

Openness in Curation: The Dutch Case of Boudewijn Büch

Alex van EGMOND



Alex van Egmond, independent writer, the Netherlands

Alex van Egmond received his Master of Arts from the Department of Dutch Language and Culture at Leiden University in the Netherlands. His thesis research focused on the literary motif of the deceased child in the work of author Boudewijn Büch. He was previously employed at the Beijing Foreign Studies University as Associate Professor and wrote numerous articles and columns, i.e. about his fascination for China. A compilation of his columns was published in 2013. His research interests include International Business and Marketing, Education, Dutch Literature, Language and Culture. Contact: jma_vanegmond@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

Author Boudewijn Büch (1948-2002) made a considerable contribution to an open and democratic environment for curating in the Netherlands. As a bibliophile, he was not only a valuable customer to antiquarian bookshops, but also the biggest promoter of the book and of collecting in general. His success as a TV celebrity contributed greatly to this. However, he kept the public from his private collection for a long time. Only in the last two years of his life were artifacts shown in a rare exhibition and on TV where Büch irregularly made appearances. This article questions Boudewijn Büch's role in the traditional world of curating by institutions as museums and libraries on the one hand and the modern perspective on the other where the consumer becomes curator. It scrutinizes Büch's ambivalence in being a promoter of these institutions, while denouncing the idea of public interaction and dialog.

Keywords: Curation, Boudewijn Büch, Museum

1. INTRODUCTION

Imagine yourself a museum today; a place for inspiration, interaction and the experience of learning, targeted at a wide audience of different educational and class backgrounds. Ongoing discussion in the last six decades about what a museum is and what it should represent, has led to open institutions, averse to elitism. Nowadays, the young and the old, the expert and the dummy, are invited to engage with the collections and their curators. This change in museum policy and definition is also reflected in the Dutch museum world, where especially in the sixties and seventies of the twentieth century the cultural elite lost some of its traditional authority.

Since author Boudewijn Büch experienced the changing times first hand and was closely involved with cultural institutions during his lifetime, it is interesting to refract the shift from elite to democratic cultural institutions through his life and work. In his written work, he frequently wrote about (what were considered) elite cultural topics, in a style that was acceptable and understandable for a mass public. In addition to being known for his work as a writer and poet, he also figured in TV shows and documentaries, where he promoted book collecting, reading, and the beauty of museums worldwide.

Büch used his fame and skill in storytelling to bring elite culture to the masses and was therefore a welcome guest speaker for cultural institutions. As a promoter of books and culture in general, he was a prominent figure in the discussion about the role of cultural institutions. However, when his life and deeds are closely examined, it becomes evident that his opinions on cultural institutions are often in opposition to the direction these institutions were going: modernism, dialog, and openness. Hence, Büch's case is therefore a questionable, yet all the more intriguing one.

In the coming sections, I will first map out the social changes that occurred in the Netherlands after the Second World War with regard to cultural institutions and the "museum discussion". Afterwards in section 2.2, the early life of the author is introduced with focus on the turbulent sixties and seventies period and his rise to fame in the eighties. Section 2.3 explores Büch as a curator and the private library he kept for reference. The ambivalent nature of his opinions towards the role of modern cultural institutions is then discussed in section 2.4. Finally, I will summarize the findings and draw conclusions in the last section.

2. BÜCH & CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

2.1 Social Change

After the Second World War, the Dutch economy was reconstructed with Marshall Plan aid from the USA. Over the period of 1945-1960, the government invested in large construction projects throughout the country, while the living standard, income, and GDP increased ten-fold (NRC Handelsblad, 1997). The population expanded rapidly and ambition and optimism was in the air. However, the war left a great number of youngsters wary of their elders and of authority in general. More than 75% of the Jews residing in the Netherlands were deported to Nazi concentration camps without much resistance from the Dutch population, and the majority did not survive the war (Verzetsmuseum, 2014).

In the sixties, young adults started questioning authority. This led to real action with the Provo movement (1965-1967). By simple, comical means they provoked the authority with harmless actions, to illustrate the intolerance of the state when it cracked down on the activists (Manders, 2014). Anti-authoritarian thinking influenced the cultural environment in the Netherlands as well. Willem Sandberg, director of the prestigious

Stedelijk Museum [City Museum] between 1945-1962, was one of the most forward-thinking. His guidance not only turned the Museum into a dynamic center of the modern art world with the acquisition of works by CoBrA and expressionist artists, but he also introduced industrial design, photography, and graphic art to the collection (Davidts, 2007).

