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Editors:
Frithjof Sterrenburg
Jose Sterrenburg

Layout:
Pieter Dillen
Alisa Graphics

Editorial address:
Vogelvlucht, c/o KLM,
G.P.O. Box 4095.
Sydney 2001, N.S.W.
Australia
Tel: 233 6255

KLM OFFICES:
• 5 Elizabeth Street,
Sydney.
• 80 Collins Street,
Melbourne.
For reservations &
information, toll free
from anywhere in
Australia: 008 222 747
Sydney callers please
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SINT MAARTEN LEEFT NOG

**"Elf november is de dag
dat mijn lichtje, dat mijn lichtje,
elf november is de dag
dat mijn lichtje branden mag".**

Elf november is bij ons in huis een beetje panisch. Zo om een uur of zeven beginnen we gespannen te luisteren of we geen ijle kinderstemmetjes horen die haast dreigen te verwaaien in de wind die er meestal staat. Want aanbeller schijnt niet te mogen: Sint Maarten is op het platteland zuiver een traditie van "mondelinge overlevering". En een heel oude traditie ook!

Het gaat er allemaal om dat zo'n 1600 jaar geleden Sint Martinus zijn kostbare mantel in tweeën sneed en de ene helft aan een arme bedelaar gaf. Begin november was vroeger de tijd dat er werd geslacht en wijn werd gemaakt. Van die overvloed deelde je als fatsoenlijk mens wat aan de armen uit. In de loop der tijd werd het een kinderfeest en terwijl veel oude gebruiken uitsterven is het feest van Sint Maarten nog springlevend.



In Noord Holland boven het IJ is dat zeker het geval. Op de scholen leren kinderen Sint Maarten liedjes (de makkelijkste staat aan het begin van dit verhaaltje) en daar worden ook de lampions onder deskundige leiding in elkaar geknuseld. Geen kaarsjes, maar moderne technologie: zaklampjes met "long life" batterijen. Een ander liedje dat in onze streek heel populair is komt hier:

**"Lampionnetje, lampionnetje,
schijn maar in de donk're nacht,
als een zonnetje, als een zonnetje,
heb je veel geluk gebracht"**

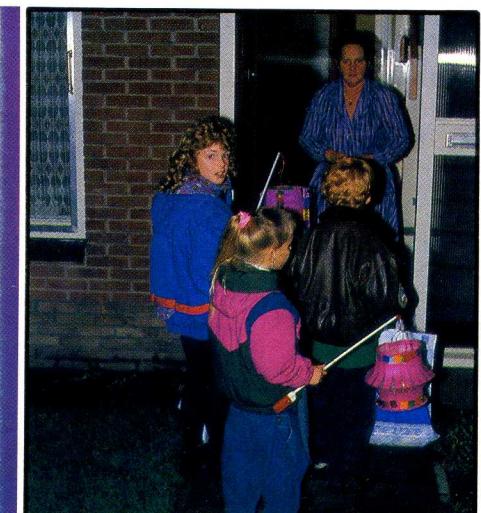
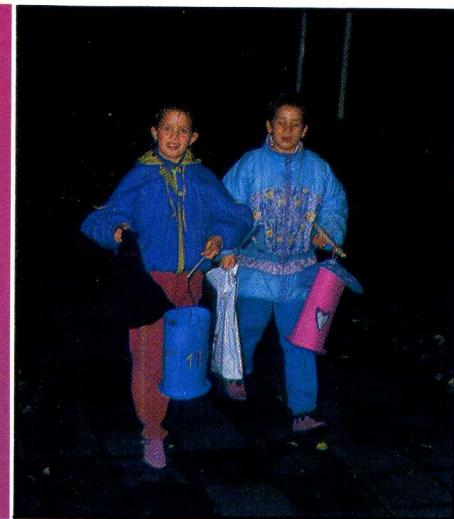
En na het zingen (dat vaak met dodelijke ernst wordt gedaan, als hing hun leven er van af) komt het moment dat ze een snoepje mogen uitzoeken. Zo doen wij het, tenminste: een grote schaal met lekkers en dan maar laten kiezen, twee stuks nog wel ... We maken ons altijd wel ongerust over de rekening van de tandarts, maar tegen oude traditie kan de moderne gezondheidsleer kennelijk toch niet op.

De sfeer in een dorp is natuurlijk heel bijzonder op de avond van Sint Maarten: overal zie je kleine lichtjes in het donker dwalen, aan alle kanten klinken liedjes op en de ouders

of grotere zusjes en broertjes die de allerkleinste begeleiden staan intussen gezellig met elkaar te kletsen. Een expeditie met de camera leverde een aantal leuke plaatjes op! Wat de liedjes betreft, sommige teksten zijn niet erg diepzinnig ("Sinte sinte Maarten, keien dragen staarten") een bekend liedje is:

**"Hier woont een rijk man
die ons wel wat geven kan
veel zal hij geven
lang zal hij leven
zalig zal hij sterven
de hemel zal hij erven
God zal hem lonen
met honderdduizend kronen
met honderdduizend lichtjes an
hier komt Sinte Maarten an"**

Voor de goede lezers zal het duidelijk zijn dat hier gewoon sprake is van afpersing: als je niet doet wat in regel drie staat kun je regel vier en de rest ook wel vergeten ... Nou vooruit, dat hoort dan ook bij oude volksgebruiken zullen we maar zeggen!





LETTERBOX FRIENDLY PUB



While spending a holiday in the Netherlands, John van Schagen from Mullaloo, WA rediscovered the joys of cosy Dutchpubs – especially as his visit coincided with one of the coldest nights of the year (minus 15 Celsius).

"The bar of Henry Herket's hotel at Oldebroek, some 10 kms South of

Zwolle, is filled with all sorts of "Veluwiana": agricultural implements, baskets, carriage wheel... On Saturday nights jazz concerts are given in one of the function rooms. The owner Henry is quite a character and soon we nearly killed ourselves laughing and were struggling to eat some of the excellent food. During the main course, a mini-boomerang was produced. Where he got it from remains a riddle, it had the word "Deurzett'n" on it and Henry's autograph. Henry personally showed us out (with an icebear's head under his arm) and despite the cold he kept waving until our cars had dis-

peared. When we came home in Australia three weeks later, his postcard was already waiting for us: "please let me know your birthdays, I forgot to ask". The cosy atmosphere and Henry's pleasant way of looking after us made us forget the bitter cold and brought back the memories of our life in Holland. If you tell him you are from Perth, he will always have a table for you. And don't forget to ask him to show his photograph taken at the corner of the Epergrintweg!"

