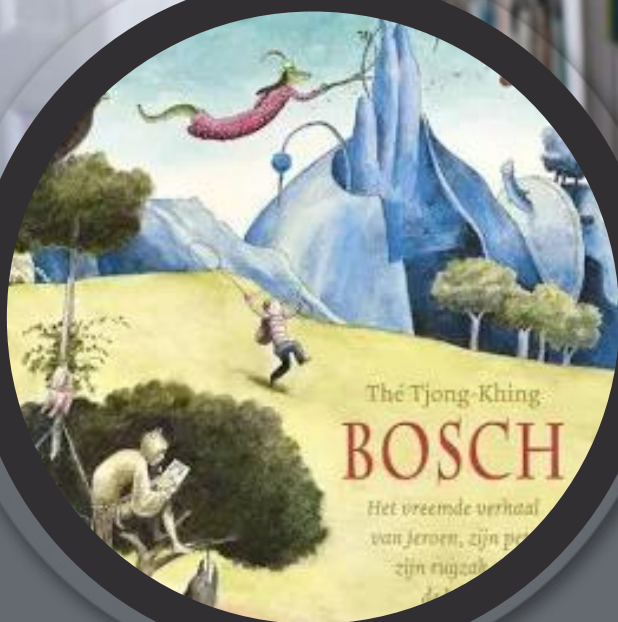


HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN AWARD

candidate for the 2026 Illustrator's Award

RENOMINATION BY

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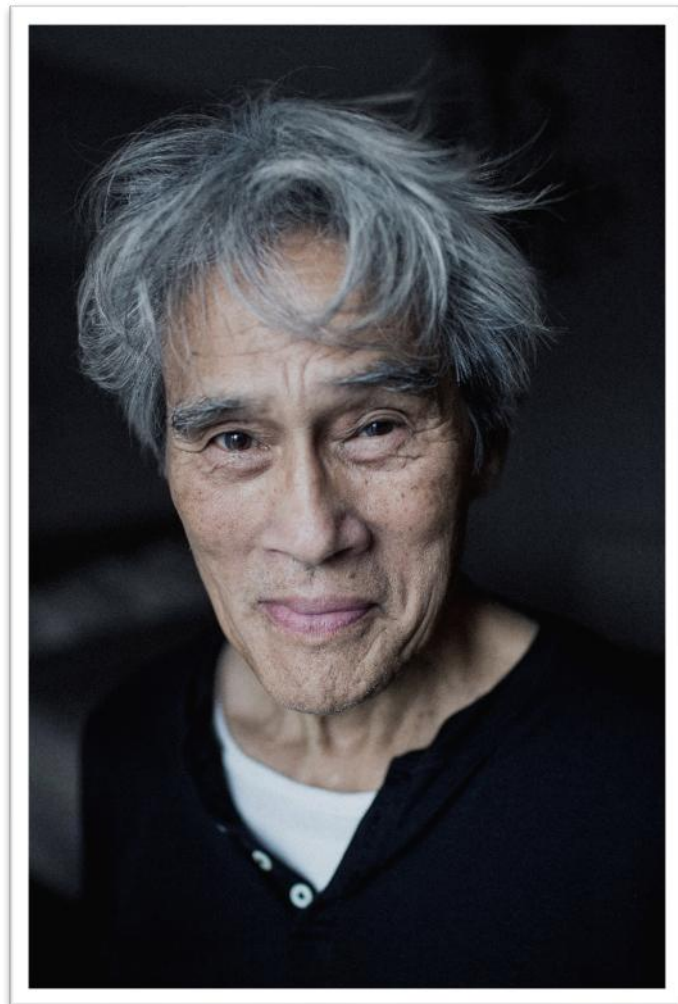
THÉ TJONG-KHING

THE HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN AWARDS 2026

Dossier on illustrator

Thé Tjong-Khing

Candidate for the 2026 illustrator's Award



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Renominated by The National IBBY Section of The Netherlands



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NOTES:

This dossier has been compiled for the jury of the Hans Christian Andersen Awards 2026.

The illustrator was nominated earlier, in 2024. This file has been updated for the 2026 nomination. All new and other notable sections are therefore underlined.

In case of public accessibility of this dossier, please note that all images (except for book covers) and primary texts are subjected to **copyrights**, as indicated. These materials may not be copied, printed or transmitted without permission of the publisher, author, illustrator or photographer. Most of the pictures in this dossier are retrieved from the online exhibition about Thé Tjong-Khing at the Museum of Literature at <https://literatuurmuseum.nl/nl/ontdek-en-beleef/literatuurlab/online-exposities/the-tjong-khing/the-tjong-khing>.

In compiling this dossier, **references to sources** of descriptions, reviews or other secondary texts about the author and/or his books have been made for as far as it was possible to trace those sources. Please mention those sources when re-using, quoting or referring to these secondary texts.

Life and Work of Thé Tjong-Khing: A Short Biography

From Indonesia to the Netherlands

Thé Tjong-Khing was born on August 4, 1933 in Purworedjo in Indonesia in a Chinese



Indonesian family. As a child, he was a fan of the Tarzan comic strips of Edgar Rice Burroughs and he used to make drawings inspired by Indonesian fairy tales. In high school, he drew portraits of movie stars with a photographic precision. Thé (his surname) went to the *Seni Rupa* (arts) institute in Bandung. He left Indonesia at the age

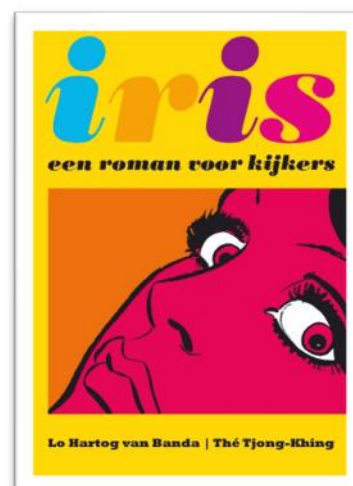
of 23 to continue his studies at the Gerrit Rietveld Art Academy in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. However, the art academy wasn't much to his liking and instead of this, Thé managed to get an internship at the drawing studios of Marten Toonder, where the most famous Dutch comics were produced back then.



From cartoons to children's books

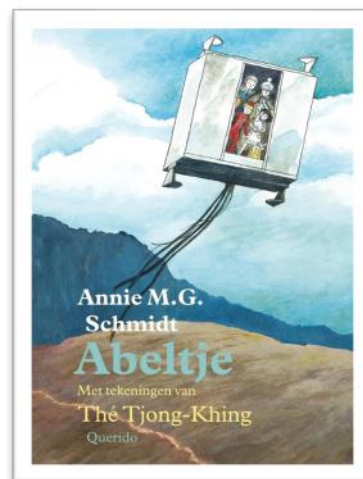
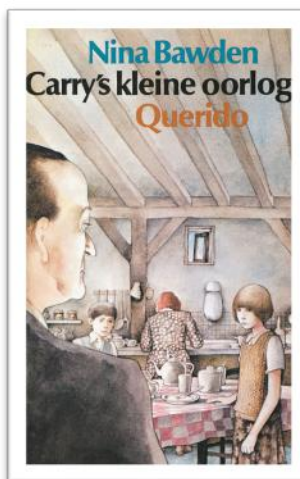
At the Toonder studios, his talent quickly became apparent and from the late 1960s, Thé worked as a cartoonist for many years. Between 1967 and 1968 he made the science-fiction strip *Iris*, with Lo Hartog van Banda writing the texts. They also created the cartoon strip *Arman & Ilva* for various newspapers. At the end of the 1970s, Thé taught illustrative design at the Rietveld Art Academy for a couple of years.





Besides this, Thé started making illustrations for (children's) magazines. In 1966, he made his first book cover, for the children's book *Micky en de vreemde rovers* [Micky and the strange robbers] by Thea Beckman. After that, many book covers followed.

In 1970, Thé illustrated his first children's book, written by Miep Diekmann. Ever since, he has been a well-known and much sought after illustrator of children's books. He worked with famous Dutch children's book authors such as Guus Kuijer, Annie M.G. Schmidt, Paul Biegel, Els Pelgrom and Dolf Verroen and has a longstanding collaboration with Belgian author Sylvia Vanden Heede. In total, Thé has illustrated over 500 books next to a smaller but significant oeuvre of his own.

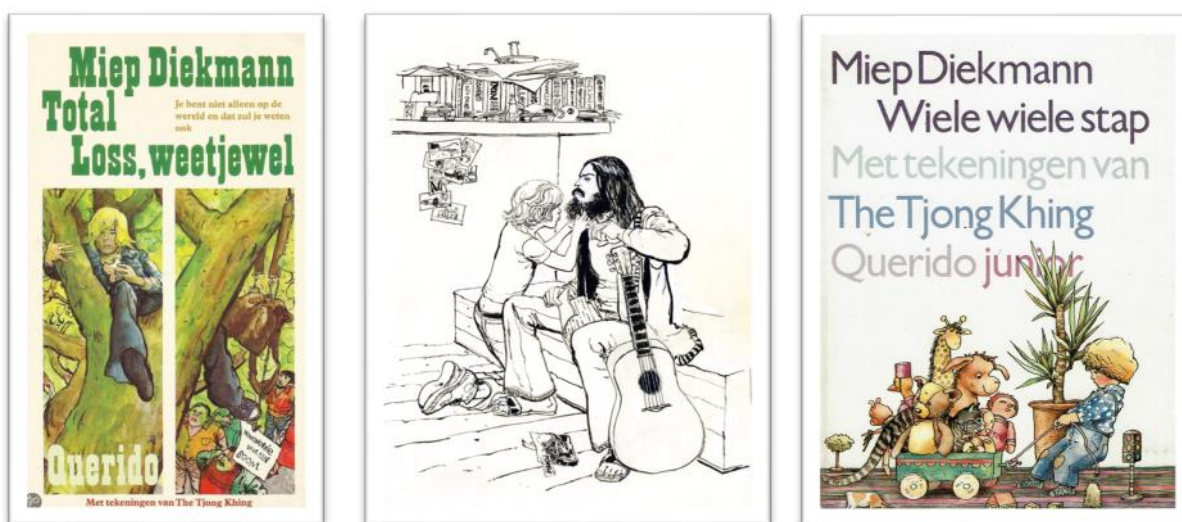


The text below consists of quotes from a portrait on Thé's work and life in the book *Tekenaars. Kinderboekenillustratoren geportretteerd* by Joukje Akveld¹:

¹ Akveld, Joukje. (2010). *Tekenaars. Kinderboekenillustratoren geportretteerd* [[Illustrators. Children's book illustrators portrayed]. Hoorn: Uitgeverij Hoogland & Van Klaveren. Quotes in this chapter are from pp. 39-43.

The first years as a children's book illustrator

In his comics, Thé drew the pictures like a film, with a lot of space for close-ups. His zoomed-in, realistic facial expressions made a big impression in the comic world, but he himself got tired of this way of drawing after a while. His head worked faster than his hand – in comics one needs to draw the same figures over and over again. In addition, the genre offered him little room for experimenting, so he switched to illustration. Now he could capture in one drawing what he would otherwise need a whole series of pictures for. Children's book writer Miep Diekmann played an important role in that career switch. She wanted a cartoonist to illustrate her books and got in touch with Thé. His pen drawings of long-legged pin-ups for *Total Loss, weetjewel* [Total loss, you know] (1973) still leaned heavily on the comic strip tradition, but his style gradually became more free. This first collaboration was followed by more joint books, including *Wiele wiele stap* [Wheel, Wheel, Step] (1977), a collection of rhythmic nursery rhymes with friendly pen drawings scattered across the pages, that was awarded both the Golden Slate Pencil and the Golden Paintbrush.²



An acclaimed illustrator

Thé mainly illustrated realistically until the idea arose to make a book together with Els Pelgrom, which became *Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper* [Little Sophie and Lanky Flop, 1984, republished in 2023]. At first he drew a rather naturalistic Sofie, but as the story progressed, she grew into the girl as the reader knows her: a captivating, bouncy little figure on thin legs in a baggy nightgown, who moves through a fairy tale landscape that recalls the meticulous pen drawings by Ernest Shepard. The fun of drawing is crystal clear: here is an illustrator at work who elatedly wrests himself away from the realistic drawing tradition and jubilantly throws himself into the adventurous fantasy story. The book was awarded both a Golden Slate Pencil, a Golden Paintbrush and the Deutsche

² The two highest annual awards for children's books in the Netherlands, see p. 27 for an explanation of these and other major awards.

Jugendliteraturpreis. Even so, after *Little Sophie*, most publishers continued to ask him for realistic stories. But when Lannoo publishers (Belgium) approached him in the late 1990s for Sylvia Vanden Heedes books about Vos and Haas (Fox and Hare), Thé returned to the fantasy story – this time for good. It led to a third Golden Paintbrush for *Het woordenboek van Vos en Haas* [The dictionary of Fox and Hare, 2002] and to a new step in his career: making his own picture book. *Waar is de taart* (Where is the Cake?, 2004) was jubilantly received and was the first book without text to be awarded the literary Woutertje Pieterse Prize.

With those three Golden Paintbrushes, the Woutertje Pieterse Prize and the Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis, Thé Tjong-Khing is the most acclaimed illustrator in the Netherlands. In 2010, he was given the prestigious Max Velthuijs Award, awarded once every three years, honouring an illustrator's complete oeuvre.

Inspiration

“I like to incorporate real paintings into my drawings,” says Thé Tjong-Khing. “In one of the Fox and Hare books, a Warhol and a Gauguin are behind the refrigerator. Some of my cornfields are by Brueghel and the table scene with Achilles in *Helden* [Heroes, 2006] is a copy of Leonardo de Vinci's “The Last Supper”. Those references are jokes for myself, I don't mean anything with it, no one needs to see them, I just hope kids like my drawings. Many illustrators say they only work for themselves, but I don't believe that. You always have that target group in your head, don't you, when you're working. Although I don't go so far as to make something against my will. I want to illustrate a story as beautifully as possible.”





Thé says that he likes to make scary things. Drawings that you look at like this – he holds his arm straight, peers through his eyelashes – from a distance. “As a child I already had a preference for the scary, the dark. That's why fairy tales are so nice to do: danger is always lurking. (...) Usually I take refuge in the ominous, then I feel on safe ground. Just look at the opening spreads of *Meer verhalen van de sprookjesverteller* [More stories from the fairy tale teller] (2009), almost all of them have that: a dark sky in “The fisherman and his wife”, a menacing castle in “Bluebeard”, a violent storm in “The princess on the pea”.”



He is completely interwoven with his drawing, says Thé, he can't imagine that there will ever come a time when he doesn't draw anymore. “I draw all day, I'd be bored to death if I didn't. It is an exciting activity, you never know in advance how a drawing will turn out. The reason I've been able to keep it up for such a long time is that I don't always do the same thing. (...) When I got tired of comics, I started illustrating children's books and when I got bored of the naturalistic drawings, I started doing fantasy stories. That's how I keep myself awake.”

“I used to be an extremely shy child, which was not quite normal, I believe. (...) If you are shy, you are constantly watching yourself, it is a kind of over-consciousness. As a result, I can now draw for children; because of that strong awareness, I remember what it was like to be a child.”

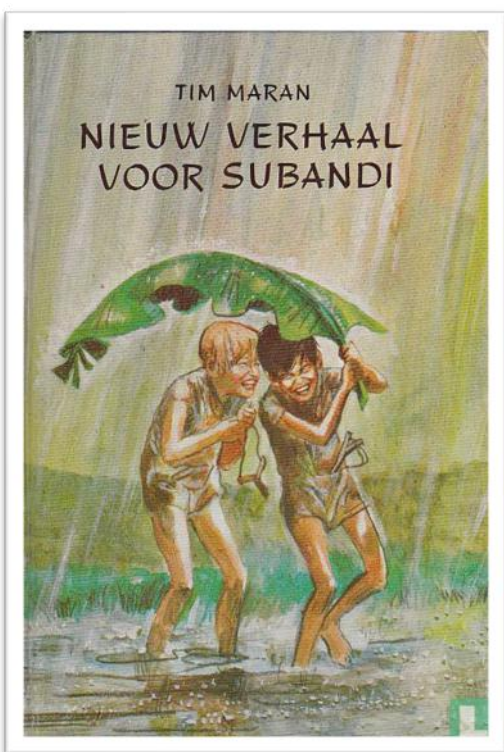


Thé Tjong-Khing's Contribution to Literature for Young People³

Thé Tjong-Khing (1933) is an acclaimed illustrator of children's books. From comic drawings with a cinematic dynamic, his work evolved to fantastic illustrations in which he repels movement and depicts emotions in a stylised way. Thé's work has been described as mysterious and surrealistic. His ideal is to make illustrations with the open-mindedness and innocence of a children's drawing, but at the same time, his work shows depth and humour and the skills of an experienced artist.

The work of Thé Tjong-Khing, who sees himself as a craftsman rather than an artist, occupies a special place in the Dutch art of illustration. His illustrations are found in many books for different ages and of different genres, both in black and white and in colour. Thé's body of work can be seen both as comprehensive – spanning a career of more than 60 years – and varied, showing drastic developments of his drawing style over the years. In more than sixty years of illustrating, he has woven his Western gaze, Eastern precision and penchant for a menacing, ominous edge into a unique handwriting.

Early years



His illustrations from the early years, such as in the book *Wie had gelijk, Mary Rose?* [Who was right, Mary Rose?] by Marilyn Sachs (1973), clearly demonstrate his admiration for work by artists like Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1898), Arthur Rackham (1867-1939) and Rie Cramer (1887-1977), the latter of whom was a Dutch illustrator who grew up in Indonesia. In his early work Thé used a special Chinese brush and East Indian ink, with which he drew both the finest lines and the big plains. Later, this brush was replaced by the pen, with which he with care and virtuosity managed to record the world of teenagers in several books for this age group. Because of this extremely precise and often clever rendition of their own world, teenagers felt attracted to his work.

³ This text draws heavily on the information from the online exhibition on Thé Tjong-Khing "From cartoonist to fairy tale teller" at the Literature Museum: <https://literatuurmuseum.nl/nl/ontdek-en-beleef/literatuurlab/online-exposities/the-tjong-khing/the-tjong-khing>. Another important source is Vrooland-Löb, Truusje (2011). 'Thé Tjong-Khing' in: Jan van Coillie, Wilma van der Pennen, Jos Staal, & Herman Tromp (1982-2014), *Lexicon van de jeugdliteratuur*. Retrieved from DBNL (KB Royal Library): https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/coil001lexi01_01/lvdj00961.php.