Sandberg hated museums. They reminded him of “graveyards” or “orphanages”. In his vision the museum was all about sharing a passion for art with people who did not even know they loved it. Moreover, the public was not to be lectured on good versus bad art. His efforts paid off and the number of visitors swelled from 60,000 to 300,000 annually (Truijens, 1998). Nowadays, it is hardly imaginable, but for decades, visitors to museums were completely ignored in favor of the objects on display. The ideas of Sandberg became an example for other cultural institutes to follow. Soon “visitors studies” emerged, with works on comparative study such as *L’amour de l’art: Les musées d’art européens et leur public* by Pierre Bourdieu, Alain Darbel, and Dominique Schnapper (1966). Dutch cultural institutions adapted well to the social changes. Seen in this light, the 1969 “Musement” event became legitimate. Some 150 museums presented themselves from June 19th to July 13th. The event attracted more than 70,000 visitors (Klasens, 1969). For authority, the times had changed as well. At the end of the seventies, the public function of cultural institutions became the policy of the Dutch government. One of the key points in the 1977 note for a new museum policy stated:

The emphasis on a public oriented function of the museums. Firstly, a theoretical foundation is needed. A dedicated program for research can contribute to this. Then the expertise in the sector of presentation (the education office is part of this) must be improved; [...] Finally, in general the accessibility of the museums

must be expanded (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 1977, p. 75)¹.

Illustrative of the appeal to the public was the reopening of the renovated Van Gogh Museum in 1990. To celebrate the 100th birthday of Vincent van Gogh, a special village was built in front of the museum containing restaurants, a bank, a post office, a perfumery and even a kindergarten. Naturally, the youngest among the visitors were not forgotten. In fact, at present almost every museum in the Netherlands caters for “museum kids” through workshops, activities, and exhibitions aimed specifically at children (Museumvereniging, 2014).

Withholding moral judgments of the artifacts, along with the anti-authoritarian sentiments in Dutch society, meant that the “old-school” curator, a person who is an academic and/or specialist in the field and who holds control over the collection and the artifacts, was bound to lose that control after the 1960s (Poole, 2011; Rosenbaum, 2011). The effects of this change appear today in, for example, the blog of the Boerhaave Museum, where curators, researchers, and marketing managers write about the artifacts they favor, and the public can interact or submit their own stories (Museum Boerhaave’s Blog, 2014). Another example is the Van Gogh Museum that opens its doors on Friday night for VJ’s, DJ’s, bands, workshops and interactive tours, where the curator is a social person who listens first and educates later (Julémont, 2013).

The underlying motives for the rapid adaptation of Dutch cultural institutions to changes in society are not germane to this paper. What matters is that, despite the fear of losing control over the collection or degradation of the cultural environment, the perception remained to the view that “a balanced museum cannot function without curatorial knowledge” (Poole, 2011). Needless to say, the role of curators are still crucial, but they

¹ 'Beklemtoning van de op het publiek gerichte functie van de musea. Daarvoor is allereerst een theoretische onderbouwing nodig. Door middel van een gericht programma van onderzoek zal daaraan worden bijgedragen. Vervolgens dient de deskundigheid in de sector presentatie (waarvan de educatieve dienst onderdeel vormt) te worden opgevoerd; [...] ten slotte dient meer in de algemene zin de toegankelijkheid van de musea te worden vergroot.'

require a bigger package of skills that must to be balanced accordingly.

2.2 A Curious Curator

Unlike Willem Sandberg, Boudewijn Büch absolutely loved museums. He was born into a Catholic family during the baby boom right after the Second World War and spent his youth in Wassenaar, a village that stretches along the coastline from Katwijk to The Hague. The relationship between his parents was not good. In 1963 his father left the place for good after a divorce, leaving his wife and six sons behind. In a small village, early in the sixties, such an act must have been a shameful and traumatic experience for the family. Every fictional work (prose and poetry) Büch wrote in later life has strong relationship to these childhood events.

