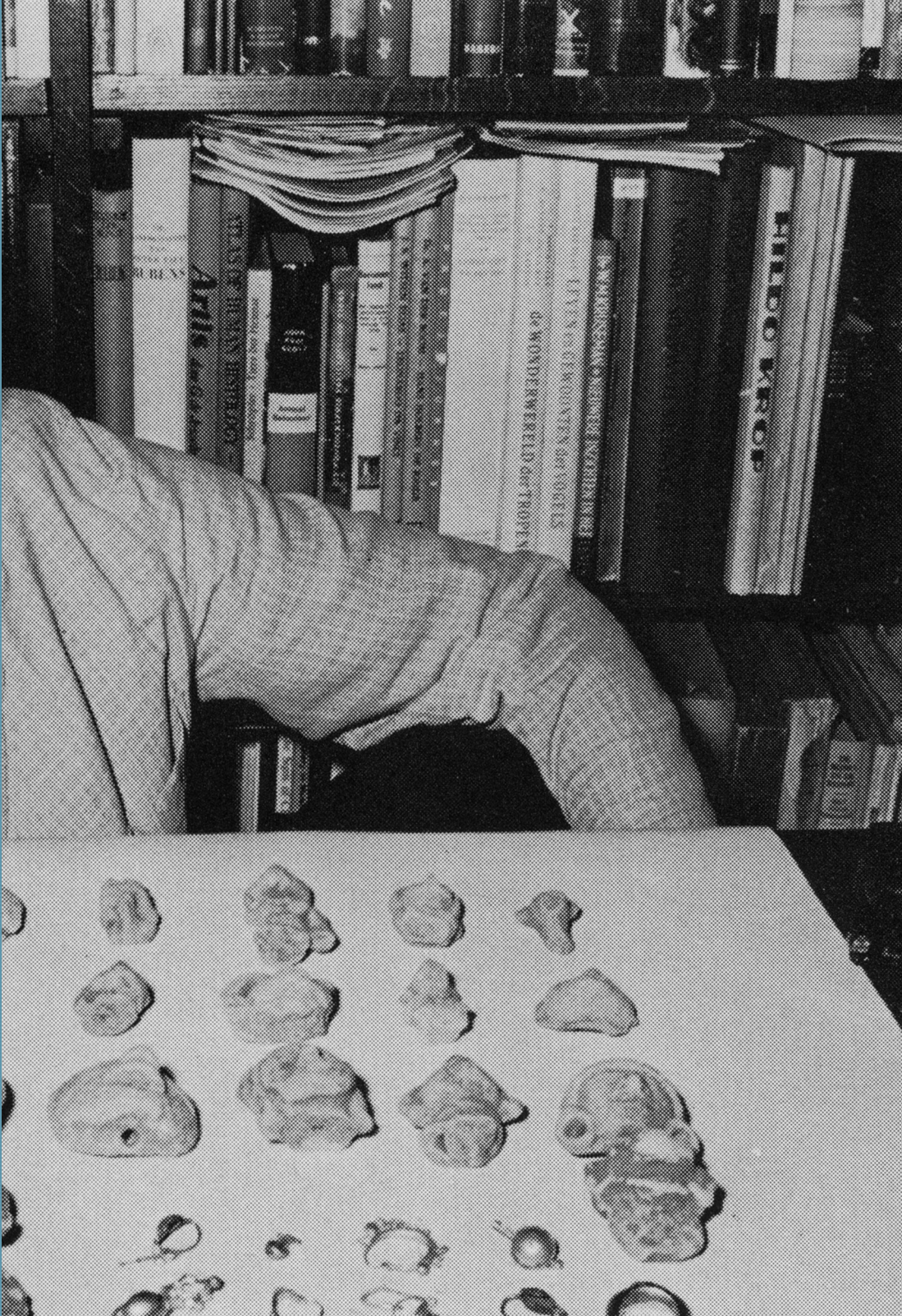


A Horse Dressed Up Like A Zebra*



* Tim Caro, Yvette Argueta, Emmanuelle Sophie Briolat, Joren Bruggink, Maurice Kasprosky, Jai Lake, Matthew J. Mitchell, Sarah Richardson & Martin How, Benefits of zebra stripes: Behaviour of tabanid flies around zebras and horses, Published: February 20, 2019, University of California USA, University of Exeter UK, University of Bristol UK

**I think
might
of an ar
I am.**

To: a.de.goede@vpro.nl
Subject: Dear Dr. A. (podcast proposal)

Dear A. de Goede,

My name is Andreas Nimmerdor and I am an investigative journalist from Amsterdam. Not only am I a fervent podcast listener and enthusiast, during my time in journalism school (Windesheim) I also got experience podcasting myself. With fellow students I made a weekly show about the going-ons at campus.

Now I am in possession of a tale that I am sure will make a great podcast and hope you take the time to read through my proposal.

(Im)patiently waiting to hear back from you.

Kind regards,
Andreas Nimmerdor

Podcast proposal Dear Dr. A.

Dear Andreas Nimmerdor,

Last week we ran into each other at the lecture: *Fetishizing the Archive*. When having a drink after, I told you about my work and investigation into Dr. A., a possibly fraudulent scientist. What I did not tell you is that I am unable to finish it. I do not know anymore what is true and what is not and I feel guilty spending any more time trying to find out. This obsession took me away from my family. I lay awake for nights thinking how to make my life easier. Find time to make work while also being available for the ones around me. Then your name popped up in my head. I have a feeling you understand the importance of finishing this project. Talking to you about it you had some great insights. With your experience in journalism I am convinced you can bring this to a successful end. In order for you to do so I compiled an extensive archive containing all my research. I trust you will handle this with care and respect to all people that are involved.

Kind Regards,
Eva van Ooijen

September 29, 2021. A box is dropped off at my doorstep. A letter lies on top of it that is addressed to me.

I immediately opened the box. Stuck on top of a pile of materials, a yellow post-it stares back at me. It reads:
How to become a fraud?

It has been years since the scientific world in the Netherlands was shaken to the core when the fraud of social

psychologist Diederik Stapel came to light (2011). It made international newspaper headlines and did great damage to the reputation of social psychology and to science in general. The question arises: for the one that gets caught, how many get away? The box delivered to my doorstep contained one of these cases, the case of Dr. A. A fraud similar to Stapel, with the difference that A. was able to make a lifelong career out of it.

I started by making an inventory of what the box contained:

- 4 letters written by Dr. A. to Eva van Ooijen + one postcard.
- 6 letters written by Eva van Ooijen to Dr. A.
- Copies out of the personal files of Dr. A.
- Print-out e-mail conversation between Eva van Ooijen and TonP1968
- 17 books by Dr. A.
- 4 books by Carol Brubaker
- Book: *Ontspoorde Wetenschap* by Frank van Kolfschooten.
- 22 newspaper clippings
- 5 figurines
- 1 notebook from Eva van Ooijen
- A USB stick
- A plant

Since that day me and the archive Eva van Ooijen has compiled have become close acquaintances. I know now that Eva was not the one to discover the story of Dr. A. She read about it in the book: *Ontspoorde Wetenschap* (Derailed Science) by Frank van Kolfschooten. This book gave an overview of the most prominent cases of scientific fraud in the Netherlands, including the case of Dr. A. This podcast will rely on some of the information provided by this book. But Eva van Ooijen found out more about Dr. A. than van Kolfschooten or anybody else before her.

This story will lead us through a jungle of stories, cases of fraud, scientific and non-scientific. Simultaneously it is about an artist who is obsessed by the truth. Not only will I try to answer Eva's

question: How to become a fraud? But I will also try to find out why someone like her would want to know how to do so?

You should see this podcast in the lines of productions like: *S Town*, *Dirty John*, *Firebug*, and *Dr. Bones*. All of these podcasts are looking for the truth. The first three with mesmerising masculine voices with a strength for storytelling.

Although this podcast will be a thing in its own right, not to be compared to anything else. The great work you as the vPRO did on the production of *Dr. Bones* is one of the reasons I sent this proposal to you. I liked the website you made that was dedicated to *Dr. Bones* and I would love to do the same for this project. So we can share some of the archival materials with our listeners as well as the letter exchanges between Eva van Ooijen, Dr. A. and some of the other people she got in contact with.

The podcast will contain 4 episodes, of approximately 25 minutes each and one bonus episode. I will attach my carefully conducted research on every episode to this proposal

Episode 1 The scientist and the artist, an introduction into Dr. A.

Episode 2 Possible Worlds

Episode 3 The case of the 5 figurines.

Episode 4 Mrs A. The Woman and the con.*

Bonus Episode An interview with Eva van Ooijen

* This episode was added after Eva van Ooijen read my proposal and insisted on me doing so.

Dramatis personae In order of appearance

Leading Roles

Dr. A.

(Rotterdam, 1916/1928–2021*)

He got his doctorate in biology and medicine both on the same day. After that he started to work as the youngest Professor at the Vrije Universiteit (Free University) in Amsterdam.

At the age of 47 he went into early retirement. Then he went on multiple excursions to the Amazon where he excavated a lost settlement. He wrote numerous books, two of them about his findings in the Amazon.

Eva van Ooijen

(Zuidwolde 1982)

Finished her Bachelor Degree in photography in 2009. Now a mother and aspiring artist who lives and works in Amsterdam. In 2020 she started her master degree in artistic research at the Royal Academy of Arts in the Hague and will graduate in the summer of 2022.

Diederik Stapel

(Oegstgeest 1966)

Was a social psychologist and professor at Tilburg University before he was exposed as a fraud. Author of the book: *Deraiment: Faking Science: A true story of academic fraud.*

Loes Jager

(unknown)

The first wife of Dr. A. and mother of his daughter Geraldine Willemien.

Mart Bax

(Zutphen 1937)

Professor in political anthropology and colleague of Dr. A. at the Vrije Universiteit (Free University) in Amsterdam. In 2012 he was exposed as a fraud.

Supporting Roles

Flatmate: Boris

(Zaandam 1994)

Artist recently graduated from the Rietveld academie.

Ton

(Hoorn 1968)

Collector of prehistoric, tribal and shamanic objects.

Jack J.

(unknown)

Son in law of Dr. A.

Thierry Oussou

(Allada, Benin 1988)

Conceptual artist who was a Rijksakademie resident in 2015/2016.

Sherrie Levine

(United States 1947)

Photographer, painter and conceptual artist.

Geraldien Willemien

(Amsterdam 1952)

Daughter of Dr. A. and Loes.

* There is some uncertainty about these dates.

Elizabeth Holmes
(Washington 1984)
American business woman and
founder of Theranos.

Olive Greenhalgh
(Bolton 1925)
Mother of art forger Shaun
Greenbalgh.

Olga Dogaru
(unknown)
Mother of art thief Radu Dogaru.

Wolfgang Beltracchi
(Höxter 1951)
Painter and art forger.

Helene Beltracchi
(Germany 1958)
Wife of art forger Wolfgang
Beltracchi.

Elizabeth Durack
(Australia 1915–2000)
Artist and writer from western
Australia.

Eddie Burrup
(Australia 1915–2000)
Aboriginal painter from western
Australia.

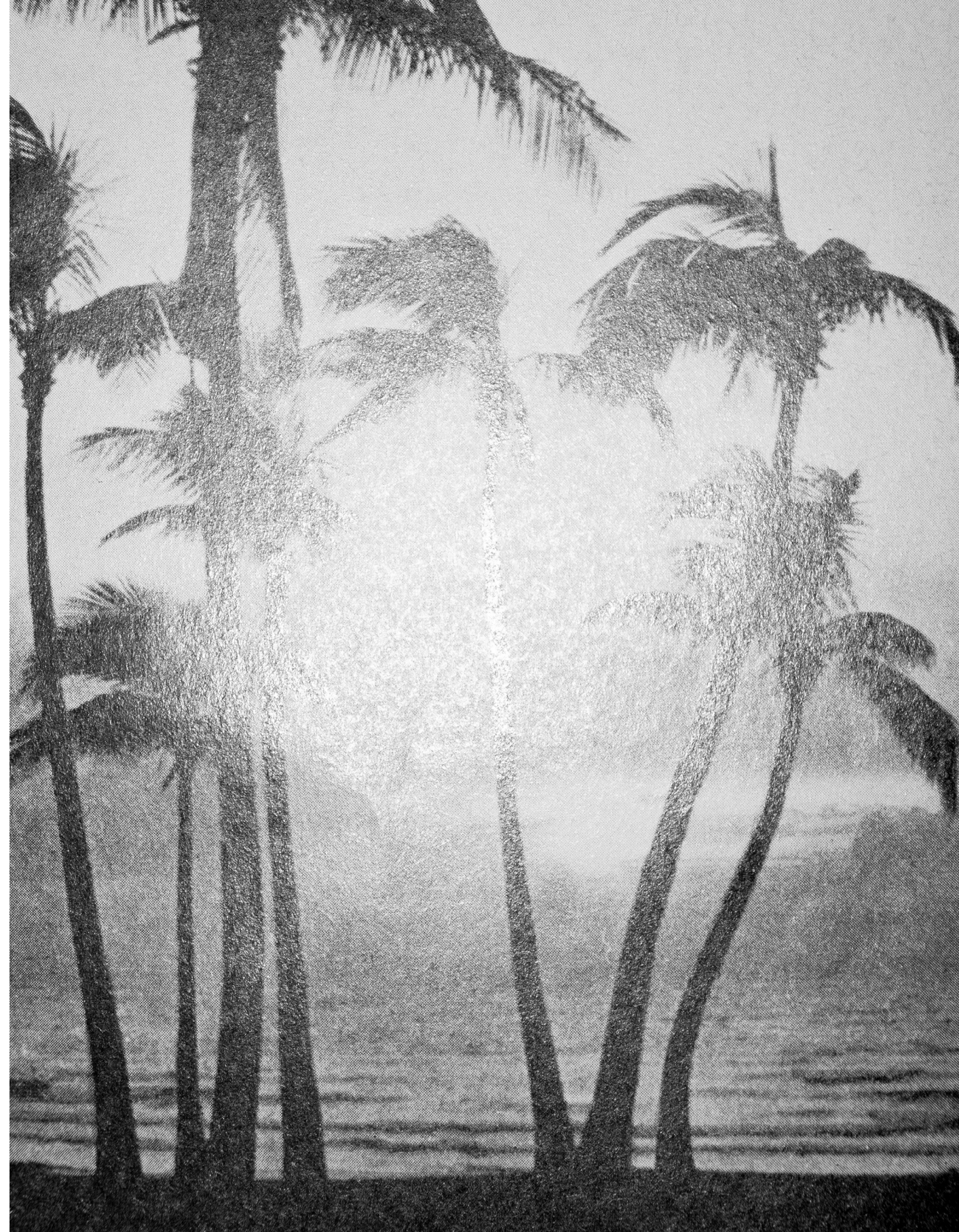
Charlie Wierema
(2015)
Son of Eva and her partner Sam.

Elsie Wright
(Cottingley 1901–1988)

Frances Griffiths
(Cottingley 1907–1986)
Nieces and authors of 5 photographs
depicting fairies

Arthur Conan Doyle
(Edinburgh 1859–1930).
British doctor, but best known as the
writer of Sherlock Holmes.

Baron von Münchhausen
(Bodenwerder 1720–1797)
A German Baron that became world
famous for telling tall tales.





Episode I The scientist and the artist, an introduction into Dr. A.

'Each November, Santon Brige, a small rural town in Cumbria, England, holds a contest: the world's biggest liar. From all over the UK and beyond, people gather at a tavern in the centre of town to try their hand at the tallest, yet still somehow believable, tall tale they can muster within a five-minute time span. The most convincing of the lot gets the crown for the year.'¹

In the Netherlands, when one thinks of the biggest liar, Diederik Stapel comes to mind. Stapel, a social psychologist who faked research data, was awarded titles like: 'The lord of the lies. The lying dutchman. Meesteroplichter. Fraude cum laude. Magna cum fraude.'² He became the face of scientific fraud in the Netherlands. Every time a new case comes to light or an old case is written about in a newspaper the comparison game starts. The competition of: who is the biggest fraud?

