

# Carl Cneut

Belgian candidate for the Hans Christian Andersen Award 2018 (illustrator)

Nominated by IBBY-Belgium, Flemish branch



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## Biography

Carll Cneut (°1-8-1969) was born and raised 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 Gent, 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 picture books 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 wasn’t mainstream. But I wasn’t completely taken by any of the texts they presented to me. And so 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 couldn’t personally identify with. That meant I had to make some illustrations that no longer corresponded to the original Dutch text. In the Dutch version, I managed to reclaim part of the story.*

*(...) So it was a learning experience, but also a little traumatic. Since then, I haven’t written anything else myself. But that also has to do with my 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’ll make a start.”*

*Carll Cneut, In: De Standaard, 23 december 2011*

Carll Cneut also contributes to many children's and adult magazines.

In 2011, Carll Cneut was a member of the international jury for the Illustrators Exhibition in the Bologna Children’s Book Fair.

In 2015, Carll Cneut won the Vlaamse Cultuurprijs der Letteren (Flemish Cultural Prize for Literature), awarded by the Minister of Culture.

From December 2014 to May 2015 the exhibition *In my head* ran in the Sint-Pietersabdij in Ghent. This exhibition on Cneut’s work and world was visited by almost 50.000 people.

In 2016, he celebrated his 20th anniversary as an illustrator.

## A statement on the candidate's contribution to literature for young people

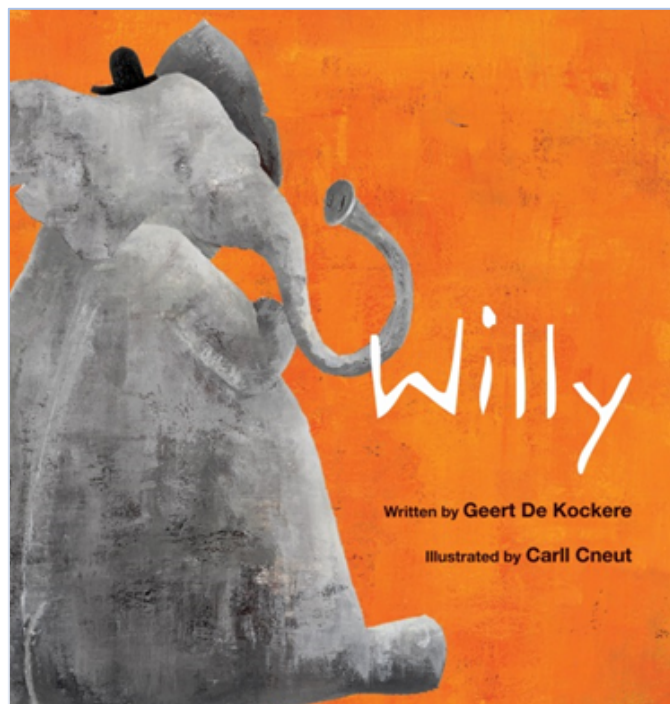
### The finer the brush, the more intense the reading experience

#### An analysis of Carll Cneut's work

Carll Cneut is an illustrator with a great and unwavering love for the medium of the book, with an enormous respect for his reader, always entitled to the best. For every story, he goes in search of 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, but 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 different ages can go out and explore, together or alone.

#### Colour and form

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 picture books such as *Willy* and *Heksenfee (Witch fairy)* still had a rather static look, but they were never without expression. This was mainly because of the illustrator's unerring sense of colour. The orange on the cover of *Willy* makes the grey, lumbering elephant appear warm and cuddly. The many shades of pink in *Heksenfee* never appear too sickly sweet, because of the many nuances and colours they are based on, both literally and figuratively.



Willy

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. Cneut places a pictogram-like castle in almost complete isolation, which makes it expand in the reader's imagination into a fortress with towers and battlements. He teases and challenges the reader, taking advantage of the human ability to complete pictures. His illustrations slip and slide, 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."*

*Carll Cneut, in: Bookbird, 48(2010)2*

In this perspective 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. The story of the little fairy who wants to be an occasional witch, is still relevant: we all must also learn to embrace our dark side. In his remake, Carll Cneut shows how well he has mastered the lines and has learned to put expression in body and face over the years. Through that 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 accentuates 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 each other, have found each other again: their noses are in the same direction again – hereby referring to a Dutch proverb.

### A never-ending story

Carll Cneut has taken on many challenges in his career. Rather than focusing on quantity, however, 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 picture book *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 moving images. Those who only read the text, might be under the impression that the princess is just a spoiled and cruel brat. However, her desire for a talking bird, a bird that will really talk to her, suggests a lack of warmth in her life. Those who carefully read the images too, get an even more nuanced story. Carll 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 way the desire of the princess

will never be alleviated. Eventually, someone offers the princess an egg, a symbol of hope. In the final image, Carll 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 emphasize that this is not the story of a cruel princess, but the story of cruel adults, failing to nurture and embrace a child.

### A very fine brush

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". In book after book, 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! But it's a fact that 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."*

*Carll Cneut, In: De Standaard, 23 december 2011*

While in his first books he captured the emotions primarily by his use of colour and composition, the characters' body language has become an integral component of the story or poem in later books, such as *O monster, eet me niet op!* (*Monster, Don't Eat Me!*), *Eén miljoen vlinders* (*One Million Butterflies*), *Fluit zoals je bent* (*Whistle As You Are*) and *Ten Moonstruck Piglets*. The characters have gained greater depth and dynamism, which makes them look more vulnerable. Their appearance touches the reader and draws us in to their experiences and emotions.



Fluit zoals je bent



Fluit zoals je bent

In a book like *One Million Butterflies* the illustrator shows his talent to use different registers so that children and adults can interpret the story in their own personal way. The old mouse, for example, emanates worldly wisdom and compassion. Adults will probably identify easily with the mouse, while children identify usually with the naive elephant that still has so much to discover.

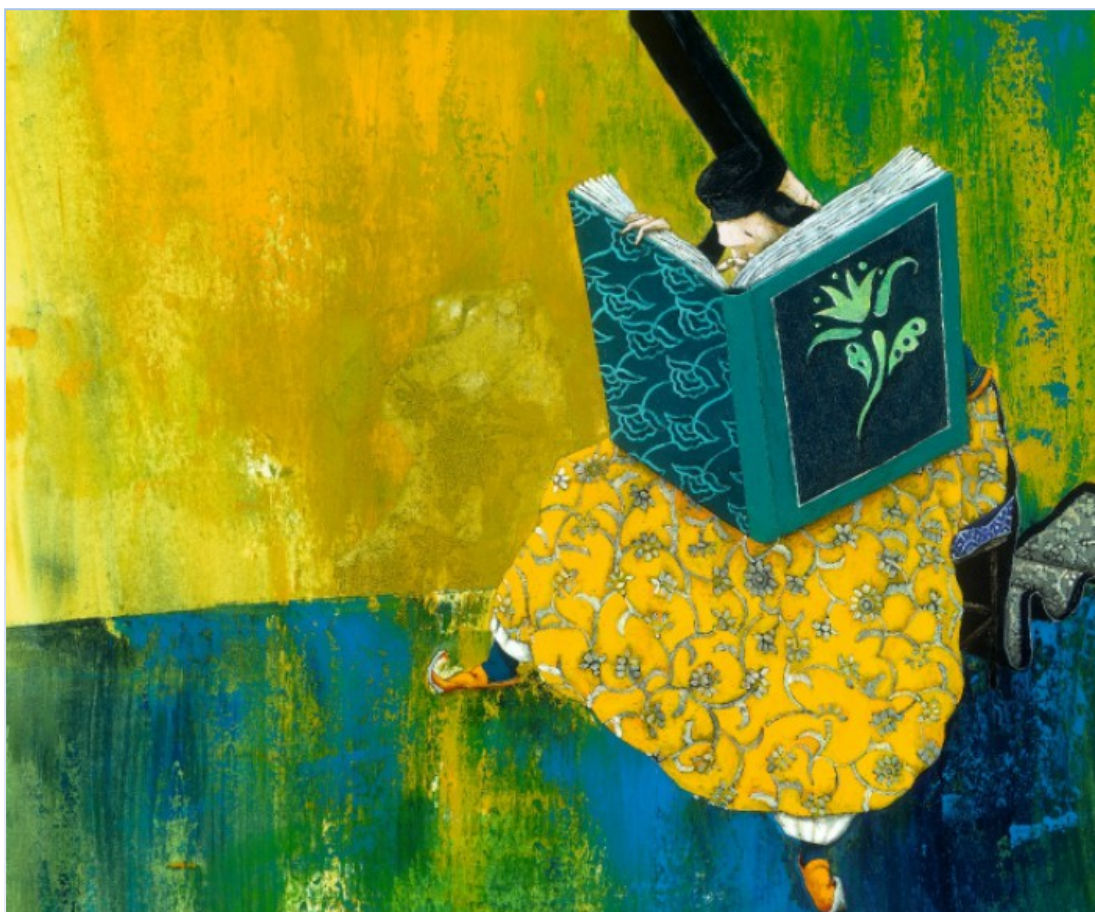
Emotions are evident in *Monster, Don't eat me!*, which is accentuated by parallel images. When the shadow of the monster falls on the pig, it is black and ominous. A little further, the crimson shadow of the monster's mother covers the piglet and his attacker. An extremely threatening image is reduced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