The father figure in Büch's literary work is usually a tyrannical person with some Jekyll and Hyde-characteristics. He can be verbally and physically abusive to his wife and sons, but at other times he has his moments, educating his children in lepidoptary (study of butterflies) and other intellectual activities. The book, *De hele wereld in een vitrinekast*, commissioned by the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, describes the first time his father took him to a museum. In reply to Büch's question on why museums are so important, his father answers:

Museums are important because you can view the whole world in the proximity of your house. As you know, your mother and I don't enjoy traveling, [...] it is not necessary to travel a lot in order to get far. With an atlas and a museum you get there too. I think even farther, 'cause your imagination travels with you (Büch, 2001, p. 11)².

For Büch, this idea of the museum as a window on the world became a guiding principle for the rest of his life. Unlike his parents, he set out to travel

to the most obscure places on earth to knock on the doors of cultural institutions, including the foremost libraries, art, natural history, and ethnology museums. Above all, he developed an insatiable curiosity for knowledge, and consequently, as a young adult he started collecting rare books and artifacts (Büch, 2001, p. 21). In the late sixties, when he moved out of Wassenaar and lived in the city of Leiden to attend college and presumably to pursue two master degrees³, he had already accumulated a vast collection.

The early collection contained first printings of works of Dutch novelists, rare exploration journals and maps from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and philosophical works by Benedict de Spinoza and other great philosophers. One of the key figures in his collection, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, would never cease to fascinate Büch. This love for the German poet was evoked by his friends from college, who also had a keen interest in literature. In the sixties and seventies, they made trips together to Weimar and other places where Goethe left his mark. Coming back to the Netherlands, Büch would tell the most fantastic tales about their encounters on the road (Mouws, 2004b, pp. 69, 72, 80).

It became apparent that Büch had a gift for storytelling and this trademark shaped him into the Goethe expert of the Netherlands. But all that came later. In the spirit of the era of rock and roll, drugs, and boundless freedom, he experimented heavily with drugs and tested the boundaries of tolerance. One of his first deeds of protest was the long hair style he wore in college, to the great dismay of the headmaster-priest, who ran the school. It resulted in hours of after school detention and more than once, his good friend and classmate Peter, who possessed the key, had to free him from the classroom (Mouws, 2004b).

The museum, as a former prestigious institute, was transformed during this period. It received

² 'Musea zijn belangrijk omdat je er de hele wereld vlak bij huis in kunt bekijken. Zoals je weet, houden je moeder en ik niet van reizen [...] en het is ook helemaal niet nodig om veel te reizen om ver te komen. Met de atlas en het museum kom je ook heel ver. Ik denk zelfs verder, want je fantasie reist mee.'

³ Büch boasted about his two master degrees in Philosophy and in German, as well as bragging about being a world specialist in Historic Psychopharmacology, but probably never attended university or received a degree (Mouws 2003:109-110, Kagie 2004).

another function: Büch discovered the Buddha Hall in the local National Museum of Ethnology, where it became common to smoke hashish.

It was in the late sixties that Leiden also discovered the revolution. I picked up the turmoil, but also the pleasant side effects: ideological chit-chat with no end, the use of “narcotic drugs”, living in a commune and carry out democracy to the extreme [...] We had friends everywhere, likewise at the entrance of the museum. There sat a boy who occasionally joined us smoking a free chillum (kind of hashish pipe), and who of course held the opinion culture was for the masses and thus freely accessible (Büch, 2001, pp. 16–18)⁴.

Nobody would bother them in the Buddha Hall. In case if anyone did, they would be branded as “reactionary” or even “fascist”. Büch and his comrades had the unshakable faith that was commonly accepted in the era. “Mao [Zedong] was our hero, smoking hashish our religion and the Buddha Hall our Valhalla” (2001, p. 18). Nonetheless, living in a commune proved to be difficult for the passionate curator. Büch’s adoration for Goethe and other “bourgeois” writers soon led to his expulsion from the Maoist oriented commune (1986). In addition to ideological differences, there were other menaces that bothered him in the city of Leiden.

On August 31, 1978, Büch filed for bankruptcy. It turned out that most of his already legendary book collection had been acquired on credit. Years of accumulating books had proportionally grown his outstanding debts and now antiquarians and booksellers demanded payment. Friends established an emergency fund and donated large sums of money to preserve his library. The bankruptcy would last till the end of 1985 (Mouws, 2004b, pp. 212–215). By then, Büch had moved to the capital and was able to sustain himself by writing and working for a broadcasting network.