Next to Diederik Stapel there are two scientists in the running for the title: Mart Bax, a political anthropologist and Professor at the Free University in Amsterdam, who we will get to know a little bit better in the next episode. And the subject of this podcast: Dr. A., who was dubbed a Super Stapel by the NRC. 'Take one of the most serious fraud cases ever, that of biologist Dr. A., a kind of super Stapel who sucked an entire body of work out of his thumb.'³

So, let me give you a short summary of Dr. A.'s career: he first made newspaper headlines when he got his doctoral degree in medicine and biology both on the same day. After that he got a job as a professor at the Free University in Amsterdam. Rumor has it that his father paid 25.000 guilders for his chair as he was originally intended to start out at a lower position.⁴

1. Konnikoca, Maria. *The Confidence Game, The Psychology of the Con and Why We Fall for it Every Time*, p. 36, Canongate Books Ltd (2017), ISBN: 0143109871
2. Stapel, Diederik. *Ontsporing*, Uitgeverij Prometheus (2012), ISBN: 9789044623123
3. Van Veelen, Arjen. *Fraude is Goed Nieuws*, NRC (27-06-2012)
4. Van Bergen, Leo. *Deel II... tot Geloof in Genezen*, De medische faculteit van de Vrije Universiteit 1945-2000, Wildenborch (2005), ISBN: 9789085710127

He was very productive, publishing approximately 30 articles each year. Besides that he was writing books about his 'true' adventures in central Africa under the pseudonym Carol Brubaker.

Questions arose about Dr. A.'s work when one of his studies appeared to contain conflicting results. The suspicion arose that he made up the results. After looking into his research data they found out he greatly exaggerated the number of animals he did studies on: 23.000 fish turned out to be only 600 fish and 1.828 rats turned out to be 180.

This could have been the end of his career, but he claimed a case of early dementia and at the age of 46, after only 12 years at the university, he was sent into early retirement. He kept going through life using the titles professor and doctor and used the authority they gave him to write newspaper articles and publish popular science books.

For one of his books: *Primitief Gedrag* (Primitive Behavior) he won the first Jacob van Maerlent prize, a prize for popular scientific publications.

The thing he is most known for is his discovery of a Pre-Columbian settlement in the Amazon rainforest. He wrote two books about it: *Nacht van de Gier* (Night of the Vulture) and *Amazonas*.

Until 1992 he had a scientific column in the *Telegraaf*.⁵ A year later Frank van Kolschooten exposed him as a fraud in his book *Valse Vooruitgang* (false progress).⁶

Now I might have given you the impression that this podcast is about scientific fraud. A subject that was never more current than in this post-truth era that we live in. Post-truth meaning: 'relating to a situation in which people are more likely to accept an argument based on their emotions and beliefs, rather than one based on facts' (Cambridge). And that is a part of it. But I want to warn you that this podcast is not about what the consequences are of scientific fraud. Nor do I think I will find out anything new about why scientists would falsify research data. Although I will get into that briefly. Because maybe their motives can tell me something about the motives of an artist like Eva and why she asked me the question of how to become a fraud.

You already know how Eva van Ooijen trusted me with this case. But who is she? She, at almost 40, is a mother to a 6 year old son and an aspiring artist who lives and works in Amsterdam. In 2009 she got her Bachelor degree in photography. She is currently in the second year of her master degree in Artistic Research at the Royal Academy of Arts in The Hague and spent the last two years investigating Dr. A.

Letter Exchanges Eva van Ooijen and Dr. A.

5. A Dutch newspaper.

6. Van Kolschooten, Frank. *Ontspoorde Wetenschap*, p.156, De Kring (2012), ISBN:9789491567025

Dinsdag weer naar Amazonegebied

Prof. dr. A. oerwoud-schatgraver



Prof. dr. A.
... eigen baas blijven ...

Eigen vindplaats in Columbiaans oerwoud

(Van onze speciale verslaggever)
AMSTERDAM, 25 juni — Dinsdag vertrekt professor dr. A(ntonie) vroeger hoogleraar aan de Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam, voor het derde achtereenvolgende jaar naar het Amazonegebied, waar hij met schop en spade zich opnieuw zet aan het opdelven van prehistorische vondsten. Hij verwacht ditmaal ongeveer drie tot zes maanden weg te blijven en met buit beladen in ons land terug te keren. Het is met prof. Stolk een heel andere kant opgegaan dan hij zich destijds zelf had voorgesteld. Zijn universitaire opleiding en twee promoties in de medische sfeer bestemden hem aanvankelijk tot een wetenschappelijk carrière in de geneeskunde.

Professor A. nu 39 jaar, die, toen hij op 25-jarige leeftijd tot hoogleraar in Amsterdam benoemd werd, tot de jongste profs in Nederland behoorde, maar uit het doceren toch te weinig voldoening putte, is een forse, vriendelijke man. Hij doet in zijn voorkomen meer denken aan een wouddoper dan aan een hoogleraar. Hij wekt helemaal de indruk zich liever in korte broek en open hemd voort te bewegen dan in zo'n keurig kostuum dat hij nu eenmaal dient te dragen in zijn even degelijk gemeubileerde woning aan de Koninginneweg. Hij houdt van het avontuur, het ongewisse, het onverwachte, maar beweegt zich daar niet in zonder grondige voorbereiding. Professor die toga en baret aan de kapstok heeft gehangen omdat het hooglerarsambt niet te combineren valt met zijn expedities, vertelt niet zonder trots, dat hij ook deze derde tocht naar Zuid-Amerika geheel uit eigen middelen bekostigt.

„Er zijn mij wel subsidies en andere middelen tot steunverlening aan-

geboden, maar ik maak er geen gebruik van omdat ik zelfstandig wil blijven. Het aanvaarden van hulp betekent ook het toelaten van een zekere inmenging en ik wil eigen baas blijven. En, ik kan het vrij gemakkelijk allemaal zelf betalen”. Hoe? „Voor een deel uit een gunstige regeling, die ik met de universiteit heb kunnen treffen, voor een ander deel uit de opbrengst van boeken en publicaties over vorige expedities”.

Het Amazonegebied is niet de enige streek die prof. A. heeft geëxploreerd, maar wel de belangrijkste vindplaats van archeologisch materiaal. Iedere expeditie begon met een of ander congres over medisch-biologische onderwerpen. Prof. Stolk rekte dan zijn verblijf met wat maanden om te gelegenheid te benutten voor dier- en plantkundig onderzoek ter plaatse. Zo bezocht hij grote delen van Afrika, Lapland en Noord-Amerika. Ook zijn expedities in Zuid-Amerika zijn uitvloeisel van een congres.

Het doel van de tocht in de zomer van 1964 was het filmen en in kaart brengen van een aantal zeldzame dieren en planten in de bijna ondoordringbare jungle van het Amazone-oerwoud. Ook toen was prof. Stolk de enige blanke in het kleine gezelschap, met enkele plaatselijke gidsen en helmers.

Een der gidsen maakte de Neder-

landse onderzoeker nieuwsgierig door toespelingen te maken op een geheime plaats, ergens in het oerwoud. Voor wat geld en whisky was deze inlander bereid de plek aan te wijzen. Na een moeilijke tocht per kano ontdekte prof. Stolk diep in de jungle vreemde bouwseis, die de resten moesten zijn van een oude nederzetting. Voorlopig houdt prof. Stolk het er op, dat het een stad betreft van de Chibcha-Indianen. Zekerheid heeft hij nog niet.

Hij is er van overtuigd, dat de vondst uniek is. Zonder veel moeite slaagde hij er in uit de bodem het ene voorwerp na het andere op te diepen: talrijke beeldjes, sieraden van goud en gebruiksvorwerpen, allemaal, naar hij meent tenminste, 2000 jaar oud. Hij nam mee zoveel hij kon maar moest wegens gebrek aan transportmiddelen veel achterlaten.

Een jaar later begaf hij zich naar dezelfde plaats waar hij opnieuw de bodem nauwkeurig onderzocht. Er kwam nog veel meer te voorschijn: vijf beelden van anderhalf tot twee meter hoog, en een menigte kleingoed. Opnieuw de moeilijkheid van het transport, en dat is de voornaamste reden, waarom prof. Stolk volgende week terugkeert. Hij is van plan een vlot te bouwen van licht hout, waarop hij de achtergebleven prehistorische vondsten uit het Amazonegebied hoop te kunnen slepen.

De collectie die hij intussen al ons land heeft binnengebracht en veilig in kluisen is weggeborgen, is een aardig kapitaal waard. In New York bood een Amerikaan prof. A. 50.000 gulden voor een indiaans beeld. Een andere Amerikaan stelde hem in alle ernst voor safari's te organiseren naar de nu alleen nog aan prof. Stolk en zijn helpers bekende plek in het Columbiaanse oerwoud zo in de geest van: „graaf uw eigen prehistorisch beeld op voor duizend dollar”.

De Nederlandse oerwouddoper is op geen van beide aanbiedingen ingegaan. „Ik graaf die dingen niet op om mij er aan te vertijken. Ik wil de collectie compleet houden en zelf geheel bij elkaar brengen”.

Dat alles vertelt prof. A. met een ontwapenend soort ijdelheid en steeds vriendelijk glimlachend. Hij is er zich ook van bewust dat beroeps-archeologen zijn bezigheden fonsend gadeslaan. „Ik hoor wel eens zeggen: je bent toch geen geschoolde archeoloog. Maar ik zie niet in, waarom ik me niet met opgravingen bezig zou mogen houden. Door mijn opleiding en twee promoties op één dag (prof. A. vertelt het niet zonder enige nadruk) weet ik heus wel, wat wetenschap is. Ik heb veel over het vak gelezen en gemerkt, dat het dikwijls „amateurs” waren die de belangrijke vondsten hebben gedaan.”

Taaie uren voor neo-Vikingen
Andersons gebed
voor 55-jarigen

A/R KOTTER: dat hij een speciaal gebed voor 55-jarigen

Dear Dr. A.

How are you?

You must be wondering who is writing to you, long after you vanished from newspaper headlines. I am a stranger to you. An artistic research student interested in your work.

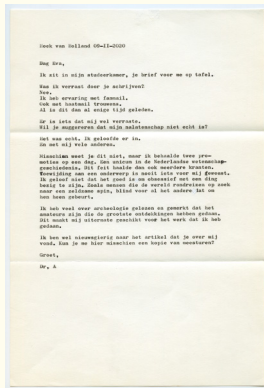
It started with me finding an article clipping in a library book. The article was about you, I got fascinated and started reading one of your books.

Last night I even had a dream about one of them. I travelled with you through Colombia on the back of a pick up truck, with our guide Garcia. We went looking for the treasures you discovered on your last trip there.

When I woke up I could hardly believe it was a dream. Is that how it felt to you? Like it was all real? I think you might be more of an artist than I am.

I would love to know more and hope to hear back from you.

Sincerely,
Eva



Original letter #01

Hoek van Holland 09-11-2020

Amsterdam 14-11-20

Dear Ms. Eva,

I sit in my studie your letter in front of me on the table.

Was I surprised by your writing?
No. I had my fair share of fan-mail. And hate-mail. Although this was a long time ago.

There is something that does surprise me.
Are you suggesting my legacy is not real?
It was real. I believed it.
And so did everyone else.

You might not know this, but I graduated with two doctoral degrees in one day.
Commitment to one subject was never for me. I don't believe it is good to get obsessed over one thing.

Like people who travel around the world looking for one kind of spider forgetting everything else that surrounds them.

I have a strong belief that the greatest discoveries were made by amateurs.
So I was perfectly equipped for the things I took on.

Just out of curiosity, could you send me a copy of the article you found?

Faithfully,
Dr. A.

Dear Dr. A.

What a pleasant surprise, you wrote back to me. I was hoping you would but did not dare think so.

Yesterday I went to the Royal Library and took out every book in their collection written by you. To my surprise I discovered a book named: 'Hella's Downfall' a book of poems that you wrote.

I really enjoyed this one poem 'Praxiteles', in which you describe the conflict inside the artist when starting something new. Contaminating the blank page by putting on those first brush strokes and with that eliminating the endless possibilities that were there before.
At some point working on a project I always contemplate if I can go back to that blank page, worried that I made a false start, or that I lost control over the steering wheel somewhere along the way.

After my visit to the library I had a meeting with my tutor talking about the work I'm making about you. Did I mention that in my last letter? My artistic research project is about you. I hope that's ok?
Do not worry it comes from a place of admiration.

I get so much pleasure out of making art inspired by your writing, drawings and the pictures you took. Thinking of the museum you planned to build, experimenting with how I could showcase your findings. But my tutor told me not to approach your research on a purely material and aesthetic level. Only being fascinated is not enough, the word logic was repeated over and over again. Logic, logic, logic... Leaving me more and more confused. But in my heart I know he is right. I have to find the logic. I know that it is in there somewhere but I can't seem to grab it.

What are you working on now? Or are you fully retired? I can't imagine that. I see you in your study, a sturdy wooden desk surrounded by bookcases stocked full of books and trinkets.

There is one book you wrote I am curious about but can't find, A book named 'Experiments', any idea where I could find this particular book?

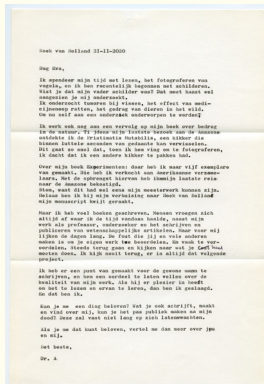
I hope to hear back from you,

With kind regards,
Eva

p.s. I included the article you asked me about.



Article



Original letter #02

Hoek van Holland 21-11-2020

Amsterdam 29-12-2020

Dear Ms. Eva,

I spend my time reading, taking pictures: primarily of birds and I started to paint a little. Did you know my father was a painter?

You must know, considering you are researching me. Am I an object to be researched?

I researched tumours on fish, the effect of medicine on rats, the behaviour of animals in the wild. Now to become an object of investigation myself.

I am also working on a sequel of my book about deceit in nature. The last time I was in the Amazon area I discovered the mutable rain frog. A frog that changes its skin in just one second, completely changing texture from spiny to smooth in a few minutes. This change was so rapid that when I captured the frog to photograph it I thought I had mistakenly taken a picture of the wrong one.

About my book, "Experiments", I only made five copies so don't expect to find one. I sold them to some American beneficiaries to sponsor my last trip to the Amazon. In hindsight it is my best work yet. Unfortunately after moving to Hoek van Holland I could never find my manuscript again. What I would do to page through that book one more time.

But I wrote a lot of books, people were always wondering where I found the time. Next to teaching, doing scientific research and publishing articles. For me there are countless hours in the day. The mistake you and others are making is to judge your own work. There is too much time consumed in that and too much worry about doing the wrong or the right thing. There is, in my opinion, only the next thing.

Let others be the judge of your work.

I always made it a point to let real people, the non-science folks, judge my work. If they like to read it and learn from it I think I succeeded. And I did.

Can you make me one promise? Whatever you write, make or find out about me, can you use it after I'm dead. It won't take that long.

If you promise me that then please tell me more about me and you.

Yours Faithfully,
Dr. A.

Dear Dr. A.

It took me a long time to respond, I'm sorry about that.

My son is home from school, because of the lockdown due to the coronavirus, so my time is limited.

This makes me think twice about everything I plan to make, because there is no time for mistakes. So I ended up doing nothing. Now I feel guilty about all the time I lost procrastinating and try to make up for it by looking for shortcuts, although I suspect there are none.

Maybe I should take your advice to heart. Just make and let others be the judge. Unfortunately up until now my work, unlike yours, has not been wildly popular. You were almost like a pop star, which is extraordinary for a scientist. Maybe you can teach me a thing or two?

You made me really curious about your paintings. Do you have a subject? I imagine it must have to do with nature. Can you send me a picture of them? I indeed do know your father was a painter, but could not find any of his works.

I did undertake a trip to the university where you used to work and had a look at your staff files there. This was enlightening. I never suspected you to be married, with a child nonetheless. This does not fit with the image I have in my head of you as an adventurer and explorer, a perpetual bachelor. I can only find one picture of you wearing a ring that could possibly be a wedding one.

Me looking for your wedding ring came from reading about this trick of the passion flower. I read about this in a book called Dazzled and Deceived, I think you might find it interesting. It describes that butterflies have the tendency to lay eggs on the leaves of passion flowers. To keep them from doing so the passion flower evolved some mimicry: its leaves started to grow small yellow spots on them that look like butterfly eggs. When a butterfly is searching for a fresh leaf spotting the fake eggs it will look further thinking this one is already taken. This is what made me think of wedding rings. Specifically about unmarried women wearing one to keep from getting unwanted attention which made me think of men and women leaving their wedding ring on the night stand to look more available. We are not far from the animal world are we?

I did read your book about deceit in nature and found your story: Clothes Make the Zebra fascinating. A horse mare dressed up like a

Hoek van Holland 07-01-21

zebra to feed an orphaned zebra foal. Did this work? After I read this story I started to see bags, cars and shoes dressed up in zebra stripes everywhere.