Sounds mysterious and you'd better find out for yourself, I think! In the picture, John certainly looks comfy . . .

BEAUTIFUL BITTERKOEKJES

Usually our KLM-letterbox is filled with neat envelopes. Last month, however, our faithful postman presented us with a funny sort of bubble. When the wrappings were removed we could hardly believe our eyes: a plastic box containing six delicious bitterkoekjes!

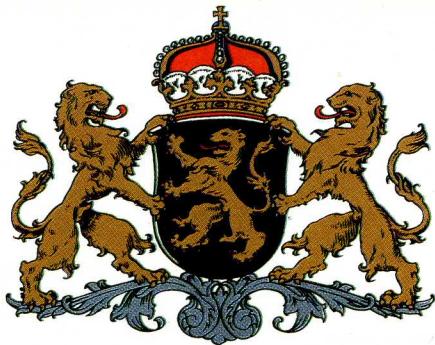
The beginning of this story was a letter from Jet Kamp, Box 53, Kadina, SA. She wanted to make bitterkoekjes (a kind of macaroons) from the sweet almonds in her garden. She

did not have the recipe but none of my numerous cookery books gave the recipe either. In the end I found an old book (1935) by the famous Mrs Lotgering-Hillebrand and she gave what we were looking for.

- 150 g sweet almonds
- 100 g bitter almonds
- 500 g cane sugar
- 1 egg white (Jet Kamp prefers 2)
Put the almonds in water and bring to the boil. Remove brown skin, wash almonds and leave to dry. After grinding, mix with sugar and part of the egg white, then grind again and

perhaps a third time to acquire reasonably fine almond paste. Add remaining egg white and pipe small round blobs on to baking sheet. Mrs Lotgering prescribes "ouwel" to cover the baking tray with but greaseproof paper can also be used. Moisten and slightly press mixture with brush and bake in moderate oven (200°C) for about 15-20 minutes. Cool on wire tray.

The bitterkoekjes Jet Kamp sent us were so delicious that they did not survive long enough to be photographed . . .



Provincie Noord-Brabant

Both in surface area (over 5,000 sq.km) and inhabitants (over 2 million), Noord-Brabant is among the top three provinces of the Netherlands. In several other respects, it also occupies a special position, showing that the historical division of the country in "above, and below the major rivers" is still appropriate. For instance, population growth in the province is clearly above the average for the country.

Hertogenbosch is the capital, but the three main municipalities are Eindhoven, Tilburg and Breda. There are two centres of academic education: the Catholic University in Tilburg and the University of Technology in Eindhoven.

Economy

At school you may have been taught that Noord-Brabant is an agricultural region with some industry (textiles, shoes, cigars) and of course the "gloeilampenfabriek" of Philips. At that time, the word "electronics" had not been invented! The picture has changed considerably: 56% of the people work in services, about 30% in industry (micro-electronics, food-stuffs, and the chemical industry are three important examples), and



Zuidwillemsevaart: highway of former times ...

almost 9% in construction. In the past decade, economic growth in the province has been stronger than in the rest of the country. A mere 5.4% of the workforce is active in agriculture. Nevertheless, agriculture is one of the factors in the province's main problem: pollution of the environment. Smog problems (traffic, industry) and acidification (agriculture, combustion) are more serious in Noord-Brabant than for the country as a whole, and severe damage to forestation has resulted. On the other hand, the authorities are taking active measures to improve the situation and a good example is Den Bosch, which recently won an international award for the "Tidiest City of Europe".

Tourism, recreation

Although recreation is also a stress factor in the environment, the pro-

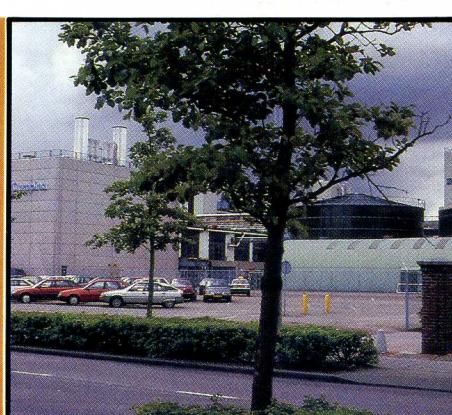
vince continues to be one of the prime destinations for tourism. The Efteling, Beekse Bergen, Autotron and "Land van Ooit" are four major attractions for family day-trips. Favourite nature areas are the Oisterwijkse Vennen, the Loonse en Drunense Duinen, Biesbosch, and Kempen. Apart from hiking and biking, aquatic sports are being actively developed. Bergen Op Zoom, Breda, and Den Bosch are excellent destinations because of the beautiful historic city centres.

We covered Bergen Op Zoom and Den Bosch in previous issues of Vogelvlucht, a special story on Breda is in the pipeline.

History

The essential point in the history of Noord-Brabant is that it is indeed the northern portion of the former Duchy of Brabant. The main portion of that now forms part of Belgium, with Brussels as the principal city! The Duchy of Brabant was founded around AD1100 and the North officially became part of the Netherlands in 1648.

The coat of arms shows this historical background very clearly, because it is identical to that of the former Duchy of Brabant!



Dairy industry flourishes

◀ Ancient cities too (den Bosch)

Religion forms part of everyday life ▶





Typical rural scenery

Where to start touring Noord-Brabant? There's lots of space to choose from! Because we covered the westerly part some time ago, we decided to visit the easterly half for this issue. And when we began touring, we kept discovering items we think you'll like, so that the net result became a trip you might decide to make as a biking-tour. The order of the visits is up to you, it's all very close together anyway. The theme is pure nostalgia and while touring, you can make an immediate "then-now" comparison. Much has changed in this area (see small map), and if some fond memories may no longer be true, many other changes are for the better ...

The Farmers' Apostle

About a century ago, farming in this area presented a sorry picture. The soil was poor and the people were poorer still. The lack of education meant that farming techniques lagged far behind. Being uneducated, the

farmers were no match for agricultural traders and had to sell their wares for a song. In comparison to the situation in Holland and Friesland, for instance, small farmers around Helmond were paupers. To see for yourself, you should go to the Boerenbondsmuseum in Gemert. Antoon van Erp, a foundation board member, told some of the story:

"The man who changed all that was a priest, Gerlacus van den Elsen (1853-1925). He stimulated the farmers to co-operate and took the initiative in founding the Noord-brabantse Christelijke Boerenbond (NCB, which is still going strong) and many other co-operatives - the first in the country. Also, he stimulated education, for instance in the competent use of fertilizers, and became an international authority in agriculture, travelling to France, the USA and even Russia!"