In 1986, he bought a colossal house in downtown Amsterdam and embarked on an exhausting adventure to turn his home into a museum.

2.3 Didina et Pinguina

On November 23, 2002, Büch passed away in his bed while reading Heinrich Heine. He left behind a staggering number of novels, essays, short stories, columns, poems, and travelogues. Any attempt to catalog this vast ocean of text published in sometimes obscure magazines and newspapers is doomed to fail. The first and only attempt was by journalist Frans Mouws and he admitted his bibliography was far from complete (Mouws, 2004a, p. 11). Even more miraculous was the library he left behind, an estimated 100,000 books and other artifacts were retrieved from his home by the auction house Bubb Kuypers, some of which were rare finds. To include all the objects, the auction catalog had to be divided in three parts and the auction itself took three stages that spanned a year (Bubb Kuypers, 2004).

Among the 100,000 titles, a great deal was reserved for his lifetime favorite Goethe, but books on other curious themes were also piled up in Büch’s house, including rock’ and roll, the American Civil War, inhabited islands, the dodo, and Captain Cook. However, over the years, his fascinations drifted to the bizarre. His last essay book discusses barbed wire, stuffed animals, and war veterans who lost a limb in great detail and seriousness. One chapter even captures the ordeals of Büch in his search for the missing penis of Napoleon Bonaparte (2002).

The sheer broadness of Büch’s collection is impressive, albeit tragic. As mentioned before, Büch started curating out of curiosity at a young age. Later, the idea for a personal library and museum were inspired by practical reasons;

The frustrating thing about a museum is [the fact] that you cannot touch anything and the

⁴ ‘Het was eind jaren zestig dat ook Leiden de revolutie ontdekte. Ik ontdekte de woelingen, maar vooral ook de aangename bijverschijnselen: het oeverloos ideologisch doorkwaken, het gebruik van “verdoevende middelen”, het wonen in een commune en het extreem doorvoeren van de democratie [...] We hadden overal vrienden. Ook bij de toegang tot het museum. Daar zat een jongen die wel eens bij ons een gratis chilm’pje [een soort hasjpijp] mocht meebloven en die uiteraard ook vond dat cultuur er voor iedereen moest zijn en dus vrij toegankelijk.’

*humiliating thing about a library is that you are not allowed to access a book of a certain age or quality, let alone take it home (Büch, 2004, p. 10)*⁵.

Another good reason for his collection drift was the operational time of cultural institutes that did not correspond well with his working hours, which could be 24 hours a day. Nevertheless, the collection gave him little delight. Dutch antiquarian and intimate friend, Ton Kok described him as a “book addict”, saying that “possession became less, and searching, almost literally hunting, became more a goal for him. In the end, it was all about the books he did NOT possess. He could really lose sleep from all the things he did NOT yet possess [...]” (Mouws, 2008)⁶.

As a bibliomaniac⁷, Büch turned into a curator himself in his home library and museum, long before curation became the “coin of the realm” and the Internet made everyone a curator (Rosenbaum 2011, p. 21). Büch did so for the sole purpose of seeking knowledge, regardless of his limited educational background and away from the ivory towers that were bestowed by ‘professional’ curators. He had spoken to dozens of curators and had seen plenty of museums and libraries to start his own cultural institute. He named it ‘Bibliotheca Didina et Pinguina’, after two of his fascinations; the dodo and the penguin.

2.4 Ambivalence

The book collection in *Bibliotheca Didina et Pinguina* functioned as a reference for his non-fiction work. In the eighties, one “island book” (1981b) and two titles about libraries and book curating appeared (1981a, 1988). His erudition regarding literature was soon be put to use by the Dutch broadcaster VARA TV, where Büch started off presenting a book program. He shot to fame with the travel program *De wereld van Boudewijn Büch* [*The World of Boudewijn Büch*] (1988-2001).

This travel program was far from conventional. It lacked stereotypical tourist information such as the locations of swimming pools, sights, or prices. Instead, a typical episode showcased Büch in a setting of museums or libraries, casually explaining the history of the place and its eccentrics. As center piece of each episode, Büch kept the program alive by his enthusiastic, boy-like approach to the topic. The public absolutely loved it. Experts contend that the best qualities a modern curator can possess are expertise in research and communicative skill, the latter even more important since museums have acquired public functions (O’Neill & Wilson, 2010; Poole, 2011; Sherman & Rogoff, 2003, pp. 53–54; Yates, 1993, p. 42). Büch was gifted with both qualities and masterfully combined the two. Whether he spoke on television, in the theater, or at events organized by cultural institutes, he always managed to excite the crowds for whatever artifact or idea he was discussing (Lange, 2002).