Next to your extended legacy as Dr. A. you also wrote under a pseudonym. Why? Was it like putting on somebody else's skin, like creating a whole new persona? Did it make you write and look at the world differently?

I spent one summer vacation as Lola, I must admit it was great. Somehow I felt more free. Maybe I should try this again but under a different name. Lola does not fit me or the artist I'd like to be anymore.

**How are you holding up in this lockdown?
I hope you are well.**

**Sincerely,
Eva**

Dear Miss Eva,

My life has been in lockdown for a while now and I like the solitude. So this is not a big change for me. But your letters are a welcome diversion.

I started painting after watching the tv program Project Rembrandt. The first painting I made was taking one of their master classes. Like Rembrandt, I am primarily interested in self portraits. I will attach a picture of my setup.

Around the world there is the tradition of masking.

I discovered part of this tradition in the Amazon rainforest. The function of the mask can be to raise one's personality above the limits of the human into the supernatural.

But also to conceal one's personality and for a certain amount of time replace it with another one. You must think: where is this lecture about masks coming from? What I'm trying to tell you is that Carol Brubaker was like a mask to me. It set me free of myself and the expectations that came with being a professor at the university.

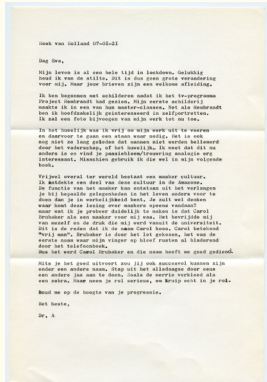
Because of this I chose the name Carol, meaning 'free man'. Brubaker I came to it by chance, flipping through the phonebook. So Dr. Carol Brubaker it was and it suited me well.

In marriage I was free to do my job and go where I needed to go. Not that long ago men were not held back by having children or wives. I know this is different now and I find your passion flower, wedding ring analogy very interesting. I might use it in my next book.

If executed properly you could also be successful under a different name. Get out of the everyday by putting on another coat. Like the horse mare dressed up as a zebra. You could lend Carol Brubaker if you'd like? But take it seriously. Really crawl into that new skin.

Let me know how you are progressing.

Yours Faithfully,
Dr. A.



Original letter #03

Amsterdam 25-01-21

Dear Dr. A.

I saw you move, and heard you speak.

Not in the flesh, but on my computer screen. It was an interesting experience. To hear and see someone that occupied my mind for a long time. Naively I thought I knew you, but seeing you altered the image I had in my head.

It was an old news item. You just came back from your second trip to the Amazon, unwrapped some figurines out of newspapers, then answered questions about your trip. What immediately struck me was that you never looked into the camera. Your eyes were fixed on something on your right, low, on the ground it seemed. Sometimes they darted to the interviewer, to then quickly return to where they were before. I found myself trying to catch your eye but never being able to do so.

All the while you were talking slowly with lots of pauses for umms and ahhs.

Do you remember how you felt in front of that camera? You do not come across as the confident man I imagined you to be.

After seeing this I decided it was time to read your book, Amazonas. What struck me most in this book is the moment where you decide you have to start digging in the ground. In my head I reconstruct it like this: you wander the Amazon on a photo expedition, looking for birds. You come across a ruin and you instinctively start to search the ground. What made you do that?

When I was a kid I used to dream about being an archeologist. Once I was staying for the weekend at a friend's house and we dug out the whole garden. We found a lot of important things. Or at least we thought so. I remember a potato peeler, some pieces of glass, pottery and a pacifier.

There was this moment where I thought I recognized one of the statues pictured in the book. I wrecked my brain over it. Finally it came to me. I thought I saw it before on the facade of a building on the Prinsengracht. I biked there to compare the two. And although there were similarities they were slightly different. How paranoid of me, but somehow it was also disappointing.

Last night I had a terrible dream. There was a mix up at my school, a few paintings were incorrectly attributed to me. And they were a success, everybody loved them. But I did not make them. In the dream I decided not to come forward but to learn how to paint instead. Oh the pressure that brought.

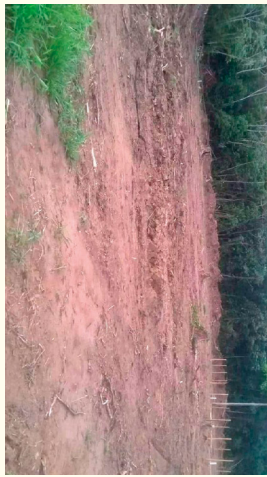
You never attached that picture of your paintings. I hope you will do so in your next letter.

Do you think Carol Brubaker can paint? I am thinking about how I could use her. It is very generous of you to share your mask. After you told me more about the name it started to grow on me.

Now I am going to start reading Night of the Vulture. Which is the only other book you wrote about the Amazon. Can you write to me a little bit more about your trips there? You have been to the Amazon three times as far as I know. But you only wrote these two books about your first trip there. So what happened on these other trips?

I hope to hear back from you.

Kind regards,
Eva



Property for sale on facebook in the Amazon region. Asking price: \$5000.

Amsterdam 30-03-2021

Dear Dr. A.

I have not heard from you for a long time and I am beginning to worry. It could be that you have decided to discontinue this correspondence with me. I would be very sorry about that. But other thoughts are haunting my mind.

For example, last week I started scanning the obituaries in the newspaper. To my relief, I have not come across your name yet. So for now I assume that you are still among us and hope to hear from you soon.

The following will probably interest you. I read an article about pieces of land in the Amazon that are for sale through Facebook. I became curious. What if I could get my hands on the piece of land you were visiting. A piece of land with, if I may believe you, rich soil and of extra value to me because it brings me even closer to your work. After doing some research on Facebook I came across this piece of land that is directly adjacent to the amazon river.

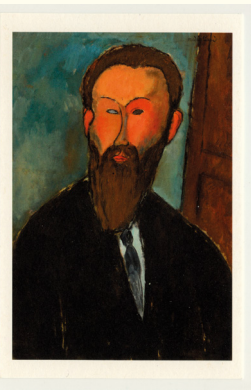
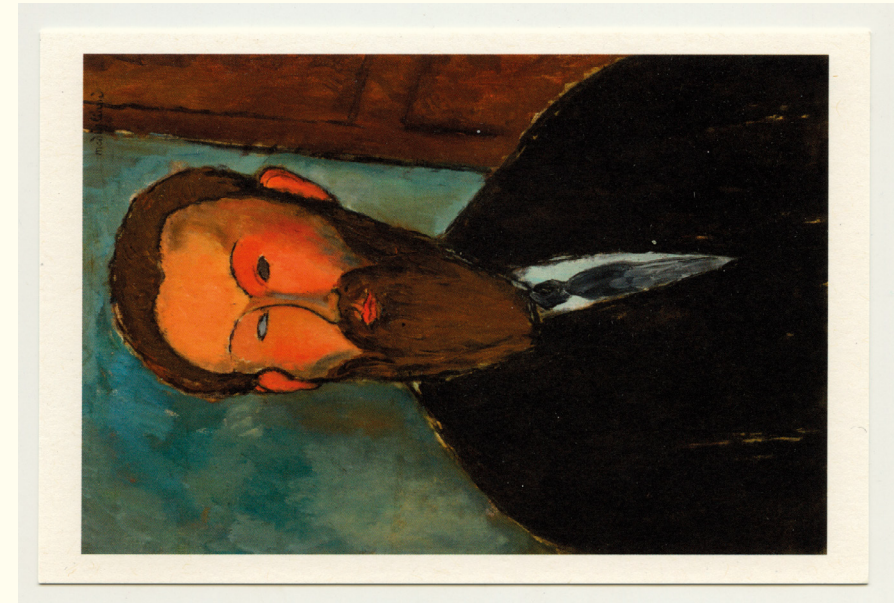
As I research this, I am watching or rather listening to the seventh season of The Real Housewives of New York City. One of my not-so-secret guilty pleasures. There are now twelve seasons, all of which I have devoured. Which means I am now watching season seven for the second time. After reading part of Sarah Shulmans book 'Conflict Is Not Abuse' for class, something struck me, I discovered a pattern. Each season of the Real Housewives begins with a dance, the dance that determines who will be the scapegoat of the season, and towards the middle of the season a shift takes place, scapegoat number 1 lands on her feet and a new scapegoat is designated.

Are you a scapegoat? As you know, there are accusations surrounding you and your work. But it is not clear to me whether they are true or not. The more I learn about you the more I begin to doubt.

I myself have now completed my first assessment. I believe they like the work I am making about you. This seems positive, is positive, but now I have to move on. But how? I feel that I am losing control over my work. I let go of the reins and now my work is running away with me. Do you know that feeling of not being in control of your own work? That over time it begins to take on a will of its own?

I hope you are doing well, please give me a sign of life. Even if you have decided you want to cut off any further contact.

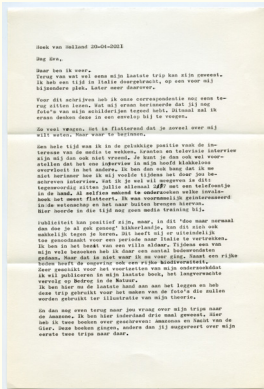
Greetings,
Eva



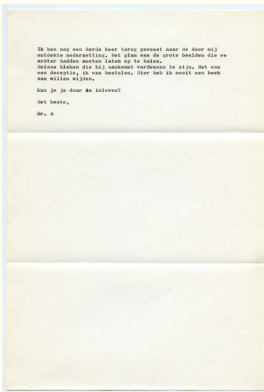
Postcard front
Depicting painting by Amedeo Modigliani. Title: Portrait of Photographer Dilewski



Postcard back



Original letter #04.a



Original letter #04.b



Self Portrait. Acryl, 63x51 cm, signed and dated 2009

Hoek van Holland 20-04-21

Dear Ms. Eva,

Here I am again. Back from what may well have been my last trip. I spent some time in Italy, in a place that is special to me. But, more on that later.

Before writing this letter I read back through some of our correspondence. Which reminded me that I still owe you photo's of my paintings. This time I will remember to include them in the envelope.

You have a lot of questions. It's flattering that you want to know that much about me. But where to begin?

For a while I was in the fortunate position to often attract the interest of the media. Newspaper and television interviews are therefore not foreign to me. You can imagine that in my mind one interview flows over into the next. So I am afraid I don't remember how I felt during the particular interview that you mention. What I can tell you is this. These days you all sit around with a phone in your hand 24/7. Taking selfies to find out which angle is the most flattering. I was mainly interested in science and bringing this to the public. At the time, this did not include media training.

Publicity can be positive, but, in this "just act normal, that's already crazy enough" country, it can easily turn against you. This eventually forced me to leave and I went to Italy for a period of time. I own a villa there and during one of my many stays I made a number of archaeological discoveries.

However, that is not what I came for this time. In addition to rich soil, the area has a rich biodiversity.

Very suitable for continuing the research that I want to publish in the book I am working on, the long-awaited sequel to Deceit in Nature. I used this trip to take pictures that will be used to illustrate my theory.

But back to your question about my trips to the Amazon. I have indeed been there three times. I have written two books about this: Amazonas and Night of the Vulture. These books, contrary to what you suggest, were about my first two trips there.

I went back a third time to the settlement I discovered. The plan was to retrieve the large statues we left behind. Unfortunately, upon arrival, it turned out they were gone.

It was a deception, I had been robbed. This is something I never wanted to devote a book to. Can you empathise with that?

Best,
Dr. A.

But let's go back a little bit. I promised to touch on the subject of why scientists commit fraud. I read a lot of books on the subject and they all point to one main issue: publication pressure. Frank van Kolfschootens paraphrases it like this: 'Publication pressure makes people sick, publication pressure promotes corruption. Publication pressure, stemming from the structure of academic business and policy, is the real problem, cases of fraud are just a symptom, says VU philosopher Henk Radder [...].'⁷

But that can't be everything. Not every scientist caves under this pressure. So why do some?

It is too late to ask Dr. A., but I could ask Diederik Stapel and for the podcast I intend to do so. For now I will suffice with what he has written about it in his book: *Derailment: Faking Science: A true story of academic fraud*. He writes: 'After years of balancing on the outer limits, the grey became darker and darker until it was black, and I fell off the edge into the abyss. I'd been having trouble with my experiments for some time. Even with my various "grey" methods for "improving" the data, I wasn't able to get the results the way I wanted them. I couldn't resist the temptation to go a step further. I wanted it so badly. I wanted to belong, to be part of the action, to score. I really, really wanted to be really, really good. I wanted to be published in the best journals and speak in the largest room at conferences. I wanted people to hang on my every word as I headed for coffee or lunch after delivering a lecture. I felt very alone.'

I was alone in my tastefully furnished office at the University of Groningen. I'd taken extra care when closing the door, and made my desk extra tidy. Everything had to be neat and orderly. No mess. I opened the file with the data that I had entered and changed an unexpected 2 into a 4; then, a little further along, I changed a 3 into a 5. It didn't feel right.

I looked around me nervously. The data danced in front of my eyes. When the results are just not quite what you'd so badly hoped for; when you know that that hope is based on a thorough analysis of the literature; when this is your third experiment on this subject and the first two worked great; when you know that there are other people doing similar research elsewhere who are getting good results; then, surely, you're entitled to adjust the results just a little?⁸

I get two things out of this. One, he believed his hypothesis was right, but could not prove it in his experiments. So he made the results match his beliefs.

The second one is something magician Penn Jillette describes best: 'The easiest way to be bigger than yourself is to lie.'⁹ Dr. A. and Stapel both started their careers in promising ways. Dr. A. with two promotions in one day, starting out as the youngest professor at the *Vrije Universiteit* (Free University). Stapel graduated from The University in Amsterdam in psychology and communication science, both with distinction. They started out setting the bar high. I can imagine it must have been difficult to keep up that standard.

7. Van Kolfschootens, Frank. *Ontspoorde Wetenschap*, p.132, De Kring (2012), ISBN:9789491567025

8. Stapel, Diederik. *Derailment: Faking Science: A true story of academic fraud*, pp. 102-103, Translation: Nicholas J. L. Brown (2014)

9. Jillette, Penn. *James Randi An Honest Liar*, min. 17:50, Tyler Measom, Justin Weinstein, Left Turn Films (2014)

How can these motives apply to an artist like Eva? I have a talk with my flatmate Boris about this in the hope that he can help me figure out why she wants to know how to become a fraud. He might have some insights as he, like her, is an artist.

He reads what I have written so far and states the following: 'I can relate to the problem of publication pressure. I always feel the need to create content. To keep my Instagram followers engaged. Can you be a scientist when your work is never published? I don't think so. Can you legitimately call yourself an artist when your work is not shown? And even when it is shown you have to show your work at the "right" places for people to take you seriously.'

He goes on to say: 'As an artist you can't be mediocre. When you want to be successful that is not an option. When you work in an office and you are ok at your job, that might be fine but art has to be great. Or the artist has to have a really interesting story.'

Talking to Boris about these motivations for fraud I get more of an idea as to why Eva would want to become one. Looking back at the two things that motivated Diederik Stapel I don't think the first: his belief that his hypothesis was right applies to Eva.

Moving on to the second point I can't find evidence Eva started out on a high like Stapel or Dr. A. did. There are no mentions of awards or graduating with honors. This is speculation, but I think she might believe herself to be mediocre. Or worse, maybe she is mediocre.

She is almost 40 and still an aspiring artist. How long can you aspire? Maybe she felt like an imposter. To prove herself, we come to Boris' point: she feels the pressure to 'publish' her work. She needs it to be seen in the right places by the right people. And maybe feels like she needs a little bit of 'extra help' to succeed in doing so. Looking for a way to make herself bigger than she actually is.

She herself writes to Dr. A.: '*I think you might be more of an artist than I am.*'¹⁰

And maybe he is. Eva's research focused on the second part of Dr. A.'s career. The time after he left or, more accurately, was sent away from the University. He could have stopped working and enjoyed his pension, but he didn't. Eva's research focused primarily on this part of his career and more specifically his discovery in the Amazon. And so will the next three episodes of this podcast.

But before we end this chapter there are two more things:

One: who is the winner of the award for the person who lies the best and lies the most? Who is the biggest fraud?

Dr. A. managed to fly under the radar. Even after his exposure he continued a fulfilling career, paid for by the university. It might not come as a surprise that I argue that, if it goes between Dr. A. and Diederik Stapel, Dr. A. is the winner of this dubious contest.

