Sommerfugle I mauven*, Lamberth, Denmark

2008 – *Zwei Millionen Schmetterlinge*, Boje Verlag, Germany

2009 – *En million sommerfugler*, Cappelen Damn, Norway

2010 – Reader publishing, Taiwan

2012 – Hindi, Sampark publishing, India

2012 – Benghali, Sampark publishing, India

2012 – English, Sampark Publishing, India

2011 – Bakur Sulakari Publishing, Georgia

2012 – *Eén miljoen vlinders*, Protea Boekhuis, South-Africa

2013 – Cosac & Naïfy, Brazil

2013 – Petrel Publishing House, China

2017 – Nebo Art Publishers, Ukraine

- 2007 – *City Lullaby*, Clarion Books, USA, Marilyn Singer (Picturebook)
 2008 – *Brooklyn baby*, La joie de Lire, Switzerland

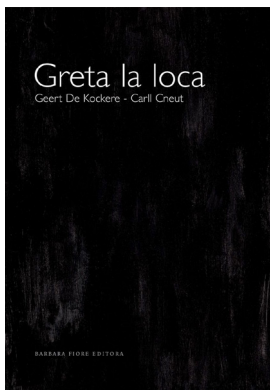


- 2006 – *O Monster, eet me niet op!*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Carl Norac (Picturebook)

- 2006 – *Mostro non mangiarmi*, Adelphi Edizioni, Italy
 2006 – *Monstruo, no me comas!*, Barbara Fiore Editora, Spain
 2006 – *Monster, Friss mich nicht!*, Residenz Verlag, Austria
 2006 – *Pošast, ne požri me!*, Narava, Slovenia
 2006 – *Da grovæderen mødte slughalsen!*, Thorup, Denmark
 2006 – *Monstro, não me comas!*, Edições Kual, Portugal
 2006 – *Monster don't eat me!*, Greenwoodbooks, Canada/USA
 2006 – *Koletis, ära söö mind!*, Varrak, Estonia
 2007 – *Monstre ne me mange pas!*, Pastel, France
 2007 – *Monstre ne me mange pas!*, Lutin Poche Ecole des loisirs, France
 2007 – *Mostro, não me coma!*, Cosac & Naify, Brazil
 2008 – MP, Japan
 2008 – *Alex, a torkos kismalac*, General Press, Hungary
 2010 – Reader publishing, Taiwan
 2010 – DDWorld, Korea
 2011 – *O monster, moenie my opeet nie!*, Protea Boekhuis, South-Africa
 2011 – Bakur Sulakari Publishing, Georgia
 2011 – *Å nei, ikke spis meg!*, Cappelen Damm, Norway
 2013 – Petrel Publishing House, China
 2013 – *Ai briesmoni, neaped mani!*, Liels un mazs, Latvia
 2015 – A&A Booktrust, Hindi
 2016 – Alvita Publishing Co., Taiwan (Complex Chinese)



- 2005 – *Dulle Griet*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Geert De Kockere (Picturebook)
 2005 – *Greta la matta*, Adelphi Edizioni, Italy
 2006 – *Margot la folle*, Editions Circonflexe, France
 2006 – *Greta la loca*, Barbara Fiore Editora, Spain



- 2004 – *Under the spell of the moon*, Greenwood Publishers, Canada, Blake, Browne, Pacovska, Kallay, e.a.. (Contribution),
 2006 – *In de ban van de maan*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium

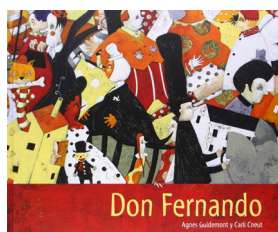
- 2004 – *Jack and the seven deadly giants*, Farrar, Struass & Giroux, USA, Sam Swope, (Reading Book)
 2004 – *Jantje en de zeven reuzen*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium
 2005 – *Jacques et les 7 Géants*, Ecole des loisirs, France
 2005 – *João e os sete gigantes mortais*, Cosac & Naify, Brazil

- 2004 – *Zootje was hier*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Edward van de Vendel, (Reading Book)
 2005 – *Pagaille*, Editions du Rouergue, France
 2010 – *Zoeira esteve aqui*, Edições SM, Brazil

2004 – *Coeur de papier*, Pastel-l'Ecole des Loisirs, France, Carl Norac
(Picturebook)

2004 – *Cuore di carta*, Adelphi Edizioni, Italy

2004 – *Het hart van Tom*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium



2003 – *Mijnheer Ferdinand*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Agnes Guldemont
(Picturebook)

2004 – *Monsieur Ferdinand*, Editions Circonflexe, France

2004 – *O Senhor Ferdinand*, Edições Kual, Portugal

2005 – *Don Fernando*, Fondo Cultural, Mexico/Spain

2005 – *El Senyor Ferran*, Fondo Cultural, Catalonia

2006 – Newton, Korea

2003 – *Lines in the Sand* (an anti-war anthology), Frances Lincoln/Unicef, UK
(Collection)

2003 – *Lines in the Sand*, Disinformation/Unicef, USA

2003 – *Zie ik je nog eens terug*, Querido, The Netherlands, Ed Franck
(Reading Book)

2005 – *On se reverra?*, Editions du Rouergue, France

2003 – *Antonio on the other side of the world, getting smaller*, Walker Books, UK,
Malachy Doyle (Picturebook)

2003 – *Antonio, de l'autre coté de la terre*, Pastel, France

2003 – *Antonio aan het andere eind van de wereld*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium

