

observant

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“REMEMBRANCE IS NOT ALL GOOD”

This weekend, Maastricht is celebrating 80 years of liberation. Important, says historian Georgi Verbeek, but there are also pitfalls. “It should not be reduced into an empty or too easy ritual.”

Photo: ANP/Jean-Pierre Geusens



P4 PORTRAIT

“I’m headstrong and don’t always follow popular opinion – not to provoke, but because I genuinely think differently. For instance, I believe Vincent van Gogh was a bad painter.”

P5 1000 KM

Neuropsychologist Golnaz Atefi will skate a world record to draw attention to dementia

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“Budget cuts will hurt, we just don’t know yet where and how much”



What's old, what's new

I seem to be getting more and more spam in my inbox as of late. Every morning, I find myself deleting a bunch of unwanted emails, all while being careful not to accidentally discard any legitimate ones in my grim enthusiasm. It happens occasionally, but never with fan messages like the one I received this week: “Sing, fight, cry, pray, laugh, work and admire’ IS BACK: YES.”

It came from one of our loyal readers, who added that he himself had been interviewed for the series thirteen years ago (“Everything still holds true”). In it, we profile students and staff members through a mix of quirky and serious questions. Is it a case of old wine in new bottles? Not at all – we’re using the exact same format precisely because it works so well. You can read this week’s interview with Ruben Philipsen to see for yourself.

A brand-new feature this academic year is our “sex series”, in which UM sexologist Marieke Dewitte answers students’ questions. She talks candidly and professionally about even the most intimate topics. But putting this into writing can be tricky. We wanted to avoid making it feel awkward, crass or too heavy. Before the summer, we agreed that the series should be informative while relatively light in tone. A little humour is welcome, but it’s a delicate balance. The same goes for the accompanying illustrations. All articles and images have been carefully reviewed and revised multiple times. You can check out the result and see what you think.

We’re also welcoming two new names to the print version of *Observant* and our website this year. One of them is Deborah Blekkenhorst, who joined the team as an editor in mid-August. She has a long and proven track record in journalism, having worked on current affairs and sports programmes at NOS and BNN/VARA. You may have heard her on the radio or in podcasts covering the Olympic Games or F1. She knows a lot about sports, but also has first-hand experience in education as a teacher at the School for Journalism.

The second new addition is junior journalist Lena Reichel. She just completed her master’s in Media Studies, following a bachelor’s degree in Arts and Culture, at Maastricht University. She has previously written for a German newspaper and the FASoS *Mosaïek Magazine*. As a junior journalist, she’ll continue to hone her writing skills with us. Originally from Germany, she’s made great strides in improving her Dutch over the past few months. Our Dutch-taught summer school course in Journalism and Effective Writing was challenging for her, but her first Dutch articles are now online.

Riki Janssen

Every week, the editor-in-chief writes about what has been happening at the *Observant* office



Collage: Simone Golob

“To reach orgasm, you need to be able to let go and surrender to your body”

It’s quite common to not always experience the pleasure of an orgasm during sex. Some people rarely do, even when they’re enjoying themselves and feel completely comfortable with their partner. Why is this? And is there anything that can help? UM sexologist Marieke Dewitte has the answers.

There is a significant orgasm gap between cis men and cis women, explains Dewitte. Men almost always climax during partnered sex, but women – especially heterosexual women – have far fewer orgasms. And there’s a reason for this: “Most women can’t come from penetration alone. This is because their pleasure centre isn’t the vagina,

but the clitoris. During penetration, the back of the clitoris – which extends deep into the body and is more than just the small nub on the outside – gets stimulated. While pleasurable, this often isn’t enough to reach orgasm.”

So, don’t skip the foreplay. “Too many people think of foreplay as an optional warm-up for the ‘real’ sex. But for many women, it’s actually the best part. Foreplay is often viewed as the appetiser to the main course of penetration, when in fact it is the main part of the experience. Penetration is just the dessert.” For those who would like to be able to orgasm during penetration, Dewitte has a few tips: “Use your fingers or a vibrator to stimulate your clitoris. Changing positions can also help. Placing a pillow under your lower back during missionary can help tilt your pelvis, allowing your partner’s pubic bone to rub against yours.”

But what if you never have an orgasm during sex? This might be a sign that you find it hard to surrender to sensation and let go of control, explains Dewitte. “To have an orgasm, you need to let go and cross a psychological threshold.” You can practise this, she says. How? “Masturbate. Experiment with using a toy. You’ll learn what you like, and your body will develop motor memory. As you have more orgasms, your body will

become better at recognising the signs. Over time, this will make it easier for you to climax.” It might also be a good idea to take a look at your expectations. “An orgasm doesn’t always feel like an intense peak of pleasure; sometimes it’s more like a gentle wave.”

So far, we’ve mostly focused on women. But what about men? What might cause them to have

trouble orgasming? “Sometimes they’re too focused on their partner. An orgasm is a solo experience, a moment when you need to focus on your own pleasure and ‘let go’ of your partner. Or they might be too focused on performance, putting too much pressure on themselves to orgasm.”

The important thing for everyone is to find the right kind of stimulation. “Many young people imitate what they see in porn, where the emphasis is often on penetration and – preferably simultaneous – orgasm. Orgasms are important, and everyone would like to orgasm, but you can have satisfying sex without it. Don’t blindly copy what you see in porn because you think that’s how sex is supposed to be. Instead, ask yourself: do I enjoy this? How does this feel for me?”