The "Farmers' Apostle", as he is known, was a farmer's son (although his family was much better off than most) and the farm where he was born has been restored to become a memorial to his work besides being an authentic reconstruction of farming practices A.D. 1900. We were shown around by Henk de Koning, one of the all-volunteer organization:

"The museum was opened in 1990 and drew over 12,000 visitors in the first 6 months, sometimes over a thousand on a single day. One of the secrets is that it is not a static show, but offers live demonstrations: people of the older generation show how things were done formerly. On special days, they demonstrate how to thresh old-fashioned crops like rye or buckwheat, how to make sausages, how to sow by hand or bake bread



BACK TO 1900

Ancient farming – nostalgic fun fairs – and more . . .



Nostalgic "Zand-Zeep-Soda" kitchen

using faggots for fuel. The products (genuine Brabant "mik", for instance) are for sale, like the honey and cheese we make."

No wonder that the public spans three generations and is not limited to the Brabanders themselves. Even if farming is a mystery to you, you'll be fascinated. Some incredible photographs show that even a decade ago, a couple in the area were still living in the Middle Ages. Many of the farming implements on display are a complete riddle to anyone under 40 and you can ask anything you like because the people of the museum know what they're talking about. Also, they are fantastically friendly and as the restaurant is really cosy you may well spend more time for your visit than you had anticipated . . . Open: every afternoon between 13.00 and 18.00 hours except for Mondays, between Easter and the autumn holidays.

And by the way: Gemert also has a



Farm A.D. 1900 in Gemert



Van Gogh's cradle stood here



castle to offer (the park is open to the public), along the Keskesdijk to the village of Handel (formerly an important religious centre) you'll see several tiny chapels and finally we found that Gemert has a surprising range of high-quality shops – especially clothes. Finally, there is a very beautiful windmill in Gemert where you can buy all sorts of flour ground on the premises: open Saturdays between 14.00 and 16.00 hours. Recipes for old-fashioned bread and pancakes are also available!

Brief interlude

Now if you have seen the haunting photographs of farmers dressed in rags and living no better than animals, you will have a much better understanding of one of the most famous Dutch paintings: Van Gogh's "Potato-eaters".

With that thought in mind, you should go to Nuenen only a few kilometers away, where Vincent was born. There is a Van Gogh memo-

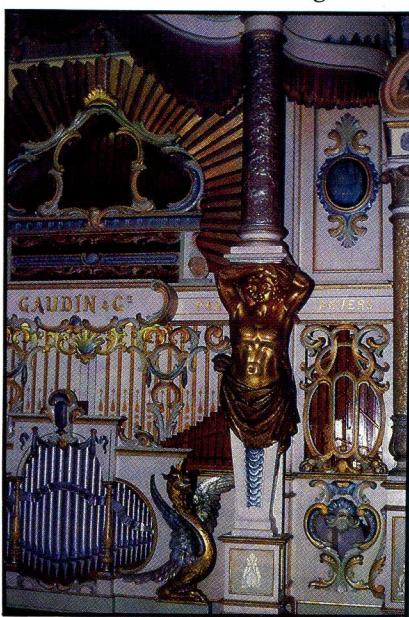
rial, of course, and you should see the old rectory where he was born. Note that his father was a Protestant minister in this predominantly Roman Catholic area! The house is not too easy to find (we were unable to discover a sign pointing the way) so you'd better ask for "De Berg", where it is at Nr. 26. It looks nice, but again there's no sign on the house either – odd! Quite nearby you'll find an ancient linden tree with benches and an interesting form of pruning. For a brief journey into history, take the picturesque road to Nederwetten nearby, where halfway the even tinier village of Hooidonk you'll find a sort of medieval pocket: the ruin of a church, a small chapel built on the foundations of a former priory and one of the few water-mills in the country.

It goes back about a thousand years and has been restored to the situation of about A.D. 1280!

Contrasts in Helmond

Helmond is the regional centre, situated on the Zuidwillemsvaart, 122 kms long and dug between 1822 and 1826. This canal was the first step in opening up the area, although the population did not benefit very much for a long time ... The first thing you may notice when entering the town is the very large dairy industry complex.

Not far from there, near the water-tower in the Torenstraat, you'll see the Favioli-zaal. Here you'll find a collection of barrel-organs, and very special ones at that. There is one "street-organ", one "funfair-organ" but especially there are three magnificent "dance-hall organs" which many of you may have never seen or



One of the Helmond organs



The best room – rarely used

heard before.

These dance-hall organs were to be found at fun-fairs, where a temporary dance-hall was one of the attractions around the turn of the century. They are simply gigantic, look like a cross between a rococo teahouse and an Indian temple and have a very characteristic sound. Again, this is an organization run by highly enthusiastic volunteers, but the instruments (two Gaudins and a Mortier, for the connoisseurs) are in perfect condition!

The Favioli-zaal is open Tuesdays through Fridays from 13.00 to 17.00, Saturdays from 10.00 to 17.00 and Sundays from 14.00 to 17.00 hours. There's a restaurant too so you can relax while listening to the best in barrel-organ music!

And finally, Helmond offers you a rare chance to compare 500 years of architectural change: the townhall is a 15th century castle, the "cube houses" are pure 20th!



After casting: tuning and finishing

VOICES OF BRONZE

Petit Fritsen: casting bells for ten generations

One of our objectives during the Brabant tour was a visit to a firm that symbolizes The Netherlands in many ways – especially abroad. Carillons and chimes have been Dutch classics for centuries and at present there are only 4 bell foundries worldwide capable of building a true concert-instrument carillon: one in France, one in England and two in The Netherlands. One of these two has been linked to a single family for over three centuries and because the firm is not open to the general public, Mr. J.J. Wijnen, one of the directors of the Koninklijke Klokkengieterij Petit & Fritsen in Aarle-Rixtel, invited us for a visit. Through his story and the pictures, you may get an impression of the unique combination of craftsmanship, artistry and technology required to make the Voices of Bronze sing.



The molds are filled

From nomad to Royal

"The history of the firm goes back to 1660, which makes us the oldest extant foundry of carillon bells. I'm sorry to say that Mr. Petit is no longer with us – for some two centuries in fact – but through his marriage into the Fritsen line the firm has been a continuing family enterprise for ten generations. The origins of the family are to be found in France, but the move to the North is simple to explain: in that time, bell-founders were nomads. It was not yet possible to transport the heavy and fragile bells over long distances, but it was possible to erect a temporary foundry wherever the work was to be found!"