### A book is a concept

Carll Cneut has respect for the text. He shows this respect by exploring the content and boundaries of the story with care and conscientiousness, generously adding his own world and experiences. He shows respect for 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.

This illustrator 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 and contemplate the story more deeply.

When creating *Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal* (*The Secret of the Nightingale's Throat*), the illustrator 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 goes in search of a suitable palette of colours to express the atmosphere, emotion and tension. In *Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal*, 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.



Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal

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 unflagging respect for his young (and older) readers.

#### Pictures are a universal language

With 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 through his use of colour, composition and body language that lies at the heart of his international appeal. Readers from France, Slovenia, 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.

Marita Vermeulen

Partially translated by Laura Watkinson.



## One essay and one interview

### “I continue where the text ends”

#### The wondrous world of illustrator Carll Cneut

In 2011 Carll Cneut celebrated fifteen years as a professional illustrator. An exhibition, four new books and enthusiastic media attention put him and his work constantly in the spotlight. This attention and appreciation are totally appropriate. Cneut is an illustrator through and through, a craftsman with a passion for the book as an object and an obsession for drawing and painting. Together with a number of other talented illustrators of the so-called new ‘Flemish School’ he re-invented the picture book. With his typical, unmistakable style, Carll Cneut has become well-known in recent years, both at home and abroad. His books have been translated all over the world into more than thirty languages and also received many prestigious prizes and other honours. At first glance, this success doesn't seem inevitable. Cneut's characters aren't creatures you'd want to hug or stroke. The often abstract style demands an attentive viewer, with imagination and empathy, and stimulates one's creativity. His pages are filled with grotesque, silent creatures, often against a sober, almost stylized background. Cneut is especially masterful in his eccentric compositions and his arresting use of colour, which create striking images and powerful narratives.

#### Commedia dell'arte

Carll Cneut (born in Roeselare, in 1969) studied graphic design at the Sint-Lucas Institute in Ghent. After a short career in the communications sector he became a full-time illustrator. He also teaches illustration at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Ghent. Since 1996 he has illustrated more than twenty children's books, of which a great number have found their way abroad. He works for the major British publisher MacMillan and has done illustrations for The New York Times. For *Dulle Griet (Mad Meg)* and for *Mijnheer Ferdinand (Mr. Ferdinand)* he was awarded a golden plaque at the Biennale in Bratislava. The French Prix Octogone was given to *Rougejauneblancnoir (Redyellowblackwhite; orig. title: Roodgeelzwartwit)* and he received a Special Mention at the Bologna Ragazi Awards for *Woeste Mie (Wild Winnie)*. Time Magazine named *City Lullaby* one of the ten best American children's books of 2007. *Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal (The Secret of the Nightingale's Throat)* received nearly every prestigious prize in the Low Countries. In 2010 he became one of the five illustrators shortlisted for the distinguished Hans Christian Andersen Award.

Carll Cneut is an illustrator who is not afraid to experiment. He paints a world that is related to the world of the commedia dell'arte, where surreal and life-like elements blend harmoniously. His figures often look like caricatures, as he plays around with traditional proportions, perspectives and ways of expression. In his first books the settings were mostly reduced to the bare essentials. Later on, the backgrounds became more exuberant and colourful. He is constantly experimenting with innovative techniques. Acrylic paint is used a lot in his drawings. He mostly puts down several layers in different colours and then adds pastel, pencil, wax pencil or ink. His brushwork and style have become more delicate and precise over the years. Composition is his forte, the way he is able to suggest an unfinished world that continues beyond the page. His work is constantly evolving. His mastery of form, colour and layout increases all the time, and he uses these three basic elements brilliantly to visualize emotions.

Carll Cneut never allows the written story to limit or constrain him. Strict instructions from the author would be wasted on him. His imaginative pictures add a new and free dimension to the text and an original interpretation. 'I continue where the text ends', he has said in an interview.

Cneut made his debut in 1996 as the illustrator of *Varkentjes van marsepein (Piglets of Marzipan)*, a book of poetry by Geert de Kockere. He immediately demonstrated his surprising personal style. You didn't see the usual adorable piglets on the cover, but a joyful tangle of pink energy. In another book by Kockere, *Een straatje zonder eind (A street without an end)*, the illustrator lays the foundation for what will remain a stroke of genius: an original composition that takes the viewer far beyond the pages of the book. With *Willy*, Cneut makes a real breakthrough. A clumsy elephant that has become a target of abuse because of his plump legs, his big flapping ears and dangling trunk, discovers that his flaws are also his greatest strengths. In 2000 the book received the Flemish Peacock Award.

The first picture in *Roodgeelzwartwit (Redyellowblackwhite)* is intriguing to say the least. Four cube-shaped blocks seem to be floating against a yellow background. You only partly get to see the massive figures. The four colours subtly hint at the rest of the story.

For *The Amazing Love Story of Mr Morf*, Carll Cneut also provided the story. It's about a circus dog, on a hopeless quest to find his true life's partner. Cneut lets his sad, yearning hero almost literally step off the page, at the top of which only the legs of his paired-off colleagues are shown. A very inventive device that makes words unnecessary.