2003 – *Antonio, Reyser til den anden ende...*, Sesam Forlaget, Denmark

2003 – *Antonio, on the other side of the world*, Candlewick Press, USA

2003 – *Antonio, on the other side of the world*, Walker Australia, Australia

2004 – *Antonio, on the other side of the world*, Walker soft., UK

2005 – *Antonio, Auf der anderen Seite der Welt*, NP Buchverlag, Austria

2005 – *Antonio, no outro lado do mundo*, Edições Kual, Portugal

2003 – *Un secret pour grandir*, Pastel-l'Ecole des Loisirs, France, Carl Norac
(Picturebook)

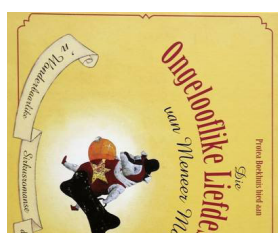
2003 – *Drengen dengerne ville vokse*, Sesam Forlaget, Denmark

2005 – Sauerlaender Verlag, Germany

2005 – *Een geheim waar je groot van wordt*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium

2005 – *Um segredo para crescer*, Edições Kual, Portugal

2009 – Chang-Tan Intl. publishing, Taiwan



2002 – *The amazing love story of Mr Morf*, Macmillan Publ., UK, Carll Cneut
(Picturebook)

2002 – *l'Etonnante histoire d'amour de Lucien le Chien*, Pastel, France

2002 – *Het ongelooflijke liefdesverhaal van heer Morf*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium

2002 – *Het ongelooflijke liefdesverhaal van heer Morf*, Stichting Lezen,
Belgium

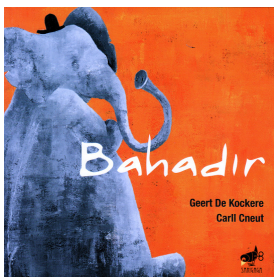
2002 – *Den magelose Signor Saltos fantastiske...*, Sesam Forlaget, Denmark

2002 – *A inacreditável história de amor da Cão Chicão*, Cosac & Naify, Brazil
 2002 – *The amazing love story of Mr Morf*, Clarion books, USA
 2003 – *Die wundersame Liebesgeschichte des Mister Morf*, Sauerlaender, Germany
 2004 – *Il meravigliosa storia di amore di Mr Morf*, Adelphi Edizioni, Italy
 2005 – BL publishing, Japan
 2010 – *Die ongelooflike liefdesverhaal van Meneer Morf*, Portea Boekhuis, South-Africa

2001 – *Roodgeelzwartwit*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Brigitte Minne (Picturebook)
 2002 – *Rougejaunenoirblanc*, Pastel, France
 2002 – Newton, Korea
 2003 – *Rojoamarillonegrablanca*, Brosquil Ediciones, Spain
 2003 – *Vermellgrownegrablanca*, Brosquil Ediciones, Catalonia
 2003 – *Rotgelbschwarzweiss*, Sauerlaender, Germany
 2005 – *Rougejaunenoirblanc*, Lutin Poche Ecole des Loisirs, France
 2011 – Chang-Tan Intl. publishing, Taiwan
 2013 – *Kirmizisarisiyahbeyaz*, Sarigaga, Turkey

2000 – *Woeste Mie*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Geert De Kockere (Picturebook)
 2001 – *Sacrée Zoë*, Editions Circonflexe, France

1999 – *Heksenfee*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Brigitte Minne (Picturebook)
 2002 – *La fée sorcière*, Pastel, France
 2002 – Newton publishing, Korea
 2002 – Bronze publishing, Japan
 2004 – *A fada feitcheira*, Cosac & Naify, Brazil
 2004 – *La fée sorcière*, Lutin poche Ecole des Loisirs, France
 2005 – *A fada bruxa*, Edições Kual, Portugal
 2006 – *Hadabruja*, Editora Barbara Fiore, Spain
 2006 – *Fata strega*, Adelphi Edizioni, Italy
 2006 – *Hexenfee*, NP Buchverlag, Austria
 2013 – *Fadabruixa*, Barbara Fiore, Spain (Catalan)



1999 – *Willy*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Geert De Kockere (Picturebook)
 2001 – *Willy*, Editions Circonflexe, France
 2010 – *Hindi*, Arvindkumar Publishing, India
 2011 – *Willy*, Eerdman books, USA
 2011 – *Bahadir*, Sarigaga, Turkey

1998 – *Niel*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Geert De Kockere (Picturebook)
 Rights sold to Korea

Ten of the most important titles by the candidate

2019

De vuurzeevlieg en andere dierenverhalen (The sea-of-firefly) / Toon Tellegen and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Amsterdam (NL): Querido

2019

Eén miljoen vlinders (One Million Butterflies) / Edward van de Vendel en Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn (remake, new cover)

Stach told everyone he met: “Hi! I have butterflies flying around my head – the whole time. Well, not now of course.”