After a total production stop during the last years of the Second World War, the firm soon flourished again. One of the most impressive facts I distilled from the documentation is that plans for resumption of production were already made in February 1944 and in March of that year many orders had already been received, including one for the City Hall of devastated Rotterdam. Talk about anticipation! The largest carillon (61 bells) was built by the firm for Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, USA. In 1976 the firm's excellence was recog-

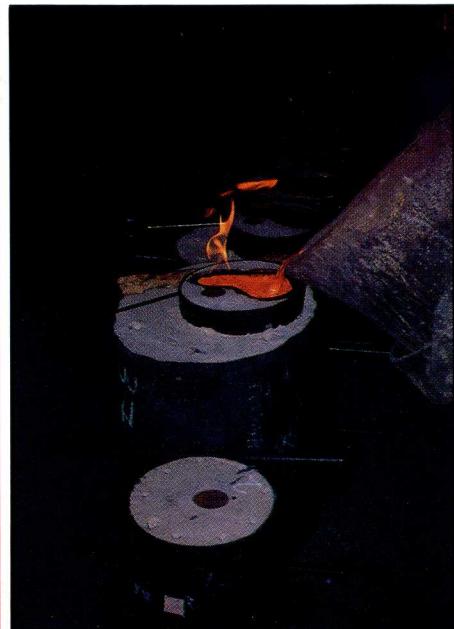
nized when it received the predicate Royal – not bad for former nomads...

True musical instrument

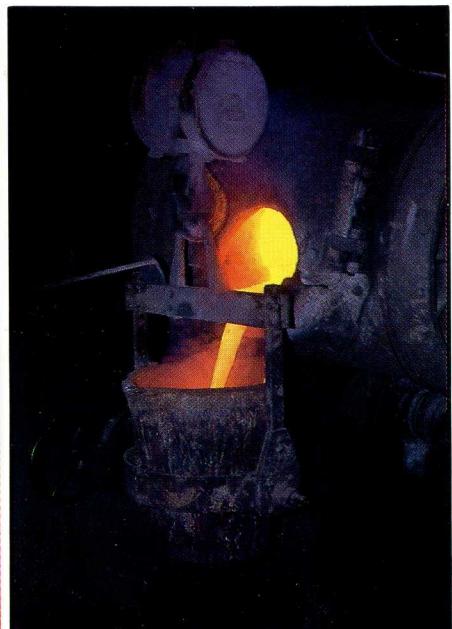
At present, new construction of chimes (up to 25 bells) and true carillons is the main activity and the firm's products can be found from Iceland to New Zealand and from Tokyo to Los Angeles. Frank Fritsen, the firm's technical director, tells the most recent part of the story:

"Although carillons as a true musical instrument go back to the famous Hemony family in the 17th century, they really began to flourish after World War Two. Technical progress made it possible to guarantee purity of tone and correct tuning. At present, we tune with an accuracy of one hundredth of half a tone – that is concert instrument standard."

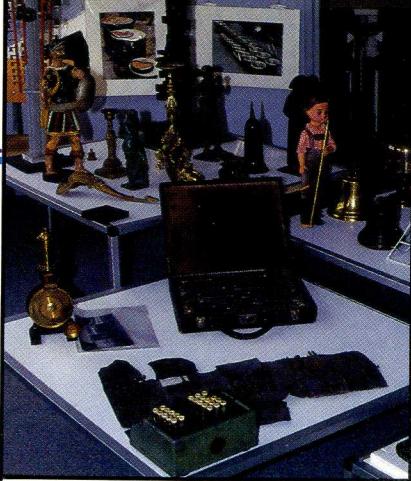
For the technically interested: a bell generates a fundamental tone (which determines its pitch) and the overtones (the so-called partials) of that



A mass of molten bronze ...



A glimpse of the firm's private memorabilia



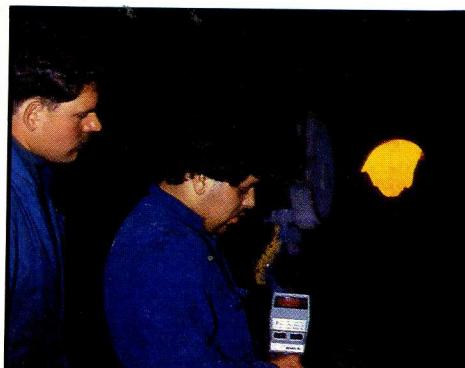
Part of an order for Germany



tone. Purity of sound is determined by the partials, and these depend on the shape of the bell. Although much of the work in a bell-foundry is still a matter of craftsmanship, computer analysis also plays an important role.

The two main types of such a musical instrument have already been mentioned: the concert carillon can be played by hand and spans at least three octaves, chimes are smaller and are played automatically. Again, the computer has had its say, as Mr. Wijnen showed us.

"In co-operation with Eindhoven University of Technology, we have developed special carillon software. A customer can send us a fax with the score of a tune, we can program this on our computer, test it out and modify the arrangement until everybody is happy, and finally the customer receives a chip through the mail that can contain a full year's pro-



Temperature: 1100 degrees C.

gramme."

Chimes have become very popular worldwide as "attention getters". Some show highly progressive designs, others perfect the ancient tradition of automata: chimes with puppets that move through a series of complicated actions. With special permission, I took a picture of Mr. Wijnen plus a magnificent puppet destined for one of these automata under construction by the firm.

A world market

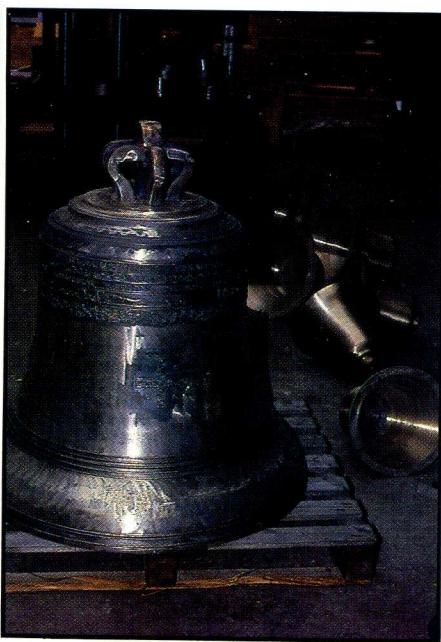
Besides the USA, the Far East has become one of the main customers. In Japan, for instance, there is a vivid interest in the traditions of ancient Europe – including carillons. It is illustrative that the largest producer of musical instruments in the world – Yamaha – is the firm's agent for Japan! Another potential market is Russia, where countless bells have been silenced through the progress of socialism ... The problem is not interest – despite decades of oppression churches are packed, especially with young people – but funds of course.