Two: the general consensus seems to be that the second part of Dr. A.'s career, like the first part, is mostly based on a lie. But nobody took the time to look for proof of that. Karl Popper (1902–1994), a philosopher of science, argues that: 'Every genuine test of a theory is an attempt to falsify it, or to refute it.'¹¹ Hank Green from *Crash Course Philosophy* gives us the following example: 'If you want to prove that Santa exists your method should be to try to prove that he doesn't exist.'¹² So although I don't believe Dr. A.'s settlement in the Amazon was real, in the next episode I will try to find it.

Note
I could interview Boris for the podcast.

10. Letter from Eva to Dr. A. 28–10–2020

11. Popper, Karl R. *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, p. 48, Taylor and Francis Ltd (2002)

12. Green, Hank. *Karl Popper, Science, & Pseudoscience: Crash Course Philosophy #8*, min. 05:25, Youtube



Episode 2 Possible Worlds

In this episode I focus on the settlement Dr. A. found and excavated in the Amazon region. The settlement that was once the main character of his books: *Nacht van de Gier* (Night of the Vulture) and *Amazonas*. The subject he was interviewed about by numerous newspapers, television and radio reporters. From now on I will call this settlement Torrez.

What I want to find out in this episode is this: does Torrez exist? And if so, where is it located? If it does not exist, how was it constructed?

Dr. A. first mentioned Torrez in an interview he gave to *De Telegraaf*. He describes how he made his way through the impenetrable Amazon jungle armed with a machete, looking for rare plants and animals to photograph. Instead he found the remains of a temple ruin that once belonged to the 16th century Chibcha Indians. He stayed there for several weeks and did excavations in which he found a treasure trove of raw emeralds, statues and jars. Over the years he went back two more times to finish his work.¹³

To follow in Dr. A.'s footsteps one should fly from Amsterdam to

Bogota, the capital city of Colombia. From there you take another plane to Letitia, a city on the border of Colombia.

After arrival and check out, you rent a car to drive to Loreto, a region in Peru. To then continue your journey by boat on the Amazon river. After ten days on the boat you arrive at Torrez.¹⁴

But isn't it common knowledge that Torrez does not exist? That it was a fruit of Dr. A.'s imagination? Maybe. Though nobody ever went looking for it. So how can you prove it's "non" existence? To find that out I want to look at another case. The case of Mart Bax, who, like Dr. A., was a professor at the Free University in Amsterdam.

I imagine their offices were only separated by a wall. Their doors lead into the same hallway, with the same green carpet. Once in a while they knocked on each other's door looking for staples or a quick chat.

Mart Bax was a professor in Political Anthropology and Neerdonk the setting of his inaugural address: *The Humiliation of a Saint*.



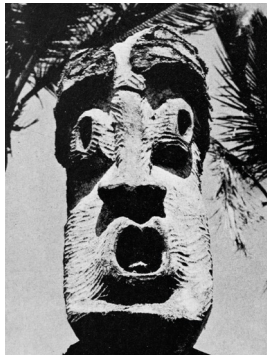
Book Amazonas. One out of two books in which Dr. A. describes the discovery of Torrez in the Amazon region.



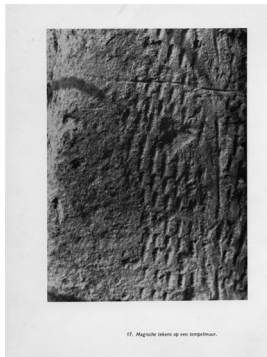
Book *Nacht van de Gier* (Night of the Vulture). One out of two books in which Dr. A. describes the discovery of Torrez in the Amazon region.

13. Telegraaf. Prof. Stolk deed opzienbarende ontdekking in Amazone-gebied (10-10-1964)

14. KRO. Radio Interview Stolk by Jan Scholtes, Prof. A. Stolk (Geoloog) n.a.v. expeditie naar Amazonde-gebied, min. 2:31 (28-06-1966)



3 out of the 13 objects Eva was not yet able to locate.



Page out of book Amazonas. Byline reads: 'Magical signs on a temple wall.'

Neerdonk is a small town located in Noord Brabant and houses around 6000 citizens, living close together. It has a market square listed by lime trees. On this market square stands a ruinous church tower, the only thing left standing from the wooden church that was built there around 1875. The rest of the church was destroyed by a fire in 1879. The patron of this town is Gerard Majella.¹⁵

In his inaugural address: *The Humiliation of a Saint* Bax described Neerdonk as a popular pilgrimage site to the saint Gerard Majella. When the population built a new church the Saint punished their disloyalty towards him by burning it down. The ruinous tower was the only thing that remained standing.

When you plan to visit Neerdonk you might enter its name into Google maps, but you will be without any luck. Neerdonk is a pseudonym Bax used to protect his key informants (Margry 133). But with this detailed information one must be able to find Neerdonk. Eva did some extensive research into this herself and followed a lead of possible matches including: Velp, Boxmeer and Roosendaal.¹⁶ But as far as I could tell not one of them fitted all, or enough of the criteria.

A market square, lime trees, a ruinous church. They are all plausible in themselves. By that I mean, they exist in the real world, but together they are nowhere to be found. When the Free University established a research committee 'the committee Baud', to investigate Bax's work suspecting fraud. Their report *Draaien om de*

Werkelijkheid makes it clear even they had difficulty proving that Neerdonk did not exist. Scientifically its non-existence seemed unverifiable.

That makes me wonder how I will ever be able to find Torrez? However there is one thing that differentiates Torrez from Neerdonk, Dr. A., unlike Bax, used pictures to illustrate his books. These pictures could be seen as proof of its existence. Especially in the 70's when pictures were a lot more reliable than they are now. Eva, however, was able to turn these pictures around on themselves and used them as proof of the methods Dr. A. employed to construct Torrez. There are 31 photos in total, depicting Torrez, spread out over two books. Most depict ancient artefacts: 3 depict bones and there are 4 artefacts that are depicted in both books. So you end up with 24 unique artefacts that could be identified.

And that turned out to be the key to finding Torrez. Because out of these 24 artefacts depicted, Eva was able to locate 11. This gives us a clue as to how Torrez came to be. 3 of the identified artefacts are located in archeological park San Agustin that lies in Colombia. This comes closest to where Dr. A. claimed to have found Torrez. 1 of them is located in the Copan Ruins, Honduras, 3 are located in the Field Museum in Chicago and the remaining 4 identified artefacts are in The Houston Museum of Fine Arts, 3 of them are displayed next to each other in the same room.

15. Bax, Mart. *De Vernedering van een Heilige*, Publisher: Gooi & Sticht (1989) ISBN:9030404973

16. Van Kolschooten, Frank. *Ontspoorde Wetenschap*, p. 194, De Kring (2012), ISBN:9789491567025





**3 artefacts found at
Archeological parc San
Agustin, Colombia**



Spread out of book *Nacht van de Gier* (Night of the Vulture). Depicting 2 out of 3 statues Eva van Ooijen was able to locate in archeological park San Agustin, Colombia.



Page out of book: *Nacht van de Gier* (Night of the Vulture). The byline reads: 'This stone Chibcha statue found by us near the temple ruins differs from the other two statues in that only the head of the deity was depicted. This is one of three statues Eva was able to locate in Archeological Park San Agustin.'



Page out of book *Nacht van de Gier* (Night of the Vulture). The byline reads: 'Another stone Chibcha statue discovered by us at the temple ruins. One out of three statues Eva was able to locate in Archeological Park San Agustin.'



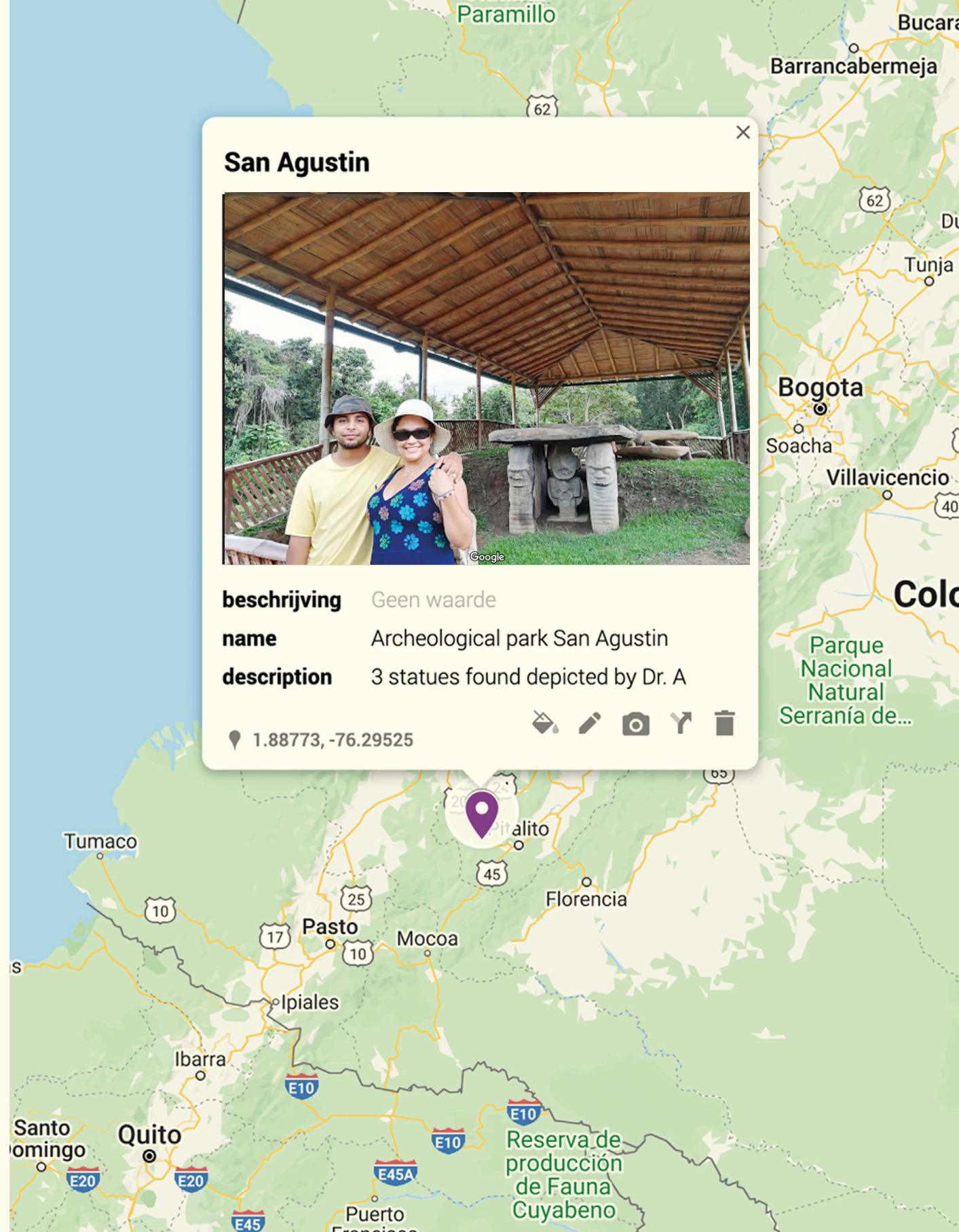
Tourist standing in front of a statue in Archeological park San Agustin. The same statue that is depicted in Dr. A.'s books *Nacht van de Gier* (Night of the Vulture) and *Amazonas* in Archeological park San Agustin. Image found on Google Maps.



Page out of book *Amazonas*. The byline reads: 'From the stone statues found in the temple ruins, this one distinguished itself by the fact that only the head of the deity was depicted. This is one of three statues Eva was able to locate in Archeological Park San Agustin.'



Tourists standing in front of one of the statues depicted in Dr. A.'s book *Nacht van de Gier* (Night of the Vulture) in Archeological park San Agustin. Image found on Google Maps.



San Agustin

beschrijving Geen waarde

name Archeological park San Agustin

description 3 statues found depicted by Dr. A

1.88773, -76.29525



3 artefacts found at
The Field Museum
Chicago, USA



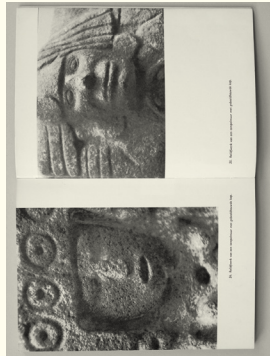
Museum description: Pink sandstone carving of Chicomecoatl holding ears of corn in each hand. Aztec goddess of corn [maize] and the fertility of the earth. Found: collections-anthropology.fieldmuseum.org



The pink sandstone carving on display in the Field Museum of Chicago. The same statue Dr. A. made a close-up from to illustrate his book *Amazonas*. Screenshot Google Maps.



Museum description: Pink sandstone carving of Aztec Maize or Corn Goddess Chicomecoatl holding ears of corn in each hand. (Texcoco.) Found: collections-anthropology.fieldmuseum.org Photographer: Kathleen C. Aguilar.



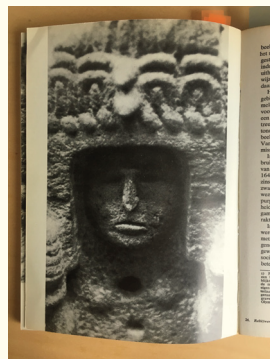
Spread out of book *Amazonas*. Left: Relief from a temple wall with a sculpted head. Right: Relief from a temple wall with a sculpted head. Both are in the collection of the Field Museum in Chicago. They are not on display at this moment.



Museum description: Pink sandstone carving of Aztec Maize or Corn Goddess Chicomecoatl holding ears of corn in each hand. (Texcoco) Found: collections-anthropology.fieldmuseum.org



Field Museum Chicago. Three of the statues Dr. A. photographed to illustrate Torrez in his books *Nacht van de Gier* (Night of the Vulture) and *Amazonas* are in the museum collection. Only one of them is on display at the moment. Screenshot Google Maps.



Page out of book *Amazonas* depicting one of the three statues that were depicted to illustrate Torrez that Eva was able to locate in the Field Museum in Chicago. The byline of the picture reads: Relief from a temple wall with a sculpted head.



Atlantean Figures from Temple of Jaguars, Chichén Itzá. Built in the 9th-12th century. Photographed: ca. 1895-1935. Cornell University Library Digital Collections.

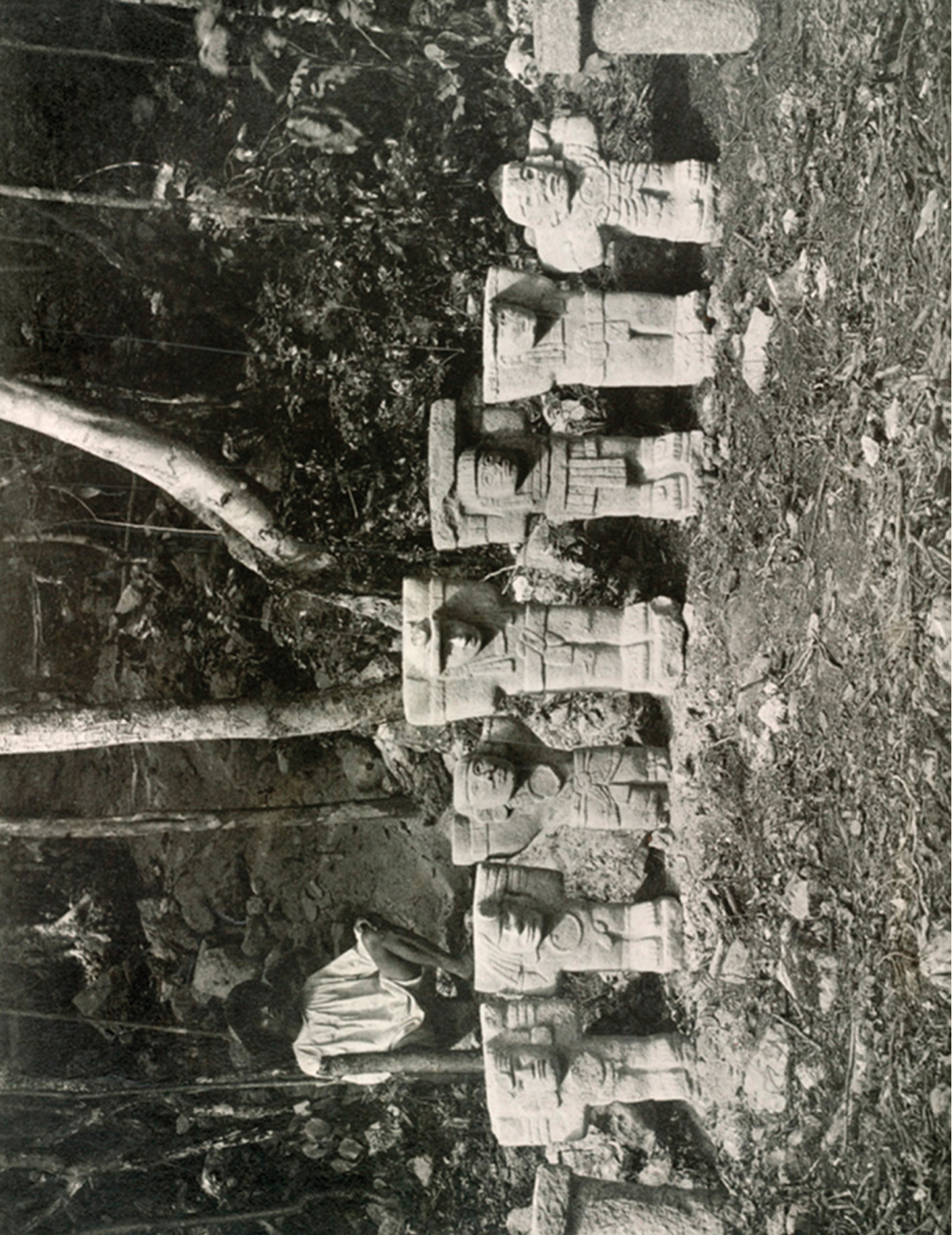


Museum description: Statue of Goddess. Aztec probably Huastec. Found: collections-anthropology.fieldmuseum.org Pictured by Dr. A. to illustrate a relief from a temple wall in his book *Amazonas*.