Cleo Freriks

Marieke Dewitte is a clinical psychologist and sexologist at Maastricht University. In this weekly series, she answers questions about sex from students. If you have a question, you can submit it anonymously, scan the code



Cabinet continues to cut hard, but differently

UM President Rianne Letschert: “It’s definitely going to hurt, we just don’t know where and how much”

The €215 million cut to universities’ national ‘sector plans’ will not go ahead, NOS reported on Tuesday. Instead, the cabinet is scrapping the starter’s and incentive grants. “It is just a shift of cuts and there is more to come,” concludes Rianne Letschert, President of Maastricht University.

The cabinet still wants to cut almost a billion euros from higher education and science. “That will definitely hurt,” Letschert says, “we just don’t know yet where the blows will fall. We are also worried about the measures that will result from the ‘internationalisation in balance’ bill.” This concerns the possible restriction of the intake of foreign students and a reduction in the number of English-language programmes. “What does the sum of all these financial effects mean? I can’t make any statements now about possible redundancies, it’s too early for that.”

The sector plans – joint projects of universities on research and education, good for 1,200 jobs nationwide – remain in place. All Maastricht University faculties participate in them: think of research themes ranging from the human factor in new technologies and mental disorders, to sustainable food systems and globalisation. The faculties receive extra research funds for this from the government. At the Faculty of Law, this amounts to about €600,000 a year and the Faculty of Science and Engineering gets €1.4 million a year. That is less than, for example, the psychologists (about €1.8 mil-



Illustration: Shutterstock

lion), Arts and Social Sciences (about €2.3 million), and the Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences together with the hospital (about €5 million). This money was used to

hire academic and support staff, convert temporary contracts into permanent jobs, and promote assistant professors to associate professors.

Starter’s grants

The new Minister of Education, Eppo Bruins, is now going to cut starter’s and incentive grants as compensation. These were meant to make researchers less dependent on competition at research funder NWO. At stake is €300 million a year nationwide. More than half was intended for starter’s grants (up to €300,000 each, but half was also possible) for staff members recently promoted to assistant professor. The other €144 million was earmarked for incentive grants for other scientific staff. Maastricht University will receive around €22 million for starter’s grants and €10 million for incentive grants in 2024. The scholarships, awarded in 2023 and this year, have been or will still be paid out, says Letschert.

Government programme

The new cabinet will present its coalition programme on Friday, which will detail various plans. Either way, Bruins will deviate from the coalition agreement, in which the sector plans were explicitly mentioned. The question is how the coalition parties will react. They can probably live with it, now that the cutback remains intact.

The blow for universities remains the same, though, tweets Caspar van den Berg, president of the society of universities UNL. “We had hoped for and counted on real relief. This is shifting, not solving.”

Riki Janssen/HOP

column



In the Blink of Her Childhood

“

“Robin, I can’t find my mascara- can I borrow yours?”

It all started with this question. A question that caused my fingers to freeze on the keyboard midsentence, and my features to twist into an incredulous expression.

When I’d left for university in August 2022, my little sister Amber was just twelve years old. She was tall for her age - to my dismay, even taller than me - but she had round cheeks, youthful eyes, slightly misaligned teeth. A child.

The next time I saw her was in October 2022. Amber had turned thirteen. She was in eighth grade, had grown even taller than before, and was wearing her hair in a slicked back ponytail. Still, she looked like a child. December 2022. Enter stage left, ‘Amber’,

wearing a sweater that she stole from my closet, and grinning widely to show off her new Invisalign. Still a child.

April 2023, a weekend trip to Lake Como. Whilst ordering drinks at a bar, Amber suggested the possibility of her ordering an Aperol Spritz. My mother declined. I smiled into my glass - still a child.

Fast forward to June 2023, the month where the question was asked. After taking a few moments to process the question, I’d looked up from my laptop to find Amber watching me expectantly. I tossed her my mascara.

The next moment was in July 2023. We were visiting family friends in Finland and had been left to our own devices. Amber seized the opportunity and asked me for a sip of my lonkero - a ready mixed drink made from grapefruit soda, lime, and gin. Being the generous sister I am, I obliged. Sorry mom

and dad.