2017

Dulle Griet (Mad Meg) / Geert De Kockere and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn (remake, only lay out)

2016 *Heksenfee (Witchfairy)* / Brigitte Minne and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn (remake)

2014 *De gouden kooi, of het waargebeurde verhaal van de bloedprinses (The golden cage, or the true story of the blood princess)* / Anna Castagnoli and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn

2014 *Vogels: tekenen, krabbelen en kleuren met Carll Cneut (Drawing, doodling and coloring birds)*. – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn

2011 *De blauwe vogel (The blue bird)* / Do van Ranst (ed.), Carll Cneut (ill.), after the story by Maurice Maeterlinck. – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn (Reading Book)

Illustration taken from the retelling of Maurice Maeterlinck's classic *De blauwe vogel*



2009

Fluit zoals je bent (Whistle as you are) / Edward van de Vendel (comp.) and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn and Amsterdam (NL): Querido



Illustration taken from the poetry collection *Fluit zoals je bent*

2008

Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal (The secret of the nightingale's throat) / Peter Verhelst and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn

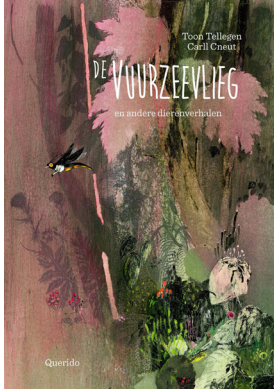
2006

O monster, eet me niet op (Monster, don't eat me) / Carl Norac and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn

List of books sent to the jurors

1. *De vuurzeevlieg en andere dierenverhalen (The sea-of-firefly)* / Toon Tellegen and Carll Cneut (ill.). Amsterdam (NL): Querido, 2019
2. *Dulle Griet (Mad Meg)* / Geert De Kockere and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2017 (remake, only lay out)
3. *Heksenfee (Witchfairy)* / Brigitte Minne and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2016 (remake)
4. *De gouden kooi, of het waargebeurde verhaal van de bloedprinses (The golden cage, or the true story of the blood princess)* / Anna Castagnoli and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2014
5. *Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal (The secret of the nightingale's throat)* / Peter Verhelst and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2008

Published reviews of the books submitted to the jury



De vuurzeevlieg en andere dierenverhalen (The sea-of-firefly) Toon Tellegen and Carll Cneut (ill.) Querido, 2019

THE STORY

The master of animal illustrations and the king of animal stories come together in this collection of seventeen stories. We meet animals who would like to be different, until they realize how special they already are. The firefly dreams of being a huge and formidable fire monster, a real sea-of-firefly, until he realizes he doesn't know of any other animal that can shine a light like he does. The knobs on the giraffe's head decide they can do without the giraffe from now on and set out to see the world. The elephant wants to be the sun and, despite repeatedly falling, goes on climbing trees – although he wonders how the sun can climb so high without anything to help it.

REVIEWS

The most important illustrator of Toon Tellegen's animal stories is Mance Post. She was his companion from the very beginning and illustrated more than fifteen collections. But Tellegen's mysterious animal world also bears the signature of Geerten Ten Bosch, Jan Jutte, Annemarie van Haeringen, Kitty Crowther, Ingrid Godon and Sylvia Weve, to name but the most well-known.

The collaboration of Toon Tellegen with Carll Cneut in this new collection of short stories has been long awaited. After all, each illustrator seeks in his or her personal style and vision of illustration to form a unity with Tellegen's stories. Mance Post repeatedly deepened the mystery with the soft atmosphere of wonder and alienation she put in her illustrations, while Kitty Crowther, for example, preferred to stay close to the concrete events and Sylvia Weve embedded the stories in her illustrations, creating a sparkling dynamic.

Carll Cneut creates picturebooks that are not finished when you turn the last page, who continually stimulates the reader's imagination with pictures that are opaque and unfinished, who keeps working on techniques to suggest that there is more than meets the eye. His imagery harmonises excellently with Tellegen's animal stories full of wonder and recognition.

The title story is about a firefly (in Dutch: vuurvliege; note by the editor), which is thoroughly fed up with that eternal diminutive '-je' at the end of its name. He wants to be 'grand and awe-inspiring', 'turbulent, uproarious, overwhelming, unbridled and much more'. And so he writes a letter: 'Dear animals,



Why do I always feel so wronged?
I give light – who else does that?
Ok, the sun. But that does not count.

/ From now on my name is different. / From now on I am also different. [...] and signs with ‘The sea-of-firefly’. Only to wonder a little later why he has been so thoughtless. This story is sparkingly new and yet very recognisable, because Tellegen’s animals often burn with unfulfillable desires, only to finally resign somewhat despondent.

That even an animal with a diminutive in its name can be sensational is shown in the full-page print in which the firefly lights up the dark forest at night from behind its window. They wish they could do it, the rhino and the elephant and all those other giants whose size he envied.

The elephant, who wished he were the sun so that he could climb high above the highest treetops, also resigns himself. After some deep thinking, however, he comes to the conclusion that the sun’s good fortune may also be his misfortune, and that he, the elephant, is lucky not to achieve such good fortune. And so, he resigns himself to going no higher than the top of a tree, from which he will tumble – it is his destiny – again. The warthog, too, after much anger and sorrow, resigns himself to the fact that he is a warthog and so is his name, and the porcupine to the fact that he cannot keep his good intentions after all.

There is a lot of failure, impotence and anger in these stories, but the sometimes exuberant absurdity and foolishness form a wholesome counterbalance. Carll Cneut has captured this duality of gloom and lightheartedness particularly well in his prints. He often paints the forest in tangled, opaque prints, at which you keep staring because you think you can see something that is just out of sight. After all, the murkiness of the print always holds the promise of light and colour. The cover image is a fine example: the bright pink of the title and the back cover shine through a dark veil, as it were, and make the dark forest glow with enchantment.

In this way, Cneut does justice to the wonder of Tellegen’s animal forest. The dressed-up animal figures have the artist’s familiar signature. Most striking is the presence of the elephant that appears so frequently in Cneut’s picture-books. Even when he plays no role in the story, he turns up, with battered ears and bumps on his head from the many falls from treetops. Cneut has a soft spot for the elephant. When, in his determined madness to achieve the physically impossible, he climbs up a tree again, Cneut simply lets him shine in all his clumsy clumsiness. By the way, he does portray more delightful characters, such as the angry toad, brooding on a mushroom, or the weasel, whose nature does not allow him to be as hospitable as he would like: he wears a shirt with a smiley face on it.