A change of styles

Thé's style has developed quite drastically over time. At first, before 1975, his drawings are cinematic and comic-like. His style becomes more realistic and naturalistic, clearly influenced by comic books. From around 1975, Thé Tjong-Khing visibly searched for a new manner of composition. He stopped striving for even greater naturalistic perfection – where technical skills dominate – but made an attempt to draw with a subtle 'anti-cleverness', to bring his work closer to the way a child draws. He starts to draw in a more imaginative, naive style with less details, that fits children's perceptions of the world. Next to drawing a lot with pen and ink, he also started to work more and more with pencils.

A toddler's perspective

The simplification of Thé's style was especially visible when he turned to the young child in the books by Dolf Verroen and the toddler picture books that he made together with Miep Diekmann. In *Wiele wiele stap* [Wheel, wheel, step] (1977), a collection of poetry for which both Diekmann and Thé were awarded Gold, text and illustrations form a unity. The black and white drawings depict the world from a toddler's perspective; steps are enormous and can only be climbed with the leg stretched out.



Just as in his illustrations in books for teenagers, here it's the details from the toddler world which has been so cleverly interwoven in the drawings. The poems deal with the life of small children. All those common, daily recurring things like eating, looking out of the apartment window, taking a bath, feeding ducks, going up in the escalator and many other things, she's caught in simply worded verses, following the child's train of thought. Thé Tjong-Khing has illustrated them in complete harmony with this process. It is clear that Diekmann and Thé worked together on this with a great amount of pleasure and from a conscious formula. Thé pictures a toddler's life in a witty and accurate way. "I never thought I could, but when Miep Diekmann finally persuaded me to illustrate this text I noticed that I like drawing for young children best of all up till now", says Thé.

From the jury report of the Golden Paintbrush Award: “Thé Tjong-Khing has once more shown he is a virtuoso in drawing the most simple and everyday situations. He needs only a few lines and little space to record the life of a small child in a recognizable and humorous fashion. In *Wiele wiele stap*, text and drawing are equal, constantly complete each other in humour and ingenuity. And none of this in a complicated or labored manner, but from a continuous clarity and simplicity.”

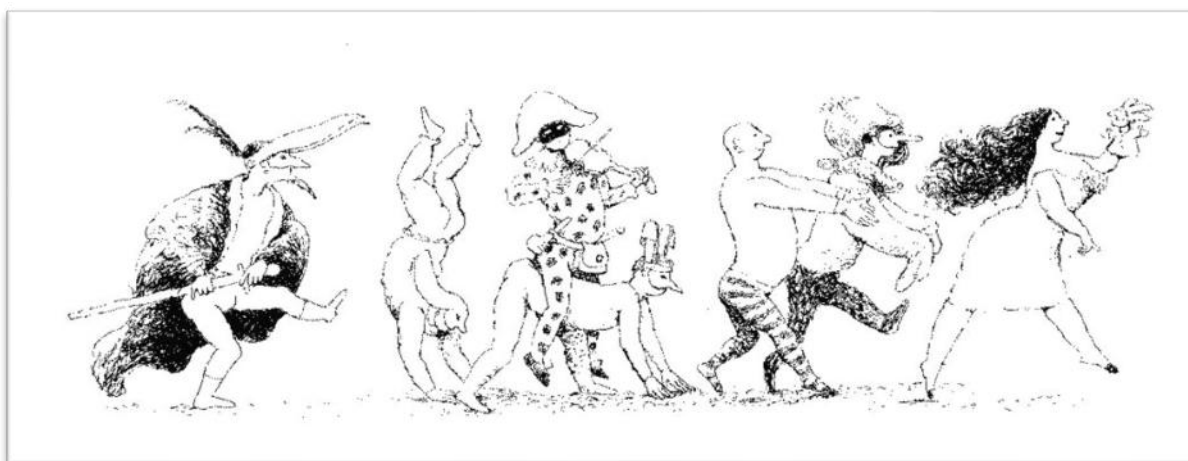
The world of little Sophie

The phenomenon of power – and the abuse that so often accompanies it – fascinated Thé. He asked Els Pelgrom to write a story about it, so that he could illustrate it, and that is how *Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper* [Little Sophie and Lanky Flop] was born (1984, the book is republished in 2023). His illustrations in this book have been called revolutionary. Here he lets go of the smooth ink line of his comics and creates a fairy tale world in finely shaded pen drawings. The cover in colour also shows the cheerful but menacing atmosphere that will become so characteristic of his work. Also striking is the way in which the depicted event seems caught in the middle of a movement. His fascination for films from his early childhood is clearly reflected in this.



In 1985, *Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper* was awarded the Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis and both the Golden Slate Pencil for text and the Golden Paintbrush for illustrations. According to the jury a “particularly beautifully constructed and moving story that because of its theme and narration technique contains all the elements to make it a classic”. Sophie, a terminally ill girl, wants to know what life is all about and what comes after life. The story is a quest for the meaning of life, a philosophical notion that author and illustrator managed to make accessible for children through their fluent collaboration.

In the book, drawings and text form a visual unity, due to careful typography and a balanced mise-en-page. The pen drawings with gossamer-thin hatchings were widely praised for their mysterious light-dark effect. They are dreamy and magical and for a large extent, they determine the accessibility of the story by inviting the reader to keep looking and discovering. *Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper* has been called a pivotal point in Dutch children's literature because of the equivalence of text and drawings.



Fox and Hare

From the end of the 1990s, Thé started to work less and less realistic. “Something had to be done with reality,” he says. The figures become more imaginative and stylized. The sets become emptier, with large surfaces and repetitive elements. The illustrations in the series of books about Fox and Hare (1998-present), written by Sylvia Vanden Heede for early readers put him on that track for the first time. The first book about Fox and Hare was a “grow book”, based on an idea that had arisen when Vanden Heede saw her daughters toil on unimaginative books for early readers. Vanden Heede thought that an attractive and fun book in which the level of the text becomes increasingly difficult in pace with the progress of its readers would help them to enjoy learning to read. The drawings were crucial in that concept. She was delighted that Thé Tjong-Khing accepted the job. On the first pages of the first book, *Vos en Haas* [Fox and Hare] (1998) he drew Fox and Hare feasting on cheese, porridge, cream, fish and pear. The text left plenty of room for images, but as the difficulty of the words and sentences increased, the amount of illustrations decreased. For the second book, *Tot Kijk, Vos en Haas* [See you later, Fox and Hare] (1999), Thé also drew a lot of small illustrations, but he had an urgent desire to make larger images. In *Vos en Haas op het Eiland* [Fox and Hare on the island] (2002) and the follow-up books, he was given more space for this: each book contained a number of full-page color illustrations. In the large cardboard picture books *Een buur voor Vos en Haas* [A neighbor for Fox and Hare] (2006) and *Wat een kou, Vos en Haas* [Isn't it chilly, Fox and Hare] (2009), Thé was able to indulge in large-format drawings. He furnished Fox and Hare's den with all kinds of objects and he also incorporated works of art in it.



The illustrations add a lot to the stories. First of all humour, but also an essential deepening of the characters. Because the texts are rather simple, the characters are not as elaborated. They get their depth in the illustrations, through the way the characters look and dress themselves, how they behave and show their emotions and through their belongings. The illustrations make the Fox and Hare series stand out among all the books for beginning readers and one of the reasons that the books have been a success for more than 25 years. For *Het woordenboek van Vos en Haas* [The dictionary of Fox and Hare] (2002), Thé got his third Golden Paintbrush, which hasn't happened often in the history of the award. The dictionary contains more than a thousand words with their meanings supported by small illustrations.





Drawing characters

Thé prefers drawing people and animals and their characters; things that are not alive, such as buildings, are not really his favorite. Dolf Verroen, one of the many authors Thé has worked with, once said that Thé not only depicts the appearance of the characters, but he also expresses what they feel with their body language and their looks. About the cover of *Maak dat je wegkomt* [Get out of here] (1978), on which an angry man with a pointing arm is pictured, Verroen says: “That arm lives, it shakes. You can see that the man is angry. Khing told me once that he tried thirty times to picture the arm before it looked good on paper. He eventually stood in front of the mirror to see what an angry arm looks like.” Next to illustrating characters, Thé enjoys making ominous and frightening illustrations. He has had this fascination since childhood: he preferred dark and scary things, where danger is always close by. In later work, such as his fairy tale drawings, Thé shifts the emotions more and more to the surrounding landscape. Trees, bushes and other greenery serve the atmosphere, the movement, the composition and the emotions.

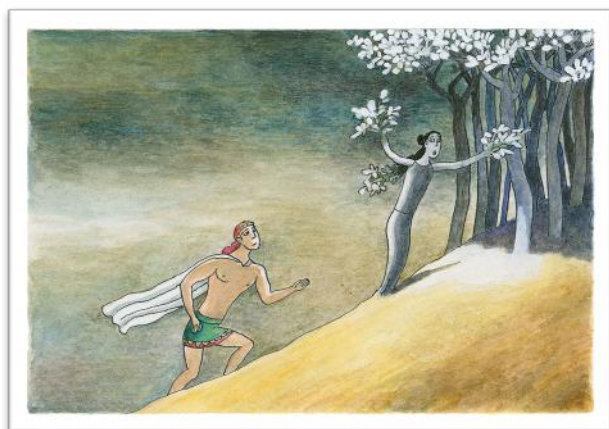
Caught in a movement

There are few drawings that retrospectively make Thé Tjong-Khing happy, but if you ask him about his own favourites, you will hear: *Griekse mythen* [The Greek myths]. Like Theseus, who is attacked in a dark corner by the Minotaur. And Medea, who races across the purple sky in her serpent chariot. “Because of the color, the darkness, the goofy characters. So many crazy things happen, no other story can compete with that,” Thé recounts.



Griekse mythen [Greek Myths] with text by Els Pelgrom consists of two volumes: *Helden* [Heroes] (2006) and *Donder en bliksem* [Thunder and Lightning] (2007). The books form another breaking point in Thé's oeuvre. In *Het grote avontuur van God en mens* [The great adventure of God and man] (2004) and *De sprookjesverteller* [The Fairy tale teller] (2007), he had already taken the first steps towards stillness. With *Griekse Mythen* he went a step further and dared to freeze scenes for the first time. In these two books everything is reduced to the essentials. Streaks of blood cling to the tips of swords, from Hera's breast a dead straight jet of mother's milk spews. The impassive attitudes adopted by the characters contrast with their bizarre experiences. Five muses carry Orpheus' mutilated body to the grave with serene faces. The proud Medea fearlessly attacks a fire-breathing dragon with a bottle of sleep-inducing droplets.

At the time, this stillness was a personal breakthrough for Thé, who had already tried everything to get rid of the sleight of hand from his comic period. The almost absurd



stories about the Greek gods, monsters and heroes lent themselves perfectly for a new direction in Thé's work. They tapped into a new artistic source. "It's amazing that I wasn't hindered at all by all the illustrations that are already there," says Thé. The myths stimulated his imagination.

The use of color in the Greek drawings is freer than ever before. Daphne takes root

on an ochre slope; Daedalus flies to his freedom against a fuchsia-orange sunset. The sky is alternately purple, sea green or soft blue; the Mediterranean Sea is overwhelmed by blue-green hues. The palette sparkles, but remains in an exciting balance. That was also a victory for Thé who was afraid to use color at the beginning of his career because he had no experience with it. What is also striking is the effective play with light and dark.



Writing and illustrating fairy tales

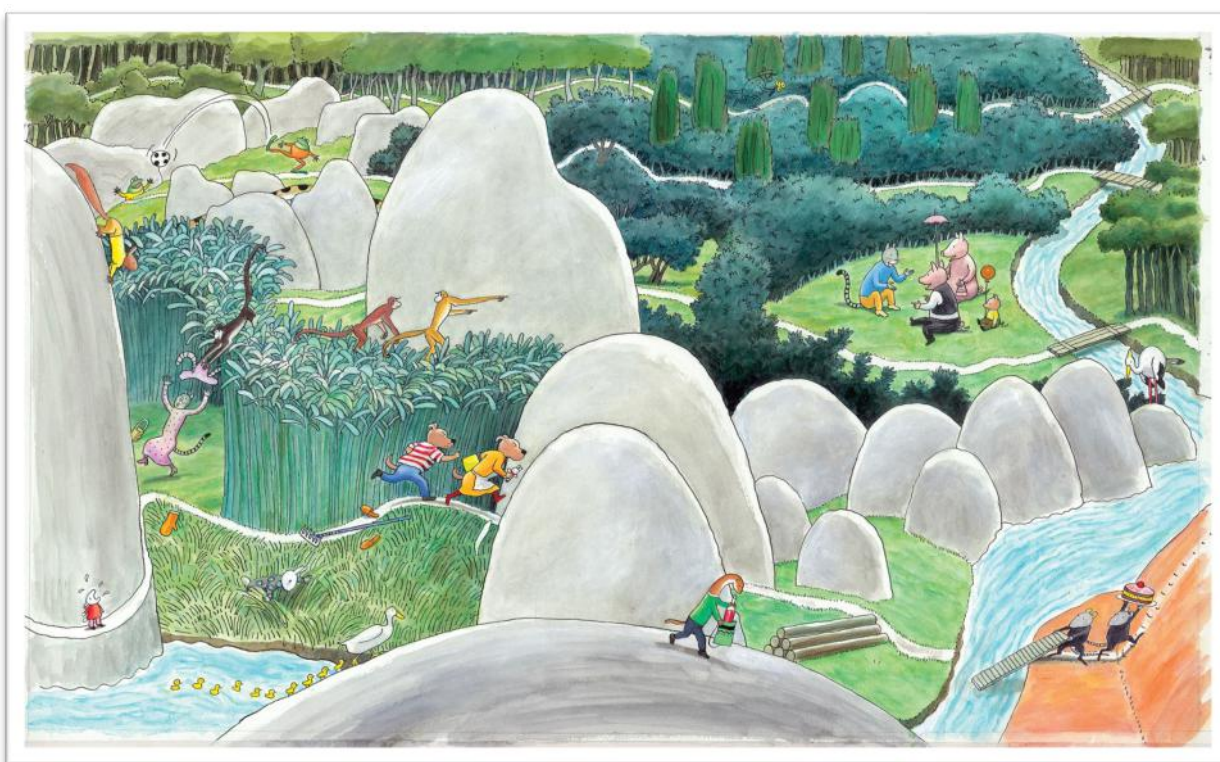
For an illustrator with a preference for the dark, for frightening elements, the fairy tale is a form of storytelling in which he can indulge himself. Already as a child, Thé used to draw Rie Cramer-like illustrations for Indonesian fairy tales and in his long career, he has illustrated many fairy tales written or adapted by other authors. In recent years, Thé has gained publicity for his imaginative, colourful fairy tales, in which costumes and drama play big roles. With his series *De sprookjesverteller* [The fairy tale teller], which he both writes and illustrates, he adapts fairy tales from all over the world for children from the age of 4. The illustrations with dragons, witches, princesses and many chandeliers can be recognized at a glance as Thé Tjong-Khing's: not gruesome but unmistakably menacing, not funny but with a lot of humour. And there is always suspense; something is about to happen, or maybe not yet. Thé himself says that children should be able to relate to an image, they must feel invited to empathize with the characters and wonder "Will this be going alright...?".

He started the series more or less by accident, and it was a surprise to himself too, because he thought he had no talent for writing. At one point when he was reading fairy

tales to his eldest grandson, he noticed how much he had to cut out, how many side paths he found too long-winded to read to a child. He told the fairy tales his way, with the occasional quirky remark or witty conclusion, and his grandson enjoyed it. Then he wrote them down on a few A-4 pages so that he could read them exactly the same way next time. Shortly afterwards, when a publisher asked him to make a fairy tale book, the beginning was already there.

The cake-series

Another highlight in Thé's oeuvre are his wordless picture books in the 'cake-series': *Waar is de taart?* (Where is the cake?, 2004), *Picknick met taart* (Where is the cake now?, 2005), *Verjaardag met taart* (The birthday cake mystery, 2010), and *Kunst met taart* (Art



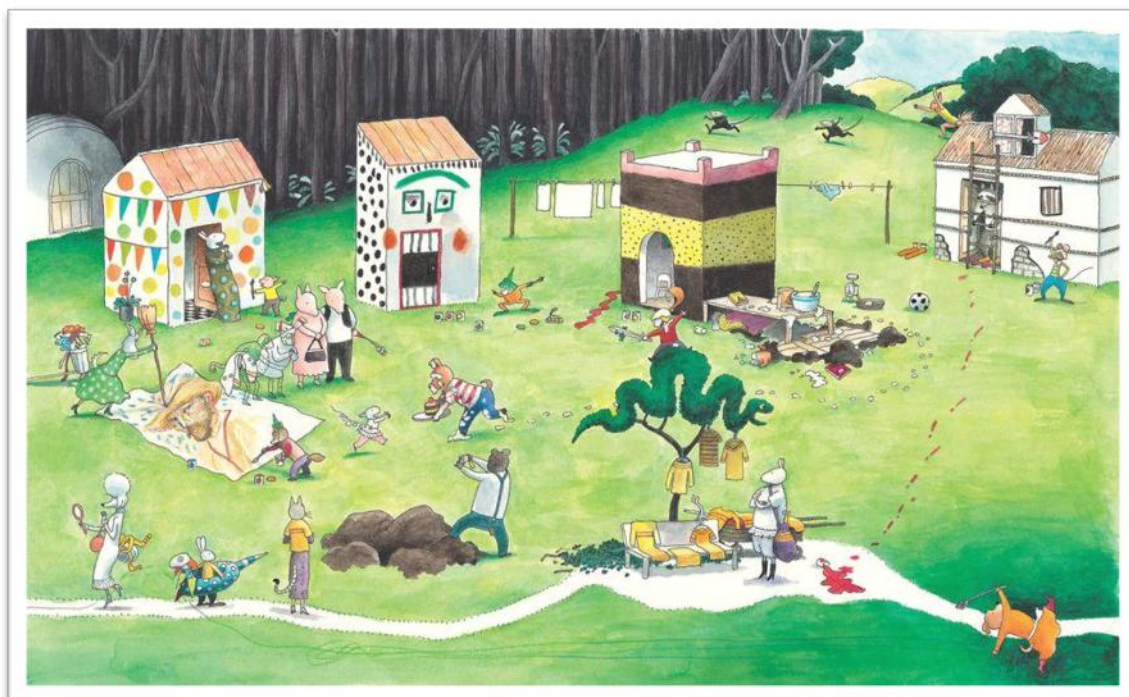
with cake, 2015), that combine different elements of his talent. His images have become more static and have a surreal character. The simplicity of form is combined with a refined staged mise-en-page. The influence of film (mimicry of the figures, solidified action) and the comic strip (cartoon line and viewing pace) and the eye-catching use of colour are the main ingredients of these books. Because it is a silent book, everything has to come from the image.