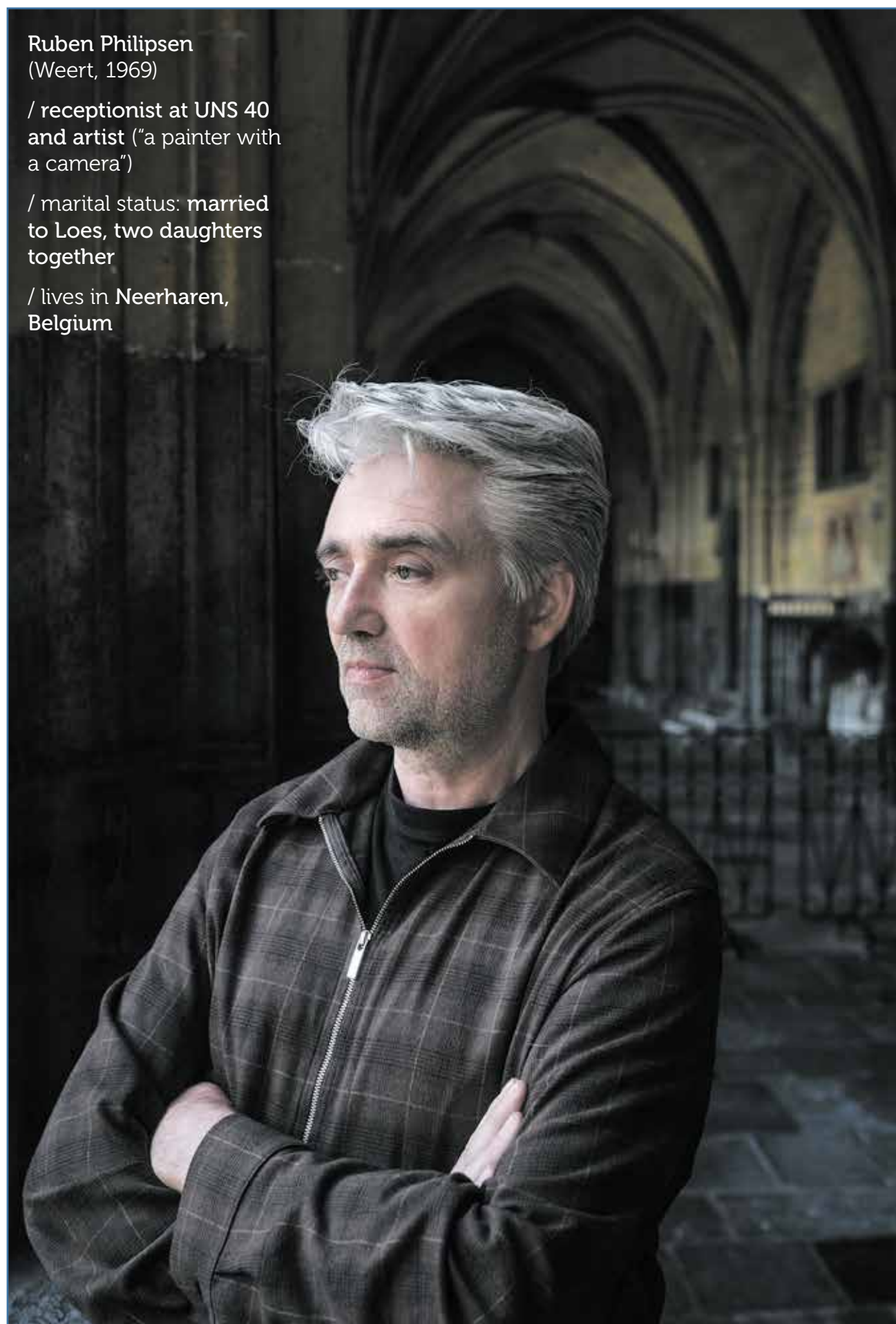
Suddenly, change occurred quickly. Holding onto Amber’s fleeting youth felt like grasping at a whisp of smoke. I tried to memorize her face each time I saw her but grew to realize there were too many faces. Too much change. And in the blink of an eye, she wasn’t a child anymore.

The last time I saw Amber was just last month, August 2024. She was fourteen years old, soon to be fifteen. Her cheeks had hollowed out, her eyes sharp and her lashes dark. I looked at her for a long time, memorizing her face. It felt bittersweet, knowing I’d come back to another.

”

Robin van Wasen,
student at the University College Maastricht

series sing, fight, cry, pray, laugh, work and admire



Ruben Philipsen
(Weert, 1969)

/ receptionist at UNS 40
and artist (“a painter with
a camera”)

/ marital status: married
to Loes, two daughters
together

/ lives in Neerharen,
Belgium

Photo: Joey Roberts

“
Life is meaningless, but that’s
one of the wonderful things about it
”

I would have loved to be a full-time artist. I’ve loved to draw since I was a child. My parents encouraged me. My mother, who was very creative, had a teaching certificate in drawing and my father, a perfectionist to the core, taught me perspective drawing. I’m still grateful to them for

that. After art school, in my youthful enthusiasm, I thought I would conquer the world. But I overworked myself. If left alone in an art studio, I never know when to stop. Seeing that job advert a few years later – “Maastricht University looking for receptionist” – saved me. Creating art is hard work. At the

reception desk, I can take a break and just focus on helping others. It’s my way of unwinding. Besides, to be a full-time artist, you have to make compromises. If you’re successful with a certain style, people want you to keep repeating it. But I want to do things my way. I’m headstrong and don’t always follow popular opinion – not to provoke, but because I genuinely think differently. For instance, I believe Vincent van Gogh was a bad painter.

When was the last time you cried? This week, watching a documentary about a man who had been sentenced to prison but maintained his innocence. Years later, he was found to be innocent of the crime. It struck me that we humans find it very hard to live with not knowing. I struggle with this, too. I graduated around the time of the disappearance of UM student Tanja Groen. The case has remained unsolved for more than thirty years. She was last seen on Herbenusstraat, and I still can’t walk down that street without thinking about it.