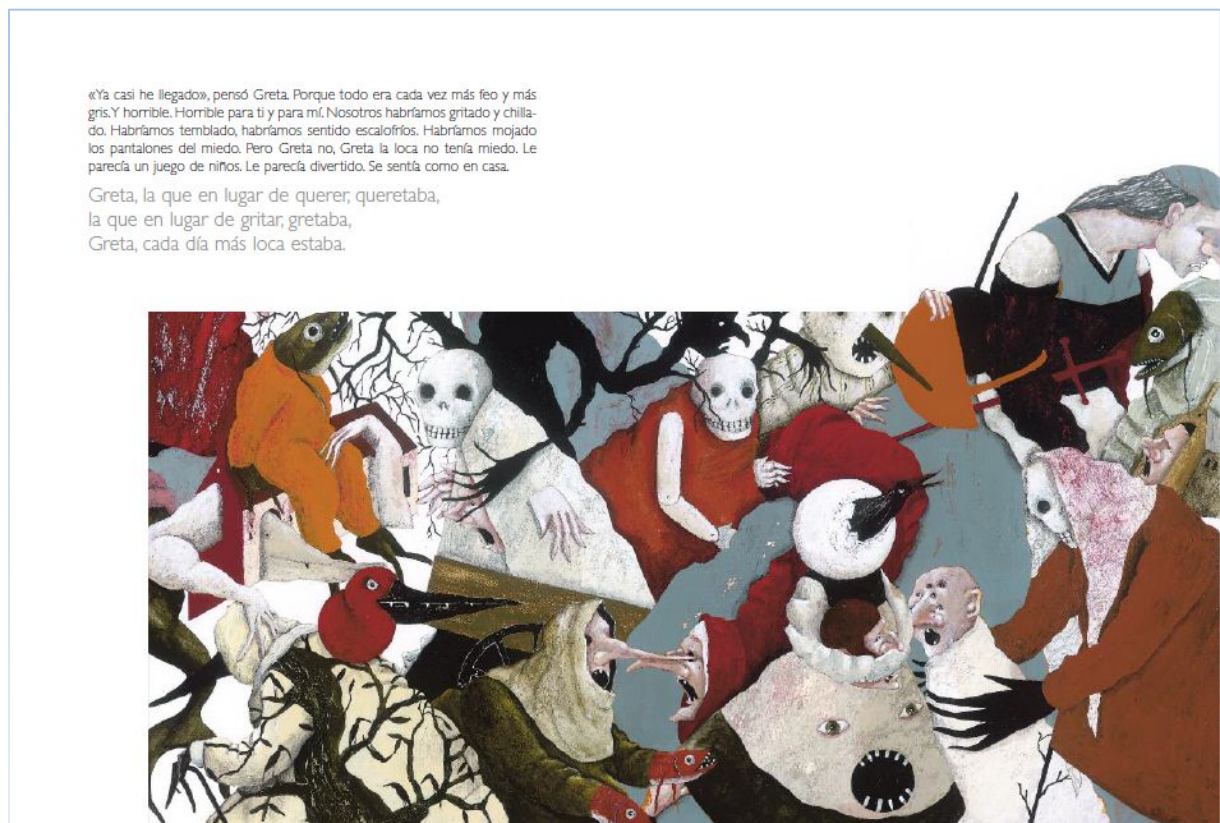
The Amazing Love Story of Mr Morf

Carl Cneut portrays emotions through the postures of his characters and a suggestive page layout, rather than by explicit facial expressions. “The postures tell you more about the characters in my work than their physiology or their expressions. (...) When you put all the expression into the face, the character becomes complete. He has become who he is and that creates a distance.” That is also the underlying strategy in *Zie ik je nog eens terug?* (*Will I See you again?*), in which a tense little girl slowly thaws out by relinquishing her secrets bit by bit. Slowly but surely the illustrator brings little Sara out of her isolation by making her more and more dominant on the page.

*Mijnbeer Ferdinand* (*Mr. Ferdinand*), a poetic story by Agnes Guldemont, is again an example of a successful symbiosis of colour, composition and form. The story is as follows: Mr. Ferdinand has lost something, but he doesn't know what it is. He is overcome by a kind of midlife crisis and he doesn't feel like doing anything anymore. In vain he starts looking for what he has lost. In one moving picture you see the poor fellow on a park bench, sliding into total apathy. His posture suggests more than words can ever convey. Gradually Mr. Ferdinand discovers that it is all a question of looking. A book to read slowly and to look at closely.

## Brueghel, Ensor, Bosch

With his striking illustrations for *Dulle Griet (Mad Meg)*, Cneut's drawing technique and use of form and colour reaches an impressive height. The book is inspired by the intriguing painting of the same name by Pieter Brueghel the Elder. The illustrator wanted to give this bizarre, apocalyptic scene his own interpretation. To this end he has lifted Mad Meg from the Brueghel painting and given her a new life and a different background. She is no longer the warrior woman in helmet and breastplate, but a vulnerable and at the same time recalcitrant female, who, because she has been cast out by her community, tempts fate and presents herself to the devil. Brueghel's full, turbulent background has been replaced by random snapshots of people and composite, hallucinatory monsters with fish heads and bird bodies. The book becomes grimmer with each new page, with hatred, envy, spite and despair on the large faces, reminiscent of those by Ensor.



Dulle Griet

*‘I’ve never made any secret of the fact that Ensor in particular is very important to me. As a boy, I saved up tokens from Soubry food packaging, which you exchanged for art reproductions that you could stick into albums. As a seven-year-old, I was completely bowled over by Ensor’s *Skeletons Warming Themselves*: a bunch of rather shabby-looking skeletons trying to warm up by a stove. That picture changed my life – wow, that sounds so dramatic! (laughs). But the grotesque in Ensor, the crowds of figures at times, and at other times the sense of calm*

*too: I think my work contains a kind of distillation of that. The Blue Bird features a very clear reference to him, as a tribute.”*

*Carll Cneut, In: De Standaard, 23 december 2011*

Good and evil, hypocrisy and ruthless cruelty are all given timeless expression in toothless skeletons and abhorrent monsters. The tone is black, both on the intriguing cover and in the images full of war, hell, rage and madness. In this book, Cneut ingeniously connects the Flemish present with its past, through images and themes, and boldly shatters the dividing line between minor and major literature. Like no other he is able to give expression to the deeper meaning of the story. His daring interpretation caused a lot of commotion, especially in Italy.

His masterful juggling with proportions and blown-up details turn *O monster, eet me niet op* (*Monster, Don't Eat Me*) into an ingenious picture book. It was published in 2006, in eleven languages and fifteen countries simultaneously. It's about eating and being eaten, with once again a greedy pig as its main character. Here Cneut uses, for the first time, busy, colourful backgrounds, with lots of attention to detail.

In *Een miljoen vlinders* (*One million butterflies*), a story by Edward van de Vendel, ethereal butterflies of every kind and size and colour can be seen flying around. The little elephant Stach is being harassed by whole swarms of them, which disappear when he gets company. He can't understand it. To his resigned parents, however, it is all too clear. “Oh, our very own big boy ... the time has come.” With a knapsack, tears and wishes for “the very best” he is sent on his way to figure things out. Cneut has drawn this colourful butterfly universe with a flourish; you can nearly hear the rustling of their wings. The different compositions into which he has placed his characters are again masterful: for example, a whole throng of animals, with Stach in the middle, is spread over four pages, as the illustrator typically goes beyond the boundaries of his page. Other pages project emptiness and loneliness. Again, with such an abundance of colourful, intriguing characters, you are reminded of paintings by Ensor, Brueghel and Bosch.

On the cover of the collection of animal poems, *Fluit zoals je bent* (*Whistle as you are*), compiled by Edward van de Vendel, there is also a colourful animal parade going by. The drawings inside are sometimes mere illustrations, but just as often add something to the poems they accompany. Cneut has dressed up the animals in bright clothes, in keeping with each character, and has given them human traits and postures. Immediately the dividing line between the species becomes blurred. Human or animal, what is the difference actually? It isn't really important in this wonderful ‘carnival of the animals’.



Fluit zoals je bent

### A book to feast on

For his many adaptations of world literature classics, Ed Franck found the perfect visual interpreter in Carll Cneut. In *Hou van mij: de mooiste verhalen over liefde* (*Love me: de most beautiful stories on love*) with six adapted stories by Franck about famous couples and their tragic loves, Carll Cneut succeeds in evoking the spirit of the time in which the story is set and palpably bringing the passion, tragedy, sorrow and desperation of those loves to life. Downright masterful are the drawings Cneut made for the book *Te veel verdriet voor één hart* (*Too Much Sorrow For One Heart*), published in 2008, a re-telling of four tragedies by Shakespeare. For each character the illustrator had an interpretation and a separate technique. Collages,

photographs and acrylic drawings alternate. Hamlet remains a shadowy face against a black background, while Ophelia's pale face nearly disappears into a black dress that becomes part of a dark background. King Lear is shown in profile in a black collage, while his beloved daughter Cordelia emanates tragedy and fragility in her white dress. Once again, Cneut leaves a lot to the imagination of the viewer. Black and blue are the dominating colours in the drawings for *Nachten vol angstaanjagende schoonheid* (*Nights of Terrifying Beauty*), an adaptation of stories by E.A. Poe. Here, too, Cneut is able to subtly capture the eerie atmosphere of the texts retold by Ed Franck, with spectres, shadows and skeletons looming out of the darkness.

More colourful shadowy images illustrate *Verboden liefdes* (*Forbidden Love*), Franck's adaptation of stories from *The Decameron*. Cneut shows himself a master in the art of suggestion in this book.