For *Waar is de taart*, Thé was Pieterse Prijs 2005 for the best year. From the jury report: that the creator of the story writer; the awarded book does go to a great illustrator. It eloquently, without using a stories. Stories that start on the the book and come to a



awarded the Woutertje literary children's book of the "Although the jury is aware Woutertje Pieterse was a great not have words this year. It goes to someone who very word, tells a story. Multiple cover and all continue within satisfying end."

Thé has found his ultimate form in the cake books. He doesn't illustrate someone's story, but draws from his own mind and builds up the ever-changing landscape layer by layer. This scenic structure is indebted to the Asian visual tradition. At the same time, the forest edges, splashing streams and rocks pass by like in a movie. The animals run and jump, they are frozen in the middle of their action. Fellow illustrator Sieb Posthuma saw in this work a mix of two visual cultures: "Since I have been to Bali, I know for sure: Khing's drawings are un-Dutch; all that green in his work, that impenetrable plant world – that is Indonesia. In Asia there are these intricate ornamented miniatures, pictures with little depth and perspective. Khing's work has that too, that naivety and at the same time the refinement that is characteristic of the printing art from there. That is the eastern influence that is visible throughout his whole oeuvre. In fact, Khing's illustrations reflect the meeting of two worlds. In doing so, he has created his very own visual language."



In *Art with cake*, Thé borrowed the decors from iconic paintings: “I wanted to let the animals run through modern paintings, from Wassily Kandinsky to Co Westerik. The story became an art theft by a crook in a classic striped suit, who manages to escape again and again.” It turned out to be a puzzle to smoothly interweave all the sets. You can see the decor of *The Scream* by Edvard Munch and that of *Gas* by Edward Hopper in different vistas from the same room; the animal parade rushes past it at breakneck speed.

Another silent book that followed the cake-series is the picture book Thé made on the occasion of the Bosch Year 2016 that honored the Dutch 15th century painter Jheronimus Bosch. It started a bit stiffly ('I never had anything to do with Bosch and I didn't see a story that quickly'), but the ominousness of Bosch's paintings took hold of him. In *Bosch: het vreemde verhaal van Jeroen, zijn pet, zijn rugzak en de bal...* [*Bosch: the strange story of Jeroen, his cap, his backpack and the ball...*, 2015], Thé detached Bosch's devilish figures from their original surroundings and made his own compositions with them. The story structure with textless panels is his own, but Bosch's dark magic resonates. Bosch's eerie atmosphere fits Thé like a glove.



In 2010 Thé was awarded the Max Velthuijs Prijs for his whole oeuvre. From the jury report: “At various levels, great dynamics characterize the creative power of Thé Tjong-



Khing. His numerous brainchildren are remarkably agile and graceful, even in their notorious clumsiness or clumsiness. (...) Their emotional expressiveness and relational vitality run the gamut from sleep-drunk to terrified, from oppressive loneliness to madly in love. (...) The combination of clear and figurative accessibility and continuous quality innovation make his signature recognizable and his creatures widely loved and known.”

More work by Thé Tjong-Khing can be seen in the online exhibition “From cartoonist to fairy tale teller” from the Literature Museum at <https://literatuurmuseum.nl/nl/ontdek-en-beleef/literatuurlab/online-exposities/the-tjong-khing/the-tjong-khing>.

Thé gives a guided tour through an exhibition of his work (2020, in Dutch, but with lots of images, sketches and Thé at work):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3qAgKA4oQI>.

Another exhibition can still be visited virtually:

<https://www.kranenburgh.nl/tentoonstelling/95/the-tjong-khing-in-het-atelier-van-de-meesterillustrator>.

Appreciative Essays About Thé Tjong-Khing

Children's book illustrator Thé Tjong-Khing is as ambitious as ever

By Paul Onkenhout

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We are awaiting the (re)opening of Thé Tjong-Khing's retrospective exhibition, but we still want to know how the legendary illustrator (87) deals with today's life. By drawing, he says, every day.

Thé Tjong-Khing, 87 years old, opens a picture book in his house in Haarlem in which Mr. and Mrs. Dog's cake is stolen, among many other things, and starts to grumble about the drawings. His own drawings, that is. 'I would draw these trees differently now. Those rocks too. This too. And this. If I'm honest: I would do it all very differently.'

We are talking about *Where is the cake?*, the masterly, acclaimed story with which Thé gave his artistry – more on this later – a new dimension in 2004. It was the first book of his own, more would follow.

Thé (his surname) is as active and ambitious as ever. He contributed intensively to a family exhibition about his work in Museum Kranenburg in Bergen, North Holland, with mostly recent work. The three playful themes in Bergen suit him well: laughing, shuddering and copying (or stealing). Due to Covid, the exhibition was postponed to a date to be determined later. An (adjusted) visit is possible online.

Master illustrator, the museum called him in the announcement. That's right. With his drawings he gave (children's) books by, among others, Miep Diekmann, Els Pelgrom, Guus Kuijer and Dolf Verroen an extra dimension. Just as impressive as his work is his productivity. Thé estimates that he has illustrated about five hundred books.

'Or six hundred, I lost count. I've been at it for a hundred years. Some books have one drawing per page, so check it out.'

The praise was not limited to the Netherlands, with the wordless *Where is the cake?* as the most appealing example. He crossed the border with it. The proofs, about twenty, are on his book shelf: *Where is the Cake?*, *Die Torte ist weg*, *Gdzie jest tort?*, *La course au gâteau*, *Var är tårten?* Putting the success into perspective: ‘They only had to translate the title.’

After some insistence: ‘Because *Where's the cake?* is my first book and I came up with the story myself, I am very indulgent, but in terms of drawing, it is not a highlight. My fairy tale books are better. *Where's the cake?* is more of a trophy to me, like a deer's head on the wall.’

The pandemic has no effect on him, he decides his rhythm himself, in his own world. ‘For me there is not that much of a difference, I spend all day behind the drawing board. But I can't go anywhere, that's boring.’

Thé draws daily in the room at the front of the house, from 6 am. “I go to bed at 10 p.m., and sometimes right after dinner.” Not everything is unchanged. His hand is less steady, he tires more quickly.

Very annoying, he says. And yes, he should be happy that he is still so active at the age of 87, and that the quality of his work is still so high. My wife often says it too. Be happy, you're 87. Yes, I know that too. But I'm just annoyed. I'm becoming a less good illustrator. Luckily I still have a lot of fun with it. And luckily I am still being asked.”

When the commissions stop, it's done. Casually: ‘Then I won't draw anymore.’ It has to do with his inability to create something from scratch, he says. Thé has never made anything for himself, he only works on commission.

‘I'm not an artist, that's the whole point. I need the story, a beginning. Artists are horrified by this limitation, but I actually like it. And that's why I find it uncomfortable when I'm called an artist. I can't start from zero, with nothing.’

He once asked a painter, Michel van Overbeeke, how he started a painting. I make a brush on a canvas, said Van Overbeeke, and then a painting emerges by itself. ‘I tried that then. My swipe became a doll. That is of course not the intention.’

And no, *where's the cake?* is no exception. That idea was also handed to him by the publisher of the Fox and Hare series. ‘The publisher wanted to exploit that. The idea was delivered, as always, and I brewed something from it. I got pushed again. And since I had no experience with writing back then, I've turned it into a wordless book.’

Work continues. Thé is currently working on three books at the same time. 'But I also decline a lot. I'm not interested in stories that take place in reality, in the everyday. Then someone else can do it better. It must be fairy tale like, something fantastic. I love myths and legends. I need something to happen in books, preferably murder and manslaughter. At least that's not boring.'

He laughs loudly and opens a book, *The Greek Myths* by Els Pelgrom. The illustrations are his. One man is sawed to pieces, another burned alive.

'It can be stylized like that, right? It's not gross or cruel. This may not be nice, but it doesn't involve a drop of blood.' He likes the drama, he says. In another drawing, a baby flies through the air into a ravine. 'Nice, right? The woman is Hera, the goddess of love. She's having a baby, but she doesn't like it. She throws him away. You can come up with a very dramatic drawing for that, but I let her make a nonchalant gesture. Get rid of it. I have drawn a neat civil path, and the Olympus in the background. Those are fun things to do. I am still satisfied with this drawing. That happens too, you know.'



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Illustrator Thé Tjong-Khing (89): ‘When I draw, I’m that little boy from Java again’

By Willem Pekelder

22-12-2022

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Originally published as Pekelder, Willem (22 December 2022). ‘Illustrator Thé Tjong-Khing (89): ‘Als ik teken, ben ik weer dat jongetje van Java’ in *Nederlands Dagblad*.

Thé Tjong-Khing is the Netherlands' oldest illustrator. Earlier this year, he illustrated a newly discovered Boman's Fairy Tale. ‘If the whole world shouts: what a beautiful drawing, and I don't think so myself, I'm not convinced.’

Thé Tjong-Khing illustrated more than five hundred children's and fairy tale books, most recently the newly discovered Boman's fairy tale *De gierige koning* [The Covetous King]. He is 89, but does not know when to stop. ‘When I draw, I am that little boy from Java again.’

He is already approaching ninety, but that is nowhere to be seen. Somewhat frail, yes, but his eyes are lively and his hair is enviably full, and actually rather tousled. On greeting, he gives a buck, a habit left over from corona days. Thé Tjong-Khing (89) is the Netherlands' oldest illustrator. Just earlier this year, he illustrated the newly discovered Boman's fairy tale *De gierige Koning* [The Covetous King].

His first drawing was published in 1957. Writer Tim Maran gave him carte blanche for all his books right from the first meeting. This was followed by Toonder Studios, where Thé Tjong-Khing drew comics such as the futuristic *Arman en Ilva*, which accounted for nine domestic and foreign daily newspapers in the 1970s. About 50 years ago, Thé Tjong-Khing left the world of comics behind and concentrated on illustrating fairy tales and children's books by Annie M.G. Schmidt, Guus Kuijer and Sylvia Vanden Heede, among others. The illustrator lives in a monumental building in Haarlem, together with his wife, the artist Mino Wortel (82). She makes collages, wall hangings and ceramics. Several examples of her creations are on display in the living room, including a crucifix with a, in Wortel's words, ‘very sweet little Jesus’.

Thé Tjong-Khing came into the world in Java in 1933 as the son of a Chinese merchant. What was it like living in the former Dutch East Indies? Smiling: ‘We spoke Indian at home. You know, like Aunt Lien: ‘Adoeh, so gèk ja.’ At school, we learned how to get

from Groningen to Haarlem by train. Oh well, as a child you don't look up at that, you don't think anything is crazy. My father traded in anything and everything: from bicycles to ice creams.

My mother? She didn't do anything. She sat on a chair all day. An army of servants was at her disposal. Whether we were among the elite? I don't know. At least we had money.'

His wife Mino from the kitchen: 'Everyone had servants. That was quite normal.'

You left for the Netherlands in 1956. Why?

'To be honest: I didn't really like it in Indonesia. Hardly any books were published there, let alone illustrated, so what was I supposed to do there as an artist-to-be? I wanted to go to the Tekenacademie [Drawing Academy] in Amsterdam. Once I got there, I thought: I'm not going back. I never felt at home in Indonesia. That's because my father was not very nice. In Chinese culture, everything revolves around boys, and father, being the only son, didn't like me at all. Often sons try to win their dad's love in such cases. I didn't. If he entered the room, I made my way out.'

What was your first impression of the Netherlands?

'Everything was different. For one thing, everyone spoke Dutch, even the baker's servant, ha. Yes, logical, you say, but not if you come from Indonesia. Then everything is strange. It took about a year before I got used to things in Amsterdam. I had a very small room and no friends. A lonely time, yes. But I was alive.'

How old were you when you knew: I'm going to be an artist?

'According to my mother, I started drawing as soon as I could hold a crayon, which is probably a bit of an exaggeration. However, I do remember often spending days drawing on the blackboard in our hallway.'

When did you discover you had talent?

'The moment Marten Toonder told me. In his studio, I learnt the trade. Then I also noticed how good it is for a cartoonist to have seen a lot of films.'

You are referring to your father who operated a cinema in Java? That must have been a dream world for a child.

'At my father's house all the Hollywood films were playing, but as a boy I didn't think it was anything special. As said, a child thinks everything is ordinary. During the film, I didn't pay so much attention to the story as to attitude and emotions. What does fear look like? One actor expressed his fear this way and another this way. I remembered that. That helped me a lot, especially when drawing comics. If I have to draw a complicated pose, and can't figure it out, I always have my mirror. Then I play the actor myself.'

What is the magic of drawing?

From the kitchen: 'He can't do anything else.'

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Thé, cheerfully: 'That too. But it's just fun. And when it works, it's great. Searching for the right pose, the right expression. The search is also nice. A journalist will have the same feeling when he finds the right word.'



When is a drawing finished?

'Well, good question. When I hand in a drawing, I think: fine. Months later, when the book comes out, I can sigh: why fine? If I don't see my drawings for a while, I believe they become more and more beautiful in my imagination. The reverse also happens. *Arman en Ilva* is being reissued. At first I muttered: that comic was not that special, was it? But leafing back through old albums, I discovered: hey, Arman's gaze is very precisely captured here, and look at Ilva getting scared there. The point is to get the emotion of a drawing across to the reader. Do I want to make him/her worried or happy? Curious or angry? And so on.'

Do you spend a lot of time sweating on it?

'Definitely, and the more experience I get, the longer it takes. Never finished in a day. First three, four sketches, that anyway. The final drawing almost always looks different from what I initially had in mind.'

He pulls out a copy from *Vos en Haas* [Fox and Hare], written by Sylvia Vanden Heede.

'Look, the tail of that mermaid, I've been brooding on that for a long time. Should it be more to the left, should it be more to the right? It's just an example.'

You started with comics, but stopped there. Why?

'Because you get stuck with the same characters and style all the time.' From the kitchen: 'And a comic every day.'

Thé: 'Yes, three pictures every day. I got fed up with that. Anger, for example, I drew the same thing over and over again. It became routine.'

(...)

Comics were followed by children's and fairy tale books, including by world-famous authors such as Andersen and Grimm.

What was that like for you?

⁴ Photo: Uitgeverij Lannoo

'Coming home. Exactly what I was looking for. As a child, I browsed through Brown Bear and fantasised how I would make those drawings myself. For example, the story in which the black queen is besieged by a soldier. I would put myself in the soldier's shoes and think: how would I carry my sword to hit the queen in the best possible way? I would compare lengths: short queen, tall soldier. How do those lengths while running affect on the flapping of clothes? That's how I let my imagination run wild. And now, as a professional illustrator, I still do. I hope children look at my drawings the same way I used to look at the illustrated magazines that fell on the mat at our Java home.'

Is there also 'class difference' between comics and illustrations?

'Yes indeed. Comics made you stupid, people thought. The funny thing is that at about the same time as my retirement as a cartoonist, publisher Querido phoned to ask: 'Would you like to illustrate Miep Diekmann's new book? She's looking for a cartoonist.'

You described the child as someone who takes no notice of anything. As an illustrator, have you remained a child yourself?

'When I work, I am that little boy from Java again, living in a world where nothing is too crazy. In a drawing, you can make anything happen.'

You do need a story first, though? You don't come up with one yourself?

'During holidays, Mino and I sometimes make up a story while walking. It's fun, we tell each other, but when we get home we already think it's no good.

How did you react when publisher Sunny Home asked you to publish The miserly King by Godfried Bomans?

'I jumped a hole in the air. (...) Fortunately, the fairy tale is about a very unpleasant man - a king so stingy that he even keeps his breadcrumbs -, which is much more pleasant to illustrate than a story about a pleasant person. Unsympathetic persons come in all shapes and sizes. Likeable people always look the same.'

How did the drawing process go?

'No different from anything else. You use your imagination. How do I depict avarice? Well, I did that by having the king frenetically embrace a bag of money. That illustration is on the cover. If you look closely, you can see that the fabric of his elbows has stopped.'

You float entirely on your imagination?

'Not always. Sometimes I need an example. Upstairs is a cupboard crammed with pictures I have torn from newspapers and magazines over the course of my life. I started doing this around 1956 in Amsterdam. On Tuesdays, when the rubbish was collected, I would scour the bins, hunting for magazines.' (...)

Mino: 'Nowadays, of course, you can also find a lot of images on Google.'

Thé: 'Yes, but not everything, eh. Recently I had to draw a horse that you can see three-quarters of the way from the back. You can't find an image like that on the internet - there you only see horses from the front or side - but you can find it in my archive.'

You have won many awards: Golden and Silver Pencils, the Woutertje Pieterse Prize. The Letterkundig Museum dedicated an exhibition to your oeuvre in 2011. How is that for you?

'It's nice. But if the whole world shouts o, what a beautiful drawing, and I don't think so myself, I'm not convinced.'