My friends are annoyed by... my perfectionism. I have a strong opinion on how things should be done. While pitching a tent with someone else, I might think the guy ropes are all wrong and decide to fix them myself. It can cause friction. I can lose my temper when I don’t get my way, although I find it easier to let go these days.

I hate it when people come up to the reception desk and ask me... “Hate” is too strong a word, but it irks me when people don’t take me seriously and treat me like I’m “just” a receptionist, a simpleton. I’ve been doing this job since 1998 and if it’s taught me anything, it’s that pigeonholes are never accurate. I have colleagues who are artists like me, and we have cleaners who were doctors in their home countries. The world is complex, people are complex, and it bothers me when others refuse to see that.

What work of art would you travel for? Piet Mondrian’s *Lozenge Composition with Two Lines*, a white canvas with two perpendicular black lines. Abstraction is peeling reality down to its essence, and in this work, Mondrian achieved perfect abstraction, pure balance, harmony. It’s stunning in its simplicity. If there is a God, I feel it’s captured in that.

I pray sometimes. I’m agnostic; I don’t know if God exists. But I’m grateful to my parents for my Catholic upbringing. It instilled essential values in me – the importance of simplicity, being of service, and the willingness to help others when you can. [Laughs] Yes, like a good receptionist.

I believe life is ultimately meaningless, but that’s one of the wonderful things about it. It’s why we try to give it meaning ourselves. All those churches, paintings and sculptures are fascinating – us humans go to such lengths to express our inner beliefs. And in such beautiful ways! Who could look at the Basilica of Saint Servatius in Maastricht and not think it would be a great loss to see it go? I don’t often go to church on Sundays anymore, but when I’m in France, I love nothing more than to wander into a little village church and inhale the incense-laden air. I’m deeply Catholic in that sense.

I fear... the destructive side of humanity. The lack of understanding of others that I increasingly see in society – just look at [far-right party] PVV’s recent electoral success. I fear that, as so often in history, we will begin to destroy each other based on nothing at all. At the same time, humanity’s violent tendencies fascinate me. Why? [Laughs] I work at the Faculty of Psychology, so I have to be careful what I say. But I was badly bullied as a child, to the point of being ambushed and beaten up after school. I never understood why they singled me out. People sometimes find my art grim; perhaps it’s my way of coming to terms with the irrational aspect of what happened to me.

Art is my true love. No, Loes is my great love. We’ve been together for 34 years and married for 25. We went to art school together. We clicked from day one and became close friends, but she was in a relationship with someone else. When they broke up, it turned out that my feelings for her were mutual. We had so much fun together, made the tough things in life more bearable for each other, were best friends... why wouldn’t we go for it? It was that simple. And it still is.

Peter Doorackers

Weekly personal interview with a student or employee

“We often know little about the participants in dementia research”

Roller skating for dementia awareness



In August, Golnaz Atefi spent four hours per day on inline skates, training for her journey
Photo: Ellen Oosterhof

This September, during World Dementia Month, Maastricht University neuropsychologist Golnaz Atefi hopes to complete a thousand-kilometre roller-skating journey on inline skates to raise awareness of dementia. If she succeeds, she'll set a world record in the process.

“May I ask you something?” she says towards the end of the interview. “I’m going to conduct thirty interviews along the way. I’ve never done that before – do you have any tips for me?” Golnaz Atefi has certainly set herself a challenge. On 1 September, the Iranian research fellow at the Limburg Alzheimer’s Centre embarked on a roller-skating journey of a thousand kilometres. Her route, divided into stages of thirty to forty kilometres per day, will take her from the Netherlands to Geneva, Switzerland, where the Alzheimer Europe Conference will be held in early October.

The distance is considerable – “If I make it, it’ll be a women’s world record” – but it isn’t the hardest part. Atefi, who previously completed a 250-kilometre roller-skating fundraiser in 2021, spent months training for the journey. After submitting her PhD dissertation (on the effectiveness of online support for informal caregivers) in early August, she increased her training to about four hours per day, the estimated duration of a single stage. “I enjoy the physical aspect. Skating is relaxing for me.” The main challenge lies in the work she’s carrying with her. “This isn’t a holiday or time off.” Atefi will be creating social media content every day, documenting her journey online to raise awareness of dementia and its impact on people’s lives. “I also hope to show people with dementia, informal caregivers and the general public how important it is to participate in research. It can improve care for yourself and others. Recruiting participants for studies is often a challenge.”

And then there are the interviews. Every day, she will speak with a fellow researcher or healthcare professional. It’ll be a learning experience for her – “I’ll be discussing the data I’ve collected so far during my fellowship with them” – and hopefully just as valuable to her interviewees and online fol-

lowers. “During my PhD research, I noticed that datasets often aren’t diverse enough. For example, much of my own research focuses on Alzheimer’s disease [the most common form of dementia], so we’re not sure if the results apply to people with other forms of dementia and their informal caregivers. Or a study will say, ‘One hundred participants in this country have benefited from this innovation.’ But what are their backgrounds? Do they live in urban or rural areas? Are they retired or not? Do they have families or not? And don’t forget the factor of educational attainment. For example, people with higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to participate in online support interventions for informal caregivers than people with lower levels of educational attainment. I hope to make researchers more aware of the importance of rich, diverse datasets and inclusive care.”