For his adaptation of the fairy tale *The Nightingale*, by H.C. Anderson, Peter Verhelst insisted on having Carl Cneut as his collaborator. The effect of this joint venture, *Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal* (*The secret of the nightingale's throat*), is overwhelming. In a perfect combination of text and images, author and illustrator put their own artistic signatures on the fairy tale. They wanted to make a book for people "to feast on" and they have certainly achieved their goal. It's hard to take your eyes off the more than forty small and lavish paintings. Cneut doesn't fall into the trap of using an obvious and affected oriental-looking style. Again he makes use of his strengths and turns the whole book into a masterful symbiosis of colour, form and composition and adds his original take on a different culture. Busy, dynamic images alternate with more intimate scenes that closely follow the rhythm of the story. He creates a beautiful play of light and dark and experiments with new techniques like Chinese shadows and with colours that are unusual for him. Blue, yellow and green dominate here. His typical red is hardly used. The brushwork of the backgrounds is rough. Carl Cneut clearly enjoyed himself painting the imperial Garden of Gardens, an abundance of wild flowers and plants, in lavish colours and a thoughtful layout.



Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal

The clothes and attributes of the imperial household also turned out to be right up his alley. Each costume and object has the proper cut and texture, with beautiful hues and patterns. This delightful book was given nearly every prestigious prize. And it seems to mark a new direction in Carll Cneut's work, as can also be seen in *De blauwe vogel* (*The blue bird*). In this fairy tale full of symbolism by Maurice Maeterlinck and adapted by Do Van Ranst, the use of dark colours, the fascination with textures, the silhouettes and the eerie magical atmosphere continue.



De blauwe vogel



Always pushing boundaries

*Ten Moonstruck Piglets*, a cheerful cardboard book for young children, seems to be a recapitulation and finalization of fifteen years of illustrating. The fat, sleepy-looking piglets, the enormous moon, the suits in all colours and sizes, the house with windows open to the whole world, they all make reference to earlier picture books. Is it time for something else, a new beginning, surprising perspectives? The upcoming projects leave no doubt about that. A second collaboration with Peter Verhelst, a book with the Italian author and illustrator Anna Castagnoli and with Saskia De Coster, plus illustrations for Ed Frank's adaptation of *The Canterbury Tales* are all in the offing.

With his unique style, Carll Cneut has definitely pushed the boundaries – in every sense – between literature for children and for adults, between local and distant cultures, between humour and emotion, between tradition and renewal. His work has given children's literature new colours, forms and structures in recent years, as well as breathing refreshing new life into it.



Heksenfee (remake)

Annemie Leysen

In: *The Low Countries* (2013) 21, p. 140-147

## The maker, Carll Cneut

**“I don’t need much to be happy ... having friends and family around and being able to do what I like is perfect.”**

It’s the second time I meet CARLL CNEUT, for LECHAPERON. The first time we met over a good glass of La Boutine in Apéro d’Oc, but today Carll invited me to Moor&Moor over a cup of coffee (or two), in Ghent. The city where Carll lives and works when he’s not traveling abroad for his work as an illustrator. A very honored and rewarded illustrator who is known for his nostalgic images, the tiny details and his unique time-consuming ‘layer’-painting technique. It is still early morning and a warm summer breeze is already present. It was going to be a good day.

### Knight Carll

No one knows, but years ago, there was a little knight, named Carll, who lived in Geluwe, an outlying village in West-Flanders, Belgium. He had two sisters who weren’t interested in the adventures of knight Carll that much, so he made up his own fantasy world. Growing up, knight Carll slowly disappeared, however the fantasy world he lived in is still subsisting nowadays in Carll Cneut’s head. Today Carll shares his imaginary world with us through his many beautiful book illustrations. Even though his work is generally defined as nostalgic & melancholic, Carll isn’t engrossed with the past in daily life. On the contrary, he is a happy person who embraces life at 200%.

### Willy the elephant

Throughout his childhood, it was clear that Carll wanted to use his creativity. He had decided to become a baker ‘to make the most beautiful pies ever’. I’m sure that his pies would have been the most beautiful ones in the world, but oh boy, are we glad it turned out differently! Cook, lawyer, architect, circus artist, ... were also on his list of potential jobs. Eventually he started his career as a graphic designer and enrolled into the job of an illustrator rather by accident. A colleague fell ill, and Carll was asked to take over the illustration tasks. Since then he combined graphic design with some illustration assignments. At first, illustrating was just a job to him. For years Carll has been struggling with how he wanted to fulfill the definition of the illustrator he wanted to be. At age of 30, ‘being an illustrator’ became real when ‘Willy’ was created. ‘Willy’ is a story about an elephant celebrating elements that make each person unique. This was Carll’s turning point. “My first three books were illustrations in poetry books. Willy was the first book with a storyflow. This was the first time I really understood the work. As from that moment I also understood the illustrator I wanted to be. It is hard to explain, but everything fell together. I liked what I was doing and I felt I could really mean something as an illustrator.” In 2000, the book Willy was awarded for ‘best illustration’ by Boekenpauw and many national and international awards followed over the next 15 years.

### Try. Do. Do again. And again. Keep doing. Success.

Not many illustrators paint their work, but Carll is one of them. His early admiration for the American artist / illustrator Brad Holland was his motive to use paint for his drawings. Yes, Carll was talented. No, he wasn't extremely good at painting nor did he have a lot of experience. But his ambitious nature and drive to succeed were determinative. It sounds very simple, but it wasn't. Carll taught himself, with success, how to paint and it took years to master certain techniques.

Even today he's still learning. With each new assignment Carll tries to improve his previous work. "That's who I am", he explains. "In everything I do, I try to improve and to challenge myself to do better. It overtakes me. And it never stops. I always want to achieve something, I set myself goals. Even when riding my bike in the city! (he laughs) I can't explain why I'm being silly in that way, but that's how it is. My biggest fear is the feeling of marking time. I think that deep inside, I am lazy. That's why I disciplined myself to get up every morning and work until evening. If I don't do it this way, I easily slip into doing nothing. And doing nothing feels uncomfortable to me."

### Perfectly imperfect.

Carll uses different layers when painting, most of the time with Acryl, to make his new high-textured world come alive. With every new assignment, Carll tries to capture the story in 15 or 16 essential images and defines an atmosphere. Then he begins to sketch, cut and paste the texts and pictures until the book is 'finished'. That's where the painting begins. At that moment he already exactly imagined how the picture will look like in the end. Every color, every detail, every space is pre-defined. The combination of subtle and saturated colors and his strong compositions make his drawings original and unique. He also literally invites and challenges the readers to create their own world by drawing incomplete pictures. This whole process is very time-consuming. One book image can sometimes easily take one week to more than a month! If he could, Carll would change his working method, but he simply can't. He tried it once, but he had to start all over again because he wasn't satisfied with the result.

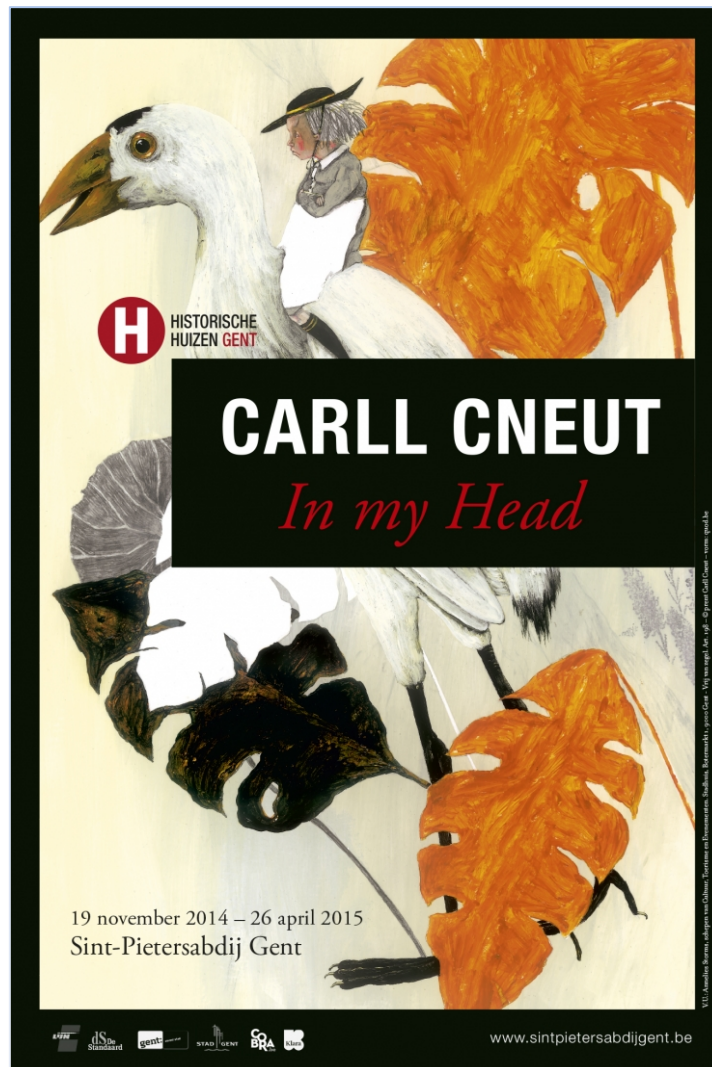
### Be happy with what you have while working for what you want