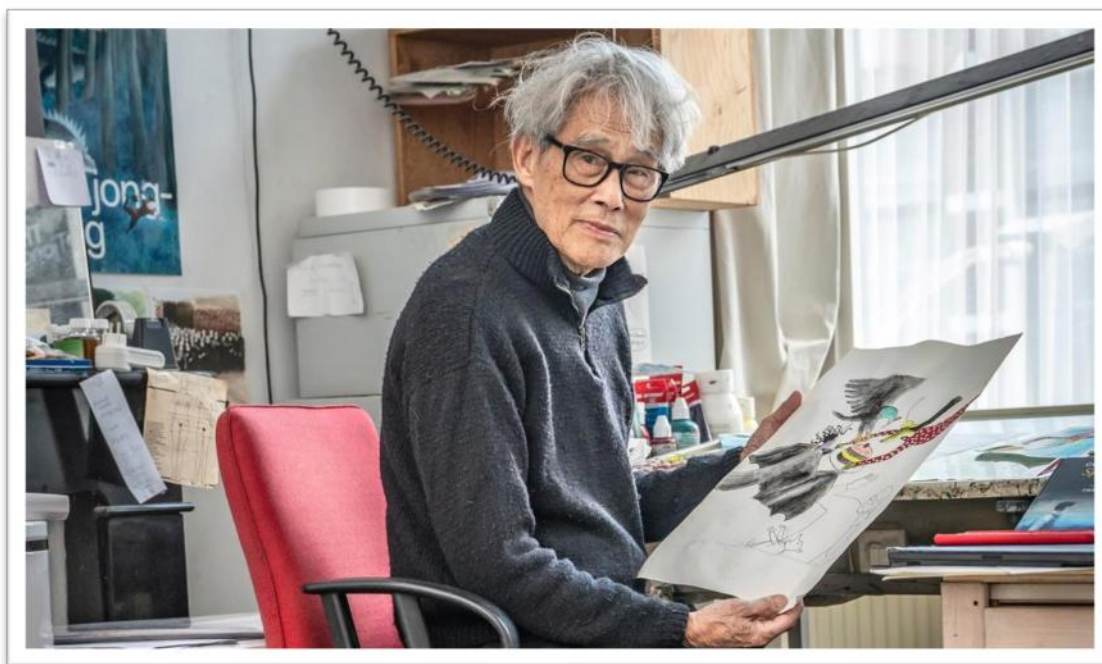
(...)

What is the secret that you are still drawing around the age of 90?

'There is no secret.'

Mino: 'His work is his hobby.'

On parting, Thé Tjong-Khing says: 'Look, the artist here in the house is, of course, Mino. She creates something out of nothing. I don't. I always need a story.'



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⁵ Photo by Martin Waalboer

List of Awards and Other Distinctions

Winner Max Velthuijs Prijs

Complete oeuvre (2010)

Nomination Hans Christian Andersen Award

Complete oeuvre (1972, 1988, 2008, 2018, 2024)

Nomination Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award

Complete oeuvre (2009, 2010, 2022, 2023)

Gouden Penseel (Golden Paintbrush)

- Viele wiele stap (1978)
- Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper (1985)
- Het woordenboek van Vos en Haas (2003)

Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis

- Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper (1986)
- Waar is de taart (nomination, 2007)

Woutertje Pieterse Prijs

- Waar is de taart? (2005)

Zilveren Penseel (Silver Paintbrush)

- Waar is de taart? (2005)

Vlag & Wimpel (Flag & Streamer)

- Een krekel voor de keizer (1981)
- De dieren van het Duitbos (1983)
- Het Witte Hert Park (1985)
- Hoor je wat ik doe? (1985)
- Vos en Haas (1999)
- Avonturen van Baron von Münchhausen (2011)
- Vos en Haas. Een boef in het bos (2020)



Pluim van de maand (best book of the month)

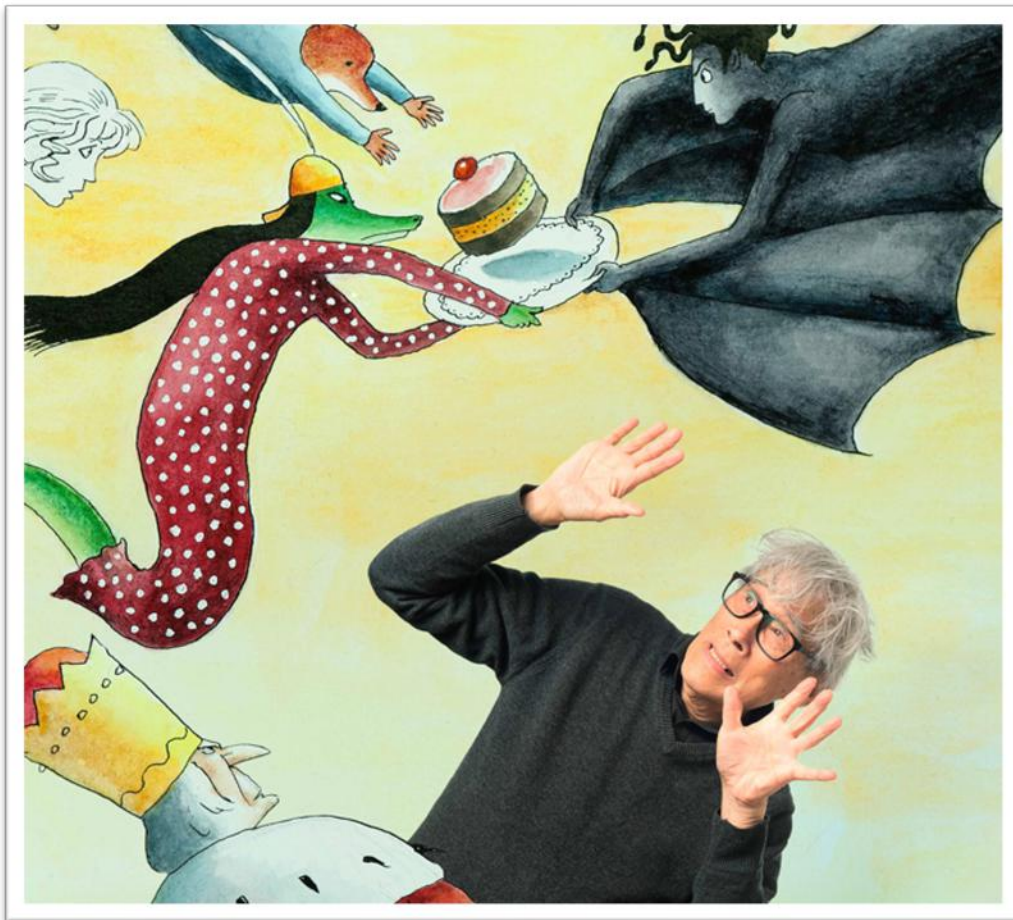
- Vos en Haas (1999)
- Het Aa Bee See van Vos en Haas (2003)
- Waar is de taart? (2004)
- De sprookjesverteller (2008)
- Van wie is de hoed? (2015)

Golden Owl (prestigious Flemish literary award)

- Picknick met taart (nomination, 2006)
- Koek koek Vos en Haas (2008)

Kinder- en Jeugdjury Vlaanderen (Flemish children's choice)

- Vos en Haas en de dief van Iek (2007)



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⁶ Retrieved from <https://uitmag.nl/musea/the-tjong-khing-90-jaar-jong/>

Brief explanation of some of the awards

Zilveren and Gouden Griffel, Zilveren and Gouden Penseel, Vlag & Wimpel

Most important annual awards for children's literature in The Netherlands, for illustration (Zilveren en Gouden Penseel / Silver and Golden Paintbrush) and text (Zilveren en Gouden Griffel / Silver and Golden Slate Pencil), established by the CPNB (Collective Propaganda for the Dutch Book). An independent jury awards books in different categories with Silver Paintbrushes and Silver Slate Pencils. From the awarded books, one is then selected as winner of the Golden Paintbrush and one as the Golden Slate Pencil. The awards were introduced in 1981 and 1973 respectively. The Vlag en Wimpel (Flag and Streamer) was an honourable mention for this award, but this prize has been abolished since 2022.

Woutertje Pieterse Prijs

The Woutertje Pieterse Prize was established in 1987, and awarded for the first time in 1988. Libris, a bookseller's chain, sponsors the prize, which is intended for children's books of Dutch origin with literary merit. The laureate receives 15.000 euro. The goal of the Woutertje Pieterse Prize is to improve the quality of children's writing by means of the award. The jury is free not to grant an award when there is no book of sufficient quality. The prize owes its name to the character Woutertje Pieterse, since the story of this boy by Multatuli is said to be one of the finest ever written. Besides the Golden and Silver Slate Pencils and Paintbrushes, the Woutertje Pieterse Prijs is regarded as the most important award for authors of children's literature.

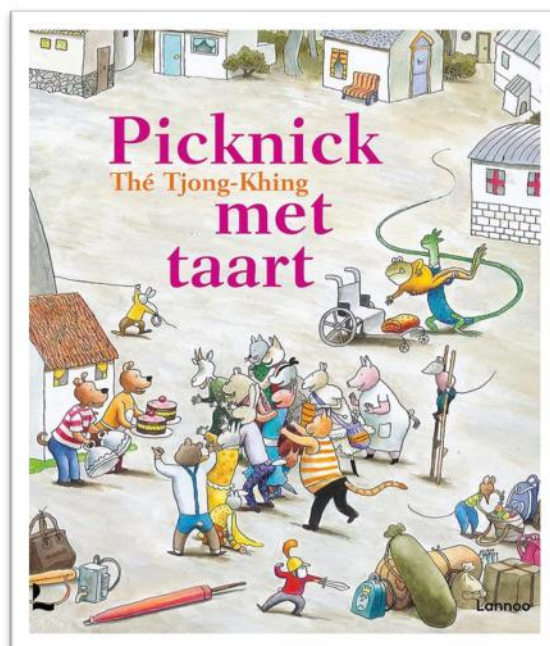
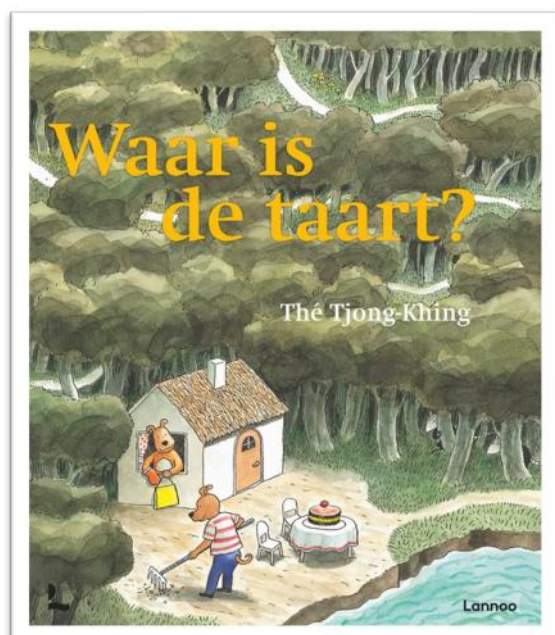
Max Velthuijs Prijs

The Max Velthuijs is a Dutch award awarded once every three years to an illustrator of children's books. The award is not given for a particular work, but for the entire oeuvre. The award is named after Dutch painter, illustrator and writer Max Velthuijs (1923 – 2005, creator of the famous books about Frog and winner of the H.C. Andersen Award in 2004). The winner of the Max Velthuijs Award receives €60,000. The award is organized by the Stichting P.C. Hooft-prijs voor Letterkunde which also awards the prestigious P.C. Hooft-prijs and Theo Thijssen-prijs. The award was established in 2006 and first awarded in 2007.

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- Thé Tjong-Khing. *Een mooi plekje* [A beautiful place]. 2013. Amsterdam: Rubinstein.
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- Thé Tjong-Khing. *Sprookjes van overal* [Fairy tales from everywhere]. 2018. Haarlem: Gottmer.
- Thé Tjong-Khing. *Russische sprookjes* [Russian fairy tales]. 2020. Haarlem: Gottmer.
- Thé Tjong-Khing. *Het mysterie van het steenhoutertje* [The mystery of the little stone mason]. 2021. Amsterdam: Leopold.
- Thé Tjong-Khing. *Taart voor iedereen* [Cake for everybody]. 2023. Tielt: Lannoo.



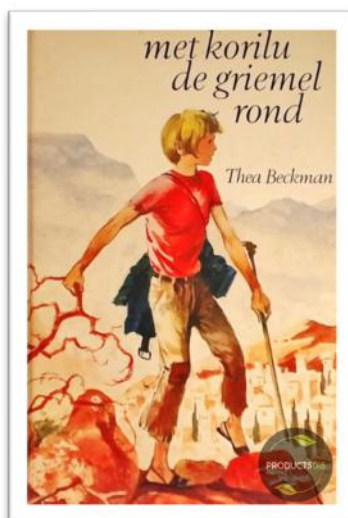
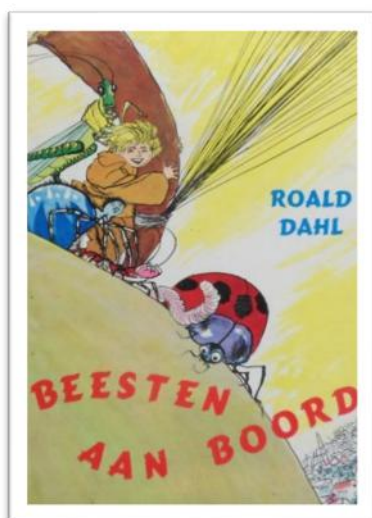
Titles illustrated by Thé Tjong-Khing (a selection)

Thé has illustrated over 500 books, below is a selection of his work. Besides the list below, Thé Tjong-Khing illustrated a large number of book covers.

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- Miep Diekmann & Thé Tjong-Khing (ill.). *Sjon Karkó* [Sjon Karkó]. 1964. Groningen: J.B. Wolters.
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- A.D. Hildebrand & Thé Tjong-Khing (ill.). *P.P. Koekelberg en z'n vriendjes* [P.P. Koekelberg and his friends]. 1967. Amsterdam: Kris Kras.
- Mathilde Roolfs & Thé Tjong-Khing (ill.). *Verhalen over God, de mensen en de wereld* [Stories about God, humans and the world]. 1968. Amsterdam: Deltos Elsevier.
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- Betsy Byars & Thé Tjong-Khing (ill.). *Het huis met de vogels* [The house with the birds]. 1975. Amsterdam: Kosmos.
- Guus Kuijer & Thé Tjong-Khing (ill.). *Een gat in de grens* [A hole in the border]. 1975. Amsterdam: Querido.
- Diana Lebac & Thé Tjong-Khing (ill.). *Nancho van Bonaire* [Nancho of Bonaire]. 1975. Den Haag, Leopold.
- Dolf Verroen & Thé Tjong-Khing (ill.). *Paarden, van die enge grote* [Horses, those scary tall ones]. 1975. Den Haag: Leopold.
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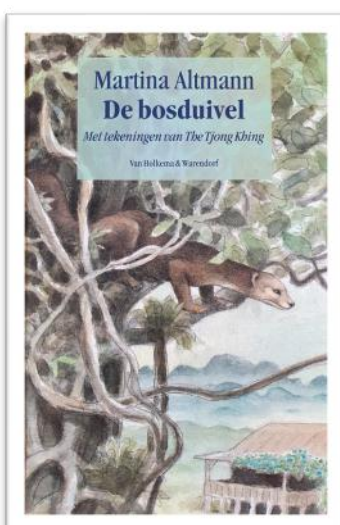
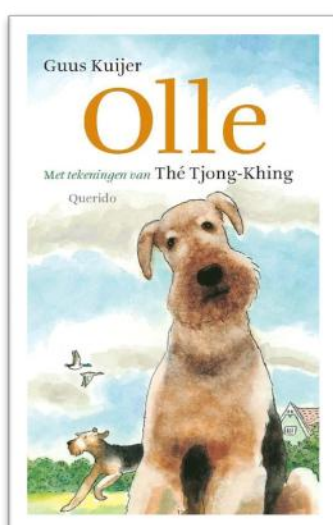
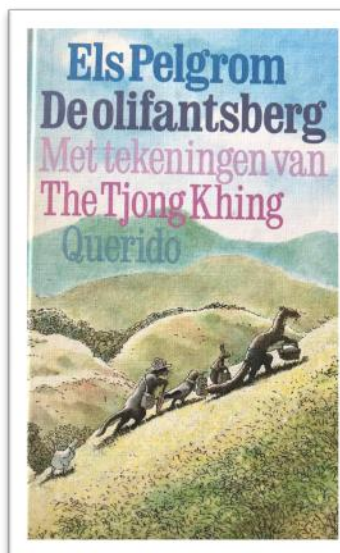
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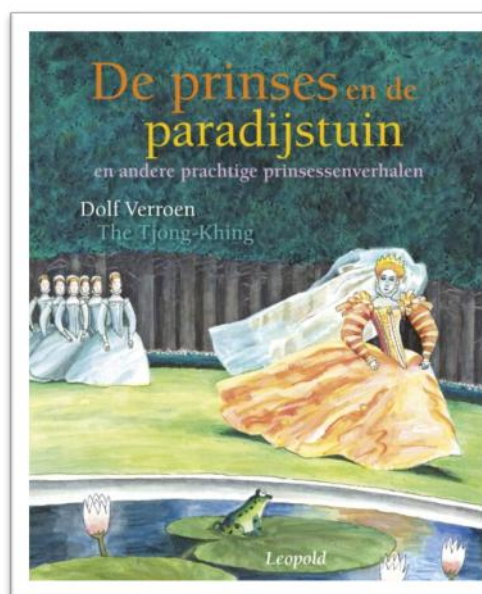
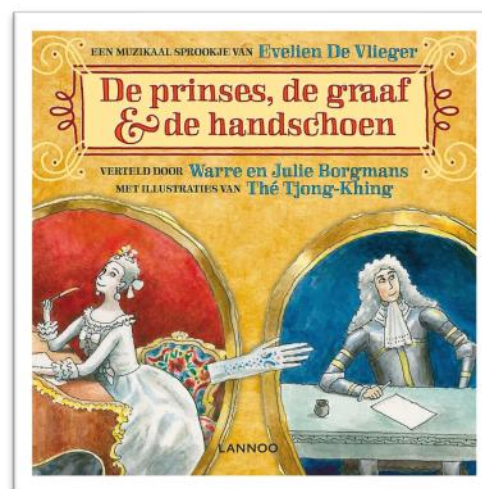
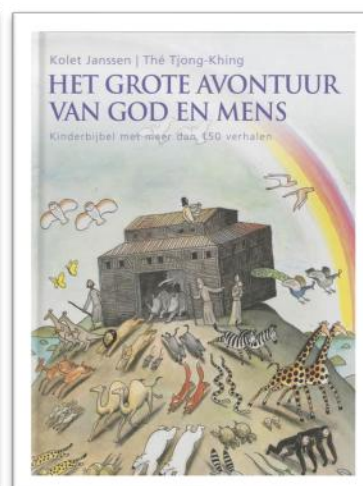
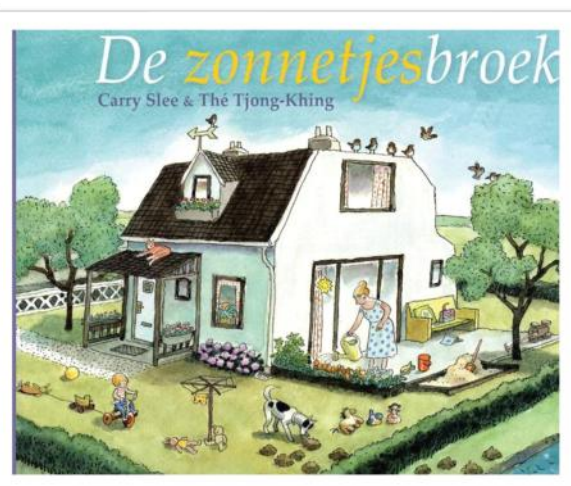