And she’s doing it on inline skates. This wasn’t a random choice; Atefi has been skating for most of her life. “I was seven when I got my first pair of roller skates, from my grandparents”, she says. “When my grandfather later developed dementia, it took a while for me to understand he wasn’t joking around – he was ill. And I saw my grandmother’s dedication to caring for him. Every time I put on my skates, I feel connected to them and my childhood.” It was her grandparents’ story that sparked Atefi’s research interest in the condition. “There’s still so much we don’t know about this disease.”

Peter Doorackers

You can follow Golnaz Atefi’s roller-skating journey on the Dementia Researcher YouTube channel, the Rolling for Dementia Facebook group and Atefi’s personal LinkedIn page

80 YEARS OF LIBERATION

“IF YOU FOCUS TOO MUCH ON THE PAST, YOU MIGHT



Georgi Verbeeck Photo: Joey Roberts

In September 1944, the campaign to liberate the Netherlands started in the south. Over the coming period there will be a whole host of events to celebrate ‘80 years of freedom’. *Observant* spoke to historian Georgi Verbeeck about the importance of remembrance. He also warned of its potential pitfalls. “Remembrance should not be reduced to an empty or too easy ritual.”

Text: Wendy Degens

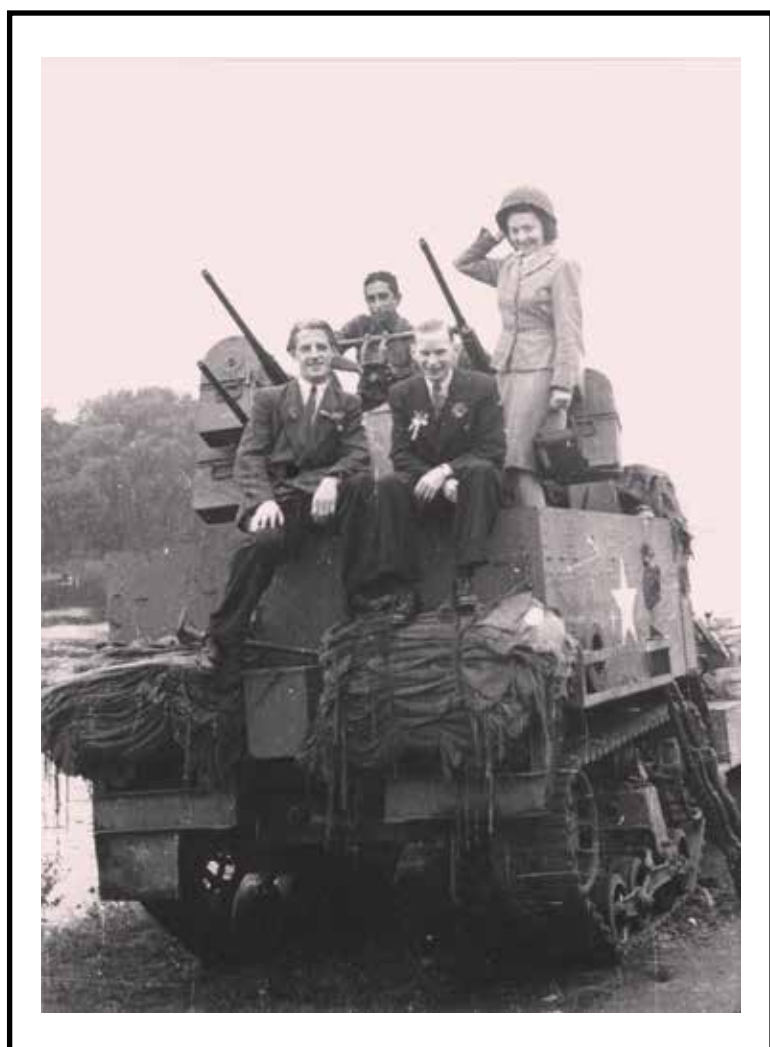
“**R**emembrance is important to us, not necessarily for the past, but because every memory is essentially an indicator of who we are and who we want to be. There’s an implicit message: ‘We have learnt lessons from the past’, ‘we have seen what went wrong’, and ‘we don’t want to make the same mistakes as those who came before us,’” says Georgi Verbeeck, Associate Professor of Modern History at Maastricht University and professor at KU

Leuven. “World War Two continues to be remembered everywhere, because it’s still such an important benchmark. A Nazi dictatorship, foreign occupation and violent warfare, all as a result of disruptive nationalism, and we don’t want that anymore.”

GREATEST VICTIM

Verbeeck says it is a “naive thought” that remembrance is by definition always “good and

healing”. “Remembrance is almost always a choice between remembering someone or something and paying less attention to someone or something else. And that can lead to tension.” He is referring to the National Remembrance on 4 May. “It started as a private initiative, which the government subsequently systematically took over. There was immediately disagreement over who we should even be remembering. It started with Dutch military personnel and political resistance fighters who perished in World War Two. Later on, soldiers who died fighting for the Netherlands in other conflicts, including those who died in the war of independence in Indonesia, felt they also deserved to be remembered. It wasn’t until much later that the largest group of victims of the Second World War was added, such as the more than one hundred thousand Dutch Jews who were transported and killed during the German occupation. Yet another expansion followed with more Second World War victims, such as the Roma and Sinti, and Dutch citizens and soldiers who died in more recent violent conflicts. There is now a long list of people who are remembered one way or another. Some people celebrate this inclusivity, but others object, saying: ‘Hang on, I’m the greatest victim, aren’t I?’”