Jen de Groeve

www.mappalibri.be, November 2019

It starts as soon as the cover pages: we see a deep green wild forest, which immediately makes it clear that these will be stories from the familiar Tellegen forest, but then in the Carll Cneut way. It will be lush, and more ‘Heart of darkness’ than other Tellegen forest books, it will smell of soil and growth.

Out of this tangled forest, the warthog (in Dutch: wrattenzwijn; note of the editor) emerges on page 68. Its little eyes look sleepy, but also... confused? It is wonderful that Cneut creates this atmosphere in the very beginning, because what follows is the story of the boar, who is unhappy with his name. This is mainly due to the ‘wr’ at the beginning. In what is, in my opinion, the funniest story in the collection, the wart hog calls himself ‘attenzwijn’ from now on, and anyone who forgets this can count on a ‘wr’ treatment: the wredgehog, the wriquet, the wrog and the wrouse.

But it is not only the green palette that reigns in this book. In the truly beautiful drawings from a story earlier, we see the weasel. He wears a black-and-red jumper, serves tea from his white-and-red crockery on his bright red table – and on the wall hangs (not often seen in Cneut’s work) cheerful children’s drawings that depict the weasel as an endearing red man. The story (about the Weasel who wants to receive only unexpected visitors) concludes with an exterior: Weasel at his front door, and there we see a picture that every reader would probably like to have hanging on the wall as an original. Weasel stands perplexed by his little blue-black house and large black-red leaves whirl around him, next to the bright red ragged leaves of yet another tree. And all that against a transparent-like white-grey background.

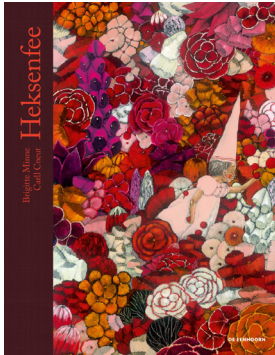
The pictures make *The sea-of-firefly* a book to leaf back through (I haven’t even mentioned the touching group of animals on page 75, check it out – that composition!), and then you also get the seventeen Tellegen reflections worth reading back through.

Edward Van de Vendel

<http://edwardvandevendelleestips.blogspot.com/>,

May 18th, 2020





**Heksenfee [Witchfairy]
Brigitte Minne and Carll Cneut (ill.).
Wielsbeke: De Eenhoorn (B), 2016**

THE STORY

Rosemary is bored of being a nice fairy. She would love to be a witch. When she makes friends with some witches and starts acting like one, her mother doesn't want her home anymore. Mom thinks that Rosemary will soon be a good fairy again, but she has to change her mind in the end.

This popular picturebook about growing up and becoming independent was published in 1999. Now, at the occasion of his 20th anniversary as an artist, Cneut has remade all the illustrations in a luxurious edition with linen band.

REVIEWS

Fairies are actually dreadfully boring

In honour of Carll Cneut's twentieth anniversary as an artist, De Eenhoorn published a remake of *Witch fairy* (1999) with completely new illustrations. This results in a stylish publication with linen cover; a fascinating gift for young children and those who read aloud to them.

The story itself, which has already turned into a classic, remains unaltered. Rosemary cannot come to terms with being a fairy: she thinks magic wands are silly and would rather go through life roller-skating. Rosemary's wishes, however, are nipped in the bud by her overprotective mother, who sees danger everywhere. Cneut's illustrations appeal to different layers of meaning in the story. The fairy-like illustrations are marked by the use of pink and red hues.

At the same time, the illustrations are quite static: good fairies in pink dresses chatting in small groups. Cneut pays much attention to expression, which can

be seen in his previous work too, for example, when Rosemary longingly looks at a pair of roller-skates in a toyshop's display window.

Remarkably is again the precise execution, treated with the utmost care. Even the toy animals in the display window have their own facial expression. Contrary to the text, Cneut integrates yet a second layer of meaning: he also focuses on the consequences of Rosemary's wishes, which literally turn her into an outsider in the fairy community.

Rosemary would much rather be a witch, so she can be messy. This way, *Witch fairy* turns into a story about identity, especially when it comes to the question of what consequences she



What Rosemary really wanted was a pair of roller skates.
But that was not allowed.



One of the witches lent Rosemary her roller skates. She whizzed in and out through the trees. She'd never had so much fun in her life!

will have to face when her true identity does not match her environment's expectations. The options are either getting accustomed to the existing norms and values or resisting them rigorously. Rosemary chooses the second option without hesitation. She seems to be a remarkably pink appearance in the dark hued witches' wood, but inside it feels like she has come home now she can roller-skate, climb trees and discover the sky on a broom. The illustrations that powerfully and sincerely portray Rosemary's evolution from a rather static to a frankly dynamic character, make up for the somewhat superficial text, which lacks genuine feelings and empathy.

Because Rosemary persists in her ways consistently, it is her mother who approaches her. She is open to her daughter's inherent qualities: "The life of a witch is actually quite fun,' mum thought" and recognizes her true identity. That is how mother and daughter reach a compromise. The message about parents choosing their children's happiness over social conventions is as clear as day.

Over 15 years after the first edition, *Witch fairy* clearly stands the test of time. This classic has always been more about the illustrations than anything else. It is a bit of a shame that the very descriptive text was not revised in any way. The wonderful illustrations, however, tell us the actual story, illustrate moods, excel at facial expressions and evolve meaningfully from static to dynamic. A classic for good reason.