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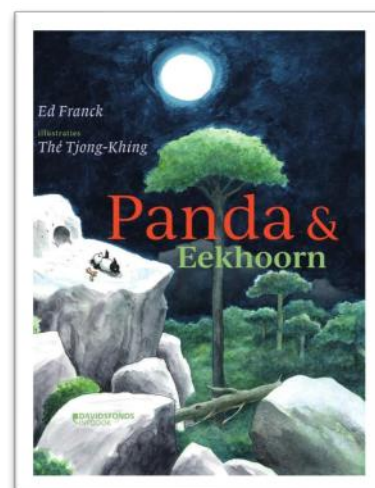
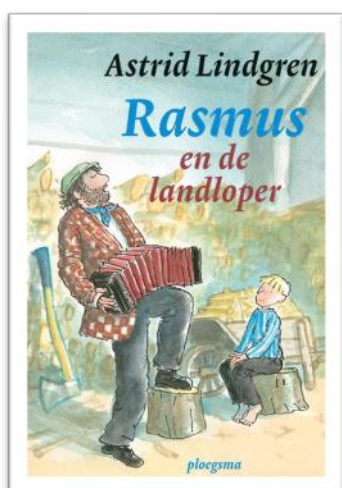
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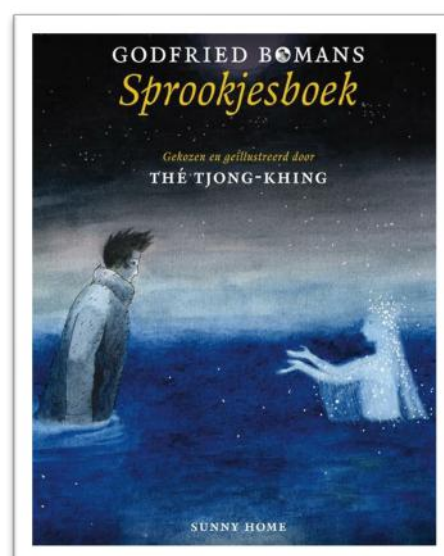
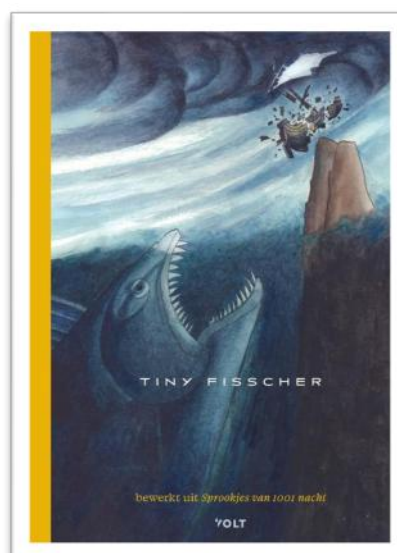
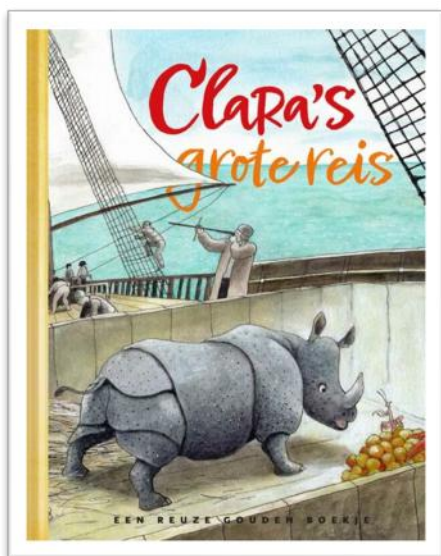
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- Sylvia Vanden Heede & Thé Tjong-Khing (ill.). *Vos en Haas. Het maatje van Haas* [Fox and Hare. Hare's mate]. 2018. Tielt: Lannoo.
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- Sylvia Vanden Heede & Thé Tjong-Khing (ill.). *Vos en Haas. Het grote groeiboek* [Fox and Hare. The big grow book]. 2022. Tiel: Lannoo.
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- Sylvia Vanden Heede & Thé Tjong-Khing (ill.). *Vos en Haas. Waar is het Cadeau?* [Fox and Hare. Where is the gift?]. 2023. Tiel: Lannoo.



List of Translations⁷

Thé Tjong-Khing's own books have been translated to Afrikaans, Catalan, Chinese, Danish, English, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish. In addition, the books that he illustrated have apart from the above languages been translated to Arabic, Estonian, Finnish, Hungarian, Icelandic, Latvian, Lithuanian, Papiamentu, Portuguese, Russian, Ukrainian.

Titles by Thé Tjong-Khing

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Catalan

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Chinese

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Danish

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⁷Source: <https://letterenfonds.secure.force.com/vertalingendatabase/>.

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English

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French

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German

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Norwegian

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Tjong-Khing, Thé. *Gdzie jest tort?*. Polish / transl. from Dutch by n.n.. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Gdansk: EneDueRabe, 2008. Children's Books; Picturebook, gebonden. Original title: Waar is de taart?. Tielt: Lannoo, 2004.

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Arabic

auteurs, div.. *[(Een boek voor jou)]*. Arabic / transl. from Dutch by Amina Abed. Amsterdam: Querido, 2017. Children's Books; Picturebook, gebonden. Original title: Bloemlezing. s.l.: n.n., Een boek voor jou is een initiatief van Marit Törnqvist en is uitgegeven door Em. Querido's Kinderboeken Uitgeverij i.s.m. Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland. Bevat werk van: Thé Tjong-Khing, Annie M.G. Schmidt, Fiep Westendorp (Uit: Jip en Janneke, Floddertje en Pluk van de Petteflet), Max Velthuis, Sieb Posthuma, Hans & Monique Hagen, Erik van Os, Elle van Lieshout, Marije Tolman, Imme Dros, Harrie Geelen, Sylvia Van den Heede, Charlotte Dematons, Hans de Beer, Wim Hofman, Marit Törnqvist, Joke van Leeuwen, Philip Hopman, Bette Westera, Sylvia Weve, Paul van Loon, Hugo van Look, Toon Tellegen, Mance Post, Joukje Akveld, Jacques Vriens and Annet Schaap. Published with support from the Nederlands Letterenfonds.

Franck, Ed. [*Een vriend, wat is dat?*]. Arabic / transl. from Dutch by Ahmed Gad Elrab. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Cairo: Al Turjman, 2022 (Dragoman). Children's Books, geniet. Original title: Een vriend, wat is dat?. Leuven: Davidsfonds / Infodok, 2021. Published with support from the Nederlands Letterenfonds.

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Chinese

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Pelgrom, Els. *[Watashi no honto no tomodachi]*. Japanese / transl. from Dutch by Etsuko Nozaka. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Tokyo: Iwasaki Shoten, 2002. Children's Books, gebonden. Original title: Drie Japies. Amsterdam: Querido, 1980. Published with support from the Literair Productiefonds.

Vanden Heede, Sylvia. *[Kitsune no Fossu (Vos) to usagi no Haasu]*. Japanese / transl. from Dutch by Etsuko Nozaka. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2007. Children's Books, gebonden. Original title: Vos en Haas. Tielt: Lannoo, 1998. Published with support from the Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren.

Vanden Heede, Sylvia. [*Kitsune no Fossu to usagi no Haasu: sono 2 mata tamago*]. Japanese / transl. from Dutch by Etsuko Nozaka. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2008. Children's Books, gebonden. Original title: Tot kijk, Vos en Haas. Tielt: Lannoo, 1999. Published with support from the Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren.

Vanden Heede, Sylvia. [*Vos to Haas minamino shima he*]. Japanese / transl. from Dutch by Etsuko Nozaka. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2009. Children's Books, gebonden. Original title: Vos en Haas op het eiland. Tielt: Lannoo, 2001.

Latvian

Vanden Heede, Sylvia. *Lapsa un zaķis*. Latvian / transl. from Dutch by Inga Karlsberga. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Riga: Janis Roze, 2019. Children's Books, gebonden. Original title: Vos en Haas. Tielt: Lannoo, 1998. Published with support from the Nederlands Letterenfonds; Literatuur Vlaanderen.

Lithuanian

Vanden Heede, Sylvia. *Lapinas ir Zuikė*. Lithuanian / transl. from Dutch by Birutė Avižinienė-Mumėnaitė. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Vilnius: Alma Littera, 2018. Children's Books, gebonden. Original title: Vos en Haas. Tielt: Lannoo, 1998. Published with support from the Nederlands Letterenfonds; Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren.

Vanden Heede, Sylvia. *Lapinas ir Zuikė - Iki pasimatymo*. Lithuanian / transl. from Dutch by Birutė Avižinienė-Mumėnaitė. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Vilnius: Alma Littera, 2018. Children's Books, gebonden. Original title: Tot kijk, Vos en Haas. Tielt: Lannoo, 1999. Published with support from the Nederlands Letterenfonds; Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren.

Norwegian

Pelgrom, Els. *Lille Sofie og Langemann*. Norwegian / transl. from Dutch by Maaïke Lahaise. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Oslo: Gyldendal, 1995. Children's Books, gebonden. Original title: Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper. Amsterdam: Querido, 1984. Published with support from the Literair Productiefonds.

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Pelgrom, Els. *Bombai!*. Papiamentu / transl. from Dutch by Henry Habibe. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Amsterdam: N.A.N.A., 1995. Children's Books, paperback. Original title: Bombaaj!. Amsterdam: CPNB, 1995. Boekenweekgeschenk.

Polish

Vanden Heede, Sylvia. *Felek i Tola na wyspie.* Polish / transl. from Dutch by Jadwiga Jędryas, Jadwiga Jędryas. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Warszawa: Dwie Siostry, 2014. Children's Books, gebonden. Original title: Vos en Haas op het eiland. Tielt: Lannoo, 2001. Published with support from the Nederlands Letterenfonds; Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren.

Vanden Heede, Sylvia. *Felek i Tola i porywacze.* Polish / transl. from Dutch by Jadwiga Jędryas. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Warszawa: Dwie Siostry, 2016. Children's Books, gebonden. Original title: Vos en Haas en de dief van Iek. Tielt: Lannoo, 2005. Published with support from the Nederlands Letterenfonds; Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren.

Vanden Heede, Sylvia. *Do zobaczenia, Felku i Tolu.* Polish / transl. from Dutch by Jadwiga Jędryas. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Warszawa: Dwie Siostry, 2013. Children's Books, gebonden. Original title: Tot kijk, Vos en Haas. Tielt: Lannoo, 1999. Ook met subsidie van het VFL. Published with support from the Nederlands Letterenfonds.

Vanden Heede, Sylvia. *Felek i Tola.* Polish / transl. from Dutch by Jadwiga Jędryas. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Warszawa: Dwie Siostry, 2011. Children's Books, gebonden. Original title: Vos en Haas. Tielt: Lannoo, 1998. Published with support from the Nederlands Letterenfonds.

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Pelgrom, Els. *A pequena Sofia.* Portuguese / transl. from Dutch by Sílvia Reichmann. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1992 (Série infanto-juvenil). Children's Books, paperback. Original title: Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper. Amsterdam: Querido, 1984.

Russian

Vanden Heede, Sylvia. *[Lis i zajka].* Russian / transl. from Dutch by Irina Leek (Trofimova). Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Moskva: Samokat, 2017. Children's Books, gebonden. Original title: Vos en Haas. Tielt: Lannoo, 1998. Published with support from the Nederlands Letterenfonds; Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren.

Vanden Heede, Sylvia. *[Lis izajka na ostrove].* Russian / transl. from Dutch by Irina Leek (Trofimova). Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Moskva: Samokat, 2017. Children's Books, gebonden. Original title: Vos en Haas op het eiland. Tielt: Lannoo, 2001. Published with support from the Nederlands Letterenfonds; Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren.

Vanden Heede, Sylvia. *[Do vstreči disi i zajka!].* Russian / transl. from Dutch by Irina Leek (Trofimova). Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Moskva: Samokat, 2017. Children's Books, gebonden. Original title: Tot kijk, Vos en Haas. Tielt: Lannoo, 1999. Published with support from the Nederlands Letterenfonds; Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren.

Woltz, Anna. *[Noč' v kukol'nom domike]*. Russian / transl. from Dutch by D.G. Ardina. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Moskva: Strekosa, 2019. Children's Books; Picturebook, gebonden. Original title: Nacht in het poppenhuis. Amsterdam: Leopold, 2018.

Spanish

Diekmann, Miep. *Corre, corre, patinete*. Spanish / transl. from Dutch by Alberto Villalba. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1987 (Austral infantil; 11). Children's Books, paperback. Original title: Stappe stappe step. Amsterdam: Querido, 1979.

Diekmann, Miep. *Pasito a pasito*. Spanish / transl. from Dutch by Pilar Rodríguez. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1988 (Austral infantil; 36). Children's Books, paperback. Original title: Viele viele stap. Amsterdam: Querido, 1977. bew. Mario Merlini.

Diekmann, Miep. *¿Jugamos?*. Spanish / transl. from Dutch by Laurence Schröder. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1989 (Austral infantil; 45). Children's Books, paperback. Original title: Ik en jij spelen wij. Amsterdam: Querido, 1982. bew. Mario Merlini.

Pelgrom, Els. *La pequeña Sofía y el Larguirucho Wapper*. Spanish / transl. from Dutch by Alberto Villalba. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Madrid: Alfaguara, 1988 (Juvenil Alfaguara; 311). Children's Books, paperback. Original title: Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper. Amsterdam: Querido, 1984.

Quintana, Anton. *El rey de los babuínos*. Spanish / transl. from Dutch by Alberto Villalba. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Madrid: Altea, 1987 (Juvenil Alfaguara; 298). Children's Books, paperback. Original title: De bavienenkoning. Amsterdam: Van Goor, 1982.

Schmidt, Annie M.G.. *Abel, el ascensorista*. Spanish / transl. from Dutch by Marc Lepître. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Barcelona; Madrid: Noguer, 1989 (Mundo Mágico; 99). Children's Books, paperback. Original title: Abeltje. Amsterdam, etc.: De Arbeiderspers, 1953.

Westera, Bette. *Un caballero en calcetines*. Spanish / transl. from Dutch by Cisca Corduwener. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Envigado: Silaba Editores, 2016. Children's Books; Picturebook, paperback. Original title: Held op sokken. Haarlem: Gottmer, 2013. Published with support from the Nederlands Letterenfonds.

Swedish

Diekmann, Miep. *Skroten och Katja*. Swedish / transl. from Dutch by Mikael Mörling. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Stockholm: Prisma, 1979. Children's Books, gebonden. Original title: Total loss, weetjewel. Amsterdam: Querido, 1973.

Vanden Heede, Sylvia. *Räv och Hare*. Swedish / transl. from Dutch by Paul Wouters. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Stockholm: Bonnier Carlsen, 2000. Children's Books, Original title: Vos en Haas. Tiel: Lannoo, 1998.

Vanden Heede, Sylvia. *Räv och Hare på den öde ön*. Swedish / transl. from Dutch by Olov Hyllienmark. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Stockholm: Bonnier Carlsen, 2002. Children's Books, Original title: Vos en Haas op het eiland. Tielt: Lannoo, 2001.

Vanden Heede, Sylvia. *Räv och Hare sitter äggvakt*. Swedish / transl. from Dutch by Paul Wouters. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Stockholm: Bonnier Carlsen, 2001. Children's Books, Original title: Tot kijk, Vos en Haas. Tielt: Lannoo, 1999.

Pelgrom, Els. *Lilla Sofies märklige resa*. Swedish / transl. from Dutch by Sonja Berg Pleijel. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Stockholm: Berghs, 1987. Children's Books, gebonden. Original title: Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper. Amsterdam: Querido, 1984.

Ukrainian

Schmidt, Annie M.G.. *[(De A van Abeltje)]*. Ukrainian / transl. from Dutch by Galyna Kyyashko. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Kyiv: Tempora, since november 2013, expected 2015. Children's Books, Original title: De A van Abeltje. Amsterdam, etc.: De Arbeiderspers, 1955.

Schmidt, Annie M.G.. *[(Abeltje)]*. Ukrainian / transl. from Dutch by Galyna Kyyashko. Ill. Thé Tjong-Khing. Kyiv: Tempora, since 2012 Children's Books, Original title: Abeltje. Amsterdam, etc.: De Arbeiderspers, 1953.

Ten of the Most Important Titles

WIELE WIELE STAP (1977)



WHEEL WHEEL STEP

Written by Miep Diekmann

“Small verses and pictures for very young children about daily toddler experiences. The toddlers depicted and their experiences are real and therefore very recognizable (...) This booklet (may) rightly be called unique” (from the Golden Slate Pencil jury report).

For this book, Thé Tjong-Khing was awarded his first Golden Paintbrush.

“A very special book for the little ones (...). built from extremely simple means around daily toddler experiences. (...) Khing’s pictures play the game completely. (...) Playing with language is an art that did not come early enough can be learned. Highly recommended” *Leeuwarden Courant*

“It is a first introduction to life, a journey of discovery, worth recording, never to be forgotten, not now, not later. While toddlers are unable to do this themselves, Miep Diekmann and Thé Tjong-Khing did it for them in a unique collaboration. Playful, touching, real.” *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*

Age: 2+

Translated to French, German and Spanish

KLEINE SOFIE EN LANGE WAPPER (1984, 2023)



LITTLE SOPHIE AND LANKY FLOP

Written by Els Pelgrom

Little Sophie and Lanky Flop is about a little girl who is terminally ill. Sophie experiences a thrilling adventure in her feverish dreams when her dolls and stuffed toys come to life at night. The tomcat, Terror, has written a play in the style of the Commedia dell'Arte about What Life Has to Offer. Teddy, Sophie and her cuddly friend, Lanky Flop, take part in the play in Sophie's cardboard toy theatre. Terror also takes a role and directs the play. Sophie travels from her room into another world, a harsh world, in which, in the space of one night, she becomes acquainted with life, complete with poverty and wealth, injustice, lies and hypocrisy.