It suddenly strikes me that many things in Carll's life are the result of going along with his gut feeling: when starting a new collaboration for a book or a project, when selecting a story, when meeting people or discovering a new location. If it FEELS right, he's very loyal to people, things and places. "I don't need much to be happy. I don't need to travel far. I like being where I am. Having my friends and family around, and being able to do what I like is perfect".

*If something is good, why should I look any further?*

## In my head

From December 2014 till May 2015 an inspiring exhibition from Carll took place in Ghent. People could wander around in his head. Literally. The exhibition offered people an insight in his fantasy world, his rich oeuvre as an illustrator, but also his daily life from childhood up to today. He also insisted on moving his atelier for almost 6 months to the exhibition in the St. Peter's Abbey (it was a copy of his own atelier to give insight in how he works). It was overwhelming: 50.000 people visited the exposition and dropped by in his atelier to have a chat, to get their books signed or to see how Carll works. We (husband, son and I) were also there. I have never ever seen so many smiling faces together during an exposition. Not one single negative comment was given. Carll recognizes that the success of this event was only made possible with the help and the support of many other people. "I can only explain how it was, but I can't put into words how I experienced this. It was an intense period and I'm very glad that I had the opportunity to do this", he says.



Poster of the In my Head exhibition

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.

To Carll it was also striking to see how things grew organically. One day in his atelier a man took some paper, drew a bird and attached the drawing to the wall. Many others followed. His atelier became his own 'golden cage' surrounded by the many birds, drawn by people who admire his work.

### Regrets

There is one moment in his whole career where the younger Carll Cneut – flattered by the attention from outside – compromised on one of his works by giving in to other's instructions. He still regrets this. It became his biggest lesson in work life, but also in life in general. He knows that he performs best when he feels that people trust him 100% and when he is allowed to be whom he is. Since then he always strives to stay true to himself.

### Biggest achievement in life

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".

### Bye

Carll Cneut. There he goes. Always with a vivid pace. A great artist and a great person in one, who stands out because of his humility and humanity. "You sound very happy", the husband says after spending my day in the presence of Carll Cneut. I smile. Apparently, that's what Carll does to people...

Vicky Janssen

[https://www.lechaperonunlimited.com/author/carllcneut/?return\\_to=%2Fall-makers%2F](https://www.lechaperonunlimited.com/author/carllcneut/?return_to=%2Fall-makers%2F)

[Visit the url for more pictures and illustrations.]

## List of awards and other distinctions

- *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 Picture Book 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 Ilustrarte 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 Biënnale 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 Enfantaisie 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 of the books for children by the candidate, English translation of the titles, the year of publication and the place and name of publisher**

*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

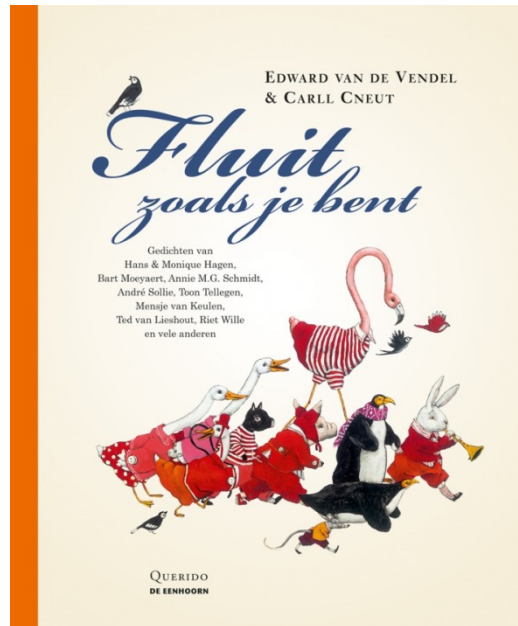


*Verboden liefdes: verhalen uit de Decamerone (Forbidden love: tales from the Decamerone)*/ Boccaccio, Ed Franck (ed.) and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Leuven (B): Davidsfonds, 2010

*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

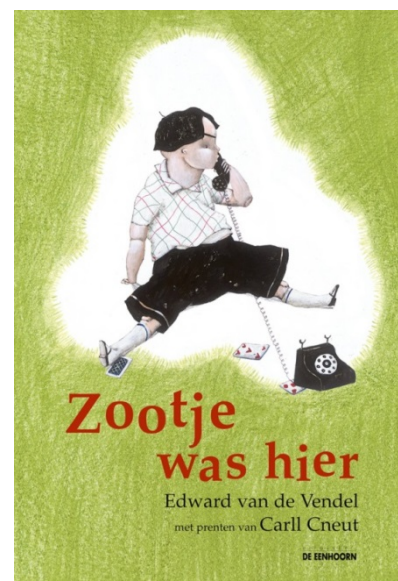
*Hou van mij: de mooiste verhalen over de liefde (Love me: de most beautiful stories on love)* / Ed Franck and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Leuven (B): Davidsfonds, 2005

*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

*Mijnbeer 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)

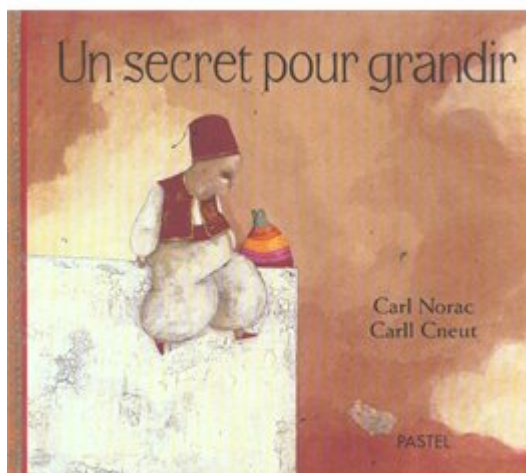
*Zie ik je nog eens terug? (Will I see you again?)*/ Ed Franck and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Amsterdam (NL): Querido, 2003

*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

*Wilby (Wilby)* / 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, and their languages

2016, *Heksenfee* (herwerkte uitgave), De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Brigitte Minne (Picture Book)

2017, *Pastel* – Ecole des loisirs, France

2017, Bohem Press, Germany

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

2015, Petrel Publishing House, China (Simplified Chinese)

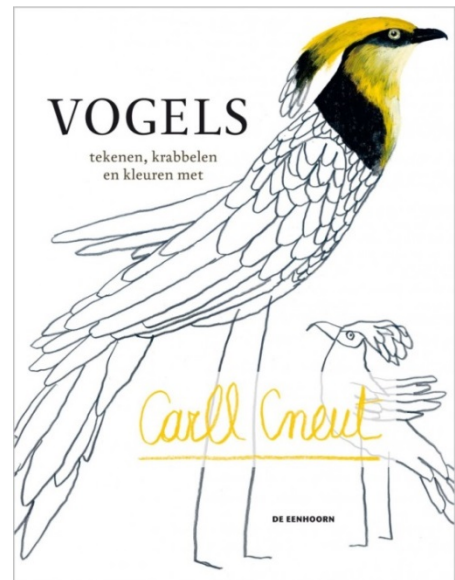
2015, *Komische Vögel, malen und zeichnen mit Carll Cneut*, Bohem Press, Germany