Jürgen Peeters

In: Cutting Edge (B), November 25th, 2016, <http://www.cuttingedge.be/boekenstrips/brigitte-minne-carll-cneut-heksenfee>

The witch fairy

A remarkable story with extraordinary pictures awaits this book's readers and spectators. (...)

Hexenfee (Witch fairy), published in January by Bohem Publishers, is one of those picturebooks that impress at first site by their artistic cover.

Hold the book in your hands to feel the soft textile cover on the left changing into a smooth structure to the right, adorned by engraved lettering and well-chosen colors introducing the theme of the story. The endpapers in a charming creamy hue take us back to days long gone by. (...)

A good picturebook story requires illustrations that not only translate the story into images but also leave enough space to trigger the fantasy of the reader. Carll Cneut is known for his imaginative, artistic illustrations which always take the reader on a fantastic journey.

He keeps succeeding in fascinating readers through his unusual, characteristic, sometimes slightly bizarre-looking, deep imagery. He takes his readers into a magical world: a world of witches and of fairies, and makes the story written by Brigitte Minne his very own.

But now something about the story.

Is it a girls' story?

Yes, one could say so, but the story lends itself to girls and boys, but above all, it focuses on the parents.

Let children be children. Don't try to bend them out of shape. Don't squeeze them into an outdated corset of clichés. Regardless its intention, which you'll grasp along the way, one should consider this book simply as a beautiful book that amuses not only children.

The little fairy would rather be a little witch. She doesn't like wearing fine pink dresses all day long, behaving elegant and being tidy. She would rather enjoy roller skating or taking a boat trip, but this is way too dangerous for small fairies, and it doesn't suit them.

Time and time again, she gets in a discussion with her mother because of her wishes, ideas and her resistance. Her mother prefers her being just a lovely girly fairy.

Finally, her mother has no more arguments and leaves her daughter the choice: or she behaves as a little fairy or she leaves the house.

And that's just what the little fairy does. She grabs her things and sets off to the witch forest.

Her mother strongly believes that her daughter will return soon enough, but that's not what happens. The little fairy loves being in the witch forest. She can do everything she would like to do and all the witches are kind. They support her in her ideas, teach her to fly on a broom and teach her even a little bit of magic.

When the night falls, she lays down on her bed of moss in the tree house and happily falls asleep quietly.

She also returns to visit her mother, who's pleased about the probable return of her daughter, but she immediately insists that she should take her place as a fairy again and to wash herself.

The small fairy escapes and flies back to the witches.

However, her mother misses her too much and sets out in the witch forest. She lays herself next to her daughter in her bed of moss and is happy to protect her. She has discovered what's important to her little fairy.

From that point onwards, the little fairy is allowed to be a witch whenever she wants. She sleeps in her tree house in the witch forest, is taught by the witches and returns to the fairies whenever she wants to. The mother accompanies her daughter, because she's nothing without her little fairy witch.

A beautiful mother & daughter story, but it could have been on mother/son, father/daughter or father/son as well.

Regardless the educational theme, we shouldn't try to classify each picture-book in a pedagogical category, but we should just enjoy it. A wonderful picture-book in both illustrations and text: elaborate, enchanting and charming, taking the reader for a short period of time in this new magic world.

The representation of the individual characters may seem a bit unusual. A bit bizarre, but the faces (and the story) leave room for interpretation. Some illustrations may seem at first sight gloomy, but it takes the story to a magic level. A kind of magic that only occurs if illustrations and the story interrelate, mutually support, and complete each other. This is what's achieved here in perfection.

Simply amazing and artful.

In: Kinderbuchkiste blog (G)

<http://kinderbuchkiste.blogspot.be/p/hexenfee.html>



De gouden kooi, of het waargebeurde verhaal van de bloedprinses [The golden cage, or the true story of the blood princess]

Anna Castagnoli and Carll Cneut (ill.).

Wielsbeke: De Eenhoorn (B), 2014

THE STORY

Valentine, the spoiled daughter of the emperor, collects birds. In her garden, there are hundreds of cages, filled with beautiful specimens. But Valentine wants a special bird, one that she can talk with. Many servants die during their dangerous quest for this bird. And when they dare to come back empty-handed, or with a wrong kind of bird, the blood princess has them beheaded. One day a handsome servant stands at the palace gate...

A new fairytale about a princess who, in her search for the impossible, loses everything and stays behind alone.

REVIEWS

Carll Cneut has a thing about birds. He has previously illustrated famous fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen (*Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal/The Secret of the Nightingale's Throat*, 2008, adapted by Peter Verhelst) and Maurice Maeterlinck (*De blauwe vogel/The Blue Bird*, 2011, adapted by Do Van Ranst). And now he has provided the illustrations for an original story by the Italian author Anna Castagnoli: *De gouden kooi/The Golden Cage*, translated by Saskia De Coster. A picturebook with a macabre subtitle ("The True Story of the Blood Princess"), a harsh message and yet a glimmer of hope.

The blood princess of the title is called Valentina and she is a stereotypical spoiled brat. She has all the material luxuries that her heart desires ("three hundred and ninety pairs of shoes, eight hundred and twelve hats and fifty belts") and an enormous garden filled with the most exotic birds, but it is still not enough. Valentina is lacking something, and so she sends her servants out on the most impossible missions to bring back all kinds of imaginary birds ("the bird with the glass wings", "the bird with the coral beak" and "the bird that spouts water"). When they do not succeed in fulfilling her wish, she has them – "chop!" – beheaded. In this, the blood princess is reminiscent of another murderous royal in children's literature, the Queen of Hearts from *Alice in Wonderland*. Cneut nicely alludes to this by putting a white apron on Valentina, which is in fact more of a reminder of Alice herself. In one illustration he even surrounds her with top hats and white rabbits.