The museum: Maya sculpture Hall 8 Case 29. Accession Year: 1932. Found: collections-anthropology.fieldmuseum.org The picture contains two statues used by Dr. A. to illustrate Torrez in his *Amazonas*.





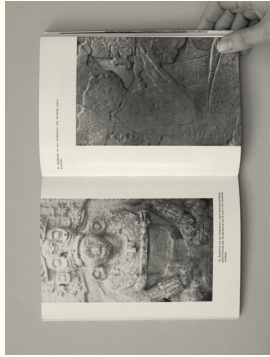
**4 artefacts found at The
Museum of Fine Arts
Houston, USA**



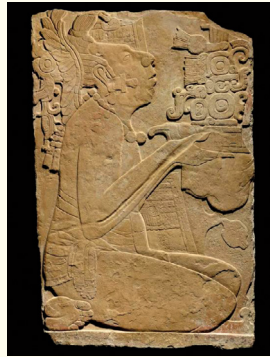
Museum of Fine Arts Houston. Four of the statues Dr. A photographed to illustrate Torrez in his books *Nacht van de Gier* (Night of the Vulture) and *Amazonas* are in the museum collection. Three of them are on display next to each other. Screenshot Google Maps.



Three statues Dr. A. photographed to illustrate his books are displayed next to each other in The Museum of Fine Arts Houston. Screenshot Google Maps.

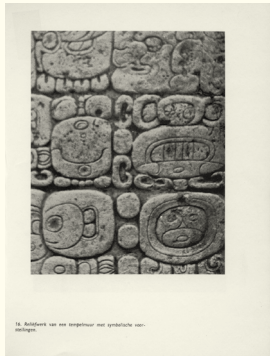


Spread out of book *Amazonas*. Depicting 2 out of 4 statues Eva van Ooijen was able to locate in The Museum of Fine Arts Houston.



Museum description: Unknown Central and South American. Seated Lord from a Relief Panel. Date: 702-764 AD Probable place: Palenque, Mexico Medium: Limestone with traces of paint. Found: emuseum.mfah.org

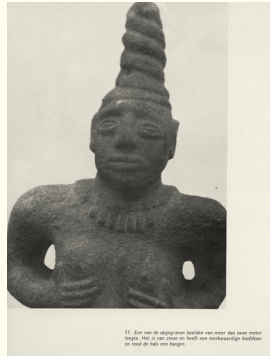
Museum description: Seated majestically on a tall platform throne, this Maya ruler once gazed down on a scene of sacrifice. He is adorned with jewelry. A huge ornamental feathered headdress forms his crown. Found: emuseum.mfah.org



Page out of book *Amazonas*. Byline reads: 'Relief on a temple wall with symbolic representation.'



Museum Description: Hieroglyphic Inscription from Tablet Y. Culture: Maya Date: 692 AD Place: Pomoná, Tabasco, Mexico Medium: Limestone with traces of paint. Found: emuseum.mfah.org



Page out of book *Amazonas*. The byline reads: 'One of the excavated statues of over two meters in length. It is made of stone and has a curious headdress and a pendant around its neck.'

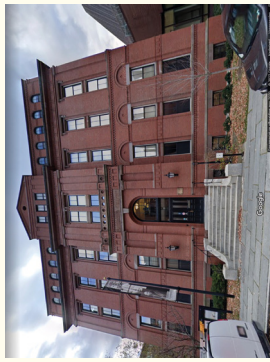


Museum Description: Twentieth Century Facsimile of an Atlantic Watershed Female Figure. Date: 1900-1960 place: Las Mercedes, Limón Province, Costa Rica. Medium: Volcanic stone Found: emuseum.mfah.org

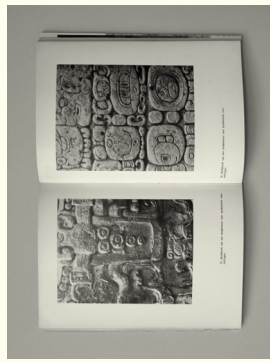




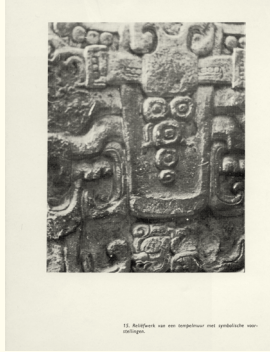
**Duplicate of Stela B at
The Peabody Museum
Harvard, USA**



Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology Harvard. Eva believes Dr. A. took a close up photograph from a copy of Stela B here. The original Stela B is located in the Copan Ruins Honduras. Screenshot Google Maps.



Spread out of book *Amazonas*. With on the left page a close up picture from Stela B.



Page out of book *Amazonas*. The byline reads: 'Relief on a temple wall with symbolic representation.'



Front of Stela B in Copan Ruins Honduras. Image found on Google Maps.

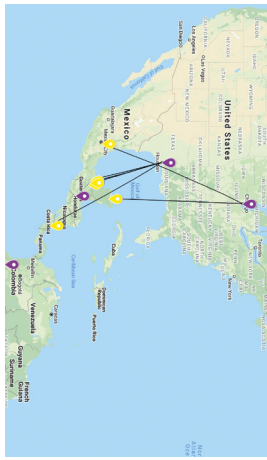


Glass negative from the British museum. Description: Back view of Stela B; stands almost in the center of the northern half of the Great Plaza. Copán, Honduras. Photographed by: Alfred Percival Maudslay, Production date 1890-1891 © The Trustees of the British Museum



Part of copy Stela B in Peabody Museum Harvard. Museum description: Cast, medium relief, linear and circular designs Found: collections.peabody.harvard.edu





Map found on USB stick archive, Eva van Ooijen. Purple: Locations where artefacts are now. Yellow: Excavation sites that artefacts are from. Lines connect them to where they are now.

Torrez is like Frankenstein's monster, a place stitched together, parts ripped from different locations. All real in themselves, but together these artefacts look like a family containing ducks, dogs and horses.

Could one see this as a recipe? Mart Bax as well as Dr. A. put together different ingredients. Working like collage artists pasting together different parts of the world.

What we learn from this is: 'When you lie it is best to stay close to the truth.'¹⁷

Mart Bax, for example, could have written: On the market square, listed by limetrees, stands a ruinous church tower, in front of that tower there is a well. Every night at dawn a unicorn visits the well to drink its healing water.

But that would not match most people's ontology. 'Someone's ontology is what they believe exists, or how they separate things into things that exist and things that don't exist.'¹⁸

Most people would agree that wooden churches and market squares do exist, but unicorns do not. But maybe there was a time you did believe unicorns existed. It proves hard to move an object from one side of your ontology to the other.

Like this anecdote out of Eva's *Position Statement* shows us. 'There inevitably came a time my trust was broken. I remember this like yesterday, although it might seem an insignificant, even silly moment.

It was the day I found out Sinterklaas does not exist. I was deeply upset (which is still a running joke in the family). But it was the moment I knew my parents could lie to me and that I could not believe everything I saw. I felt like a fool. I wanted nothing more than to go back to the time I did believe.'¹⁹

One of the questions I asked myself for this podcast is: when does something become real? Could there, for instance, be a possible world in which Sinterklaas does exist? Or unicorns for that matter.

To investigate that I look to philosopher David Lewis and his notion of possible worlds. Jonathan Tallant explains Lewis' theory on possible worlds in the following matter: 'Lewis thought that there really were possible worlds. And possible worlds is a complete way that a world could be.

So, for any possibility you can imagine, there is a possible world, in which this thing is the case.'²⁰ This means there must be a possible world where Sinterklaas does exist and a world where unicorns do.

But in what worlds might that be? David Lewis suggests: 'The worlds we should consider, I suggest, are the worlds where the fiction is told, but as known fact rather than fiction. The act of storytelling occurs, just as it does here in our world; but there it is what here it falsely purports to be: truth-telling about matters whereof the teller has knowledge.'²¹

Torrez is a possibility so it must exist in a possible world. Could that be a loophole for Dr. A.? No, because as Lewis explains in the same article: 'On the other hand, any world where the story is told as known fact rather than fiction must be among the worlds where the plot of the story is enacted. Else its enactment could be neither known nor truly told of.'²²

What I gather from this is that it is impossible to be an Anthropologist, Archeologist, or any other type of scientist of another possible world than the one we live in, because this world is separated from all other possible worlds. (note: for an artist like Eva it might be possible.)

'I don't know what is true, and I don't know what isn't.' Oprah Winfrey exclaimed, clearly exasperated in an interview with the author James Frey (Oprah 0:08). His memoir: *A Million Little Pieces* was picked for Oprah's book club and shortly thereafter topped the New York Times Best Seller list. But an article by *The Smoking Gun* exposed that the book held many fabrications. The result was that the status of the book changed from memoir to fiction. Oprah felt betrayed and it showed.

When you stop believing in something it can alter your world. That is why it can be so upsetting when something moves from fact to fiction. It changes your ontology. It can feel like you move from one possible world into another one. To be considered the real one for now.

When David Lewis is writing about possible worlds they are separated from each other. But I start to believe that here on this earth there are multiple worlds. And when your ontology changes you move from one into another.

17. *Dr. Bones*, Episode min 8:26, Hansje van de Beek & Michelle Salomons, Interview Albert Balvers, VPRO (2021)

18. Carneades.org, *Meinong's Jungle*, min. 1:13, Youtube

19. Van Ooijen, Eva. www.evavanoijen.nl

20. Tallant, Jonathan. *Possible worlds, why we might need them and what they might be*, min. 2:51, Youtube

21. Lewis, David. *Truth in Fiction*, p. 40, American Philosophical Quarterly. Vol.15 No.1, University of Illinois press (1978)

22. Lewis, David. *Truth in Fiction*, p. 40, American Philosophical Quarterly. Vol.15 No.1, University of Illinois press (1978)

Diemen 03-10-2021

Dear Andreas Nimmerdor,

It is fitting that I write this letter sitting in The Monkey Town. Where? you might ask. I can give you some clues: there are palm trees, monkeys, lots of browns and greens, and my ears are ringing from the noise. Ok, it is a jungle themed indoor playground. There are no windows so it's like you landed yourself in a place that has no connection to the real world. A place where kids can behave like animals and parents have time to drink a horrendous cup of coffee. I traveled here to keep my son entertained on a rainy Sunday and take the opportunity to write you this letter.

I want to give you an update: As you know I located one of Dr. A.'s artefacts at the Copan ruins. Dr. A. took a close up picture of a relief that is part of Stela B. What struck me as strange is that I could only make one match there. And such an insignificant one. I could have taken a similar photograph right here at Monkey Town. This made me believe that I should be able to locate more artefacts at the Copan Ruins. After hours of looking, without any success I gave up.

Then I discovered the following: the relief has a doppelganger, a copy. It is located in the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard. I have not located any other of Dr. A.'s pictures there. But their collection is vast so I will keep looking. There is another logical explanation. Could he have passed by Harvard to give one of his famous lectures? Let's say this is the most plausible scenario. Then two out of three 'crime scenes' as I call them are musea. This gives us a clue as to where to look next.

I know I should be on a break from Dr. A. and leave the research up to you. This way I can focus on my art and family life, but that proves to be harder than I imagined.

Ever since my first discovery in San Agustin I can't stop looking for these artefacts. It feels like I can't start making work until I locate all 24 of them. But that could be a diversion. And sometimes it feels like I am trying to locate Hogwarts.

Back to Monkey Town, A jungle in Diemen. It is a pity that it contains so little magic, but it could be the backdrop of an interesting story. I am going to think about that. How is your research progressing?

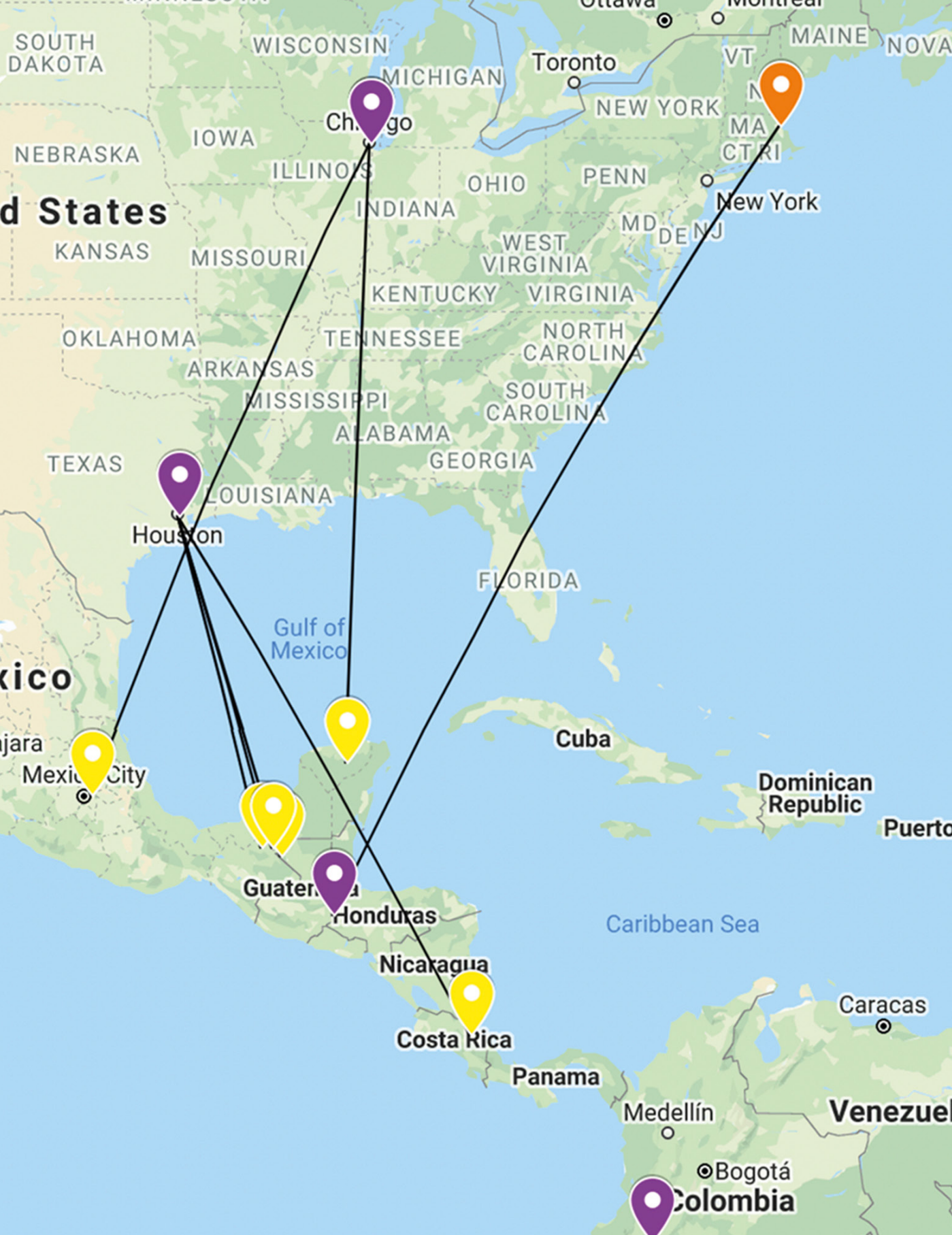
Love to hear from you.