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

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

2016, Barbara Fiore, Spain

2016, Wydawnictwo Dwie Siostry, Poland



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

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, Barbara Fiore, Spain

2016, Wydawnictwo Dwie Siostry, Poland

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

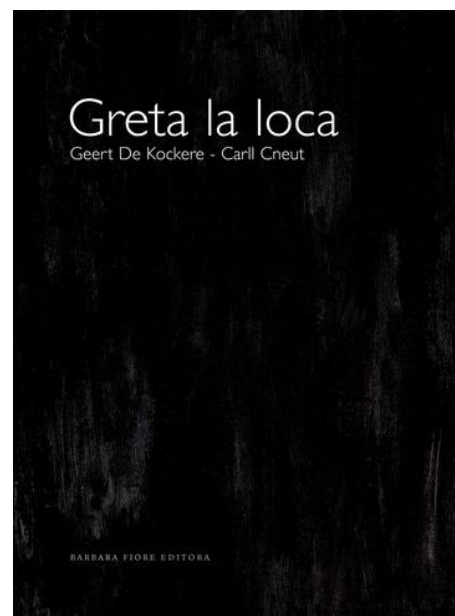
2011, Jakkajungsin Publishing Co., Korea

2013, Rights sold to Brazil



- 2011, *Ten moonstruck piglets*, Clarion Books, USA, Lindsay Lee Johnson (Picture Book)
- 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 (Picture Book)
- 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 slav□ evo*, Narava, Slovenia
- 2010, Korean translation, Sun & Tree Publishing, Korea
- 2011, Portugese/Brazilian translation, Cosac & Naify, Brazil
- 2011, *Hemmeligheden om nattergalens stemme*, Turbine Forlaget, Denmark
- 2011, Protea Boekhuis, South-Africa
- 2011, *Hemligheten med näktergalens sång*, Turbine Forlaget, Sweden
- 2011, Alfa Print Publishing, Armenia
- 2007, *Eén miljoen vlinders*, De Eenhoorn, Edward van de Vendel, (Picture Book)
- 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, 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 (Picture Book)  
 2008, *Brooklyn baby*, La joie de Lire, Switzerland
- 2006, *O Monster, eet me niet op!*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Carl Norac (Picture Book)  
 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 slugbalsen!*, Thorup, Denmark  
 2006, *Monstro, não me comas!*, Edições Kual, Portugal  
 2006, *Monster don't eat me!*, Groundwoodbooks, 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 & Naïfy, 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, *nei, ikke spis meg!*, Cappelen Damm, Norway  
 2013, Petrel Publishing House, China  
 2013, 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 (Picture Book)  
 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*, Groundwood 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, Strauss & 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 (Picture Book)

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

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

2003, *Mijnbeer Ferdinand*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Agnes Guldemont (Picture Book)

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)

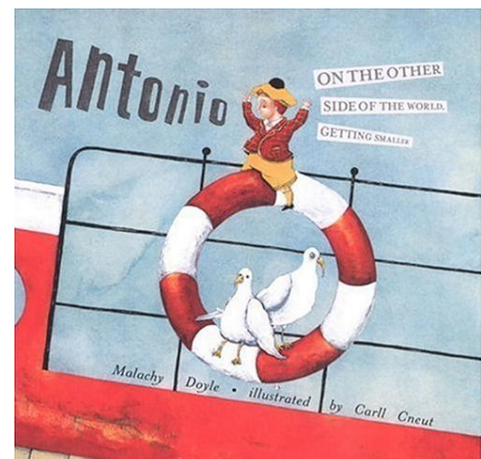
2005, *On se reverra?*, Editions du Rouergue, France

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

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



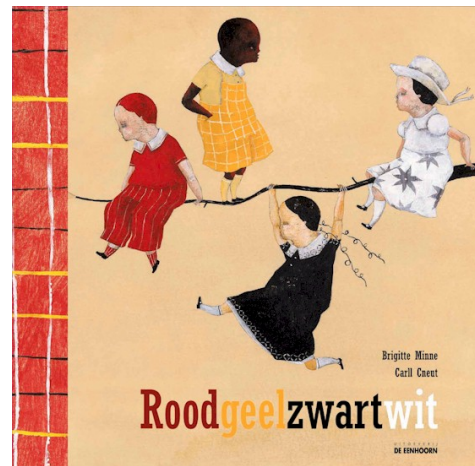
2003, *Antonio, on the other side of the world*, Candlewick Press, USA  
 2003, *Antonio, on the other side of the world*, Walker Australia, Australia  
 2004, *Antonio, on the other side of the world*, Walker soft., UK  
 2005, *Antonio, Auf der anderen Seite der Welt*, NP Buchverlag, Austria  
 2005, *Antonio, no outro lado do mundo*, Edições Kual, Portugal

2003, *Un secret pour grandir*, Pastel-l'Ecole des Loisirs, France, Carl Norac (Picture Book)  
 2003, *Drengen dergerne 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, Carl Cneut (Picture Book)  
 2002, *l'Etonnante histoire d'amour de Lucien le Chien*, Pastel, France  
 2002, *Het ongelooflijke liefdesverhaal van de beer Morf*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium  
 2002, *Het ongelooflijke liefdesverhaal van de beer 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 (Picture Book)

2002, *Rougejaunenoirblanc*, Pastel, France  
 2002, Newton, Korea  
 2003, *Rojoamarillonegrablanca*, Brosquil Ediciones, Spain  
 2003, *Vermellgownegrablanca*, Brosquil Ediciones, Catalonia  
 2003, *Rotgelbschwarzweiss*, Sauerlaender, Germany  
 2005, *Rougejaunenoirblanc*, Lutin Poche Ecole des Loisirs, France  
 2011, Chang-Tan Intl. publishing, Taiwan  
 2013, Sarigaga, Turkey



2000, *Woeste Mie*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Geert De Kockere (Picture Book)

2001, *Sacrée Zoë*, Editions Circonflexe, France

1999, *Heksenfee*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Brigitte Minne (Picture Book)

2002, *La fée sorcière*, Pastel,

France

2002, Newton publishing, Korea

2002, Bronze publishing, Japan

2004, *A fada feitcheira*, Cosac &

Naïfy, Brazil

2004, *La fée sorcière*, Lutin poche

Ecole des Loisirs, France

2005, *A fada bruxa*, Ediçoes

Kual, Portugal

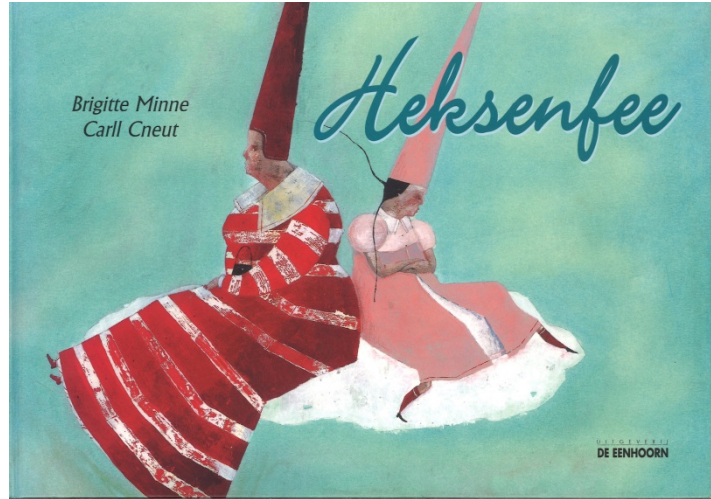
2006, *Hadabruja*, Editora Barbara

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 (Picture Book)

2001, *Willy*, Editions Circonflexe, France

2010, Hindi, Arvindkumar Publishing, India

2011, *Willy*, Eerdman books, USA

2011, *Babadir*, Sarigaga, Turkey

1998, *Niel*, De Eenhoorn, Belgium, Geert De Kockere (Picture Book)

Rights sold to Korea

**Five of the most important titles by the candidate (even if out of print)**

*Heksenfee (Witchfairy)* / Brigitte Minne and Carll Cneut (ill.) (De Eenhoorn, 2016) (remake)

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

*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

*O Monster, eet me niet op! (Monster, don't eat me)* / Carl Norac and Carll Cneut (ill.). - Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2006