"A light automated carillon such as for a town-hall costs about DFL 70,000, a large concert-instrument up to 2 million. One inherent

advantage of such a musical instrument is that it lasts for several centuries at least, but throughout the ages, bells have also had a very special meaning to people."

That became also evident when we saw some of the bells for a carillon being cast: not only are there all sorts of ceremonies when carillons are inaugurated, very frequently the customer wants to be there when the molten bronze of 1100 degrees Celcius is poured into the moulds. Inscriptions and decorations commemorate special events – such as the Liberty Bell produced by the firm for the Bicentennial of the USA – and especially when playing the haunting Valerius melodies, the Voices of Bronze never fail to move people.

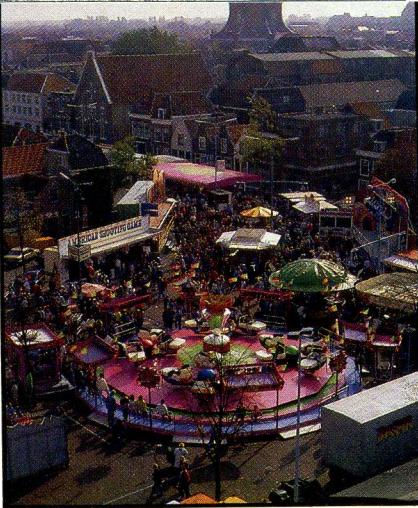
NOTE: Petit & Fritsen bells can also be heard in New Zealand (Henderson: Bonsel Jewelers, Wanganui: City Hall) and in Australia (Southport shopping centre).



Voices of bronze!



Mr. Wijnen and exotic friend



LEIDEN LIBERATED

October festival makes the city even better

Leiden is one of the most attractive daytrip destinations in the country at any time, but during the annual October festival ("Leidens Ontzet") it's something very special indeed. For in the first week of the month the city commemorates its liberation of over 400 years ago. Or rather: the end of the 1574 siege by the Spaniards during the war of independence. We were quite familiar with Leiden, but somehow had never experienced the festival. And when on October 3rd (the official date, although the festival spans several days) the weather turned out to be gorgeous, we decided to take a look at what it's all about.

Pure tradition

Let's be frank about it: many festivals that commemorate a historic occasion are of recent origin only. There's nothing against that, of course. If a city or area organizes a festival, many people would say that it's a good idea even if there is no historic event to celebrate at all... But as far as I have been able to find out the lifting of the siege of Leiden is pure tradition. Even people in their nineties cannot remember a time when it was not celebrated and old books also mention the tradition. What's more: the event is not only commemorated in public so to say, but also by many Leiden citizens privately in the home. The only reason I can offer is that what happened in 1574 had such an impact that people still can relate to it, as if it were a religious feast. Which makes me wonder: will people still commemorate the end of World War II in AD 2345? A very brief summary, then: officially, the 80 Years' War began in 1568; four

years later, the rebels (Geuzen) took Den Briel – an event that is also still celebrated. After Zutphen, Naarden and Haarlem had been taken by the enemy, the balance began to swing in favour of the Dutch when first Alkmaar and then Leiden could be saved. In the latter case the siege led to famine, pestilence and mass deaths in the city. Mayor Van der Werff even offered himself for consumption to hungry burghers who wanted to capitulate! Clever use of inundation was one of the reasons why the siege was suddenly lifted – so suddenly that a pot of food was said to be left by the soldiers. That mixture of onions, carrots and potatoes became the traditional "hutspot" and now forms part of the feast. Many Leiden families have it on the table – and it's served in any restaurant that respects itself! Another enduring legacy was the University Leiden was granted in recognition of its resistance.

The city

That university is one of the factors determining the atmosphere in Leiden, which otherwise has the typical "feel" of ancient Dutch cities like Haarlem, for instance. The Breestraat is the main shopping-street, but for the specialist shops (books, antiques, crafts etc.) you'd best explore the maze of smaller streets in the centre. There are lots of pubs as well and despite all the changes of modern times you are still likely to meet some of the "classic" Leiden students: dressed like young executives and very, very "posh". Leiden offers many superb views because there are so many canals. A walk along the Rapenburg (which has been called Europe's most beautiful



(canal) is a must and so is a visit to the Botanical Garden (Hortus) situated there – one of the oldest extant in existence. Nearby is the Wittenberg, another canal with a nice view including the Sterrewacht (astronomy institute).

Three special elements in the cityscape: a very large number of drawbridges, the city gates (Morspoort, Zijlpoort) and a profusion of "hofjes" – secluded courts with picturesque houses for the aged. Many of these are so tucked away you will have to look carefully, otherwise you'll miss them! But the most interesting structure in the city is even more difficult to find despite its generous size and all casual visitors will simply fail to see it: the Burcht (citadel). Its age is not known with certainty, apart from some 17th-century embellishments (the gate, for instance) the



situation as you see it now goes back to about AD 1100 (!), but some remains underneath go back another 200 years or so. Note that the hill is artificial: it must have taken some digging and carting to make it a thousand years ago.

Apart from the siege, Leiden has been the scene of some other major disasters: in 1807 a gunpowder ship exploded in the Rapenburg and some of the devastated area was never built up and now forms the van der Werff park. In 1929 the magnificent Town Hall was ravaged by fire, but it has been restored to its 17th-century splendour.

Other notable sights are De Waag, the Gravesteen and several museums (Boerhaave - ancient scientific instruments, archeological museum - ancient art, Lakenhal - paintings, museum voor Volkenkunde - art from "exotic" countries).

The festival

Leidens Ontzet might also be called the Herring Festival. This is another traditional part of the festivities (it was the first food supplied to the

famished people) and I can safely say that I have never seen so many go down as on that one day! The major part of the city centre is transformed into a market-place, with stalls selling about anything you can imagine. Real "gezellig", but in case you hadn't thought about it: it's not a very good idea to go by car - the train is a much better alternative and as soon as you come out of the railway station you'll see the first of the stalls in the Steenstraat. From there, just follow your nose more or less and you'll be in the Breestraat.

One thing you should not miss (and probably cannot anyway) is the fun-fair. It's one of the biggest kermis events in the country, people from Leiden proudly proclaim, and I have risked life and limb in the monstrous Ferris wheel to take a picture for you!