Seemingly “boring” topics (Goethe, book collecting, literature, history) that only appealed to elites or would be considered the domain of elite culture, were suddenly explored and embraced by the masses. Today, the Holy Grail for cultural institutes is to be a venue that

[...]stimulates people to read books, to ask new questions in class, to make different choices when watching TV, to travel in new ways and, above all, whether it generates conversation, conversation during the visit itself, conversation at the first family meal after the visit, conversation with oneself (thinking), conversation with nature’ (observation, experimentation) (Wagensberg, 2005, p. 311).

However, part of the intellectual elite in the Netherlands, especially writers and poets, who had protected their bastion through the turmoil of the sixties and seventies relatively successfully, were not amused. Because Büch acted in

⁵ ‘Het frustrerende van een museum is immers dat je niets mag aanraken en het vernederende van een bibliotheek is dat je een boek van enige ouderdom of kwaliteit niet mag raadplegen, laat staan mee naar huis mag nemen.’

⁶ ‘Het ging hem steeds minder om het bezitten en meer om het zoeken, jagen, bijna letterlijk. Uiteindelijk ging het om de boeken die hij NIET had. Daar kon hij echt van wakker liggen, van alles wat hij nog NIET had [...]’

⁷ Person who expresses extreme fondness for acquiring and possessing books.

the role of a cleric blessing a marriage between high and low culture, they denounced his literary work (Mouws, 2004b, pp. 228–229; Nieuwenhuis, 2012). Arguably, there were good reasons for the disapproval. Apart from the fading quality of Büch's novels and poetry, the focal point of critique became his “clown-like” behavior on television and in other media (Kagie, 2004). As long as it earned him money, he participated in quizzes and talk shows, and advertised a rice brand, with the same enthusiasm he would have promoted a book or a museum.

However, the public did not mind and loved him all the more. Booksellers and antiquarians recorded higher sales after his appearances on television, while cultural institutes in the Netherlands and around the world could count on new visitors⁸. Nonetheless, this love was not returned to the public. Over the years, Büch developed an aversion to the public and social interaction in general. His personal chronicle of 1998 depicts a lonely and depressed author surrounded by his books and artifacts. For example, early each morning on January 1st, the year is reviewed:

Damn, it is true: in this year I will turn fifty, I have become dreadful lonely. I need to rephrase: made myself voluntarily lonely. Though “voluntarily”...It is just a mechanism I'm unable to stop: that I seek silence around because I want to, and at the same time, it makes me incredibly sad (Büch, 1999, p. 10)⁹.

Contacts with old friends from his hometown and student years in Leiden were cut off or reduced to the minimum and the downside of fame pressed on him when dealing with his audience. Being a famous television star meant that he would be recognized and harassed by “cheaply dressed” Dutch tourists in every corner of the world (Büch, 1999, p. 246). An aspect of stardom that disgusted him. From this perspective his home library and museum became a retreat.

Büch regarded the *Bibliotheca Didina et Pinguina* as a private matter and few were permitted to enter (Engelsman, 2014; Mouws, 2008). The lucky few, among them Jelle W.F. Reumer, curator of the Museum for Natural History in Rotterdam, witnessed a “neo pre-Victorian house” packed with books and artifacts in every corner. True to his childhood ideal, the collection was a window onto the world that recalled the great collectors from the eighteenth and nineteenth Century;; Sir Arthur Lever, Willem Bullock, Hugh Cuming, Walter Rothschild, and Charles W. Peale. It was as if one traveled back in time. Although, there was one key difference with those collectors; entry was denied to the public (Büch, 2004, pp. 6–8).

Reasoned from Büch's perspective, the library was his own universe that needed to be separated from his working life, especially from the curious public. It had the function of a “treasure vault” according to former director of the National Museum of Ethnology, Steven Engelsman, who further observed that particularly “the mystery” associated with the collection benefited him (Engelsman, 2014). Starting in December of 2000, Büch made an irregular appearances as a sidekick in the Dutch talk show *Barend & Van Dorp*¹⁰, where for each episode an artifact or book was brought in from his collection. For example, with seriousness and special curator gloves on his hands, he could carefully show a “real” dodo bone or the withered penis of Napoleon¹¹. The sense of mystery surrounding the artifact and the stories of its enthusiastic curator contributed greatly to the success of the show.