Best,
Eva



Pictures taken by Eva in Monkey Town.





Episode 3 The Case of the Five Figurines

The camera is aimed at a piece of land. Approximately 2x2 metres are cordoned off by a piece of rope. Four people, layer by layer, remove the earth. They look like professional archeologists, meticulously doing their work.

This is what I pictured Dr. A. doing when reading his books. The only thing missing in this picture is a middle aged white male, to represent him. They dig deeper and deeper and finally seem to hit something.²³

I divert my eyes from the screen of my laptop and focus on the five small figurines that lie before me on the table. I want to find out how they got into Eva's possession. All I have to go by is an email exchange between Eva and Ton. Ton is, as he explains himself, a collector of prehistoric, tribal and shamanic objects. He replied to an ad Eva put in the Volkskrant.

In his letter he goes on to explain that he thought these figurines might be of interest to Eva. He is not wrong about that. After emailing back and forth he informs her he is forced to sell some pieces of his collection. Before he does this he would like to give her some of the Mayan figurines. This is not a completely selfless act, he confesses. He hopes Eva's project will give some traction to the story of Dr. A. and that the figurines, now linked to that story, will elicit more buyers.

²³ Oussou, Thierry. Talk by Thierry Oussou, Seminar Rythmanalysis in Context, Open Set Foundation, Published: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5km_cZkC4Aw

Ton
Re: ...
To: info@evavanooijen.nl

Dear Eva,

Thank you for your email.

What an interesting story about Wolfgang Beltracchi. The forging of this picture made me think about the story of the Cottingley Fairies. There was a picture taken in 1917 by cousins Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths depicting fairies. These pictures were used as proof of psychic phenomena by writer Arthur Conan Doyle. The reaction of the public was mixed, some believed the pictures to depict real fairies others did not. If you are interested you could read more about them here: <https://ap.lc/DaR95> It makes me think that we have come a long way. Nobody would believe a fairy picture anymore. But can we still be tricked? If I read your scenario I think we can.

Now, enough chatter and on to your question.

How do I know that Dr. A. never excavated a lost settlement in the Amazon rainforest? The answer is simple, there are no pre-Columbian cities made of stone to be found in the Amazon. And this is exactly what Dr. A. claimed to have found. Recent studies do show that there was a very dense culture, consisting of interconnected jungle settlements.

Then where did these figurines come from? And how can I claim their authenticity?

The objects I acquired from the Dr. A. collection are all from the Mayan culture (Mexico and Central America). Dr. A. himself claimed that he went on an expedition to the Amazon region, which is really quite a bit further south.

So the manner in which Dr. A. obtained them is a story that may be relegated to the realm of legend.

Then how did he really? I think he probably bought them from the local population on one of his trips. But who knows?

I think truth and fantasy are like a tangled web in Dr. A.'s life. He was an eccentric figure, a bit of a Baron von Münchhausen.

His workroom, the one you describe in your last letter, actually reminded me of some pictures out of Tin Tin. I'm copy-pasting one here. Do you see what I mean? It almost feels like he is playing the role of a scientist. And this is the decor that fits with it.

Unfortunately I am forced to sell some pieces from my collection due to lack of money because of the Corona-crisis. I am self-employed and my work has completely dried up. Now the bottom of my treasure chest has almost been reached.

Before I sell part of the Dr. A. collection, I would like to give you some of the Mayan figures. With that I am sure they end up in the hands of someone who can appreciate them. I am in the habit of lending these figurines to whomever they themselves want to be with. That may sound vague, but some of my prehistoric Venus figurines have a will (spirit) and a task of their own. They go wherever they want to go, I just have to listen to them.

I feel that it is appropriate that some figurines of Dr. A. go to you. And to be honest this is not completely without self interest. If your project gives some traction to this story, these figurines will entice more buyers. In this time, it's the story that gets to people, not the object itself.

I hope to help you with this.

Warm greetings,

Ton

On Jan 30, 2021 03:02 PM, info@evavanooijen.nl wrote:

Dear Ton,

I, like you, went down an internet rabbit hole, in search for the truth about Dr. A. But I never knew these figurines existed. I know Dr. A. himself claimed to keep them at home in a safe. But sources state nothing was ever found, not in a safe nor in the Amazon.

The only proof of their existence was in some pictures. You probably saw them as well, the pictures in which Dr. A. posed with them. It was all a variation of this sort: A sitting behind a desk, wearing a lab coat, in the background bookcases chock-full of books and, in front of him, a table covered in a white cloth. On the table these objects were systematically spread across the surface in neat rows.

Maybe it was naive of me to think they did not exist, was the proof not there in these pictures? But I always imagined him making these objects, or buying them at flea markets. Knowing they are worth nothing and, on closer inspection, would reveal their real identity, he got rid of them after the photographer left.

In my imagination that is.

But while you may think my imagination is running wild, in my opinion this scenario is not that far-fetched. I recently saw a documentary about Wolfgang Beltracchi, an art forger. He and his wife Helene thought up a believable story to sell his forged paintings as the real thing. They claimed Helene inherited these paintings from her grandparents. To give the story credibility Helene posed as her own grandmother, in clothes from the era, the forged paintings hanging casually in the background.



Picture out of: The Adventures of TinTin and The Seven Crystal Balls.



The Dr. A. collection. Sold on Marktplaats by his son in law Jack J.

Maybe it is a case of watching too much tv, because now that I have proof, the above scenario is not the most likely one. I, thanks to you, now have another picture, depicting another cloth but I do recognize some of the figures on it. I call this picture exhibit A. But what I do not understand is that you can be so adamant that these figurines are authentic while at the same time stating the settlement where A claimed to have excavated them from does not exist. What then is your theory of where these objects come from?
For me these pictures make me doubt everything. Can it be that he was telling the truth after all?

Kind regards, Eva

On Jan 25, 2021 08:14 PM, tonp1968@yahoo.com wrote:

Dear Eva,

Thank you for your reply. I am glad it's of interest to you. I only spent about an hour with Jack and most of my attention was focused on the objects. These objects are certainly authentic. Not only that, they are beautiful. Jack was not very forthcoming in speaking of his father-in-law's adventures. It was obvious from his demeanor that he was not all too happy with him. He did tell me that he had several artefacts of Dr. A. in his possession. Some of which he had auctioned off at Christie's. According to him they brought up a nice sum of money. After hearing Jack's story, noticing his reluctance in talking about his father in law, I became curious. So like you, I did some digging into the story of Dr. A.

Besides the, let's call it imaginative, character of A, the story about him certainly says something about the time in the Netherlands. There was a need for eccentric figures, who like him, cared little for the culture of rules and brussels sprouts and brought people exotic stories of adventures. Tell me, wouldn't you rather go on an adventure, discover mysterious cultures and dig up fabulous treasures? Live life colouring outside the lines, kissing mystery. Who does not dream of that?

So much for my (indirect) experience with A. I collect prehistoric, tribal and shamanic objects. It is just a hobby but I get a lot of pleasure out of it.

I will attach a picture from the Marktplaats ad. If you want to know more, please email me.

Warm greetings,
Ton

Kringloop van de evolutie ligt dan v
die **bewust** tijdloos, **GRENZELOZ**
Zie: www

Kunstenaar zoekt man tussen
de 65 en 85 jaar om
wetenschapper en avonturier
Dr. A. te spelen.
Ervaring met acteren of
poseren geen vereiste.
Interesse? Stuur info en foto
naar: info@evavanooijen.nl

Goud & Zilver

Inkoop



MARKTPLAATS.NL

On Jan 24, 2021 10:40 AM, info@evavanooijen.nl wrote:

Dear Ton,

Thank you for your response to my newspaper ad. Somehow I just discovered your email hence my late reply. It seems you came closer to Dr. A. than I did in my research so far. I hope you want to tell me more about your encounter with John. Did he have any useful information about this settlement Dr. A. claimed to have discovered? And did he know where these figurines came from? If possible I would like to see more of your collection.

I hope to hear back from you.

Kind regards,

Eva

On Dec 29, 2020 05:19 PM, tonp1968@yahoo.com wrote:

Dear Eva,

Last Saturday I read your ad in De Volkskrant. This piqued my interest. Not because I can help you as a model or actor, I don't look anything like Dr. A. But because I am in possession of part of his collection of pre-Columbian figurines. I bought them ten years ago on Marktplaats from Dr. A.'s son-in-law John. This included a newspaper article about his alleged discovery of an ancient settlement. You can see some of the collection I bought through these links:

<https://nl.pinterest.com/pin/519391769497107215/>
<https://nl.pinterest.com/pin/572168327657702785/>
<https://nl.pinterest.com/pin/572168327657702766/>

I thought this might be of interest to you.
Sincerely,
Ton



Translation

Artist looking for men between 65 and 85 years of age to play scientist and explorer Dr. A. No experience required. Interested? Send information and picture to: info@evavanooijen.nl



The five figurines Ton gifted Eva out of the Dr. A. collection.



Thierry Oussou, Impossible is nothing. (Filmstill)

I focus my eyes on my screen again, where the video plays on. Layer after layer of earth is removed. And slowly but surely a chair is unearthed. Looking at it closer there are some things that seem off to me. The tools the archeologists use look too shiny and new. Some strangely remind me of the dustpan and tin my mother uses.

After that observation I start to see more discrepancies. Is that a dish brush? It still has a sticker on it, with something that looks like the Albert Heijn logo. The chair the archeologists unearth is not actually a chair but a throne. Is it the throne of King Béhanzin of Dahomey, or not?

That throne has been in France since the early 1890s when Béhanzin was defeated, and Dahomey (present-day Benin) colonised (Berning Sawa). So how did it end up back there?

Back to my table, to the figurines before me. I hold one of them. It smells like nuts mixed with a whiff of smoke. I picture Dr. A. smoking in his office, feet on his desk, a glass of whisky in one hand, while playing with this figurine in his other.

I inspect them closer and see there is still soil in their eyes and in the pleads of the adornments around their necks. What part of the world is this soil from? Where are these figurines from?

I can think of 3 possible scenarios:

1. The figurines are looted.
2. They are fakes.
3. They are forgeries.

Scenario I Looted

‘Looted antiquities are distinct from “art theft” or “stolen art” in that looting involves the illicit removal of objects that remained buried in the earth (or sometimes the sea), and therefore have never existed before, for modern humans, which means that they will never appear on a listing of stolen works of art, because the last time they were seen was perhaps thousands of years ago.’²⁴

Dr. A. confessed that he did precisely that when he was interviewed by NOS news. Just back from the Amazon he answered some questions from reporter Fred Emmers at Schiphol Airport: ‘Professor, you brought back a number of objects you found there. It could be argued they belong to the cultural property of the country where you have been. In this case I believe Brazil. Did you make any particular arrangements for that?’ ‘No’ Dr. A. answers, ‘I have not made arrangements for that; I have told you, in Egypt the matter is regulated to the extent that anything of significance unearthed there becomes property of the country. In South America it may be the same on paper. But I can assure you that in the area where I have been, people do not know very much about this arrangement and I don’t believe I will get into any trouble with this.’²⁵

And like he predicted he did not get into trouble. But Thierry Oussou did.

Thierry Oussou (1988, Allada, Benin) is an artist and the archeological excavation I watched is his performance piece: Impossible is Nothing.

In 2015 he buried the throne of King Béhanzin in Benin and in 2016 he dug it up with archeology students from the university there.

But what I saw was not the video he made of the excavation in 2016. The university was not happy when they discovered the throne, although Oussou had been up front to the students about them participating in one of his artworks. The head of the archeology department did not allow him to use the video material he made.

So, we are looking at a retake of the excavation. He could only take the throne back to the Netherlands where he was a resident at the Rijksakademie under the condition that he exhibit it as the copy that it is²⁶, not as the original throne that it looks to be.

Oussou says about this himself: ‘It wasn’t ever my intention [to do otherwise]. For me it was a contemporary experiment; as an artwork, it is authentic.’²⁷

So I can safely state that this throne is not a looted artefact. But could we match it with one of the other two categories, a fake or a forgery? I will come back to that later.

Of the figurines we stay less certain. Why is it important to find out? In an article on the question if objects should be returned to where they came from, Stanford Archeologist Contreras argues: ‘The value of antiquities is the story of their culture and their use, and when they’re treated only as objects, they lose that [...]’

Ownership, context and use add up to a very interesting pattern of behavior that tells us about trading, culture, society, gender and so on. One pot out of context doesn’t tell us that.’²⁸

And although at first reading I agree with Contreras theory, in this case I dare to argue it is not true. These artefacts became proof in the story of Dr. A. and in doing so tell me about trading, culture, society and gender.

It speaks of a society that lets a fraudulent professor in biology and medicine act like an archeologist. A society that trusted a man wearing a white lab coat posing with figurines that he brags about looting and lets him get away with this self admitted crime.

It tells me about gender because I think he used his masculinity to exude authority.

Looking back at the interview Dr. A. gave to the NOS news, it looks more and more like a performance piece to me. Before a backdrop with a display of airplanes Dr. A. casually unwraps these figurines, showcasing them in front of him on the table. It makes me look at Dr. A. like an artist. That could explain why he so provocatively admitted to his crime. A confession that seems too wrong to be real. If we consider Dr. A. an artist in what light would that put these figurines? It would make it highly unlikely they are looted. But could they be fakes, or forgeries?

Note: I can play this audio in the podcast

24. Charney, Noah. *Art Crime: Terrorist, Tomb Raiders, Forgers and Thieves*, Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan (2016)

25. NOS. Interview Fred Emmers with prof. Stolk on Schiphol airport regarding his departure for a new Amazon expedition, Television (29-09-1965)

26. The copy was made by sculptor Elias Boko, a friend of Oussou

27. Berning Sawa, Dale. Watch the throne: why artist Thierry Oussou faked an archaeological dig, The Guardian (09-07-2018)

28. *Buying, Selling, Owning the Past*, p. 12, Published: Stanford Report (28-01-2009)



His home office on the Koninginneweg 154 11 in Amsterdam. Screenshot from Google Maps

Scenario 2 Fakes

‘A “fake” is a work of art, antique, antiquity or collectible, that has been tampered with for the purpose of fraud. A fake could be created in a number of ways, but typically will involve a physical change to the object itself, rather than the mere creation of supporting documentation. The intention must be to defraud and, typically, will increase the perceived value of the piece.’²⁹

This definition seems the most fitting to me. It is likely that these figurines are antiquities; Ton believed they were. He wrote to Eva: ‘The objects I acquired from the Dr. A. collection are all from the Mayan culture (Mexico and Central America). Dr. A. himself claimed that he went on an expedition to the Amazon region, which is really quite a bit further south. So the manner in which A. obtained them is a story that may be relegated to the realm of legend. Then how did he really? I think he probably bought them from the local population on one of his trips. But who knows?’³⁰

The next thing Rapley describes in his definition of the fake is that they are typically tampered with or physically changed. Looking at these figurines I don’t think they are. But the one thing that is tampered with is the story of their origin. Not immediately increasing their value but increasing the relevance of Dr. A.

So how did Dr. A. get them in his possession? Did he travel through North and Central America enjoying his pension? And while there, like

many other tourists he bought some souvenirs to bring home?

Maybe he bought them in one place, but chances are that he gathered them over multiple trips from a variety of different locations.

As I said I think this is the most plausible theory, but it does not excite me much, it is too obvious to make for an interesting podcast. If I want to picture Dr. A. as an artist I think this scenario would make for rather dull art.

I start to fantasise about a theory in which he never left his office. But how to explain the pictures he made illustrating his books. Eva found pretty convincing evidence that he made them in museums in North America and in archeological park San Agustin in Colombia.

Me and my flatmate Boris, the artist, have a brainstorm session about this episode. I tell him I would find it interesting for the podcast if Dr. A. orchestrated all of this from his office and ask if we could make that theory work?

Boris looks at the pictures in Dr. A.’s books and suggests I look into the artist, Sherrie Levine. He noticed some pictures have a strange kind of blur over them that could suggest they are pictures of pictures.