Liberation Maastricht, an armored vehicle with soldiers and civilians. Historisch Centrum Limburg/ Jef Naseman – photocollection GAM [790]



Liberation Maastricht by the Old Hickory Division. Historisch Centrum Limburg/ Jef Naseman – photocollection GAM [3834]

MISS THE DANGERS OF THE PRESENT”



Liberation Maastricht, Cörversplein. Inspection tour along the Maas from the Sint Servaas Bridge. Historisch Centrum Limburg/ Jef Naseman – photocollec-tion GAM [3411]

traumas.”

He uses a brief diversion to the east to highlight the misuse and manipulation of memory. How Putin legitimises the invasion of Ukraine – Russia fought against the Nazis in World War Two and now claims to be fighting against the ‘new Nazis’ – is dangerous, Verbeeck says. “He’s mobilising people for new violence, new injustice.”

FAR-RIGHT PARTY

Under the banner of ‘80 years of freedom’, the south of the Netherlands will celebrate peace and freedom. “But if we continuously emphasise that we have been living in a free and democratic country since 1945, we may overlook the dangers we face here in the Netherlands and in the rest of the world. If you focus too much on the past, you forget what lies ahead of you.” Such as the significant victory of the far-right AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) party in the German states of Thuringia and Saxony? “It was always said that Germany moved on from its history so neatly.” After the Second World War, the promise of ‘*Nie wieder*’ dominated, never again would there be a Nazi dictatorship or a repeat of the Holocaust. “Acknowledging that legacy would make it much harder for far-right and populist parties to succeed there – compared to other European nations. However, that no longer seems to be the case.”

have to ensure that the cultural memory is nuanced and balanced enough, takes as many different perspectives into account as possible. Because there will come a time when there are no contemporaries to call us out. Just a few more years and this will all be consigned to the history books.” According to Verbeeck, “small, individual stories”

can help. One example is the *Stolpersteine* project in Europe – including in Maastricht – which places memorial stones in front of houses where people who were deported and killed by the Nazis once lived. “You get that sense of, ‘This is what happened to that family, on that day, on my street’. It speaks to you directly.”



Liberation Maastricht. Historisch Centrum Limburg/ Jef Naseman – photocollec-tion GAM [1997]

CULTURAL MEMORY

It’s getting harder and harder to find people who experienced the war first hand, but those eye-witness accounts are the most impactful stories we have. What do we do when there are no more survivors? “Communicative memory is everything you can still share with each other, with surviving generations. But that’s shrinking. It’s becoming cultural memory, a more institutionalised memory, in books, museums, movies, and the like. That shift from one to the other, and that tipping point is where we are now, is important, because you

MINORITIES

Another aspect that leads to tension is clashing cultures of remembrance. “In Europe, in the ‘global north’, World War Two is important, but there are minority groups or people with a migrant background for whom it is of less or even no importance. And they say: ‘Why don’t we have a right to our history and culture of remembrance?’ Look at Palestine and Gaza, for example. Many people

there feel that we essentially pay too much and exclusive attention to the Holocaust.” Until recently, Verbeeck believed that remembering the Holocaust would “continue to be the greatest moral benchmark in the Netherlands, in Europe”, but he has started to waver. “The loss of eye witnesses and the increasing diversity of our society may yet change that. As history continues its unrelenting march, new groups emerge, new

Thursday 12 September marks the start of the national celebration of 80 years of liberation. King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima will be in Mesch in South Limburg, where the Allied forces started their campaign to end the war in the Netherlands. Maastricht will celebrate the liberation on 14 September with a parade featuring American veterans in vintage army vehicles, music, and a fly-over by military aircraft. For more information, visit www.limburg.nl/over/80-jaar-vrijheid

achtergrond

UM opent de deuren op Open Monumentendag

“De universiteit is de redding geweest voor de monumenten in de stad”

De Minderbroedersberg. Ooit de kerk van de franciscanen in Maastricht, maar inmiddels alweer jaren het bestuursgebouw van de universiteit. De verhalen over wat zich allemaal in het pand heeft afgespeeld - en daarbuiten - komen dit weekend aan bod tijdens de Open Monumentendag.

Wie niet beter weet, loopt met gemak het beklinkerde zijstraatje van de Tongersestraat voorbij. Er is ook maar weinig dat erop duidt dat juist aan het einde van dat omhooglopende weggetje - vandaar de berg - een eeuwenoud pand staat waarin ooit broeders woonden en zelfs gevangenen huisden.

“Het ligt inderdaad een beetje uit het zicht”, beaamt Bart Zwegers, conservator academisch erfgoed van de Universiteit Maastricht, terwijl hij de Berg beklimt. Op de gevel boven de ingang herinnert het symbool van het alziend oog aan de oorsprong van het pand. “Studenten hebben hier weinig te zoeken, er zijn geen collegezalen of studieruimtes. Je zou het een oase van rust kunnen noemen.”

Die rust duurde tot 1673. In dat jaar keerden de minderbroeders terug naar de Limburgse hoofdstad nadat ze vanwege vermoedens van collaboratie met de Spanjaarden tijdens de Tachtigjarige Oorlog, waren verbannen.