In 2001, a selection of artifacts from *Bibliotheca Didina et Pinguina* collection were on display “just once” in an exhibition at the Museum for Natural History in Rotterdam (Büch, 2004, p. 10; Moeliker, 2001). Büch kept the reasons for this sudden public display of his private collection to himself. Arguable, money matters might have changed his mind for in the same year he ran into

⁸ In remembrance of the greatest promoter of the antiquarian book, the Boudewijn Büch Prize was initiated in 2011. Travel writer Redmond O' Hanlon won the prize in 2013 (Nieuwenhuis, Roderick, 2013).

⁹ 'Het is verdomde waar: in het jaar dat ik een halve eeuw oud ga worden, ben ik verdomde eenzaam geworden. Ik moet het beter zeggen: heb ik mij vrijwillig steeds eenzamer gemaakt. Hoewel “vrijwillig” ...Het is gewoon een mechaniek dat ik niet meer stil kan zetten: dat ik het steeds stiller om mij heen maak omdat ik het wil, terwijl ik er tegelijkertijd ontzettend veel verdriet van heb.'

troubles with the broadcasting station and his long running travel program was halted (Mouws, 2008). Apart from this exhibition and the appearances in the *Barend & Van Dorp* talk show, Büch's ideas concerning the public function of his collection were certainly not modern. Similarly, his thoughts about the function of museums were evenly conservative.

Despite growing up in a period of social change that also affected the way cultural institutions interacted with the public, Büch disliked and disapproved of the transformations that were ongoing worldwide. For example, his personal chronicle of the year 1998 is full of contempt for the "modernized" museum, that he describes in terms as "museum discotheques" and "design terror" (1999, pp. 137, 178, 221) and it is also reflected in the 2001 exhibition at the Natural History Museum in Rotterdam. For this exhibition, the museum provided him with a hall and ten cabinets. Büch received unlimited freedom in selecting and displaying the artifacts. When asked to write captions for every cabinet, the museum received 'a pile of A4 paper as thick as the average Yellow Pages'. Surely, this was not what the curators of the Natural History Museum expected and for some visitors it was quite disturbing; "[v]isitors with a body length of below 165 centimeters and those who have to make do with heavy optical devices receive short shrift, supposing that they want to read the texts" (Moeliker, 2001)¹².

Büch's vision on cultural institutes thus endorsed the traditional museum as a place for knowledge worship, rather than a public place, suitable for young and old. A reading of Büch's views that is evenly confirmed by Steven Engelsman, who worked closely with Büch and a team of curators and designers for the reconstruction of the National Museum of Ethnology during the years 1998-2001. For these team meetings, Büch was asked mainly because of his expertise in curating and museology. However, nothing constructive

came out of him. Most of the time, he behaved like an actor who enjoyed his role of being the erudite storyteller, rather than actively contributing to the team. Multimedia and interactivity in museums did not please him to the least. Engelsman recalls a question Büch asked him in the midst of the construction site that undoubtedly expressed his antipathy; "This is not going to be a museum with buttons and lights, now is it, Steven?" (2014).

3. CONCLUSION

Overlooking the life and work of Büch, without any comparison in Dutch history, he must be regarded as a remarkable endorser of cultural institutions and the antique book specifically. Through his skill as storyteller and his phenomenal erudition, he reached out to the ones who might otherwise have never picked up a book and actually read it. The same applies for the museums and libraries that featured in his television programs, where with his "boy-like" behavior i.e. made an extinct bird, a German poet, and former "temples of wisdom" became popular among a larger audience. His efforts certainly contributed to a higher exposure of the (antique) book and consequently better sales.