I enter Sherrie Levine into Google search and click the picture section. It is like I am looking at the work of Walker Evans disrupted by the occasional image of a bronze version of Marcel Duchamp’s *fountain*.

However, as you might have guessed, these are not works by Evans or Duchamp, but by Sherrie Levine (1947 American).

She is most famous for her series called: *After Walker Evans*. This is a series of re-photographs of Evans’ famous documentary series *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Levine made her photographs from an exhibition catalogue of Walker Evans’ work.³¹

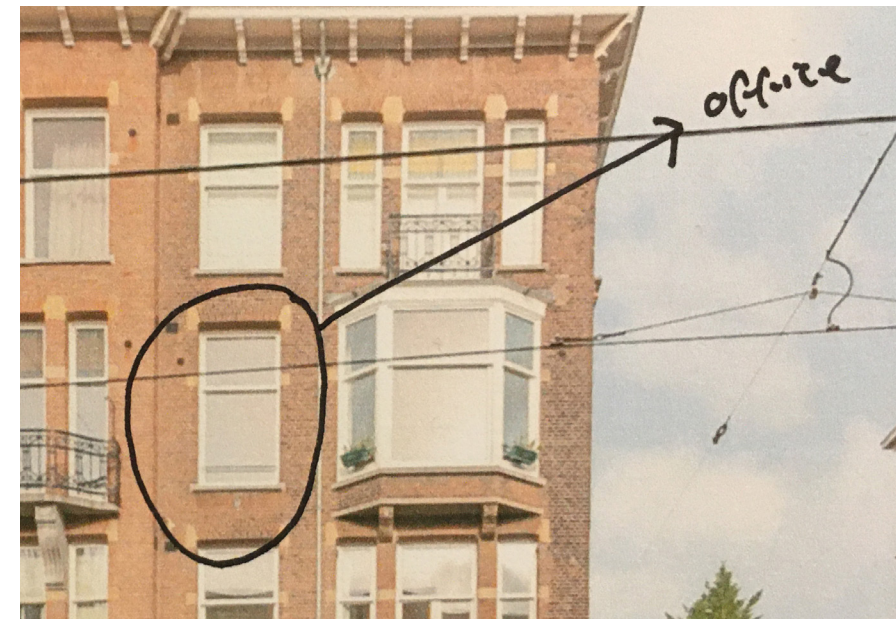
Is this a method Dr. A. might have used? Re-photographing pictures out of different books and catalogues he owns. Creating something resembling a collage?

In an article in the Observer about Levine’s work they say they detect a slight blur, the same thing Boris detected in Dr. A.’s photographs (Pollack). I will use this as evidence supporting my theory that he never left his office.

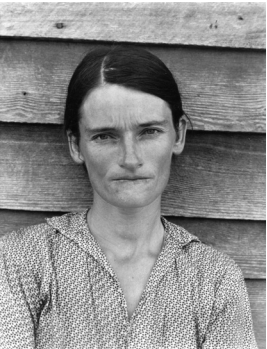
But why would an artist want to do something like that? In the LA Times I read the following explanation: “I intend that my work contaminates history,” says artist Sherrie Levine, who accomplishes exactly that by borrowing any bit of history that strikes her fancy for use in her own work.³² If you change the name Levine to Dr. A. this could be the beginning of a fitting artist statement.

Considering that Dr. A. used this artistic method and never left his office, we are left with the following question: how did he get the figurines?

An artist in this day and age would probably have bought them on Catawiki or Marktplaats. But in the 70’s these platforms did not exist.. There must have been catalogues though, where one could order something like that? If not, we can still consider the forgery.



Sherrie Levine, *After Walker Evans*.



Sherrie Levine, *After Walker Evans*.

29. Rapley, Vernon. Chapter: *The Police Investigation of Art Fraud*, p. 144 Book: *Art Crime: Terrorist, Tomb Raiders, Forgers and Thieves*, Noah Charney, Palgrave Macmillan (2016)

30. Email Eva to Ton on 01-03-2021

31. Wikiwand. *Sherrie Levine*, https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Sherrie_Levine

32. McKenna, Kristine. *Sherrie Levine and the Art of the Remake*, LA Times (17-11-1996)



Picture out of Dr. A's book
Amazonas



Picture out of Dr. A's book
Nacht van de Gier

Scenario 3 Forgeries

'A "forgery" is an object made in fraudulent imitation of an existing item, or the creation of an artwork that presumes to be something other than what it actually is. A forgery is unlike a fake, because a fake is an object created honestly, but altered for deceptive purposes, whereas a forgery is created from scratch, with the intent to deceive.'³³

After the scenarios of the looting or the fake we have now come to consider the forgery.

If I had to give one of these labels to the artworks described in this episode I would label the throne by artist Thierry Oussou, as well as the pictures *After Walker Evans* by Sherrie Levine, as forgeries.

Why? Let's take a closer look at Vernon Rapley's definition of the forgery in relation to these objects. 'A "forgery" is an object made in fraudulent **imitation** of an existing item, [...].'³⁴The throne by Thierry Oussou imitates the throne of King Béhanzin of Dahomey and the pictures by Sherrie Levine could be easily confused with the photographs of Walker Evans. So both could be seen as imitations of an existing item.

But can we speak of **fraudulent** imitation? The definition of fraudulent being: 'characterised by, based on, or done by fraud: deceitful.'³⁵ I do not think this applies.

Both Levine and Oussou never tried to hide anything. The methods they used were out in the open. So, even though these works come closest to

the scenario of the forgery, they are not. Can artists even be frauds?

Dr. A. did conceal his methods. Does that make him a fraud or a better artist?

Can we picture him making these figurines, sleeves rolled up, working clay with his hands. He did paint and even sent Eva some pictures of his paintings.

All self portraits that to me show no extraordinary talent, but maybe he is more of a sculptor. Even if he is not, as a conceptual artist he could have someone else make them for him. However, that would mean someone was in on his secret, and did it so well that he fooled Ton.

But experts can be fooled. And I was the one that dubbed Ton an expert; he himself was honest about his amateur status.

That the figurines are forged is a scenario Eva did consider.

She writes to Ton: '..I always imagined him making these objects. Knowing they are worth nothing and, on closer inspection, would reveal their real identity he got rid of them after the photographer left. In my imagination that is.'³⁶

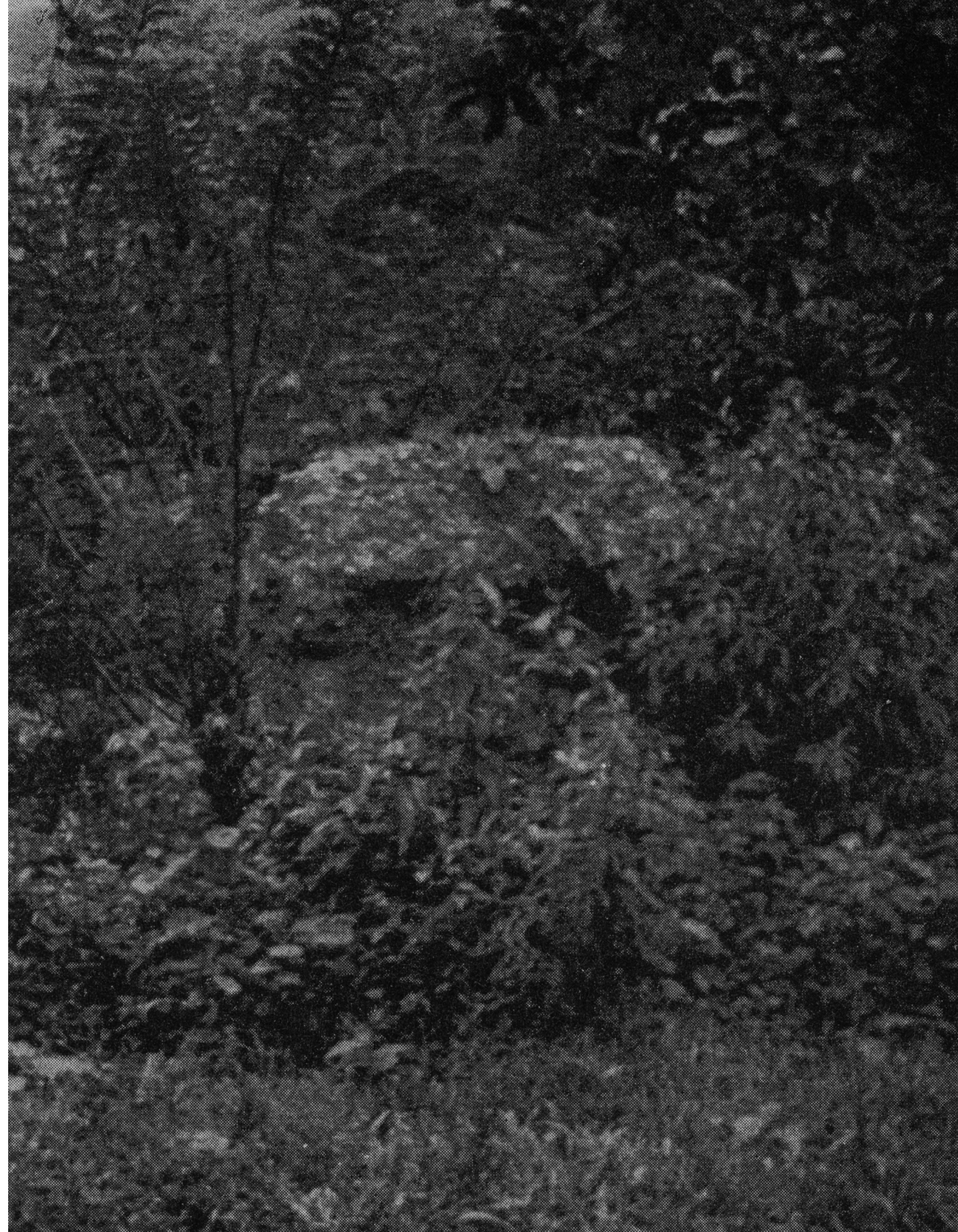
The forger has a very distinct profile. Noah Charney describes it like this: 'Most began as failed artists, whose original works were somehow dismissed by the art world. They turned to forgery to act out a sort of passive-aggressive revenge against the art community, which they perceive as

33. Rapley, Vernon. Chapter: *The Police Investigation of Art Fraud* Book: *Art Crime: Terrorist, Tomb Raiders, Forgers and Thieves*, p. 145, Noah Charney, Palgrave Macmillan (2016)

34. Rapley, Vernon. Chapter: *The Police Investigation of Art Fraud* Book: *Art Crime: Terrorist, Tomb Raiders, Forgers and Thieves*, p. 145, Noah Charney, Palgrave Macmillan (2016)

35. Webster, Merriam. *fraud*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fraudulent>

36. Email Eva to Ton on 30-01-2021





a collective entity that has conspired to deny their talent, and which they will “show up” by creating works that will be praised and accepted, as their originals were not. Passing off a forgery provides a twofold sense of artistic fulfillment. On the one hand, if a forger’s work is taken to be that of a great master (Picasso, for example, who is the most-forged artist in history), then the forger considers that they are just as good as Picasso. On the other, the forger demonstrates the fallibility or foolishness of the so-called experts, who cannot tell their forgery from an original —the implication by extension being that these experts were foolish to dismiss the forger’s original creations in the first place.³⁷

To fit Dr. A. the profile of the forger needs to be slightly altered: Dr. A. did not want to take revenge on the art world, but on the scientific one. He did not start out as a failure; in fact the opposite of that: he started out on top. But he became an outcast when the scientific world exposed him as a fraud.

In interviews he always talks about scientists in a derogatory way. He profiles himself as a scientist who fled from his office and who, unlike his colleagues, can explain his work to normal human beings.

Although I can not draw any definite conclusion on where these figurines come from or how they came to be I want to conclude with the most likely scenario, and the scenario I like the most.

I start with the most likely one: Dr. A., enjoying his pension, traveled to North and Central America, not only to take pictures to illustrate his books but also to buy souvenirs.

Now the scenario, I personally, like the most: Dr. A. stayed at home and created these figurines himself. He wrote his books sitting in his home office and illustrated them with pictures he made of pictures out of books and catalogues.

Dr. A. never revealed his methods. The other two artists discussed in this episode did. By not doing so, Dr. A. created an almost endless amount of possible explanations for everything he did.

If Levine would not have shared her method of re-photographing from Evans’ catalogue, we might think she exhibited his prints bearing her name. Or maybe she bought his negatives in an online sale, and made prints herself, or did she reconstruct his pictures?

The throne by Oussou would make people doubt: could it be the real one? And if not, how did a fake one get into the ground?

I don’t want to pass judgement on what is the better method to make work, but I think it is a possibility for Eva and other artists to consider.

Note
one of the reasons I dislike this theory is that these figurines still might have been looted. Just not by Dr. A. himself.

Note
In my opinion this is also the more ethical way to lie.

37. Charney, Noah. *Art Crime: Terrorist, Tomb Raiders, Forgers and Thieves*, p. 64, Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan (2016)



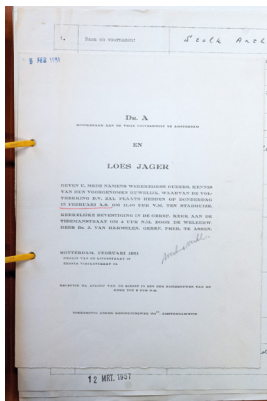
Picture out of book *Nacht van de Gier* (Night of the Vulture).
Byline reads: 'While the female is brooding, the male has taken up his observation post.'

Note

This episode was added as a request by Eva. After sending her my initial proposal outline, Eva wrote me the following letter.

Episode 4 The woman and the con





Picture made by Eva out of Dr. A's personal files at the Vrije Universiteit (Free University) in Amsterdam. Depicting Dr. A's and Loes' wedding announcement.

Amsterdam 23-09-21

Dear Andreas,

Thank you for taking good care of my research and keeping me updated on your progress. I read your proposal and think your choice to make a podcast is an excellent idea, how fitting for this project. I listened to so many of them when my son Charlie was young, pushing him around in his stroller. And although I enjoyed listening to Dirty John, one of the examples you mention, I do not like its sensationalist tone. But something like S. Town, I can live with.

Reading your proposal I almost felt like I gave away a little part of myself. I have let go of something I spent so much time on and now I have no control over what it becomes. But reading it also made me trust your judgement even more than I already did.

Although I hope you will let me make one suggestion? Could you add one more chapter? I would like it to be about Dr. A's first wife? I always wondered what happened to her. She, Loes and Dr. A. had a child together, the three of them lived in Amsterdam on the Koninginneweg. Then a few years after Dr. A. came back from his last trip to the Amazon and a second wife is mentioned in a newspaper article. This was surprising to me. Dr. A. was a very religious man, one of the reasons he got hired by the Free University in Amsterdam that has a bond with the reformed church.

It makes me wonder, did Loes leave because she found out the truth about her husband? Or did they work together? After his book Amazonas Dr. A. was never able to create a work that got so much attention and was put together with so much finesse.

Unfortunately I was never able to ask. Not only because I found out about their separation after Dr. A.'s passing on 05-09-2021, but also because I was too afraid to ask any real questions when I still had the chance. After the birth of their daughter Geraldine Willemien, which was announced in the newspaper Trouw, I can't find anything more about Loes. Not a death certificate, no divorce papers, nothing. It is like she just disappeared. Of course all this information you can find in the files I sent you.

1.	Naam en voornamen:	S'tolk Anzh
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5 FEB 1951

DR. A

HOGLERAAR AAN DE VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT TE AMSTERDAM

EN

LOES JAGER

GEVEN U, MEDE NAMENS WEDERZIJDSE OUDERS, KENNIS VAN HUN VOORGENOMEN HUWELIJK, WAARVAN DE VOL-TREKKING D.V. ZAL PLAATS HEBBEN OP DONDERDAG 15 FEBRUARI A.S. OM 11.40 UUR V.M. TEN STADHUIZE.

KERKELIJKE BEVESTIGING IN DE Geref. KERK AAN DE TIDEMANSTRAAT OM 4 UUR N.M. DOOR DE WELEERW. HEER Ds. J. VAN HARMELEN, Geref. PRED. TE ASSEN.

ROTTERDAM, FEBRUARI 1951
GERRIT VAN DE LINDESTRAAT 18
EERSTE VIRULYSTRAAT 3A

Merkus Verbeke

RECEPTIE NA AFLOOP VAN DE DIENST IN EEN DER BIJGEBOUWEN VAN DE KERK TOT 6 UUR N.M.