The illustrations make it clear that Valentina harbours an impossible longing. The birds she describes are depicted in an unusual way: their heads are shining examples of perfect precision, but their bodies appear to have been finished by a child's hand. Cneut seems to be telling us that these birds exist only in Valentina's imagination. Such unfinished elements are a frequent feature of the



Many, many servants died on those long and exhausting expeditions. However, they were almost the lucky ones, because if anyone dared to return with empty hands...

illustrations: in the drawings on Valentina's bedroom wall, but also in the girl herself and the other figures (hair and stockings are scribbled in with grey pencil) and the birdcages and flowers (shaky pencil lines). We have not seen such touches in Cneut's work before; he appears to be setting a new stylistic course. Perhaps for a reason, as will become apparent.

One night Valentina dreams of a talking bird. This, too, is depicted as if drawn by a child: a shaky pencil line and without colouring neatly between the lines. Valentina links her happiness to this fantasy image: if her servants can make this wish come true, no more heads will roll. This is more easily said than done, however. Anyone who thought Valentina would be satisfied with a simple parrot will be disappointed: these golden birds, painted by Cneut in one of his familiar packed pictures, do not please the princess ("They only repeated what others had said to them.").

Valentina's longing goes deeper than simple greed. In the first pictures, she is filled with anger: a red flush on her cheeks, the corners of her mouth turned down and her arms angrily crossed. In the bird garden, though, we see a very different Valentina, a girl who is longingly looking up at the big birds, and yet cannot succeed in making eye contact with them. Other pictures suggest boredom (a sullen Valentina on a pile of skulls, one hand under her chin) or even sadness (Valentina surrounded by dolls, head bowed and shoulders drooping).

All of these pictures emanate a sense of loneliness, and the words, too, suggest a need for affection: "In her dream, the talking bird was very good company. He said sweet things and he said them only to her. Valentina felt special and singled out. The next day, the emperor's daughter woke up in a good mood for once." This sentiment is enhanced by the absence of a parent figure. It is striking that Valentina is often described in the text as "the emperor's daughter" and yet we do not see the complete emperor anywhere in the pictures. In the text he is mentioned only once as an independent character, when he gives his daughter a golden cage for her birthday. An empty cage as a birthday present – could there be anything colder?

The extent to which a lack of parental love plays a role in Valentina's blood-thirsty behaviour is debatable; the hints in the text and pictures are too sketchy. Whatever the case, though, the princess is clearly lacking something, and she wants to fill that gap with a creature that does not exist. It is particularly apt that this creature is a bird: a bird is, after all, the very symbol of elusiveness, given that it can fly away at any moment.

Valentina wishes for the impossible: she wants her imagination to become reality. A longing that is doomed to remain unfulfilled, but still, she would do anything to achieve it. She sells all her possessions, including the birds (she was apparently not that fond, after all, of the coral-beaked bird for which heads had to roll), in the hope that this investment will result in a talking bird. Then a boy comes to the palace with a ruse that would not look out of place in a classic fairy



With an average loss of ten servants' heads per bird, life in the emperor's palace went on relatively quietly.

tale: after making the blood princess swear that no more servants will lose their heads, he gives her an egg. An egg from the talking bird, he claims. For the first time, we see a Valentina who does not look angry, sad or longing, but perfectly happy: she smiles and even seems to skip. Her behaviour changes from cruel to caring: she even weaves a nest from her own hair to keep the egg warm.

With bated breath, we turn the page, but then... the garden is cold, dark and windy. The cages are still empty, the egg is nowhere in sight, and Valentina has fallen asleep, her hair grown to the length of Rapunzel's. At that point, the text takes over the story and an authorial narrator steps into the foreground, who makes a number of suggestions about what might have happened. Interestingly, none of those suggestions is entirely positive. This fairy tale does not end with "they all lived happily ever after". Valentina's wish is not fulfilled, simply because talking birds exist only in the imagination. The princess has failed to make this fantasy come true somehow in real life.

One way to express the imagination is by drawing, which the reader can do in the accompanying colouring book, *Vogels tekenen, krabbelen en kleuren met Carll Cneut* (*Drawing, Scribbling and Colouring Birds with Carll Cneut*), in which the illustrator takes a Keri Smith-like approach to stimulating the reader's creativity. So... get drawing!

Kyra Fastenau

Translated by Laura Watkinson

In: Mappalibri (B), <http://mappalibri.be/?navigatieid=61&recensieid=4481>

La magnifique volière de Carll Cneut

Une princesse capricieuse attend impatiemment l'oiseau qui pourra occuper sa volière dorée. Un conte mis magistralement en images.

Avec *La volière dorée*, Anna Castagnoli signe un merveilleux conte à la fois philosophique et magique porté par les dessins somptueux du Flamand Carll Cneut. Un livre presque trop beau pour les enfants et une volière qui hypnotise tous ceux qui s'y laissent piéger.

Qu'est-ce qui vous a décidé à unir votre univers à ce texte d'Anna Castagnoli?

Quand Anna m'a envoyé ce texte, j'en suis immédiatement tombé amoureux. Quand je lis un projet, différentes conditions doivent être remplies avant que je n'accepte. La première c'est que je dois immédiatement voir un dessin ou une ambiance ou certaines couleurs. Avec *La volière dorée*, après dix phrases, c'était fait! Tout un univers émotionnel s'est tout de suite matérialisé dans mon esprit.

Vous parlez de couleurs, elles sont éclatantes dans ce livre, comment les choisissez-vous?