From my understanding, the fact that some Dutch intellectuals diminished the importance of his literary legacy and denounced his television work, tells me that Büch was on the right side of the debate between elitism and popular culture. In the late eighties and early nineties, the conservative bastion of Dutch authors was already in decline and faced with shrinking book orders, a new breed of authors was emerging. Authors who did not comply with the traditional stereotype of the lonely writer seated behind his desk creating art. Büch did not shy away from being a celebrity author with a commercial attitude. With that in mind, it is interesting to note that he was the first Dutch author to employ a manager who could deal with his appointments and affairs. However,

¹⁰ Barend & Van Dorp, RTL/TALPA sixteen seasons: 1990-2006

¹¹ He found and acquired this precious Napoleon artifact in the end. It was later discovered that the dodo bone belonged to an ordinary chicken skeleton

¹² Bezoekers met een lichaamslengte onder de 165 cm en zij die lezen met behulp van zware optische hulpmiddelen komen er bekaaid af, mits ze de teksten willen lezen'

in all fairness, there lurks a selfish motive in the commercialization Büch embraced, as well as a selfish motive in curating. He did anything for money, even if it downgraded his status as a respectable author and TV personality, and sadly this is exactly how he became an outcast, not only in the literary world, but also in the real one. Surrounded by his precious books and artifacts, he could pretend to be a modern Goethe, indulging himself at the window to the world that his library offered him, but he would never fully gain the respect from the cultural elite. As for the common men, the audience that watched his shows and read his books, he avoided them as much as he could and did not long for their respect.

It is thus quite a contradiction that the promoter of cultural institutions in the Netherlands was conservative and undemocratic in acting and thinking regarding the function of cultural institutes. The ideal museum in Büch's perspective was an untouched museum from the nineteenth century with a strong didactic emphasis. Thus, his contributions to the debate about museology were limited and usually met with indifference. In fact, this indifference even extended in the afterlife; his books and artifacts from the *Bibliotheca Didina et Pinguina* were auctioned and found new homes in collections of other curators. An intact collection in a museum that bears his name did not interest him. To the contrary, he once mentioned: "As for me, they can throw them all away. I collect for myself and not for my offspring" (Lange, 2002)¹³.

REFERENCES

- Bourdieu, P., Darbel, A., & Schnapper, D. (1966). *L'amour de l'art: Les musées d'art européens et leur public [The love for Art: European art museums and their Public]*. France: Les Editions de Minuit.
- Bubb Kuyper. (2004). *Bibliotheca Didina et Pinguina. The library of Boudewijn Büch [Sales catalogue in 3 volumes] Pt. 1: Natural history, medicine, sciences, travel, exploration, colonization. Pt. 2: Books about books, fine and applied arts, philosophy, literature.* Pt. 3: History and travel, music varia and addenda. Haarlem: Bubb Kuyper.
- Büch, B. (1981a). *Bibliotheken [Libraries]*. Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers.
- Büch, B. (1981b). *Eilanden [Islands]*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker.
- Büch, B. (1986). *Links! [Left wing!]*. Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers.
- Büch, B. (1988). *Boekenpest [Book pestilence]*. Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers.
- Büch, B. (1999). *Een boekenkast op reis: Persoonlijke kroniek 1998 [A traveling bookcase: Personal chronicle 1998] (vol. 231)*. Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers.
- Büch, B. (2001). *De hele wereld in een vitrinekast [The whole world in a cabinet]*. Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers.
- Büch, B. (2002). *Steeds verder weg [Further away]*. Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers.
- Büch, B. (2004). *Een heel huis vol [Packed house]*. Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers.
- Davidts, W. (2007). Nostalgie en pragmatiek. Architectuur en het nieuwe Stedelijke Museum [Nostalgia and pragmatism, Architecture and the new city museum]. Retrieved March 12, 2014 from <https://biblio.ugent.be/input/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=376337&fileId=460152>
- Engelsman, S. (2014, March 20). Steven Engelsman, former Director National Museum of Ethnology.
- Julémont, V. (2013). Cultuurmarketing: Now it is a real meaningful experience. Retrieved March 12, 2014 from www.cultuurmarketing.nl/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Val%C3%A9rie-Jul%C3%A9mont-PDF1.pdf
- Kagie, R. (2004). *Boudewijn Büch, verslag van een mystificatie [Boudewijn Büch, report on a mystification]*. Amsterdam: Prometheus.
- Klasens, A. (1969). *Musement: eerste gezamenlijke presentatie van de Nederlandse musea, 19 Juni t/m 13 Juli 1969, Irenehal, Koninklijke Nederlandse Jaarbeurs [Musement: The first jointly presentation of Dutch Museums, June 19 till July 13, 1969]*. Utrecht: Stichting Musement.
- Lange, H. de. (2002, November 26). *Boudewijn Büch: niet alleen het dodo-botje [Boudewijn Büch: Not just a Dodo bone]*. Archive. Retrieved March 12, 2014 from <http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/5009/Archief/archief/article/detail/2583173/2002/11/26/Boudewijn-Buch-niet-alleen-het-dodo-botje.dhtml>
- Manders, T. (2014). Jeugdculturen en Maatschappijkritiek [Youth cultures and criticism of society].