Soberheid

Tot dat moment hadden ze een onderkomen op de Sint Pieterstraat, maar dat was te klein geworden. “Ze stuitten hier op een stuk land dat werd gebruikt voor de winning van klei”, zegt Zwegers. “Een perfecte plek. Met de lokale klei, en dus bakstenen, werd de nieuwe - tweede - kerk gebouwd.” In 1699 werd de eerste steen gelegd, in 1703 was de kerk - wat nu de centrale hal van het universiteitsgebouw is - af en vijf jaar later was ook het achterliggende klooster gereed. “Het is allemaal opgetrokken in een



Foto: Observant

De Open Monumentendag is op 14 en 15 september. In het kader van het thema *Erfgoed van routes, netwerken en verbindingen* zijn er lezingen in de aula op de Minderbroedersberg. In de Hoofdwacht op het Vrijthof is een expositie gemaakt in samenwerking met UM Special Collections - de erfgoedbibliotheek van de universiteit - met onder meer boeken, foto's en films over Maastrichts monumentale geschiedenis. Ook op andere plekken in de stad openen monumenten de deuren. Kijk op www.umdmaastricht.nl voor meer informatie en het programma.

sobere classicistische stijl, zoals dat paste bij de franciscanen. Helaas moesten ze alles weer achterlaten toen de Franse revolutie uitbrak en ze werden verdreven.”

Vanaf dat moment kreeg het gebouw vele functies, waaronder die van rechtbank en gevangenis. Die laatste bleef in gebruik tot 1975, in de Tweede Wereldoorlog werden er nog politieke gevangenen opgesloten. De rechtbank sloot in 1995 de deuren. “Toen heeft de universiteit het gekocht”, aldus Zwegers.

“Er was veel leegstand in de jaren 70 en de universiteit durfde het aan om die panden in gebruik te nemen. Dat druiste in tegen het idee van die tijd dat universiteiten modern zouden moeten zijn, met een campus. Dat dat niet in Maastricht is gebeurd, is de redding geweest voor de monumenten. Een herbestemming van een oud of historisch pand is een prachtig alternatief voor nieuwbouw. Vanuit historisch, maar ook economisch oogpunt.”

Vier jaar lang werd het pand aan de Minderbroedersberg verbouwd voor het college van bestuur erin kon trekken. “De indeling is veranderd, er zijn ramen toegevoegd, de tussenvloer is weg”, somt Zwegers op. Wat wel bleef: de grote zuilen en de statige trap naar de eerste verdieping die er in de 19^e en 20^e eeuw al bij kwamen.

Een van de meer recentere aanwinsten in het pand is de grote blauwe globe met duizenden oplichtende ledlampjes die vanaf het gewelfde plafond in de hal naar beneden komt en boven de hoofden van bezoekers hangt. “Dat is het kunstwerk *Eternal Blue* dat herinnert aan de grote cyberhack rond kerst 2019.”

Belang

De bol zal een blikvanger zijn op de Open Monumentendag. Zwegers geeft in het weekend drie keer een rondleiding en zal dan ook zeker even wijzen op de tentoonstellingen die doorlopend zijn te bezoeken in het pand.

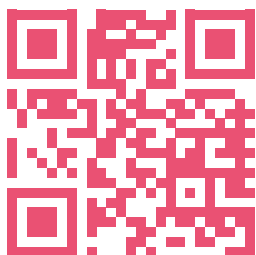
“Elk half jaar laat de kunst- en erfgoedcommissie van de universiteit iets anders zien van de geschiedenis van Maastricht of de streek. Daarom is zo'n weekend ook belangrijk, voor studenten, toevallige bezoekers of inwoners van de stad. Dit is je geschiedenis en voor de universiteit is die historie van groot belang.”

Deborah Blekkenhorst

colofon

Redactie Riki Janssen (hoofdredacteur), Deborah Blekkenhorst, Wendy Degens, Peter Doorakkers, Cleo Freriks, Marion Janssens (redactie-assistent), Lena Reichel, Dennis Vaendel **Telefoon** 043 3885390 **E-mail** observant@maastrichtuniversity.nl **Website** www.observantonline.nl **Aan dit nummer werkten mee** Wammes Bos, Wim Groot, Robin van Wasen **Ontwerp en illustraties** Simone Golob **Vertalingen** Maud Bovelander, Susanna MacDaniel **Druk** Janssen/Pers Gennep **Abonnementen** Observant wordt gratis verspreid op de universiteit en diverse locaties in Maastricht, belangstellenden kunnen de krant thuisgestuurd krijgen

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background

UM to open its doors on Open Monument Day

“The university was the salvation of these historic buildings in the city”

Minderbroedersberg, the former Franciscan Convent in Maastricht, has served as the university's administrative headquarters for years. Stories from inside and outside this historic building will be shared during Open Monument Day this weekend.

If you don't know any better, it's easy to walk straight past the cobbled side street off Tongersestraat. There's little to indicate that this uphill street (which gave rise to the nickname “De Berg”) leads to a centuries-old building where Franciscan friars once lived and prisoners were held. “It is a bit hidden away”, agrees Bart Zwegers, curator of academic heritage at Maastricht University, as he ascends De Berg. The Eye of Providence above the entrance to the building serves as a reminder of its origins. “Students don't have much reason to come here. There are no lecture halls or study spaces. You could call it an oasis of calm.”