J'ai des périodes (rires)! C'est très vrai quand je regarde mon travail rétrospectivement... Mais ici, il y a essentiellement du jaune et du gris. Je suis parti de ce jardin qui était déjà très vert et j'ai cherché quelles couleurs pourraient bien s'accorder à cet univers, c'est comme ça qu'est arrivé le jaune.

Il est question d'une volière et donc d'oiseaux, vous avez dû faire de nombreuses recherches pour les dessiner aussi bien.

En fait, il n'y a qu'un seul oiseau qui existe réellement, il est sur la couverture. Tous les autres sont nés de mon imagination. Leurs becs, leurs couleurs, leurs plumages sont purement inventés. Puis, je voulais faire de grands, très grands oiseaux, ce qui ne pouvait pas correspondre à la réalité.

Et Valentina, cette petite fille qui ne ressemble pas à une princesse, comment l'aviez-vous imaginée?

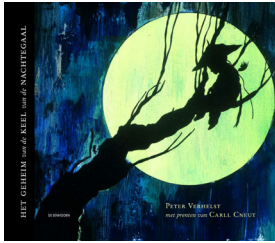
Je ne voulais pas dessiner une princesse classique avec une couronne, un château, de belles robes... Finalement, elle est comme toutes les petites filles. Et toutes les petites filles sont des princesses. En tout cas aux yeux de leurs parents.

Par contre, elle a des chapeaux fantastiques...

C'est vrai! Je crois que ça me vient de ma grand-mère qui avait un style éclatant. Je me souviens de mes sœurs qui adoraient s'habiller avec ses affaires, comme toutes les petites filles. Mon cerveau est comme une immense armoire remplie d'images, beaucoup d'images. Elles se matérialisent dans mon travail.

Fanny Guillaume

In: L'avenir (F), November 27th, 2015



Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal
(The secret of the nightingale's throat)
Peter Verhelst and Carll Cneut (ill.).
Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2008

THE STORY

In *The secret of the nightingale's throat*, a Chinese emperor dreams about a new Imperial Garden of all Gardens. A simple gardener succeeds in making this dream come true. But when the emperor hears a nightingale sing, he also wants this music to be part of the royal garden. Although the nightingale is willing, he is not without a will of his own and his music cannot be captured. Can an almighty emperor live with the idea that there is something that escapes his will?

Peter Verhelst has adapted the famous fairytale by H.C. Andersen into a musical and poetic text. Carll Cneut makes the reader wander into an enchantingly beautiful world.



REVIEWS

This beautiful picturebook is based on H. C. Andersen's well-known fairy tale. Peter Verhelst interprets Andersen's story in elegant, lyrical sentences and vivid images. His prose creates an enchanting rhythm and explores the magic of the repeated epithet. Carll Cneut catches the marvellous story in poetic illustrations (such as the one depicting the wealth of Chinese decorative art), ranging from festive exuberant colours to mysterious night black and dark blue.

In: *The White Ravens* 2009 (G)



A heavenly nightingale

Verhelst demonstrates his sensitivity as a writer in this book. His language is visual, his images are almost tangible, his tone alternates between serious and light-hearted, his sentences sing like poetry and his powerful prose calls for recital skills. It's just as every fairytale should be.

But Verhelst's secret is Carll Cneut. His full-page paintings harmonise magnificently with the text. Like a shadow, he follows Verhelst's movement and rhythm, filling the space with abundance and then with simplicity, alluding to traditional eastern painting, and showing his great eye for detail (see the variation in the silk costumes).

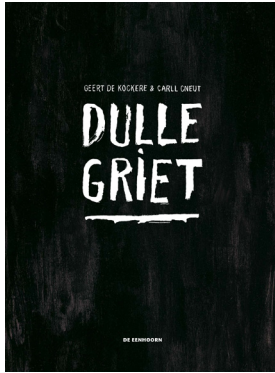
He dazzles you with his riot of colours, he overwhelms you with his teeming 'Garden of Gardens', he makes you frown at the sight of his kitschy mechanical bird, he leads you astray in the green-blue forest of the little nightingale and, throughout the story, he places you up high in the treetops, sitting with the scullery maid in the bright light of the full moon, and reaching for the stars, even though you know they may no longer be there.

Andersen, Verhelst and Cneut understand one another very well indeed.

Mirjam Noorduijn

Translated by Laura Watkinson

In: De Groene Amsterdammer, March 13th 2009 (NL)



Dulle Griet (Mad Meg) Geert De Kockere and Carll Cneut (ill.) Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2005

THE STORY

Meg was an adorable child, a living doll really. Yet, when she was old enough to be naughty, she got naughty. Very naughty. Sweet Meg became Mad Meg. She yelled and roared, she slapped and kicked. The result was that nobody wanted to marry her. “Go to hell!” they said. This made Meg even madder. One day, she decided to go and look for hell. After a long journey, she arrived at the hell-gate. She went inside and asked the devil if he wanted to marry her. The devil didn’t answer, he never does. Meg was furious and stabbed her heart with her sword...

Based on the painting *Mad Meg (Dulle Griet)* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1563).

REVIEWS

The power of infinite imagination

In his latest, and most masterful, picturebook *Dulle Griet (Mad Meg)*, he achieves an impressive perfection in his command of drawing techniques, form and use of colour. The book is inspired by Pieter Breugel the Elder’s savage and intriguing painting. This canvas full of war, hell, frenzy and insanity continues

to fascinate art historians. Is Mad Meg an allegory of an era, or does she simply represent a figure from popular tradition? No conclusion has been reached. Together with author Geert de Kockere, Cneut went in search of his own interpretation of this bizarre, apocalyptic scene, by lifting Mad Meg out of Breugel’s painting and giving her a new life and new surroundings. Not a warrior woman with a helmet and armour, but a vulnerable yet crotchety human being, who, spurned by those around her, chooses to challenge fate and present herself to the devil. ‘She would ask the devil if he wanted to have her. If he felt anything for her. If he might have a place in his heart for her.’