Musicians are everywhere, of course, and we have seen some excellent street theatre performances. But the main event is the Grand Parade, an "optocht" that lasts several hours. All sorts of clubs and organizations have their own decorated floats and

rather than describe some of them I'd suggest you look at the pictures I shot of all this Pomp & Circumstance! As former "Leidenaars" will see, we found a good position just opposite the Town Hall, and I have some good advice for you. Get the official programme from the VVV and see to it that you're early for the parade - which takes place in the afternoon. The crowds are really out in force!

Most of the Leiden festival is pure uncomplicated fun, of course. But all of a sudden the mood swung completely to a more serious one, as a detachment of World War II veterans came into view. As these elderly gentlemen marched by - a bit portly, perhaps, but having lost none of their military bearing - the crowd spontaneously started cheering and applauding and one could hear this ovation rippling along the entire route.

And it felt really good to see that many people did not attempt to hide their emotion as they were reminded of another time Leiden was liberated - much more recently.

REMBRANDT EXHIBITION

In a previous Vogelvlucht, we have drawn attention to the great Rembrandt exhibition to be held in Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum from Dec. 4 1991 to March 1, 1992.

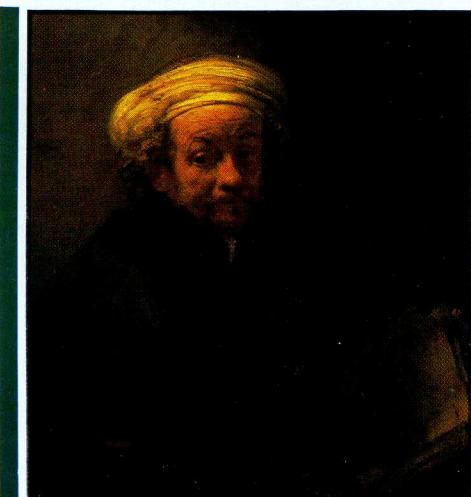
But Rembrandt also lived in Leiden for 26 years and in this city several other exhibitions will be held in the same period.

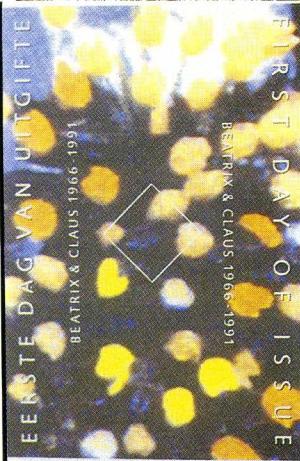
In the Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal the focus is on Rembrandt's friendship with the painter Jan Lievens, with whom he worked

together.

In the windmill De Valk a reconstruction is shown of life in a miller's family of that time.

In the house where the painter was born - in the Weddesteeg - a modern impression is given of a painter's studio of the 17th century. The Rembrandt city-walk, along the places where Rembrandt lived and worked in the city, has been extended. For all further information contact the VVV!





POSTZEGELS OP VACANTIE

Het is al een flinke tijd geleden dat ik zelf "aan postzegels deed", zoals dat heet, maar kennelijk verlies je de smaak toch niet helemaal. Toevallig hoorde ik een paar keer achter elkaar heel gezellige verhalen van mensen die naar een postzegelbeurs waren geweest en daarom besloot ik eens met een vakman op dat gebied te praten. Daarvoor ging ik te rade bij Ton Hoogendoorn, die in de Schoolstraat in Wassenaar een postzegelhandel heeft.

Hoe word je het?

"Ik studeerde in de textielrichting en heb daarin ook lange tijd mijn beroep uitgeoefend, maar ik verzamelde al vanaf mijn achtste postzegels en had vaak zitten denken over hoe leuk het zou zijn om dat als beroep te doen. Ruim vijftien jaar geleden had ik die kans en nu is mijn hobby dus mijn beroep - een ideale situatie! Het postzegelverzamelen moet je toch voornamelijk als hobby zien en niet als belegging - dat wordt een heel ander verhaal. Ook in mijn klantenkring is 99% hobbyist.

Als je begint rijzen er natuurlijk direct twee vragen: hoe kom je aan je voorraad en hoe kom je aan je klanten? Wat het eerste betreft: als je niet zelf al een grote voorraad hebt opgebouwd in je hobby hoef je er niet aan te beginnen. Verder koop je op veilingen, grote partijen, of uit een erfenis. Het wordt wel steeds moeilijker om een voorraad aan oude zegels op peil te houden. Die worden steeds zeldzamer, net als antiek. De prijzen, stijgen maar dat gaat langzaam. Er was een periode waarin ze heel snel stegen, maar dat was een modegril, mensen dachten

daar snel veel geld in te kunnen verdienen.

Een klantenkring opbouwen is niet moeilijk als je goede dingen hebt te bieden: ik heb me gewoon gevestigd, heb wat geadverteerd en had natuurlijk uitstekende contacten met veel verenigingen."

Specialiseren

"Als je leuk en goed wilt verzamelen moet je je gaan specialiseren. Heel populair is het thematisch verzamelen geworden: mensen verzamelen postzegels die een bepaald thema behandelen, zoals schilderijen, luchtvaart, bloemen of sport. Postzegels die over sport gaan geven nogal eens verrassingen te zien, zoals series over de wintersport uit Centraal Afrika! Ook als handelaar moet je je specialiseren. Ik heb de "Europese gedachte" als specialisme: in 1956 begonnen zes landen waaronder Nederland met de uitgifte van 2 speciale zegels met eenzelfde motief. Dat gebeurde elk jaar rond dezelfde tijd. Er kwamen steeds meer landen bij en er zijn behalve die speciale zegels nog andere Europees uitgaven zoals voor congressen. Zegels "met een Europees tintje" zijn dus een groot gebied geworden."