And it was calm, until 1673. In that year, the Franciscan friars (*minderbroeders*) returned to the Limburg capital after being forced out of the city for suspected collaboration with the Spanish during the Eighty Years' War.

Simplicity

The Franciscans' original convent on Sint Pieterstraat had become too small. “They found this land”, says Zwegers, pointing to the ground, “which was being used for clay extraction. It was the perfect spot. They used bricks made of local clay to build their new, second convent.”

The first stone was laid in 1699. By 1703, construction of the convent – now the central hall of the university building – was completed. The adjoining monastery was completed five years later. “It was all built in a simple, classical style befitting the Franciscans. Sadly, they had to abandon it when the French Revolution began and they were



Photo: Observant

Maastricht's Open Monument Days will take place on 14 and 15 September. Lectures around the theme “Heritage of Routes, Networks and Connections” will be held in the Minderbroedersberg auditorium. An exhibition at Hoofdwacht on Vrijthof – organised in collaboration with UM Special Collections, the university's heritage library – will feature books, photographs and films of historic buildings and sites in Maastricht. Historic buildings across the city will open their doors to the public. For more information and the Open Monument Days programme, please visit www.omdmaastricht.nl.

driven out.”

From that point on, the building served various purposes, including functioning as a courthouse and a prison. It was used as a prison until 1975, holding political prisoners during the Second World War. The courthouse was closed down in 1995. “That's when the university acquired the building”, explains Zwegers.

Salvation

“In the 1970s, there was a lot of vacant property in the city. At the time, the prevailing view was that a university should be modern, with a campus. Maastricht University dared to go against the tide and, in doing so, was the salvation of these historic buildings. Repurposing old buildings is a wonderful alternative to new construction from both a historical and an economic perspective.” After four years of renovation, the Minderbroedersberg building was ready for the university's Executive Board. “The layout was changed, windows were added, the mezzanine floor was removed”, Zwegers lists. Preserved features include the large columns and the grand staircase leading to the first floor, added in the 19th and 20th centuries. One of the more recent additions to the building is the large blue globe with thousands of glowing LED lights that descends from the vaulted ceiling of the hall, hanging above visitors' heads. “This artwork, called *Eternal Blue*, serves as a reminder of the Christmas 2019 cyber-attack.”

Importance

The artwork will certainly draw visitors' attention on Open Monument Day. Zwegers will be giving three tours over the weekend, and he'll be sure to point out the rotating exhibitions on different topics that are held in the building throughout the year. “The university's art and heritage committee organises an exhibition every six months. This time, the focus is on the history of Maastricht and the surrounding region. That's why a weekend like this is so important for students, casual visitors and local residents alike. This is our history, and the university attaches great importance to it.”

Deborah Blekkenhorst

Agenda academic ceremonies

Aula Minderbroedersberg 4-6

12-09, 10.00h	Lukas Andreas Duffner	20-09, 16.30h	Dr. Alard F. Roebroek, inauguratie
12-09, 13.00h	Famke Houben	23-09, 10.00h	Nivinehanach
12-09, 16.00h	Deepa Ravi	23-09, 13.00h	Francesco Schianchi
13-09, 10.00h	Ines Mouchaers, Double Doctorate Degree Maastricht University – KU Leuven	23-09, 16.00h	Khava Im Elievna Ibragimova
13-09, 13.00h	Linsey Jeannette Francine Peters, Double Doctorate Degree Maastricht University – RWTH Aachen University	24-09, 10.00h	Sophie Vervullens, Double Doctorate Degree Maastricht University 0 University of Antwerp
13-09, 16.30h	Dr. Aniquehommels, inauguratie	24-09, 13.00h	Gerjanne Vennegoor
16-09, 10.00h	Akhil Antony Konkoth	24-09, 16.00h	Katherine Marie Wisener
16-09, 13.00h	Stefi Nordkamp	25-09, 10.00h	Valérie N.E. Schuermans
17-09, 10.00h	Francesco Maletto	25-09, 13.00h	Hajarhasannejadasl
17-09, 13.00h	Lars Oliver Wittrock	25-09, 16.30h	Prof. Dr. Gijsbrecht Vonk, inauguratie
17-09, 16.00h	Georgina Kotsau	26-09, 13.00h	Yara Quirine Wingelaar-Jagt
18-09, 10.00h	Romina Willi	26-09, 16.00h	Maud P.M. Tijssen
18-09, 13.00h	Mohammed Ali Ghossein	27-09, 10.00h	Janna Josephus Anna Oda Schoenmaekers
18-09, 16.00h	Max Brüning	27-09, 16.00h	Prof. Dr. Clemens G.M. Rommers, afscheidscollege
19-09, 10.00h	Cheng Gong	30-09, 10.00h	Bhathika Perera
19-09, 13.00h	Jeroen R.J.H. Gruiskens	30-09, 13.00h	Maïke-Elisa Ostheller
19-09, 16.00h	Ian Jens Dieterhillebrand Pohl	30-09, 16.00h	Leanne Lily Gerda Christina Ackermans
20-09, 13.00h	Aurore C.M.-J. Delvenne		

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