When Cneut places his Mad Meg against the original Breugel background, she is perfectly at home. On the other pages, Breugel’s writhing, crowded backdrop gives way to snapshots of people and hallucinatory composite monsters with the head of a fish and the body of a bird. The book becomes increasingly grim, with hate, malice, malevolence and despair depicted on the enlarged faces, all of which Cneut renders with incredible expression, in a style that is strongly reminiscent of Ensor’s work. Cneut selected a number of the many scenes in the background of Breugel’s painting and created his own take on them in separate depictions. Good and evil, hypocrisy and ruthless



“Devil, I’m here. Take me then!”
But the devil takes nothing. The devil never takes anything.
You give yourself. And the devil lets you.

barbarity, all of these receive a fascinating and timeless interpretation in his toothless skeletons and repulsive horrors. A magnificent, jam-packed book that you never tire of looking at.

Annemie Leysen
Translated by Laura Watkinson
In: De Morgen, April 13th, 2005 (B)

Cuando encontré este álbum lo primero que me llamó la atención fue la cubierta, oscura, con veladuras en tonos más claros que como si fueran arañazos contribuyen a enfatizar el ya enigmático título, *Greta la loca*. Acto seguido, di la vuelta al libro, para observar la contracubierta, dando por supuesto que la tonalidad oscura compuesta por veladuras, como si de un cuadro abstracto se tratara, continuaría. Pero cuál fue mi sorpresa cuando descubrí, lejos de mi prejuicio, una reproducción del cuadro de Brueghel el Viejo, *Greta la loca*. En este momento los elementos de presentación comenzaban a encajar, pero... ¿qué podría albergar entre sus páginas este peculiar álbum?

El autor ha creado una historia a partir del cuadro de Brueghel. En ella nos cuenta la vida del personaje de Greta la loca y su entrada en la boca del infierno, representado a la izquierda en el cuadro, en busca del diablo. Greta, que de niña era conocida con el nombre de Margarita, va enloqueciendo ya desde la infancia, se va convirtiendo en un ser violento, cruel, rechazado por los demás, y su propia locura le llevará al suicidio.

Carll Cneut ha recreado en imágenes el texto de Geert De Kockere. Unas interesantes ilustraciones que, siendo diferentes al cuadro de Brueghel, resultan a la vez muy afines. El paralelismo entre las dos obras pictóricas se aprecia a simple vista, pero es mayor si uno observa los personajes de una y otra composición, se descubren varios parecidos. Ya el cuadro conforma una pintura ruidosa, en la que el espectador, si se detiene, puede escuchar sonidos metálicos, gritos espeluznantes, campanas, el chisporrotear del fuego, etc. Esta misma “ambientación sonora” la ha reproducido el ilustrador en el álbum, donde las figuras aparecen representadas de forma plana y las arquitecturas responden a diferentes perspectivas.

Este ilustrador, que tiene publicados en este mismo sello editorial otros dos álbumes: *Hadabruja* y *Monstruo no me comas*, ha conseguido aunar en *Greta la loca* una aparente contradicción estética: la belleza de lo horrible, o la armonía de lo esperpéntico.

Autor e ilustrador han dado vida al conocido cuadro *Dulle Griet* (*Greta la loca*, 1561-1562), pintura en la que se ve claramente la importancia del simbolismo que Brueghel tomó de El Bosco, y donde los personajes, tratados con una ironía burlesca, crean una atmósfera delirante. En este cuadro se aprecian los temas elegidos por Brueghel, donde existe la dualidad de si lo representado era fruto de sus sueños, o si reproducía el realismo social que implica toda sátira.

Volviendo a la cubierta, que en mí produjo un impacto ineludible, atrayéndome como un agujero negro, vaticina el mundo oscuro en el que se va a desarrollar la cruel historia de Greta.

Barbara Fiore nos tiene acostumbrados a libros de calidad, editados de forma cuidada. Sin duda, está llevando a cabo una buena labor, dando a conocer álbumes extranjeros de grandes ilustradores vivos, y rescatando álbumes publicados en los años cincuenta como los dos más recientes: *Chispas y cascabeles* y *El pequeño 1*. *Greta la loca* quizás es el libro más atrevido de su catálogo, invita a adentrarse en el mundo de la pintura flamenca y en las complejidades del ser humano. Sin lugar a dudas invita al debate.

Ana Sancho

In: www.revistababar.com, November 9th, 2006 (E)

Lastly: a view into the studio of Carll Cneut



When asking Carll about his biggest achievement in life until now, he answers the exposition IN MY HEAD in Ghent. Later on, when the recorder has stopped and we're chitchatting in the sun, Carll comes back to this question and says "Maybe my biggest achievement in life is just 'staying true to myself' because I think I succeeded well in that part".

In: <https://www.lechaperonunlimited.com/author/carllcneut/>

Appendix

The following pdf's of the original books and translations are available:

De Vuurzeevlieg / The Sea-of-firefly:

- Dutch pdf
- English pdf: sample translation

Heksenfee / Witchfairy:

- Dutch pdf
- English pdf

De Gouden Kooi / The Golden Cage

- Dutch pdf
- English pdf

Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal / The secret of the Nightingale's Throat

- Dutch pdf
- Spanish pdf
- French pdf

Dulle Griet / Mad Meg

- Dutch pdf
- Spanish pdf
- Italian pdf