¹³ 'Wat mij betreft gooien ze het allemaal weg. Ik verzamel voor mezelf, niet voor het nageslacht.'

- Retrieved March 14, 2014 from <http://www.sjgls.nl/jeugdcultuur/index.html>
- Moeliker, K. (2001). *Over de tentoonstelling "Een heel huis vol" van Boudewijn Büch [On the exhibition "Packed House" by Boudewijn Büch]*. Straatgras, (13-2).
- Mouws, F. (2004a). *Boudewijn Büch : Een overzicht van zijn werk [Boudewijn Büch: An overview of his work]*. Soesterberg: Aspekt.
- Mouws, F. (2004b). *Weg uit Wassenaar : Een tocht door het leven van Boudewijn Büch [Away from Wassenaar: A journey through the life of Boudewijn Büch]*. Soesterberg: Aspekt.
- Mouws, F. (2008). *De bibliotheek van Boudewijn Büch [The library of Boudewijn Büch]*. Soesterberg: Aspekt.
- Museum Boerhaave's Blog. (2014). Retrieved March 18, 2014 from <http://museumboerhaave.wordpress.com/>
- Museumvereniging, De. (2014). Museum kids. Retrieved March 20, 2014 from www.museumkids.nl
- NRC Handelsblad (1997, May 24). Het Marshallplan [The Marshall Plan]. Retrieved March 23, 2014 from <http://retro.nrc.nl/W2/Lab/Marshallplan/>
- Nieuwenhuis, R. (2012, December 14). "Büch maakte roman van zijn leven. Na zijn dood is er van hem een karikatuur gemaakt" ["Büch made a novel of his Life. After his death they made a caricature of him]. *NRC books*. Retrieved March 23, 2014 from <http://www.nrc.nl/boeken/2012/12/14/buch-maakte-roman-van-zijn-leven-na-zijn-dood-is-er-van-hem-eeen-karikatuur-gemaakt/>
- Nieuwenhuis, R. (2013, September 15). Redmond O'Hanlon krijgt prijs voor promoten antiquarische boek [Redmond O'Hanlon receives a price for promotion of the antique book]. *NRC books*. Retrieved March 24, 2014 from <http://www.nrc.nl/boeken/2013/09/15/redmond-ohanlon-krijgt-prijs-voor-promoten-antiquarische-boek/>
- O'Neill, P., & Wilson, M. (2010). *Curating and the educational turn*. London; Amsterdam: Open Editions ; De Appel.
- Poole, N. (2011, December 14). Rise and fall of the curator. Collection Trust. Retrieved March 13, 2014 from www.collectionstrust.org.uk/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-curator/
- Rosenbaum, S. (2011). *Curation Nation : How to win in a world where consumers are creators*. New York [etc.]: McGraw-Hill.
- Sherman, D. J., & Rogoff, I. (2003). *Museum culture histories, discourses, spectacles*. London: Routledge. Retrieved March 12, 2014 from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=sit&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=96338>
- Truijens, A. (1998, June 26). Willem Sandberg : Verknocht aan het museum dat hij wilde opheffen [Willem Sandberg: Devoted to the museum he wanted to abolish]. *De Volkskrant*.
- Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (1977). *Naar een nieuw Museumbeleid [Towards a new museum policy]* (Note).
- Verzetsmuseum Amsterdam (2014). Jodenvervolging [Holocaust]. Retrieved March 14, 2014 from <http://www.verzetsmuseum.org/museum/nl/kinderen/over-de-oorlog/voorkant/jodenvervolging>
- Wagensberg, J. (2005). The "total" museum, a tool for social change. *História, Ciências, Saúde-Manguinhos*, 12, 309-321.
- Yates, B. (1993). Coming to terms with change: The new curator. *Museum International*, XLV(180), 41-45.