Sophie tumbles from one adventure to another: from the boggy marshland to the year market, from the 'Home for Unfortunate Children' to Teddy's luxurious villa, from the King's palace to a prison cell, finally ending up in a raging storm at sea. Pelgrom describes all this with great imagery, at a high tempo and with sensitivity and precision. At the end, Sophie whispers, laughing: 'What Life Has to Offer! That's what I wanted to know. So much! So much!' Then the play is ended and Sophie dies contentedly. The family and neighbours pay their last respects and, the next morning, Sophie is travelling with her friends in a beautiful deep blue car through green hills and blue skies. 'An endless journey had begun'.

The book has justifiably been highly praised as a literary masterpiece and a rich, comforting children's book about dying. When it was first published, in 1984, however, it was the subject of some controversy, due to its stratified, multi-interpretable text, full of symbolism and references to literature and theatre and because, at the time, death was still rather a taboo in children's books. It soon became clear, however, that this was an undeniably magisterial children's novel, a modern classic of substance.

(Written by Lieke van Duin)

"I wish I were a child and got this book as a gift. I wish I didn't know what it was about and could start reading it from the beginning. I know I would have had a wonderful day."
Vrij Nederland

“*Little Sophie and Lanky Flop* is the product of an outstanding collaboration between author and illustrator, who deliver top quality in language, imagination and design.”

Haarlems Dagblad

“The jury for the Golden Slate Pencil and the critics are unanimous: this is a first-rate book.”

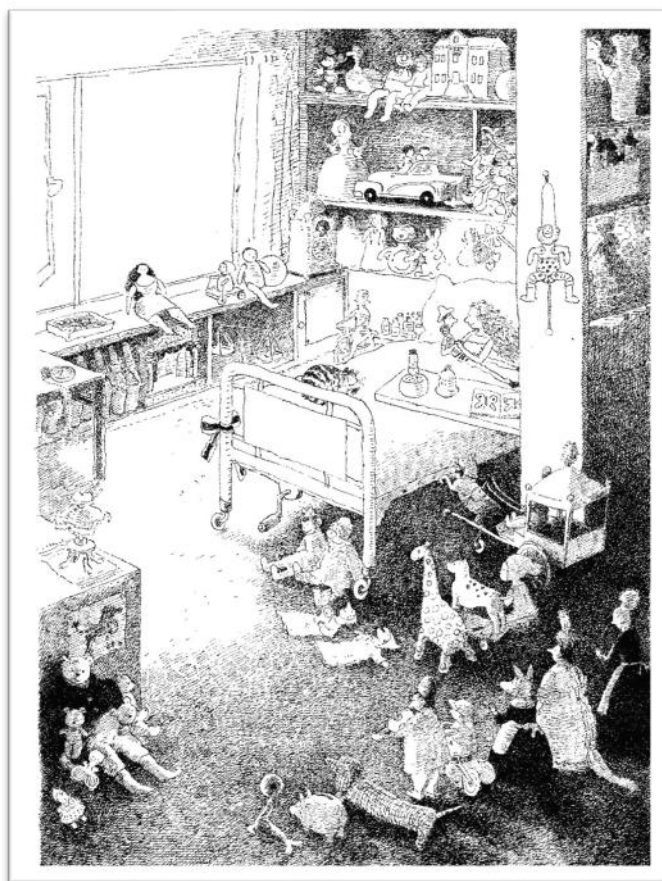
PZC

Age: 10+

Translated to Danish, German, English, French, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian, Portuguese, Spanish, Swedish.

(Retrieved from: <https://www.letterenfonds.nl/en/book/286/little-sophie-and-lanky-flop>)

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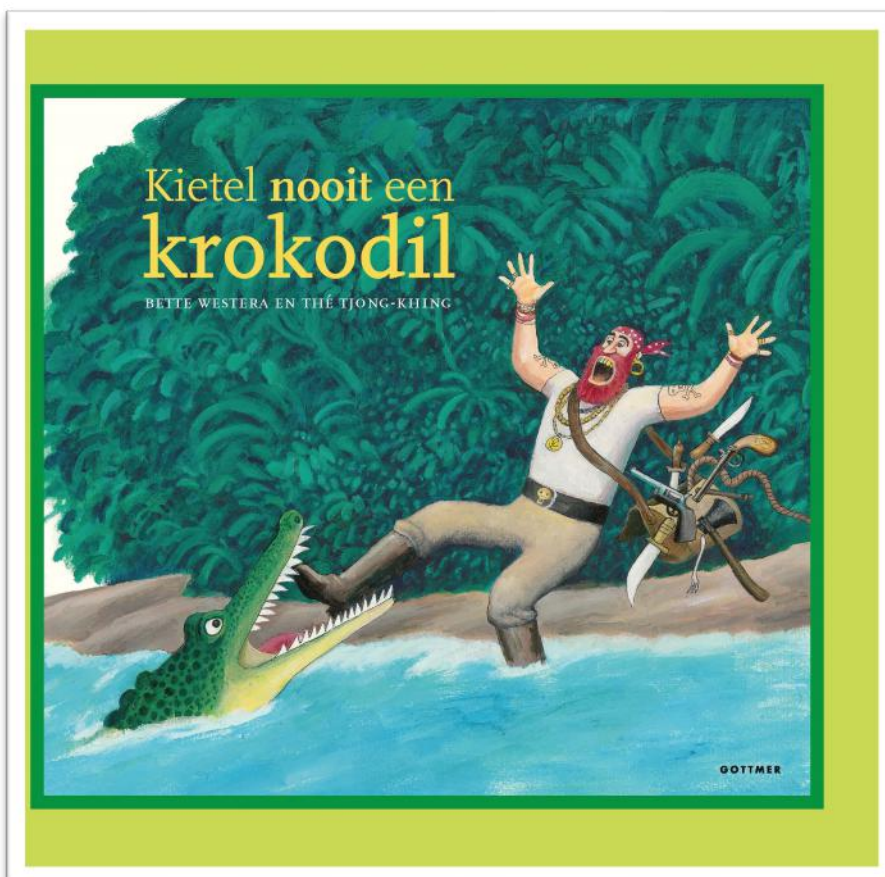


⁸ Picture from *Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper*, retrieved from <https://literatuurmuseum.nl/nl/ontdek-online/literatuurlab/online-exposities/the-tjong-khing/speelgoed>

KIETEL NOOIT EEN KROKODIL (2014)

NEVER TICKLE A CROCODILE

Written by Bette Westera



On his deathbed, a ferocious robber chief gives his three children a very important piece of advice: 'Turn legs out, take princes by the nose, do what you want. Rob the queen, but never tickle a crocodile!' His two sons, disobedient as sons of robbers are, go looking for a crocodile to tickle immediately after their father's last breath - and it costs them dearly. The

daughter seems a lot braver, but a sweetheart she is by no means.... The first book by this surprising duo, *Helden op sokken* [Hero in socks], received an honourable mention at the 2014 Woutertje Pieterse Prize: 'A spirited parody of knightly tales that rings true from the first to the last page.'

"The cover drawing, the socks on the inside flap and the fact that Ripplebeard has one wooden leg suggest why it is best never to tickle a crocodile. Wise advice that the two brothers ignore. More than that: they defy fate by doing just what is forbidden. The book surprises; for instance, the daughter, who is initially presented as a pathetic and slavish girl, evolves into a real robber chief who manages to tame her partying brothers. Highly recommended!" *Pluizuit.be*

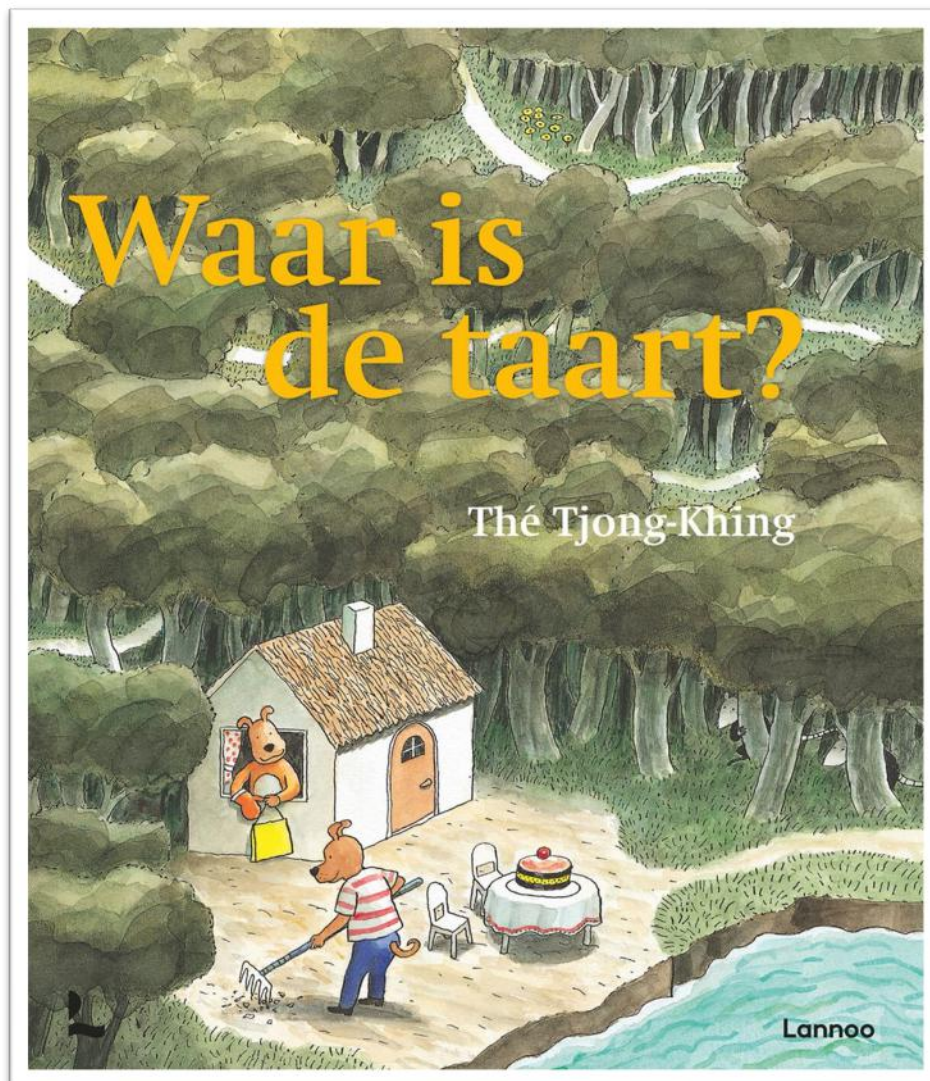
Age: 4+

Retrieved from <https://gottmerkinderboeken.nl/product/kietel-nooit-een-krokodil/>)

WAAR IS DE TAART? (2004)

WHERE IS THE CAKE?

The first picture book that Khing not only illustrated, but also wrote the story himself. However, the book has no text. It is a silent book that tells an exciting story.



Where did the cake go? And where is the eleventh duckling? And why is baby Rabbit crying like that?

Where is the cake? is highly unique search-and-find book.

It was awarded with the Woutertje Pieterse Prize 2005 and also received a Silver Paintbrush.

A selection of the reviews:

“A great book in which the virtuoso illustrator Thé not only appears to have an enormously long artistic breath (...) but also a crazy fantasy that he lives out in the smallest details. Each spread provides great viewing pleasure and is so incredibly beautiful in color and wonderfully drawn that it will make you really happy from the age of four. Tribute to maestro Khing!” *Leesgoed*

“It is a search-and-find book in which you have to find your way through full-page prints and distill the story yourself. (...) A very beautiful (...) book for all ages and for many moments of reading pleasure.” *De Morgen*

“Thé Tjong-Khing (...) shows that humour can also be done without words. (...) A hilarious quest to bring all stories to a successful conclusion. (...) Things are going fast. Thé turns out (...) to like mean humour.” *De Volkskrant*

“The full-page illustrations are a true viewing pleasure (...). With a great eye for detail, the illustrator “tells” other stories in the prints than the hunt for the cake and the rats (...). The book provides the young viewer with a lot of viewing and searching pleasure.” *Pluizuit.be*

“In this wordless picture book, panoramic spread each time provide a situational overview of what happens to about twenty animals. (...) The large, clear watercolor drawings are puzzle pictures, each with twenty or more animals, each of which has its own activities. (...) A funny look-and-search book from the top shelf, for toddlers from the age of five.” *Bol.com*

Age: 3+

Translated to Afrikaans, Danish, German, English, French, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish

GRIEKSE MYTHEN (2011)

GREEK MYTHS

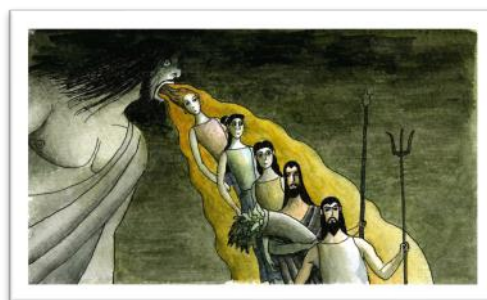
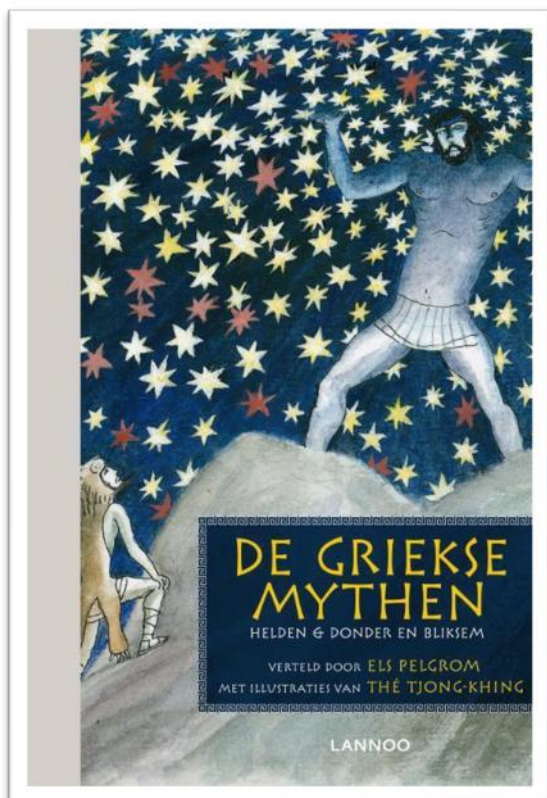
Written by Els Pelgrom

The Greek Myths collects two previously published collections by Els Pelgrom and Thé Tjong-Khing. The book opens with 'Heroes' (2006), about four important men from Greek mythology: Bellerophon, who stormed Olympus with the winged horse Pegasus; Jason, who went with the Argonauts to get the Golden Fleece at Colchis; Theseus, who crushed the Minotaur and Achilles, who played a crucial role in the Trojan War. After 'Heroes' follows 'Thunder and Lightning' (2007). This part tells the creation myth of Mother Earth (Gaia), her sons Uranus and Pontos (the sky and the water) and their progeny, the Titans. During the Battle of the Titans, the old gods lost out and their offspring, the 'new' gods on Olympus, took over. The common thread in this part is the supreme god Zeus, who has love or blood ties with almost all gods. Both parts open with an introduction. A timeline, and in the case of 'Heroes' also a map of the Mediterranean, help the reader to put the stories in context.

“The colourful, accessible drawings by Thé Tjong-Khing fit in perfectly with the smooth writing style. They appropriately fill in what has not been put into words, express emotions in facial expressions and posture.”

Leeswelp

Age: 12+



HET GROTE VOORLEESBOEK VAN VOS EN HAAS (2013)**THE BIG READ ALOUD BOOK OF FOX AND HARE**

Written by Sylvia Vanden Heede

Fox and Hare live together in the wood, next door to Owl. They love each other and they tease each other and, as befits an inseparable duo, they're complete opposites.

Together, they have small, everyday adventures. Sylvia Vanden Heede uses short and easy words, which the youngest readers can read for themselves.



In spite of this simplicity, Vanden Heede succeeds in creating unforgettable characters in a fresh and funny style. The story's so much fun that the readers barely notice the words and sentences are getting longer and longer.

Thé Tjong-Khing's sparkling colour illustrations add to the humour. There are now more than twenty books in the series. With translations in nearly fifteen countries, the happy twosome are well on their way to becoming a classic couple.

This big cardboard reading aloud book collects four previously published picture books of Fox and Hare. In 'A neighbour for Fox and Hare' Fox and Hare meet their new neighbour Owl. Together, they unpack Owl's moving boxes and have a fun evening together. In 'Looking for cookies' Fox has a big appetite for cookies. He doesn't want rice or raisins, or apple or nuts, and even less cheese or meat. Owl and Hare surprise him with cookies when he returns home hungry from a long search. In 'The party of Owl' Owl learns that candles belong on a birthday cake and in 'Blue is boring' Fox doesn't like the colour of his sweater anymore. But during a picnic, Fox's sweater gets all kinds of stains and in the end, it's perfectly colourful!

Through funny stories, the simple words and short sentences the books of Fox and Hare are festive reads for beginning readers. Some words and sentences are in bold, and that makes it easy for them to make the (often funny) emphases in the story. There is also a lot of humour in the big, beautiful illustrations by Thé Tjong-King. A very clever (reading aloud) book!

"Fox and Hare are the cream of the crop of books for children learning to read."

Pluizer.be

Age: 4+

The books about Fox and Hare are translated to Afrikaans, Chinese, Danish, German, Finnish, French, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, Swedish



DE DIEREN VAN HET DUITENBOS (1982)

THE ANIMALS OF FARTHING WOOD

Written by Colin Dann



Drought and building on the Duitenbos [Diamond Forest] have forced the animals living there to move to the nature reserve. It will be a long and dangerous journey.

Age: 9+



Translated from English

(Retrieved from <https://www.bol.com/nl/nl/p/de-dieren-van-het-duitenbos/1001004005077658/>.)

BOSCH (2015)**HIERONYMUS**

Jeroen goes out to play. But on this day everything is different than usual. Jeroen falls into a ravine and ends up in a fantastical world full of strange creatures. They not only take his ball, but also his cap and backpack. Jeroen goes after it fearlessly. He is smart, helps where he can and makes new friends. But not everyone is what they seem...