Mooie anecdotes

"Postzegels zijn natuurlijk van oudsher omgeven met anecdotes. Je moet eerlijk zeggen dat het nauwelijks meer

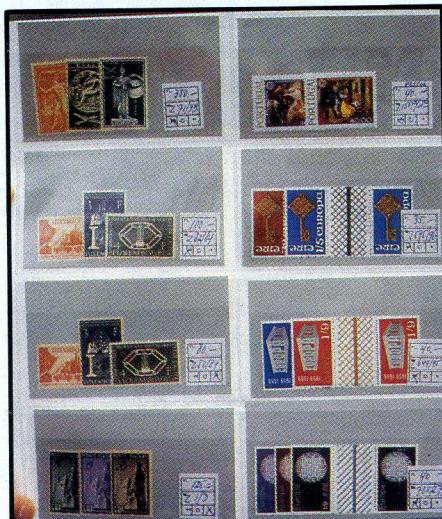
voorkomt dat zeldzame zegels voor een habbekrats verworven worden. De communicatie is daarvoor te intensief. Maar een enkele maal gebeurt er nog wel iets spectaculairs. Ik heb zelf meegeemaakt dat mensen vijftig jaar in een huis hadden gewoond en kleiner gingen wonen. Bij het opruimen van de zolder kwam toen een hele koffer met oude albums tevoorschijn. Die had een familielid vlak voor de oorlog daar gelaten toen hij weer van verlof terug naar "Indië" ging. In de oorlog is hij overleden en iedereen had die postzegels finaal vergeten!"

Voor de Olympische Spelen van Moskou zorgde Duitsland nog voor een sensatie. Er waren Olympische zegels gedrukt en een klein aantal was voor de uitgave als proef naar selecte personen gestuurd, onder andere naar de minister van sportzaken. Toen Duitsland van deelname afzag werd de hele oplaat ingenomen en vernietigd - maar de vrouw van de minister had er een volkomen te goeder trouw op een brief geplakt en verstuurd, ze had gewoon een postzegel nodig! Dat ene exemplaar is natuurlijk zeer kostbaar. Kort geleden ontstond er in Nederland ook zo'n situatie, toen het wereldkampioenschap voetbal in een debacle eindigde. Voor zover bekend is die oplage in zijn geheel venietigd."

Een middagje postzegelen

"De postzegelmarkt in Amsterdam (op de Nieuwe Zijds Voorburgwal) bestaat nog steeds en wordt elke zaterdag gehouden. Dat is wel een unieke instelling, verder is er alleen in Den Haag een tegenover het paleis Noordeinde, maar die is veel kleiner.

Maar er zijn veel verenigingen die een ruilbeurs organiseren, er is vrijwel elk weekend wel ergens iets te doen. Voor Nederlanders die uit Australië of Nieuw Zeeland komen en iets gezelligs willen meemaken is dat een uitstekend idee: loop eens gewoond bij een postzegelhandel binnen en vraag wat er te doen is. Je bent als "buitenlander" altijd welkom en zeker als je zelf iets leuks meeneemt, heb je direct veel contacten!"



Op de Amsterdamse postzegelmarkt



Mijn gesprekspartner in zijn vestiging

Europese gedachte in postzegels

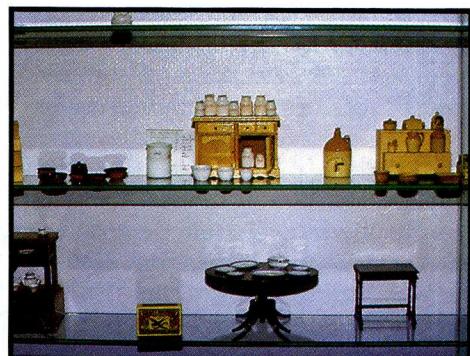


TINY TREASURES

A teacher of Latin who has a crush on miniature furniture suggests a sound case for the split personality department... But on meeting Louise Meertens all doubts disappear. She is just an awfully nice person who even as a small child knew exactly what she wanted. At the age of five when she could already read, she felt frustrated by the fact that the Latin text in a missal was beyond her. She decided then and there that she was going to master that mysterious language.

Her second frustration originated in her goodheartedness. She gave her dearly loved doll's house to a sick friend and when the friend moved away, the doll's house disappeared. But what can be healthier than exploiting your frustrations to your advantage? Seeing Louise amidst her tiny treasures you cannot but admire the result.

Until about five years ago collecting miniature furniture was just a pleasant hobby for Louise. But as the shelves got overcrowded and the attraction did not dwindle, she

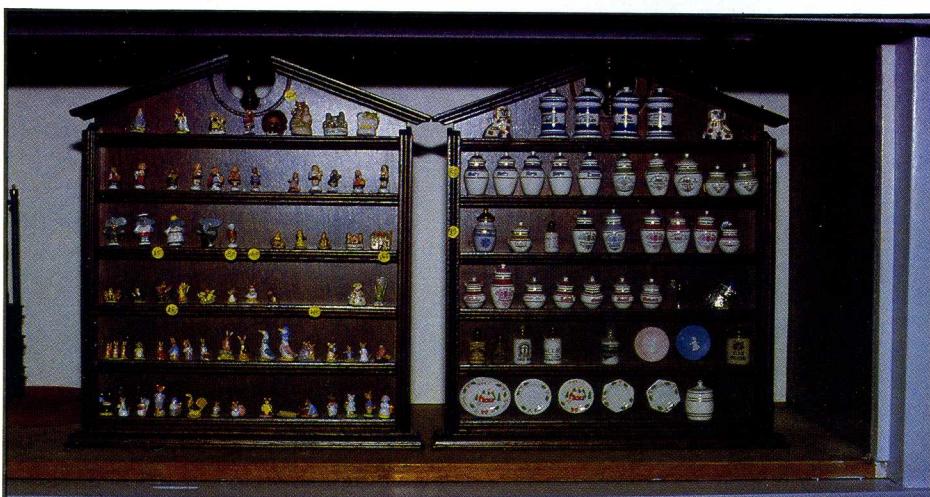


started a small shop together with her colleague Atemma Smeets. Her architect husband magnanimously gave them a wedge of his office and every Saturday from 12 till 16.30 Louise and/or Atemma share their enthusiasm with kindred souls. They sell exquisite Louis XVI furniture with the tiniest brass ornaments but also minute fake articles to furnish the shelves of a grocery. Between these extremes in size and price there is a whole range of the most adorable miniatures. Just to mention a few that attracted my attention: potted plants, teaset and dinner services, a cosy four-poster, a wash

stand, an ironing board and a sewing machine, old-fashioned prams and a bath with copper taps. There are complete outfits for a music room, a pre-war living room with even a floorlamp and a wireless to match, a kitchen too sweet for words and a whole range of Hindeloopen furniture in the original colours. Most of the objects are handmade with doors that open and drawers that can be drawn but for children to play with there is also a cheaper range.

The collection keeps changing and growing. Louise regularly visits fairs and friends in Holland and abroad and also has things made on order.

On spotting "Bakkerij St. Jozef" in Vogelvlucht 1990/4 she immediately fell for the handsome tins with Jan Hagel and Zandmoppen... "That is exactly what I am looking for", she exclaimed and it is not difficult to guess what the next addition to the miniature collection will be.