*Dulle Griet (Mad Meg)* / Geert De Kockere and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2005  
Out of print

## List of books sent to the jurors

*Heksenfee (Witchfairy)* / Brigitte Minne and Carll Cneut (ill.) (De Eenhoorn, 2016) (remake)

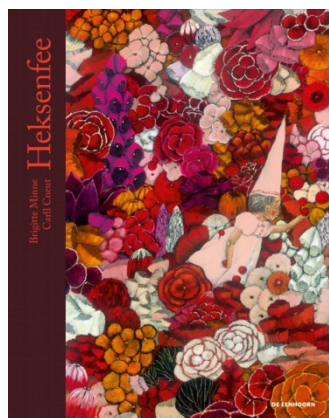
*De gouden kooi, of het waargebeurde verhaal van de bloedprinses (The golden cage, or the true story of the blood princesses)* / Anna Castagnoli and Carll Cneut (ill.) (De Eenhoorn, 2014)

*Het geheim van de keel van de nachtegaal (The secret of the throat of the nightingale)* / Peter Verhelst and Carll Cneut (ill.) (De Eenhoorn, 2008)

*Eén miljoen vlinders (One million butterflies)* / Edward van de Vendel and Carll Cneut (ill.) (De Eenhoorn, 2007)

*O Monster, eet me niet op! ([Monster, don't eat me)* / Carl Norac and Carll Cneut (ill.) (De Eenhoorn, 2006)

## Reviews of the books sent to the jurors



*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. Mam thinks that Rosemary will soon be a good fairy again, but she has to change her mind in the end.

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

### Reviews

#### **Fairies are actually dreadfully boring**

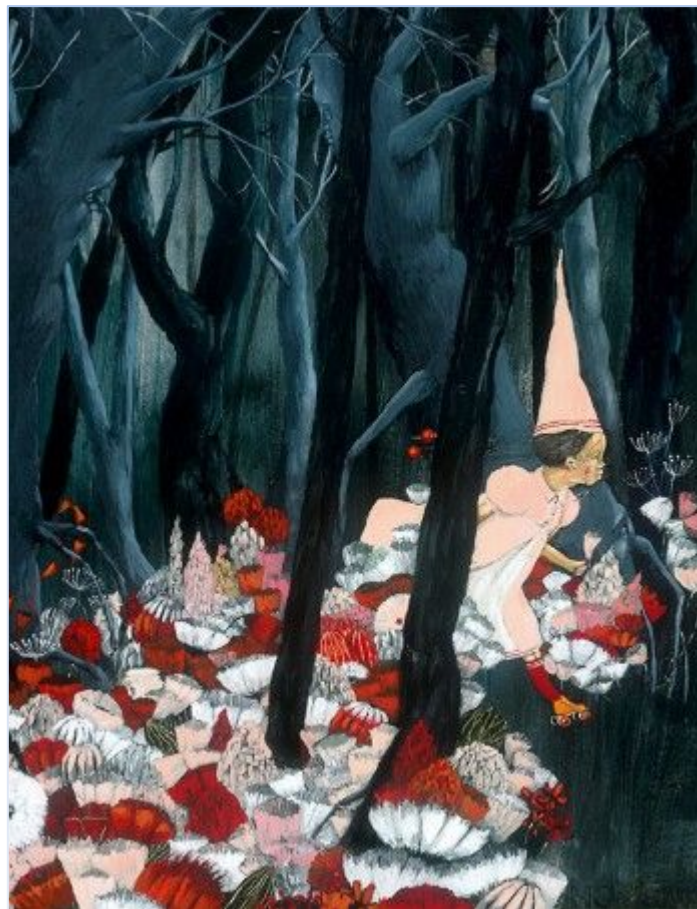
In honour of Carll Cneut's twentieth anniversary as an artist, De Eenhoorn published a remake of *Witch fairy* (1999) with completely new illustrations. This results in a stylish publication with linen cover; a fascinating gift for young children and those who read aloud to them.

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 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), 25 november 2016, <http://www.cuttingedge.be/boekenstrips/brigitte-minne-carll-cneut-heksenfee>

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The witch fairy

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

*Hexenfee (Witch fairy)*, published in January by Bohem Publishers, is one of those picture books 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 picture book 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 together 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 all 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.

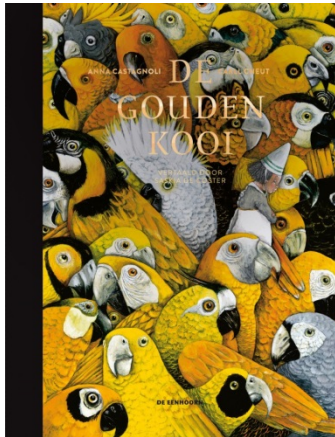
Regardless the educational theme, we shouldn't try to classify each picture book in a pedagogical category, but we should just enjoy it. A wonderful picture book in both illustrations and text: elaborate, enchanting and charming, taking the reader for a short period of time in this new magic world.

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

Valentina is the spoiled daughter of the emperor. She loved birds very much. In the garden there were hundreds of cages with beautiful species. Valentina wanted a special bird, one that she could talk with. Many servants died during their dangerous quest for this bird. And when they dared to come back empty-handedly, or with a wrong bird, the blood-princess let them be beheaded. One day a handsome servant stood at the palace-gate ...

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

### The 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 picture book 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 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 bloodthirsty 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 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.

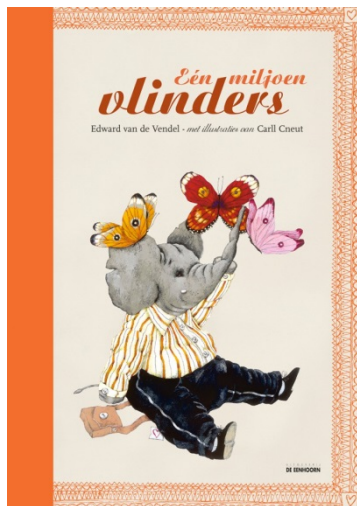
One way to express the imagination is by drawing, which the reader can do in the accompanying colouring book, *Vogels tekenen, krabbelen en kleuren met Carll Cneut/Drawing, Scribbling and Colouring Birds with Carll Cneut*, in which the illustrator takes a Keri Smith-like approach to stimulating the reader's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

Kyra Fastenau

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

Translated by Laura Watkinson

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*Eén miljoen vlinders [One million butterflies] / Edward van de Vendel and Carll Cneut (ill.). – Wielsbeke: De Eenhoorn (B), 2007*

### The story

Nelius first sees them in the middle of the night: the butterflies. They fly around his head, one million of them. His parents tell him that it is time to start on his journey. Nelius follows the butterflies and meets many animals. Some of them are too young, but others are old enough to know what the butterflies mean. The butterflies guide him to the love of his life.

A story about growing up and falling in love.

### The reviews

Nelius sueña un día con un millón de mariposas revoloteando sobre su cabeza, y cuando se lo cuenta a sus padres, éstos deciden, ante su sorpresa, que debe salir de viaje inmediatamente. No le explican adónde debe dirigirse ni por qué: «Ya lo entenderás», le repiten.

Nelius se embarca entonces en un viaje hacia un lugar desconocido, algo atemorizado pero siempre acompañado de su millón de mariposas revoloteando alrededor de su cabeza... Espera, ¿siempre? No, Nelius se da cuenta de que cuando se encuentra con alguien por el camino las mariposas desaparecen, aunque muchos le dicen que las conocen, que también las vieron hace tiempo, y le aconsejan que las disfrute todo lo que pueda, que las guarde en el recuerdo. Empieza a pensar que son muy tímidas y que por eso desaparecen, pero entonces... entonces se encuentra con una chica, y no sólo no desaparecen sino que se unen al millón que revolotea por encima de ella; ahora son dos millones de mariposas las que se arremolinan juguetonas alrededor de sus cabezas, hasta que de pronto Nelius se da cuenta de que no están, de que han ido a parar a su estómago: «¿Me las he comido?, ¿me las he tragado?», no Nelius, sólo te has enamorado.