A picture book without words, in which the magical world of Hieronymus Bosch becomes the scene of an exciting adventure.

Follow the cap, the backpack and the ball...

This beautiful search book without words not only lets the reader/viewer search for the cap, the backpack and the ball, but also guides him through the fantastic world of Hieronymus Bosch. Thé Tjong-Khing must have studied and dissected this master's

paintings for hours. His interpretations and references to the paintings, or fragments from them, are subtly woven into the story.

"You meet all the figures in Hieronymus Bosch's world, but Thé has placed them in his own mysterious world. So there are plenty of details to search for in these fantastic illustrations."

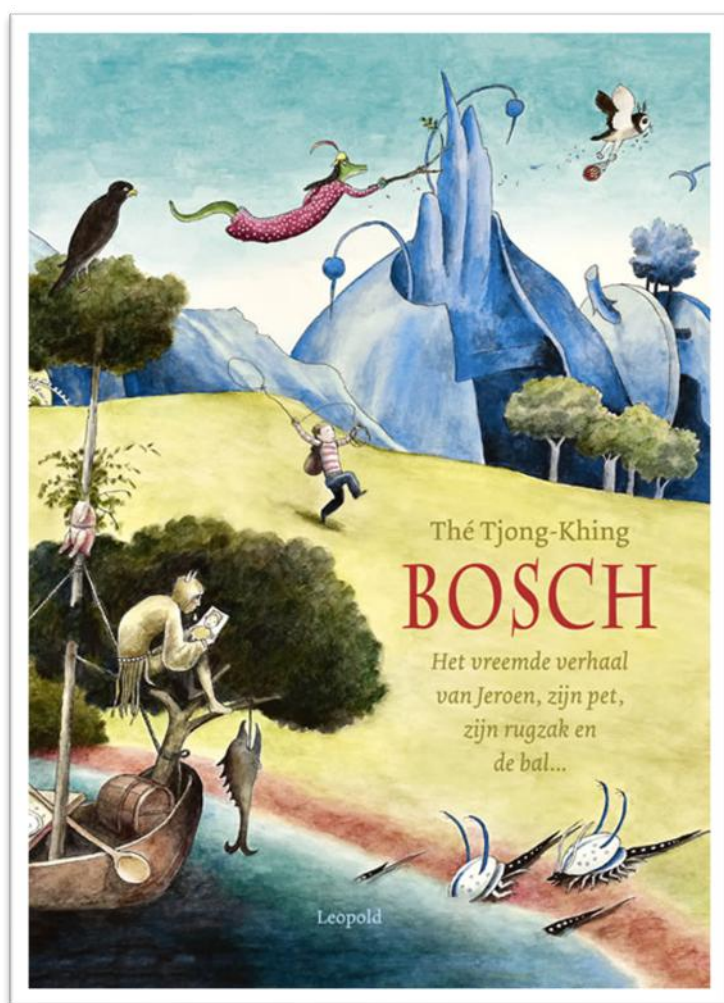
Kidsweek

"Thé and Bosch share a sense of absurd humour, a keen eye for detail and a sardonically grim side."

NRC

Age: 5+

Translated to Chinese, German, English, Italian, Spanish



SPROOKJES VAN ANDERSEN (2016)

FAIRY TALES BY ANDERSEN – THE FAIRY TALE TELLER



In the books of the Fairy Tale Teller, Thé Tjong-Khing has collected the most beautiful fairy tales and rewritten them in such a way that even young children can enjoy them. The beautiful books are now a household name - more than 65,000 copies have already been sold.

With *Fairy tales by Andersen*, which contains no less than 13 well-known fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen, another beautiful volume is added to the series. Like all the other books by the Fairy tale teller, it is a richly illustrated, bound edition with reading ribbon: a classic fairy tale book to cherish for years to come.

“That Thé Tjong-Khing is not only a universally acclaimed illustrator of eye-catching prints, but also a passionate storyteller of fairy tales, he proved before in his fairy tale books.

This time, he has adapted 13 fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen and neatly bundled them in this bulky book (with reading ribbon!). Two of them appeared earlier in his previous book.

The selection is varied: familiar next to unfamiliar, simple next to slightly more complex, short next to long. Like ‘The ugly young duckling’, ‘The little mermaid’, ‘The emperor’s clothes’, ... But also ‘What father does is always good’ or ‘The travelling companion’ or ... Tjong-Khing edits with respect for the original. He makes the tales wittier and uses contemporary language. Each of them is perfectly readable because every word is in your mouth like a cast.


The illustrations in the recognisable Tjong-Khing style are gems. They are narrative and atmospheric. They stimulate your imagination and refresh the text.

A beautiful book that should not be missing from your bookcase of fairy tales and that will delight both young and old time after time with fascinating read-aloud sessions.”

Pluizuit.be

Age: 5+

Retrieved from



En toen
Thé Tjong Khing

tentoonstelling 12 september t/m 1 november 2020
open dinsdag t/m zondag 13.00-17.00 uur

WKGKUNST
Marius van Bouwdijk Bastiaansestraat 28 - 1054 SP Amsterdam
www.wgkunst.nl - 020 6161515 - wgkunst@wgkunst.nl

VSBfonds,
Nederlandse Stichting
Amsterdams
fonds voor de
kunst

Gemeente
Amsterdam
West

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⁹ Retrieved from: <https://www.wgkunst.nl/the-tjong-khing/>

DE DERTIG MOOISTE VERHALEN VAN DE SPROOKJESVERTELLER (2010)



THE THIRTY MOST BEAUTIFUL STORIES OF THE FAIRY TALE TELLER

De dertig mooiste verhalen van de sprookjesverteller by Thé Tjong-Khing is a beautifully and richly illustrated collection of well-known and lesser-known fairy tales.

Everyone knows that Thé Tjong-Khing is a great illustrator. Not for nothing did he win, besides the Max Velthuis Prize (for his entire oeuvre), three Golden Brushes, a Silver Brush and the Woutertje Pieterse Prize, among others. But that he is also a

master storyteller was less known until recently. Fortunately, he has published several fairy tale books in which he has rewritten well-known and lesser-known fairy tales in such a way that even toddlers can enjoy them. In total, more than 65,000 of them have already been sold.

The beautiful anthology *De dertig mooiste verhalen van de sprookjesverteller* contains not only the 22 fairy tales from 'The storyteller' and 'More stories of the storyteller', but also 8 brand-new fairy tales!

“De vertelstem van de auteur is duidelijk herkenbaar in ongeunstelde, toegankelijke taal en grappig vertelcommentaar.” NBD Biblion

Age: 4+

Books Sent to the Jury



Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper (1984, new edition 2023)
(Text by Els Pelgrom)

+ Full PDF of the English edition *Little Sophie and Lanky Flop* (1987)

+ Full PDF of the German edition *Die wundersame Reise der kleinen Sofie* (1985)



De Griekse mythen (2011)
(Text by Els Pelgrom)

+ PDF of the Dutch edition



De dertig mooiste verhalen van de sprookjesverteller
(2010)

+ PDF of the Dutch edition



Bosch (2015)
(Silent book)

+ Book covers in Chinese, German, English, Spanish

+ PDF of the Dutch edition



Kietel nooit een krokodil (2014)

+ PDF of the Dutch edition

Selection of Reviews of the Books Sent to the Jury



KLEINE SOPHIE EN LANGE WAPPER

DOUBLE GOLD FOR LITTLE SOPHIE

By Margot Klompmaker

28 September 1985 in *Provinciale Zeeuwse Courant*

Originally published as Klompmaker, Margot (28 September 1985). 'Dubbel goud voor Kleine Sofie' in *Provinciale Zeeuwse Courant*.

Rarely will the choice for the winner of the Golden Slate Pencil have been as clear to the jury as this year. Already when *Little Sophie and Lanky Flop* was published, the critics were unanimous: this was a book of rare class. With this book, writer Els Pelgrom and artist Thé Tjong-Khing have delivered a top performance, which stands head and shoulders above anything that has appeared in children's books in recent months. The highest awards, a Golden Slate Pencil for the story and a Golden Paintbrush for the drawings, were obvious. Let it be said right away: the book is about death. But the fact that it is anything but a sad reading experience is due to the thoughtful way in which Els Pelgrom has given shape to the theme of death. The main character is Little Sophie, a seriously ill, bedridden girl. One night, all her toy animals come to life. Under the leadership of the cat Terror, it is decided to perform the game "What can be bought in life". The curious Sophie also applies for a place on stage and the game begins. A game taken from life, because that's what it's all about. Sophie ends up in a world that seems real. The girl experiences beautiful moments, but also experiences what cold, hunger, betrayal, arbitrariness and misery mean. At a frantic pace she learns what life has on offer. And as her life comes to an end, she exclaims overwhelmed: "So much, so much!". Els Pelgrom could have ended here, with Sophie's death. Fortunately, she did not leave the reader empty-handed. "'Come,' said Lanky Flop. He took her hand and pulled her to the window... Lanky Flop went first, then Sophie and finally Terror. They climbed out the window... Sophie laughed. An endless journey had begun." For example, Sophie's dying is softened by the thought that there need not be a definitive end after death. 'What

actually happens to you when you are dead?' Sophie asks on the first page of the story. No one can give a satisfactory answer to that. Not even this book. It can only offer comfort to those left behind. And it does, and in a grand way. With this ending many a reader is spared a hangover. This book has also been criticized. According to adults who have read the book with children, children do not understand that Sophie dies. And how can Sophie suddenly become so small that she fits in the puppet theatre? Some also find the drawings too childish. Everything cannot be denied, but I would like to put this against it. Many fairy tales, and I include Sophie's history, I have never fully understood. And what happened in them did not correspond exactly with reality either (but that's why they're fairy tales!). I couldn't care less. Fairy tales were one of my favourite readings. Enjoyment in reading a book does not only depend on a good understanding of the story. The way in which Els Pelgrom depicts Sophie's life lessons and death make *Little Sophie and Lanky Flop* a timeless story, in which an irritating narrative tone is missing. The language is very neat. Illustrator Thé Tjong-Khing is also entitled to the same amount of praise. His illustrations were created in close consultation with the author. In fact, they built Sophie's history together. The result is of unprecedented quality. This book is not only a feast for the eyes because of Khing's drawings (on almost every page!). The publisher has also done its best: the book is generous in size and printed on beautiful paper.

TWO SPECIAL CHILDREN'S BOOKS BY ELS PELGROM AND GUUS KUIJER

By Joke Linders-Nouwens

29 May 1984

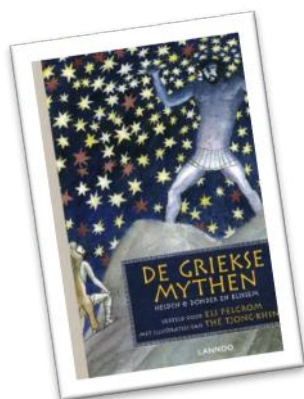
Originally published as Linders-Nouwens, Joke (29 May 1984). 'Twee bijzondere jeugdboeken van Els Pelgrom en Guus Kuijer' in *Haarlems Dagblad*.

Ten years ago, the project group 'The children's book from a different angle' signalled that death in children's books was a taboo, that children were apparently not allowed to know that dying is part of life and that adults still wanted to keep children in a walled, protected world. This has long since changed, certainly also thanks to the activities of socially critical groups. Children's book authors discovered that, if you have enough imagination, you can also address the sad sides of life in a very pure way. I think of such gems as *When grandfather journeys into Winter* by Craig Strete and *Where are you going* by Philippe Dumas. Two special books by Dutch authors have now been added, both for young children from ± 8 years and for teenagers: *Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper* by Els Pelgrom and *De Zwarte Stenen* by Guus Kuijer. Both books were illustrated by Thé Tjong-Khing, have characteristics of a heroic saga, while death is incorporated in a subtle interplay of fantasy and reality. Enough reason to put those two books side by side. Little

Sophie is a curious girl who has been seriously ill for a long time and always has to stay in bed. However, she insists on knowing “what is for sale” in the world and beyond. Els Pelgrom has found an excellent solution for this curiosity, which also makes it possible to accept the girl's death. One night, when Sophie can't sleep, she hears and sees all her dolls and stuffed animals come together for the puppet show “The world is a vale of tears”. Because the puppets think an ordinary puppet show is old hat – “We want something difficult” – Terror the cat organizes a play about “What Is For Sale In Life”. Sophie also plays a role in this and learns while playing that there are all kinds of people: fat, rich, selfish people and poor people who can only be grumpy from hunger. At the annual fair she sees the wonders of the world and discovers to her shame that happiness is always paid for with misfortune. In *The Home for Failed Children*, Sophie can catch her breath, because she is not laughed at for her bald head. That paradise state, in which one accepts each other's flaws, is not the real one. Terror soon comes to get her because her friend Lanky Flop is in prison. The attempts to get him out of it keep Sophie in situations where she has to choose between fair and unfair, between dreaming away in a temporary happiness or fighting a bitter battle. Els Pelgrom has developed an excellent storyline for this that is logical, exciting and contains subtle references to real life with its hardships. In the course of the play it becomes clear that Sophie is dangerously ill and she experiences this firsthand after a last act of heroism. But then Sophie also knows that life is very beautiful and she knows the value of true friendship. The end of the play is also the end of Sophie's life. “There were many visitors and they laid flowers for her.” Her father and mother stayed with her, but “grief makes you tired” and when their eyes close, the story can go on. The friends from the play come to pick up Sophie and together they then set off “through green hills and blue skies”, having fun. “Sophie laughed. An endless journey had begun.” We also know that continuation of life after death from *The brothers Lionheart* by Astrid Lindgren. It's a good way to make the inevitable livable, it's very comforting.

Thé Tjong-Khing has richly illustrated this special story. His drawings add a lot to the story and are almost never repetitions. Thé Tjong-Khing tells that he'd asked Els Pelgrom to write a book especially for him. Then she had made this story, in which a lot happens, so that there was also a lot to draw. In his drawings, Thé shows another side of the story: the time and place in which Sophie and the others live. The Middle Ages? No, because cars pass by, and you see posh ladies from the last century. Is it about people? But what are those winding keys for in some backs? Thé Tjong-Khing drew figures from the time and land of fairy tales and all that is very different from ordinary time with ordinary people.

I wish I was a kid and got this book. I wish I didn't already know it and could start reading it. Because I know that I would have a wonderful day.



GRIEKSE MYTHEN

GREEK MYTHS

By Kyra Fastenau

15 April 2012

Originally published as Fastenau, Kyra (15 April 2012). 'Griekse mythen' in *Leeswelp*.

The Greek Myths collects two previously published collections by Els Pelgrom and Th   Tjong-Khing. The book opens with 'Heroes' (2006), about four important men from Greek mythology: Bellerophon, who stormed Olympus with the winged horse Pegasus; Jason, who went with the Argonauts to get the Golden Fleece at Colchis; Theseus, who crushed the Minotaur and Achilles, who played a crucial role in the Trojan War. After 'Heroes' follows 'Thunder and Lightning' (2007). This part tells the creation myth of Mother Earth (Gaia), her sons Uranus and Pontos (the sky and the water) and their progeny, the Titans. During the Battle of the Titans, the old gods lost out and their offspring, the 'new' gods on Olympus, took over. The common thread in this part is the supreme god Zeus, who has love or blood ties with almost all gods.

Both parts open with an introduction. A timeline, and in the case of 'Heroes' also a map of the Mediterranean, help the reader to put the stories in context. Pelgrom also explains the origin of the myths. She characterizes them as the answer to inexplicable matters and unsaid things. Myths never straightforwardly tell what happened, but rather serve as a mirror to humanity. They are stories of great deeds, which are at the same time full of self-interest, deceit, lust, hatred, senseless violence, adultery, rape, incest, intrigue, jealousy, resentment, vengeance and cruelty – qualities of both men and gods. They want people to understand that every action has a cause and effect. Furthermore, they advise taking an example from the heroes and avoiding their mistakes.

(...)

The marginal notes to the stories prove that Pelgrom does not just talk about the Greek heroes and gods, but wants to show that contemporary culture is still full of references to the old stories. She provides etymological and semantic explanations of modern

words, names and expressions, and draws parallels between Greek myths and other folk tales, fairy tales and the Bible and Quran. This brings the stories closer to the reader. Pelgrom also explains that there is a connection between myths and reality: the search for the Golden Fleece, for example, is an epic translation of the trade expeditions of the Greeks, and economic interests also played a role in the battle for Troy. Pelgrom's stories do not walk on literary stilts. They read fluently, the style does not want to imitate the Homeric verses, the language sounds contemporary and young and occasionally puts things into perspective, with a critical note and a touch of humour. However, there is no clear storyline or characters that the reader can empathize with.

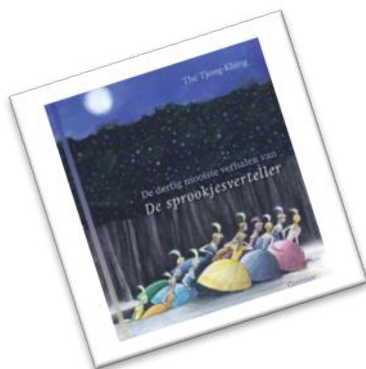
The colourful, accessible drawings by Thé Tjong-Khing fit in perfectly with the smooth writing style. They appropriately fill in what has not been put into words, express emotions in facial expressions and posture. The prints contain artistic jokes: for example, the dinner where Achilles listens to King Priam's plea is a clear reference to Da Vinci's *Last Supper*. The book has been published with great care, with clear printing on a beautifully varied page layout. A minor flaw is the inconsistency in the spelling of Greek classical names. Nevertheless, it is a beautiful, fascinating and instructive book.

GREEK MYTHS

NBD Biblion

Reviews for libraries

The combination of the writer Els Pelgrom and the illustrator Thé Tjong-Khing is a guarantee for a quality children's book. And this omnibus with two previously separately published books about Greek myths certainly has quality. The often complicated stories about the Greek gods, goddesses and heroes are clearly retold. The author manages to avoid the problem that the Greek myths are intended for adults and not for children. The sexual elements in the myths are not concealed, but not given too much emphasis. The choice of myths is very extensive. Practical and useful is the additional information provided in the margin. It does not interfere with reading the story thanks to a very successful layout. The many pen drawings coloured with water color fit well with the atmosphere of the book. Certainly not sweet or funny. Horrific stories are given a gruesome drawing, such as the one about the death of Pentheus, who is torn apart by women.