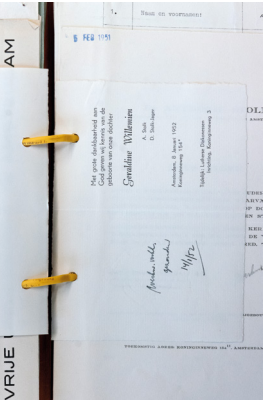
TOEKOMSTIG ADRES: KONINGINNEWEG 154^{II}. AMSTERDAM-ZUID

I hope you will do me this one favour. I promise not to ask for much more.

Keep me updated.

Kind regards,
Eva

p.s. I think you can guess how I feel about your idea of an interview with me in your podcast. But I won't say no immediately, let me think about it.



Picture made by Eva out of Dr. A's personal files at the Vrije Universiteit (Free University) in Amsterdam. Depicting the birth announcement of Dr. A and Loes daughter Geraldine Willemien.

5 FEB 1951

AM

JE

Met grote dankbaarheid aan
God geven wij kennis van de
geboorte van onze dochter

Geraldine Willemien

A. Stolk
D. Stolk-Jager

Amsterdam, 8 Januari 1952
Koninginneweg 154"

Tijdelijk: Lutherse Diakonessen
Inrichting, Koninginneweg 3

Archiev. vnlk.
gerraldine

14/1/52

TOEKOMSTIG ADRES: KONINGINNEWEG 154 II, AMSTERDAM

UDBO

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Let's start with some facts.

Who is Loes? I find evidence of Loes Jager and Dr. A.'s marriage in the form of a wedding invitation that Eva photographed from Dr. A.'s staff files at the Free University. A year after the wedding their daughter: Geraldine Willemien was born. Another picture from his staff files depicting another card, announcing her arrival.

I find the line about the second wife mentioned in Eva's letter in *Het Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* in yet another article about one of Dr. A. adventures. It starts by setting the scene of the interview and describes Dr. A. making his own coffee, only because his second wife, as well as his 14 year old daughter out of his first marriage are absent when the interview is taking place.³⁸

The mention of a second wife is evidence of the existence of a first wife. Loes' presence also lingers in the form of her absent daughter. After that nothing, this is where the story ends for Loes. I can not find an obituary, nor a birth certificate, no divorce papers, nothing.

So where do we go from here?

I feel Eva would like me to come to the conclusion that Loes was the artist behind Dr. A.'s work, which is something I will consider in this episode. But, some time ago I started to suspect Eva herself. At first I did not want to give any attention to my doubts. If I can't trust Eva I can not rely on the archive this podcast so heavily leans on. Although not a big fan of Eva at the moment I will grant

her request and start my investigation into the woman and the con. Trying to find a spot for Loes and Eva to fit in.

Listening to a podcast about Elizabeth Holmes gave me some perspective on why this episode can be important. Elizabeth Holmes is the youngest female self-made billionaire. She dropped out of Stanford to go on and found Theranos, a company that engineered a device: the Edison, that promised to change the face of blood testing. With only a few drops of blood it would be able to diagnose a wide variety of diseases.

But the Edison was not able to deliver what was promised and Holmes' success crumbled. She was charged with fraud. This story propelled the podcast: *The Drop Out, Elizabeth Holmes on Trial*.³⁹

In the episode: *Crime and Punishment*, Roger McNamee states the following: 'The thing about Elizabeth Holmes that I look at, that gives me great hope for humanity. You would not have to go back more than 5 years when it would have been impossible for a woman to raise that kind of money, even for a really great idea. Men have been raising money for bad ideas for a really long time. And I thought there definitely is a silver lining here because I am really happy that women get the chance to do that. And I feel the same way about it if it turns out to be a scam. That also represents a form of social progress.'⁴⁰

If I want to answer Eva's question about how to become a fraud I have to consider Eva is a woman. And for

women there are a set of different rules. For Elizabeth to get to where she was she had to take drastic measures including lowering her voice, to match that of her male colleagues.

To research this episode I read: *Females in the Frame: Woman, Art and Crime* by Penelope Jackson. In Jackson's book a wide variety of art crimes are presented, all committed by women.

To my disappointment one category is missing though, that of the forger. Is that because there are no female forgers? That does not have to be true. Maybe female forgers are just that great, and therefore never get caught.

Next to the forger there are two categories of special interest to me. One in relation to Loes: crimes committed to help or protect family. The other in relation to Eva: crimes committed to be heard.

I will start with family. There are many examples in Jackson's book of women who help family members conceal or even commit art crimes. For example, Olive Greenhalgh, the mother of art forger Shaun Greenhalgh. She devised the provenance for his fraudulent artworks and, at the age of 82, she received a year long suspended sentence for her crime.⁴¹

Olga Dogaru helped her son Radu Dogaru by hiding the artworks he stole from the Kunsthall in Rotterdam. She even admitted burning them, but later retracted that story, though the artworks were never found.

She was sentenced to two years in prison in 2013.⁴²

And remember Eva wrote to Ton about art forger Wolfgang Beltracchi and his wife Helene, who provided false provenance to his paintings.⁴³

Is there any evidence suggesting Loes, like these women, could have helped Dr. A.? In her letter Eva defends this theory by stating that after their separation Dr. A. was never able to create work of the same calibre ever again.⁴⁴

If we go from the hypothesis that he never left his office she must have helped him. Maybe only to keep his presence in Amsterdam a secret by doing the groceries and keeping him hidden from visitors.

Maybe she helped correct his texts or assisted in making pictures? That is not far-fetched to me. But is that the type of fraud Eva wants to become? As a modern woman and an artist I can imagine she wants to be more in control.

The second category that stood out to me relating to Jackson's book are the women who committed art crimes in order to be heard. That, I think, would be more suitable for Eva.

In the book there are many examples of women who vandalise works of art to get their point across. Two of them attacked the Mona Lisa. One, a Russian woman, bought a mug in the giftshop of the Louvre and hurled it at the painting. Angry, because she was denied French citizenship.⁴⁵

38. Nieuwsblad van het Noorden. *Prof. Stolk gaat in het Amazone-gebied gevaren trotseren*, p. 7, (04-07-1966)

39. Jarvis, Rebecca. *The Drop Out, Elisabeth Holmes on Trial*, ABC Audio (2021)

40. Jarvis, Rebecca. *The Drop Out, Elisabeth Holmes on Trial*, min. 24:05, ABC Audio (2021)

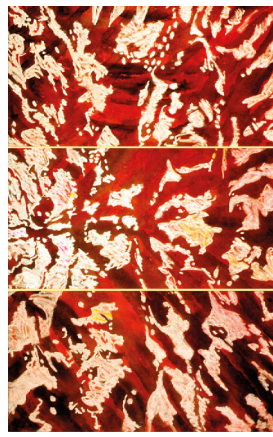
41. Jackson, Penelope. *Females in the Frame, Women, Art and Crime*, p. 39, Palgrave Mcmillan (2019)

42. Jackson, Penelope. *Females in the Frame, Women, Art and Crime*, p. 42, Palgrave Mcmillan (2019)

43. Email Eva to Ton 30-01-2021

44. Letter from Eva to Andreas Nimmedor 23-09-21

45. Jackson, Penelope. *Females in the Frame, Women, Art and Crime*, p. 61, Palgrave Mcmillan (2019)



Totemic Tumult, 1998, painting by Eddie Burrup, mixed media on canvas. Collection: estate of Elizabeth Durack.

And then there are the Suffragettes. In 1913 and 1914 they attacked several artworks in their fight for the right to vote. Almost all of them works by male artists, some depicting prominent men, others, female nudes.⁴⁶

Although these women are not artists or frauds, I think Eva, like them, wants to be heard. Or more accurately: I think she wants her work to be seen. I think deep down all artists want their work to be seen. Why else did she start a masters degree?

There are less violent examples of women who want to be heard. Like the ones who use a male pseudonym to get their books published and read.

Some examples are: George Eliot, who was actually Mary Ann Evans and The Bronte sisters who became Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell.⁴⁷

A pseudonym is: 'a fictitious name'.⁴⁸ Using a fictitious name in and of itself is not fraudulent. It becomes so if you appropriate the name of someone else. Most problematic that of a fellow writer or artist.⁴⁹

Did Loes go further than a pseudonym? Did she use Dr. A. as a stand-in, an actor?

Mary Beard wrote: 'If we close our eyes and try to conjure up the image of a president or — to move into the knowledge economy — a professor, what most of us see is not a woman.'⁵⁰

It is sad for me to think that instead of breaking the barrier, she might have given people the exterior they expected. But, on a more positive note, Dr. A. could also have functioned as a shield for Loes to live out fantasies and be taken seriously without the backlash. Because women are judged more harshly on their actions.

Let's go with the above hypothesis: Loes was the real artist behind Dr. A.

In light of this there is one more case from Jackson's book I want to add. The case that comes closest to the forger.

Elisabeth Durack, like Mary Ann Evans and The Bronte sisters, used a male pseudonym. However, there are two things that differentiate her from them: Durack was a successful artist under her own name and her pseudonym Eddie Burrup was an aboriginal man painting in the aboriginal tradition. That in itself is controversial but became even more so because he entered exhibitions and awards that were dedicated to aboriginal artists only.⁵¹ Eddie Burrup, although never seen, was a success.

In 1997 Elisabeth came clean about her deceit to Robert Smith who wrote an article about it in *Art Monthly Australia* (pp. 4–5).

When people found out Eddie Burrup was not an aboriginal man but an 81 year old white woman, a big fall out followed. Kaye Mundine, who was the head of the national indigenous arts advocacy organisation, put it simply saying: "it's cultural theft".⁵²

I would like to make a bold statement and call it forgery. Let's look back at last episode's definition of forgery:

'A "forgery" is an object made in fraudulent imitation of an existing item, or the creation of an artwork that presumes to be something other than what it actually is. A forgery is unlike a fake, because a fake is an object created honestly, but altered for deceptive purposes, whereas a forgery is created from scratch, with the intent to deceive.'⁵³

We have to be a little bit creative to put it in this category. But I think that it is worth it considering it would mean the first discovery of a female forger. The Durack/Burrup paintings do not imitate an existing item, but they do presume to be something [made by a male aboriginal artist] other than what they actually are [paintings by a white woman].

This proves that there are female forgers out there, and if my hypothesis is right, Loes under the disguise of Dr. A. was one of them.

What interests me even more in relation to Eva's question of how to become a fraud is the following. Elisabeth Durack died in 2000. Jackson writes about her death that she guesses Burrup died with her.⁵⁴

But did he? Probably. However, had she not outed herself as Eddie Burrup he would have been immortal, and at any given moment somebody could have picked up his brush and bring him back to life.

Other than Durack, Loes never admitted to her fraud and that left Dr. A. for the taking.

What does this have to do with Eva? I began to mistrust Eva when I found out that she had fiddled with Dr. A.'s birth year. Not born in 1928, like the notebook Eva bestowed on me suggests, but in 1916, he would be 104 years old when he wrote his last letter to Eva. That is possible. The oldest man currently living in the Netherlands is 106. But if that were true why try to keep this hidden?

Does this mean Eva prolonged Dr. A.'s life in order to finish Loes' artwork? Only to 'kill' him when he was no longer needed? This would mean the letter exchange between Eva and Dr. A. can be relegated to the realm of fables. It is hard to admit this, even to myself, but possibly a lot of my research for this podcast is based on a lie. Because what else did Eva tamper with? And why?

It makes me wonder: Did Eva already find out how to become a fraud?

I hear Oprah's exasperation in my head: 'I don't know what is true and I don't know what isn't.'⁵⁵

46. Jackson, Penelope. *Females in the Frame, Women, Art and Crime*, p. 71, Palgrave Macmillan (2019)

47. Jackson, Penelope. *Females in the Frame, Women, Art and Crime*, p. 116, Palgrave Macmillan (2019)

48. Webster, Merriam. Pseudonym, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pseudonym>

49. Knight, Matt. Seven Legal Myths About Pen Names, *Sidebar Saturdays* (2017)

50. Beard, Mary. *Women & Power, A Manifesto*, p. 54, Profile Books Ltd (2018)

51. Morrison Louise. *The Art of Eddie Burrup*, p. 81, Westerly, *The best writing from the west Vol. 54:1* (2009)

52. Morrison Louise. *The Art of Eddie Burrup*, p. 80, Westerly, *The best writing from the west Vol. 54:1* (2009)

53. Rapley, Vernon. Chapter: *The Police Investigation of Art Fraud Book: Art Crime: Terrorist, Tomb Raiders, Forgers and Thieves*, p. 145, Noah Charney, Palgrave Macmillan (2016)

54. Jackson, Penelope. *Females in the Frame. Women, Art, and Crime*, p. 166, Palgrave Macmillan (2019), ISBN 9783030207656

55. Oprah, Winfrey. *Oprah Confronts James Frey, Top 25 best Oprah Show Moments*, min. 0:08, OWN Network Youtube

Epilogue

You just read a podcast proposal written by Andreas Nimmerdor. What might come as a surprise is that what you read is also my, Eva van Ooijen's, thesis, 'written' in order to graduate with my Masters degree in artistic Research at the Royal Academy of Art The Hague.

Let me explain: Andreas Nimmerdor did write a podcast proposal based on my investigation into Dr. A., a possibly fraudulent scientist and con-man. In an act of defeat I entrusted my carefully assembled archive about this subject to Nimmerdor in the hopes he would finish my project, with the consequence that my project turned into his project. Why did I give the archive to Nimmerdor one might ask? For similar reasons I decided to appropriate his proposal and present it as my thesis.

I am tired. My son, Charlie, has not been to school for more than a month now. And my experience over the past two years taught me that this probably is not the end of his 'break' due to the Coronavirus. I admire the artists who create work surrounded by their children, even including them in their art. I admire the mothers who paint at night or get up at four in the morning to write novels in their bedroom closets.

But this was an extraordinary year and trying to work, study, and parent I got stressed out and irritated with my son, who is now happily bouncing on my neck. At one point I saw myself mirrored in an article about mom rage⁵⁶ and decided this had to stop. I declared defeat, I am unable to do everything at once.

A week or so before this I met Andreas Nimmerdor at a lecture: Fetishizing the Archive, where we had an inspiring conversation. Trying to come up with a solution for my problems I decided to trust him with this project, in the hopes of getting it out of my head. He then decided to make a podcast out of it, hence the proposal.

How do I defend using Nimmerdors proposal for this thesis?

For years women have been robbed of their work. Just to give you a few examples: in Benjamin Moser's biography of Susan Sontag he reveals that she was the true author of her ex-husband's, Philip Rieff's, book: Freud: The Mind of the Moralizer. When Sontag divorced him, she gave up the little credit she got for her work; a 'special thanks' in the preface.⁵⁷

56. The first article about mom rage got traction again when children had to stay at home for a long period of time due to the coronavirus. (*The Rage Mothers Don't Talk About*, Mina Dubin, New York Times, 15-04-2020)

57. Flood, Allison, Susan Sontag was true author of ex-husband's book, biography claims, *The Guardian* (13-05-2019)

When I say modern art and Fountain you probably think of Marcel Duchamp. But after reading an article in *See All This* I now firmly believe Fountain should be attributed to Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven.⁵⁸ Knowing this, makes reading books and listening to talks about modern art torturous since they always start with Fountain and Duchamp as modern art's birth.

And what to think of Walter Keane, who signed his wife Margaret Keane's wildly popular paintings of wide eyed children?⁵⁹

These are only three examples out of many.

How am I affected by any of this? When one of my classmates asked me if I could give her an example of a successful artist who is also a mother I had to think long and hard. These women, two of them also mothers, could have been examples! To show me, other mother artists and artists who want to become mothers that it can be done.

You might ask why not be such an example yourself? Just work a little harder instead of using somebody else's work in order to succeed. Maybe I could be an example. I'll leave it up to you to decide if using Nimmerdor's work has been my plan all along. Men have cut corners and bent rules for centuries and with great success. Why should I not do the same?

Note

I translated this proposal including the letters Andreas attached to it from Dutch to English with the help of DeepL.

58. Pajmans, Theo, *Het Urinoir is niet van Duchamp*, p. 18, *See All This* Kunstmagazine, 3rd volume number 10 (Summer 2018)

59. Jackson, Penelope, *Females in the Frame. Women, Art, and Crime*, p. 171, Palgrave Macmillan (2019), ISBN 9783030207656

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‘The easiest way to be bigger than yourself is to lie.’ Penn Jillette