"**Miniature Furniture**", Prinsengracht 293 (near Raadhuisstraat) 1016 GX Amsterdam. In July and August it is advisable to phone first (020-6267863) because they may be away.

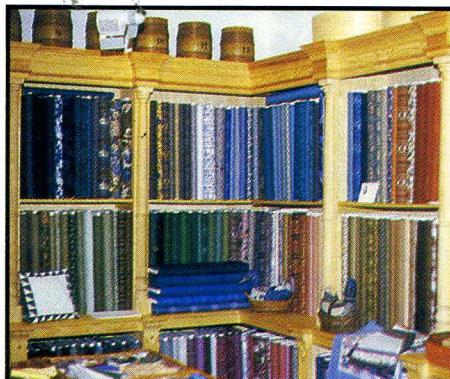


KLEDERDRACHT QUILTS

Bij een bezoek aan het Nederlands Openlucht Museum in Arnhem sla ik de souvenirwinkel nooit over. Deze keer viel mijn oog op een serie ansichtkaarten van quilts die zó perfect het karakter van een aantal Nederlandse klederdrachten weergaven, dat ik ter plekke besloot niet te rusten totdat ik er u in "Vogelvlucht" over kon vertellen.

Patchwork-paradijs

Behalve de naam van de maakster vermeldde de kaart de firma Den Haan en Wagenmakers. Die bleek zowel in Edam (Nieuwenhuizenplein 1) als in Amsterdam (Nieuwe Zijds Voorburgwal 97-99) een winkel geopend te hebben waar de argeloos binnentredende klant even naar adem snakt: zo'n overweldigende hoeveelheid traditionele en handbedrukte katoenen stoffen, de een nog mooier dan de ander, doet bij menigeen de wens opkomen zich daar een weekendje te laten insluiten. In Edam telt de collectie zo'n 1350 verschillende stoffen, in Amsterdam nog meer! Maar behalve



materiaal en boeken herbergen de prachtige panden ook kennis van de Nederlandse patchworkwereld zodat we nu persoonlijk Mariet Soethout kunnen benaderen, de maakster van de klederdracht-quilts.

Uit de nood een deugd

Zodra de deur opengaat in de Tappis straat in Elden (gem. Arnhem) weten we dat we aan het goede adres zijn: hier woont een handwerkster.

Het begin van Mariet's story is onverwacht: ze komt niet uit de kunstnijverheidshoek maar was lerares aan een Sociale Academie. Door een auto-ongeluk kon ze zich een jaarlang slechts met krukken voortbewegen en kreeg toen de behoefte haar handen de activiteit van haar benen te laten overnemen. Een familielid bracht haar in contact met patchwork en toen ging de bal aan het rollen. Ze volgde een paar cursussen maar bleek zo'n aanleg en kleurgevoel te hebben dat ze al gauw in binnen en buitenland bekendheid kreeg via publicaties, lezingen en workshops. Binnenkort gaat ze voor de vierde keer naar Amerika en de contacten die ze nu wereldwijd heeft vindt Mariet het leukste aspect van haar tegenwoordige bezigheid. Haar specialiteit, de folklore, verklaart ze deels door de pure aantrekkelijkheid van de stoffen, deels door





CRAZY PATCHWORK

haar behoeft nog iets vast te houden van de verdwijnende klederdrachten. Doordat "die jongens in Edam" weer sitzen en andere authentieke klederdrachtstoffen brachten, werd het ook praktisch uitvoerbaar. Maar niet alle stoffen zijn meer nieuw te koop. Mariet Soethout bezoekt de plaatsen waar de klederdracht nog gedragen wordt, niet alleen om het karakteristieke in haar ontwerp te kunnen verwerken maar ook weer vanwege de contacten. Zo verzamelt iemand op Marken lappen voor haar die b.v. op een plaatselijke bazaar nog wel eens uit privé-bezit worden aangeboden.

Werkwijze

Het uitgangspunt is altijd een idee. Daarna begint het verzamelen van de lapjes, wat wel eens een jaar of vier kan duren. Het patroon is er dan nog niet, dat moet via getekende en ingekleurde ontwerpen groeien binnen de grenzen van de klassieke patchwork-patronen. En last but not least: het beeld van de dracht moet er op een of andere manier uit spreken.

Mariet werkt met malletjes waarvan ze de omtrek op de stof tekent. Met de hand zet ze de stukjes aan elkaar, niet alleen omdat dat soepeler wordt maar ook omdat je er gezellig in de huiskamer aan kunt werken. Vanwege die langdurige persoonlijke betrokkenheid met een werkstuk vindt ze het moeilijk om er uiteindelijk afstand van te doen. Veel werk hangt tijdelijk op tentoonstellingen en thuis vragen muren en bedden om steeds wisselende, kleurige bedekking. Heel af en toe verkoopt ze iets maar het creatief toepassen van traditionele stoffen en technieken en het doorgeven daarvan brennen Mariet Soethout de meeste bevrediging.

If you feel a bit bitten by the patchwork bug but lack the courage to start something GREAT, a miniature quilt in crazy patchwork is the ideal thing to start with. There are no laws to be obeyed nor stitches and millimeters to be counted.

It is essentially a technique for bold patterns, outspoken contrasts and bright colours so Dutch folklore fabric in the red-white-blue category is ideally suited. What you'll need apart from assorted scraps in the colour scheme you have chosen, is embroidery cotton in matching and contrasting shades, a piece of plain material (any old sheet or shirt will do) to attach the patches to, a piece of thin polyester foam or thick flannel for the padding, backing fabric, enough to bring over the front edges.

My miniature quilt measures 27x32 cm and I cut 32 pieces out of 15 different scraps. This is just to give you an idea, any other number and size will

do as well as long as you keep the size of the patches in scale with overall measurements.

The first step is to tack a patch flush with two sides of a corner, right side up. Stitch the second piece wrong side up along a third edge of the first, leaving a small seam allowance. Turn and pin down. Go along in this fashion until the entire piece of material is covered. There are a few do's and don'ts but they are not serious and you will discover them as you go along.

The nicest part of the job is the embroidery. Here again anything goes. I gave each patch a central motive in the shape of a flower, a butterfly or a few leaves and I stitched merrily along the edges any row of stitches that came into my mind or was suggested by the pattern of the patch.

To finish your quilt: bring the backing fabric over the front edge and tuck in the edge to form a binding of about 1 cm wide.



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