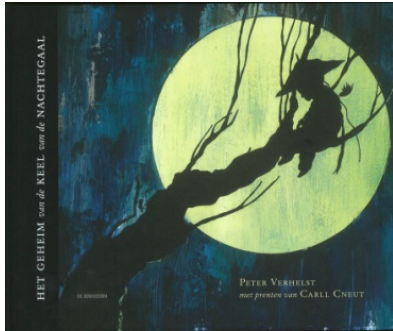
Contado así, Nelius podría ser un chico cualquiera, aunque en realidad se trata de un elefante encantador que tiene que atravesar montañas y cruzar ríos hasta llegar al puente donde encontrará su respuesta, su chica; un animal «irracional» buscando una respuesta que no pocos seres «racionales» saben que buscan. Es una fábula maravillosa y fantásticamente bien construida en la que existe una compenetración perfecta entre imagen y palabra para hablarnos sobre el amor, sobre el miedo a lo desconocido y sobre ese momento, que tarde o temprano siempre llega, en el que tenemos que ir a buscar nuestro propio camino. Un relato universal que expone aquello que nos hace humanos, lo que sentimos hacia la gente que nos rodea.

Debo reconocer que en este caso fue la historia lo que supuso el complemento perfecto (normalmente son las imágenes las que acompañan y completan el texto y no al revés); lo que realmente hace que sea un libro especial, lo que hace que uno se quede absolutamente prendado de este cuento son sus impresionantes ilustraciones: nunca una mariposa había tenido tanto relieve, tanto colorido, tanta vida. Cuando uno abre el libro por las páginas centrales parece que se van a escapar en busca de otro chico o chica para concederle su «hora de las mariposas». Son de tal belleza que sobrepasan la impresión en el papel y parecen revolotear alrededor del lector como lo hacen alrededor de Nelius...



Y es que, ¿quién no ha sentido mariposas en el estómago alguna vez?

Beatriz Bejarano del Palacio



*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

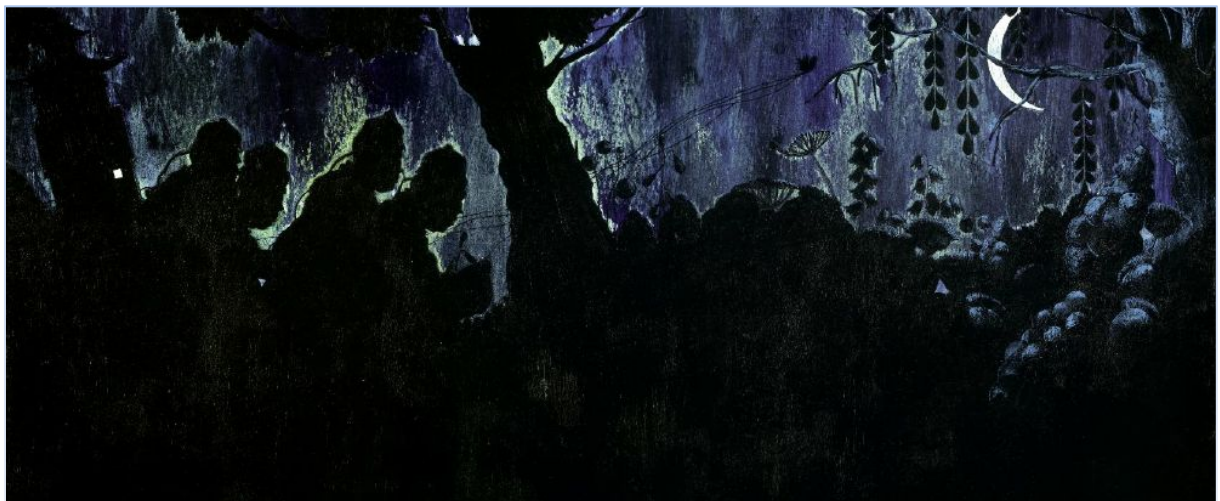
#### The story

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.

#### The reviews

This beautiful picture book 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)

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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

In: *De Groene Amsterdammer*, March 13<sup>th</sup> 2009 (NL)

Translated by Laura Watkinson





*O monster, eet me niet op (Monster, don't eat me!)* / Carl Norac and Carll Cneut (ill.). - Wielsbeke (B): De Eenhoorn, 2006

#### The story

Alex is a greedy little pig. 'Don't eat between meals!' his mother always says, but Alex finds it hard to obey. When he walks to the river to take a bath, he finds many snacks: apples, raspberries,... Suddenly, a hungry monster grabs Alex and wants to devour him. 'Monster, don't eat me!' Alex screams and he fantasizes about bigger meals: an elephant in the forest, a rabbit village under the earth,... When he runs out of ideas the monster prepares to eat him after all. Then the monster's mother appears and shouts: 'I've told you before: don't eat between meals!'

Children will alternately laugh and shiver at Alex' plight in this playful picture book about pigs and monsters.

#### The reviews

Originally published in Belgium, this adventurous tale chronicles the travails suffered by a greedy piglet with a penchant to snack. Alex's mother catches her hungry son munching on new potatoes in the garden one morning and admonishes, "Look at you. Always eating between meals! And you are so dirty. Go wash up...!" On his way to the river, Alex encounters a monster that has an equally insatiable appetite. The dinosaurlike creature, dressed in a yellow jacket and short blue pants, grabs Alex and threatens to swallow him.



The frightened piglet does his best to distract him by suggesting other more delectable meals, including an imaginary elephant and an underground city of rabbits. He is saved when the beast's mother arrives at the critical moment. Just as the monster is about to pop the poor pig into his gaping mouth, she scolds him, echoing the words of Alex's mom. The stylized paintings are filled with cartoon animals primly dressed in old-fashioned clothing. The rich, jewel tones set against an ecru background give the pictures an oddly appealing sophistication.

Linda L. Walkins

In: *The School Library Journal*, August 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 (USA)

\*

Alex is a greedy little pig, and he loves to eat. He snacks on potatoes. He snacks on apples. He snacks on raspberries. "Look at you. Always eating between meals!" his mother scolds.

Unfortunately for Alex, he is not alone in having an insatiable appetite. One day, an enormous monster decides that Alex, himself, would make a perfect snack.

In order to dissuade the monster, Alex tries several diversionary tactics, including one that is reminiscent of *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. "Monster, don't eat me!" Alex cries out. "Because right near here I saw a baby elephant. He looked really delicious. He's lots fatter than me."

The monster soon tires of the stalling tactics. "I want a snack now!" he grumbles. Alex's plump bottom is about to disappear down the monster's throat when a saviour appears in an unexpected form.

In *Monster, Don't Eat Me!*, the illustrations prove an ideal companion to the text. Carl Norac and Carll Cneut have collaborated on several picture books. Their joint efforts here will amuse young readers while, at the same time, subtly sending just the right amount of shivers down young spines.

*Monster, Don't Eat Me!* is an English translation of a book presumably originally penned in French. Norac's work has previously been translated into 18 languages. If *Monster, Don't Eat Me!* is an example to go by, Norac's utility and the wide appeal of his work has its origins in the fact that he writes of experiences children can relate to—things such as hunger cravings, fear, parental disapproval, kinship, and creativity. For children, such things transcend language barriers.

Carll Cneut's creative use of colour is a strength of the paintings, contrasting bright and dim, dark and light, in a manner that is appealing to the eye and stimulating to the mind. On the one hand, his mixture contributes a sombre, frightening mood to many of the pieces, yet also contributes to the fanciful, playful sense of the whole.

*Monster, Don't Eat Me!* is a book that young children will enjoy over and over again, each time finding new details in the bold illustrations.

Recommended.

Gregory Bryan

In: *CM: Canadian Review of Materials*, XIII-20, May 25, 2007 (CAN)

## Unfinished business

In the 2014 Hans Christian Andersen Award dossier, we concluded with Carll Cneuts quote : “*I want to create books that are never finished.*”

That same year, he created *Vogels tekenen, krabbelen en kleuren* (*Drawing, doodling and coloring birds*), a drawing and coloring book that inspires his readers (children and adults alike) to finish the drawings he started. By now, it has already been published in 6 language areas.

We would like to leave you with some of his unfinished business.



Transform the blob in a crazy bird