DE DERTIG MOOISTE VERHALEN VAN DE SPROOKJESVERTELLER

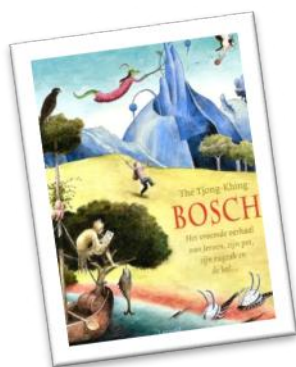
THE THIRTY MOST BEAUTIFUL STORIES OF THE FAIRY TALE STORYTELLER

By Truusje Vrooland - Löb at website www.dbnl.org.nl

(...) For *De dertig mooiste verhalen van de Sprookjesverteller* [The thirty best stories of the fairy tale storyteller] (2010) he selected the best-known stories from the Western cultural heritage and ‘translated’ them into short sentences, in a way that is clear to young children. With the occasional quirky remark or witty conclusion: ‘Imagine if the princess had not done what she promised, she would never have married this handsome prince. And fair is fair: after all, it's a good thing she had such a strict, wise father.’

For these fairy tales, Thé delights as illustrator in depicting a real fairy-tale world with handsome princes on horses, castles, dark forests, baroque ballrooms and princesses of all shapes and sizes; subjects that suit him and which he deftly depicts with a wink or with some extra drama.

(Retrieved from: www.dbnl.org/tekst/coil001lexi01_01/lvdj00961.php)



HIERONYMUS. AN ADVENTURE IN THE WORLD OF HIERONYMUS BOSCH

YOU GET HIERONYMUS BOSCH'S ART FOR FREE

By Thomas de Veen

11 February 2016

Originally published as Veen, Thomas de (11 February 2016). 'Bosch kunst krijg je er gratis bij' in *NRC Handelsblad*.

On the opening page of *Hieronymus*, young Jeroen fools around with his ball and then stumbles into the abyss. With ball and all, and with cap and backpack. In Thé Tjong-Khing's textless picture book, he goes on a quest for those objects, because little monsters have run off with them. Jeroen ends up in a typical Thé Tjong-Khing world, with vast grassy plains and dark forests, which is now populated by the diabolical creatures from the work of Hieronymus Bosch.

This makes it an ideal introduction to Bosch's art for children: searching for the ball, cap and other storylines, you get the art for free. Thé was already familiar and unsurpassed with this procedure: he previously opened the complete history of art in the picture book *Art with cake* (2015), by having his characters stroll through Van Gogh's bedroom, Co Westerik's grass and Dalí's steppe.

With *Hieronymus* he does something similar, and maybe even better. Because Thé and Hieronymus Bosch share a sense of absurd humor, a keen eye for detail and a sardonic grim edge – their 'collaboration' makes *Hieronymus* one of the creepiest children's books in ages. But the nightmare ends gently and above all it is a great search book. Thé's images do not reveal their secrets at a glance, many storylines intertwine. The most wonderful and scary monsters – reptile-like porcupines, dragon-like birds, owls – eventually lead young Jeroen to a snake-like witch. Is it a Bosch-witch or a Thé-witch? In *Hieronymus*, their two oeuvres merge beautifully.

(Retrieved from <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2016/02/11/bosch-kunst-krijg-je-er-gratis-bij-1589114-a991015>.)

HIERONYMUS

By Frauke Pauwels

December 2015

There is no doubt that the paintings of Hieronymus, or Jeroen, Bosch are intriguing. His imaginative, almost absurd and sometimes gruesome visual language still fascinates after all these centuries. With the lessons of medieval culture by Professor Jef Janssens, twenty years ago now, that visual power only increased for me: every element also turned out to be a code, every painting became a secret language that you gradually learned to decipher.

It is precisely that feeling that Thé Tjong-Khing manages to capture in *Hieronymus*: the idea that behind every image there is a story, and another, and another... so that you want to look again and again, pluck layer after layer and dive into the new world beyond.

It seems like a gift, that visual excess and generous symbolism of Hieronymus Bosch. But to get started with Bosch's legacy without losing your own image language and style, you have to be from a good background. Thé Tjong-Khing performs this task wonderfully. Those who are familiar with his work will see how he continues the line and manages to give a place to figures from earlier works, such as the cake and the salamander as the villain from the series of wordless picture books. Anyone familiar with the work of Hieronymus Bosch will be amazed at how wonderfully details from his world of imagination fit into Khing's universe. For example, the blue mountains with their strange pointed appendages come straight from the left panel of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, we see the house and an allusion to the figure from *The peddler*, the strange little boat and the 'boatswain' from *The Ship of Fools*... Feel free to include Bosch's work: Khing's book guarantees a wonderful game of recognition, from large 'carrying' figures to small details from various paintings – the strawberry as a seducer, the animals of all kinds (and feel free to take that literally, exuberant tails, crests and feathers are strikingly present), the mythical creatures, nature and architecture...

In *Hieronymus*, Khing strips the images of the sharpest edges and of the layer of guilt and sin from an adult world of experience (and a lesser-known iconographic culture). He charges them again with fear, sadness, deceit, quarrel, but also helpfulness, cooperation and gratitude. In this way he also makes the images readable for the viewer with less

cultural (and emotional) baggage, and he fuses his own visual language with that of Bosch. To the biblical references, which are emphatically present in Bosch – or form the starting point – Khing adds fairy-like elements, so that the imprisoned children are reminiscent of ‘Hansel and Gretel’ and the transformation of the evil ‘witch’ to that of the stepmother from ‘Snow White’.

As in Khing’s earlier work, the slope acts as an ominous space. He puts a lot of effort into the spatial effect of the prints. Landscapes expand in height, width and depth and subtly guide the reader’s direction of view.

It is also clever how Khing knows how to open up the images in which many researchers grit their teeth to a wider audience. *Hieronymus* can be read in many ways. It works as a search-and-find book, in which the search for a backpack, cap and ball leads the reading and numerous side figures can be followed. It forms an adventure story in which a boy tumbles into a ravine and in the strange world in which he ends up, he sets children free who have disappeared in the hands of a witch. The book invites you to philosophize about good and evil and forms – on top of that or above all – a wonderful introduction or renewed acquaintance with the work of Hieronymus Bosch. The painter from the fifteenth century will have died 500 years ago in 2016, and that will not go unnoticed. With *Hieronymus* it is guaranteed that Khing will lead different generations (again) to the work of Hieronymus Bosch. Fantastic and fascinating!

(Retrieved from

https://mappalibri.be/?navigatieid=62&recensieid=5347&via_navigatieid=81.)



KIETEL NOOIT EEN KROKODIL

NEVER TICKLE A CROCODILE

By Inge Umans

maart 2015

This book creeps, horrifies and chuckles just as much as *Helden op sokken* [Hero in socks], previously published by this duo. This time, we dive into a den of robbers, where robber chief Rimpelbaard [Wrinklebeard] is dying and, from his deathbed, passes on various robber wisdom to his two sons and daughter. He asks one of his sons to become a robber chief, and also tells them never to tickle a crocodile. When Rimpelbaard is dead and buried, the sons reach for the rum bottle and set out. Not to go robbing. They never have and never will. Only the daughter does what her father has told them to do and robs and steals to her heart's content. The sons just want to do everything their father has forbidden them to do, so they go looking for a crocodile. When they find it and want to tickle it, the crocodile is too quick for them. Just in time, their sister arrives at the whimper and rescues them from the bite-sized beast's maw. She orders her brothers to go out robbing with her and profiles herself as a real Rimpelbaard...

What a delightful book to read aloud. The book is written entirely in rhyme, which makes for a solid read-aloud cadence. The cover drawing, the socks on the inside flap and the fact that Rimpelbaard has one wooden leg suggest why it is best never to tickle a crocodile. Wise advice that the two brothers ignore. More than that: they defy fate by doing just what is forbidden. The book surprises; for instance, the daughter, who is initially presented as a pathetic and slavish girl, evolves into a real robber chief who manages to tame her partying brothers. Highly recommended!

Awarded a Flag and Pennant 2015

(Retrieved from <https://pluizuit.be/boek/kietel-nooit-een-krokodil/>)

December 2014

Never tickle a crocodile, that is the wisest advice a great robber chief bequeaths to his three children. But what to do with such advice? His sons know: they completely ignore it. They pay for their food, let rich noblemen walk and immediately go looking for a crocodile to tickle. Looks like fun to them!

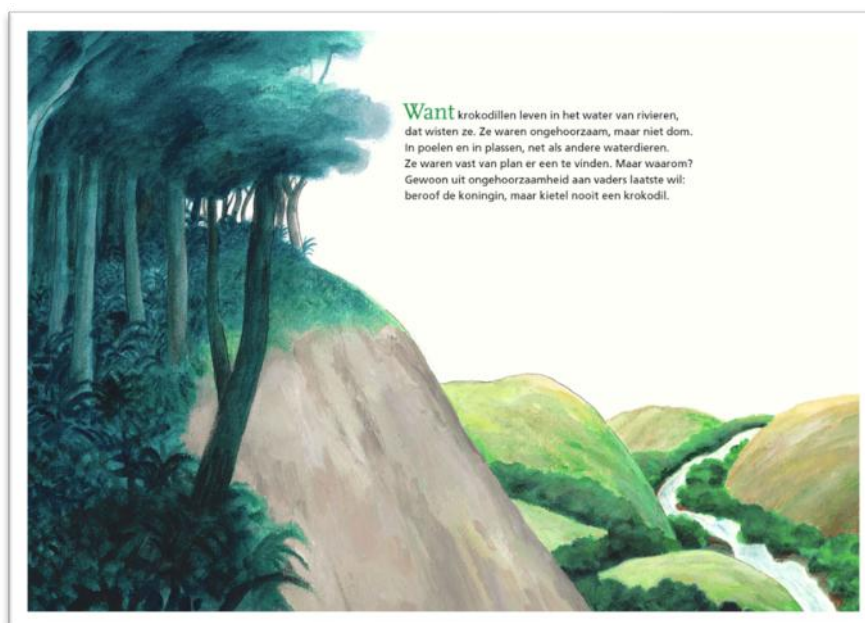
But his daughter knows better. If you are given advice, you should follow it. Staying true to her father's traditions, she keeps robbing and killing. She cracks bones, robs the queen, and she also faithfully follows the advice 'never tickle a crocodile'. Why should you? But one day, she hears her brothers calling - they have found their crocodile... now what?

Never tickle a crocodile is good advice, even if it comes from a robber chief. This brutal man has a lot of bad on his conscience, but apparently knows full well how far he can take himself. These brutal deeds, by the way, come to the fore in the story: breaking bones and twisting legs, murders and violence are mentioned verbatim, although these acts are also quickly negated by a joke.

The drawings are done in Thé Tjong-Khing's style: designed spatially by shadow borders, and with both simple design where possible and details where desirable. A tough picture book for young daredevils, or for older children who just want to be read to once in a while - or, of course, read this exciting book themselves!

(Retrieved from <https://www.coolsuggesties.nl/recensie-kietel-nooit-een-krokodil-bette-westera/>)

10



¹⁰ <https://www.erikthedesign.com/boeken/kietel-nooit-een-krokodil/>

CONDENSED PROFILE

Biography

Thé Tjong-Khing was born on August 4, 1933 in Purworedjo in Indonesia in a Chinese Indonesian family. As a child, he was a fan of the Tarzan comic strips of Edgar Rice Burroughs and he used to make drawings inspired by Indonesian fairy tales. In high school, he drew portraits of movie stars with a photographic precision. Thé (his surname) went to the *Seni Rupa* (arts) institute in Bandung. He left Indonesia at the age of 23 to continue his studies at the Gerrit Rietveld Art Academy in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Early work

Thé's talent quickly became apparent and from the late 1960s, he worked as a cartoonist for many years. Between 1967 and 1968 he made the science-fiction strip *Iris* and he created the cartoon strip *Arman & Ilva* for various newspapers. At the end of the 1970s, Thé taught illustrative design at the Rietveld Art Academy for a couple of years. Besides this, Thé started making illustrations for (children's) magazines.

In 1966, he made his first book cover, for the children's book *Micky en de vreemde rovers* [Micky and the strange robbers] by Thea Beckman.

In 1970, Thé illustrated his first children's book, written by Miep Diekmann.

Now he could capture in one drawing what he would otherwise – in comics - need a whole series of pictures for. His pen drawings of long-legged pin-ups for *Total Loss, weetjewel* [Total loss, you know] (1973) still leaned heavily on the comic strip tradition, but his style gradually became more free. This first collaboration was followed by more joint books.

Thé mainly illustrated realistically until the idea arose to make a book together with Els Pelgrom, which became *Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper* [Little Sophie and Lanky Flop, 1984, republished in 2023]. At first he drew a rather naturalistic Sofie, but as the story progressed, she grew into the girl as the reader knows her: a captivating, bouncy little figure on thin legs in a baggy nightgown.

Even so, after *Little Sophie*, most publishers continued to ask him for realistic stories.

But when Lannoo publishers (Belgium) approached him in the late 1990s for Sylvia Vanden Heedes books about Vos and Haas (Fox and Hare), Thé returned to the fantasy story – this time for good.

Key Characteristics

- Thé likes to incorporate real paintings into his drawings, a Warhol, a Gauguin, some details of Brueghel or Da Vinci. He does this pure for himself, he doesn't mean anything with it, but these famous artists just him, that's for sure.
- His illustrations from the early years clearly demonstrate his admiration for work by artists like Rie Cramer (1887-1977), a Dutch illustrator who grew up in Indonesia. In his early work Thé used a special Chinese brush and East Indian ink, with which he drew both the finest lines and the big plains. Later, this brush was replaced by the pen, with which he with care and virtuosity managed to record the world of teenagers in several books for this age group. Because of this extremely precise and often clever rendition of their own world, teenagers felt attracted to his work.
- The simplification of Thé's style was especially visible when he turned to the young child in the books and toddler picture books. The black and white drawings depict the world from a toddler's perspective; steps are enormous and can only be climbed with the leg stretched out.
- His illustrations in *Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper* have been called revolutionary. Here he lets go of the smooth ink line of his comics and creates a fairy tale world in finely shaded pen drawings. The cover in colour also shows the cheerful but menacing atmosphere that will become so characteristic of his work. Also striking is the way in which the depicted event seems caught in the middle of a movement. His fascination for films from his early childhood is clearly reflected in this.
Kleine Sofie en Lange Wapper has been called a pivotal point in Dutch children's literature because of the equivalence of text and drawings.
- From the end of the 1990s, Thé started to work less and less realistic. The figures become more imaginative and stylized. The sets become emptier, with large surfaces and repetitive elements. The illustrations in the series of books about Fox and Hare (1998-present), written by Sylvia Vanden Heede for early readers put him on that track for the first time. The drawings were crucial in that concept. Thé drew a lot of small illustrations, but he had an urgent desire to make larger images. He was able to indulge in large-format drawings. He furnished Fox and Hare's den with all kinds of objects and he also incorporated works of art in it. The illustrations add a lot to the stories. First of all humour, but also an essential deepening of the characters.

- Next to illustrating characters, Thé enjoys making ominous and frightening illustrations. In later work, such as his fairy tale drawings, Thé shifts the emotions more and more to the surrounding landscape. Trees, bushes and other greenery serve the atmosphere, the movement, the composition and the emotions. *Griekse mythen* [Greek Myths] with text by Els Pelgrom forms another breaking point in Thé's oeuvre. In this book Thé went a step further and dared to freeze scenes for the first time. In these two books everything is reduced to the essentials.

Stillness was a personal breakthrough for Thé. The almost absurd stories about the Greek gods, monsters and heroes lent themselves perfectly for a new direction in his work. They tapped into a new artistic source and the palette sparkled, but remained in an exciting balance.

- Another highlight in Thé's oeuvre are his wordless picture books in the 'cake-series'.

His images have become more static and have a surreal character. The simplicity of form is combined with a refined staged mise-en-page. The influence of film (mimicry of the figures, solidified action) and the comic strip (cartoon line and viewing pace) and the eye-catching use of colour are the main ingredients of these books. Because it is a silent book, everything has to come from the image. Thé has found his ultimate form in the cake books. He doesn't illustrate someone's story, but draws from his own mind and builds up the ever-changing landscape layer by layer. This scenic structure is indebted to the Asian visual tradition. At the same time, the forest edges, splashing streams and rocks pass by like in a movie. The animals run and jump, they are frozen in the middle of their action. In fact, Khing's illustrations reflect the meeting of two worlds. In doing so, he has created his very own visual language.

- In *Bosch: het vreemde verhaal van Jeroen, zijn pet, zijn rugzak en de bal...* [Bosch: the strange story of Jeroen, his cap, his backpack and the ball..., 2015], Thé detached Bosch's devilish figures from their original surroundings and made his own compositions with them. The story structure with textless panels is his own, but Bosch's dark magic resonates. Bosch's eerie atmosphere fits Thé like a glove.
- In recent years, Thé has gained publicity for his imaginative, colourful fairy tales, in which costumes and drama play big roles. The illustrations with dragons, witches, princesses and many chandeliers can be recognized at a glance as Thé Tjong-Khing's: not gruesome but unmistakably menacing, not funny but with a lot of humour. And there is always suspense; something is about to happen, or maybe not yet.

- As a writer Thé Tjong-Khing started more or less by accident, and it was a surprise to himself too, because he thought he had no talent for writing. At one point when he was reading fairy tales to his eldest grandson, he noticed how much he had to cut out, how many side paths he found too long-winded to read to a child. He told the fairy tales his way, with the occasional quirky remark or witty conclusion, and his grandson enjoyed it. Then he wrote them down on a few A-4 pages so that he could read them exactly the same way next time. Shortly afterwards, when a publisher asked him to make a fairy tale book, the beginning was already there.
- The combination of clear and figurative accessibility and continuous quality innovation make his signature recognizable and his creatures widely loved and known.

Awards

With three Golden Paintbrushes, the Woutertje Pieterse Prize and the Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis, Thé Tjong-Khing is the most acclaimed illustrator in the Netherlands. His books are published in many, many countries and in 2010, he was given the prestigious Max Velthuis Award, awarded once every three years, honouring an illustrator's complete oeuvre. In more than sixty years of illustrating, he has woven his Western gaze, Eastern precision and penchant for a menacing, ominous edge into a unique handwriting.

“In a drawing, you can make anything happen.”

**Renomination dossier by the
national IBBY section of The
Netherlands**

