

# There are still people there

Signs of life in Doel

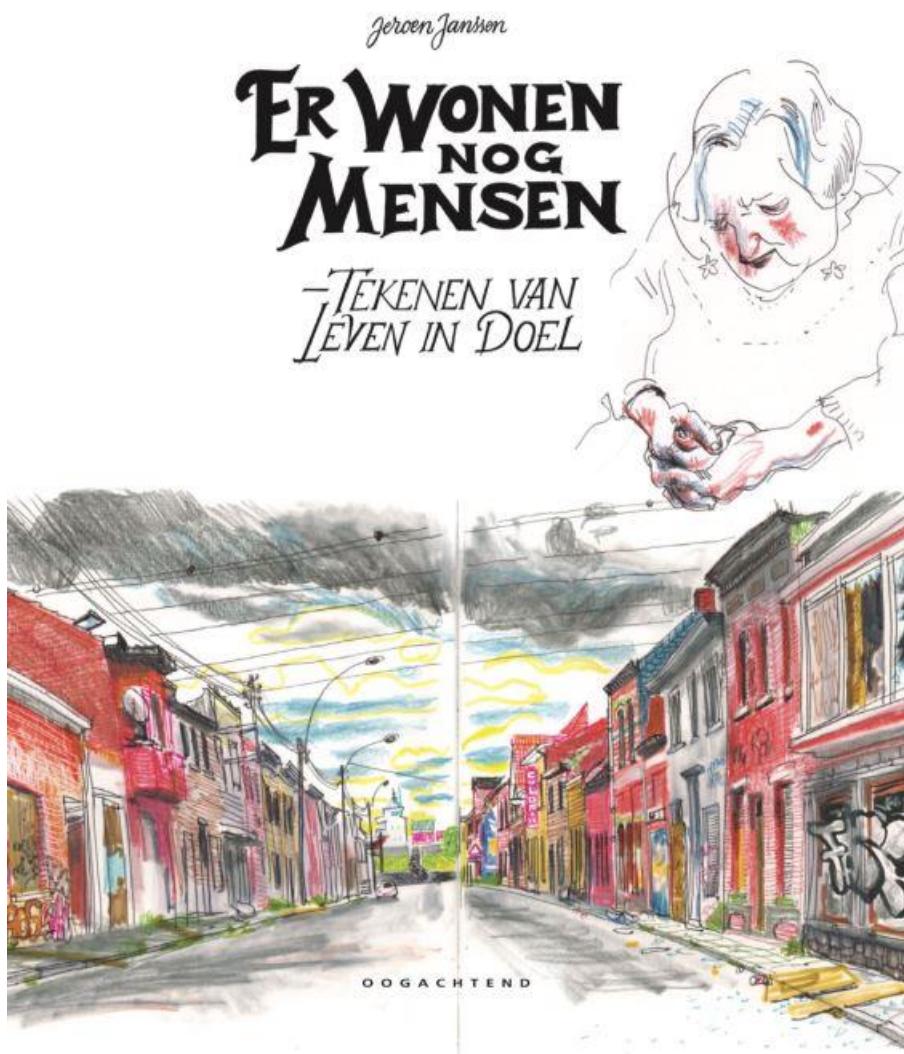
Jeroen Janssen

An extract

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Jeroen Janssen

# THERE ARE STILL PEOPLE THERE

*SIGNS OF  
LIFE IN DOEL*





## Jeroen Janssen

Né en Belgique, en 1963, il fut clair dès la maternelle que je n'étais pas fait pour autre chose que le dessin. Mais je n'en vis pas uniquement. Pour faire bouillir la marmite, j'ai été aide dans la psychiatrie, chauffeur, jardinier, assistant de pub dans une entreprise d'aliments pour bétail, facteur, prof de dessin, formateur de peintres/tapisseurs handicapés. Actuellement, je suis assistant bibliothécaire. Après un séjour de cinq ans au Rwanda comme enseignant aux Beaux-Arts, j'ai publié plusieurs albums. Entre autres :

- Muzungu, Sluipend gif ( Homme blanc, poison insidieux, 1997 )
- La Revanche de Bakamé ( La Boîte à bulles, 2010 )
- Doel ( dans XXI et Grands reporters, éd. Les Arènes 2012 )
- Doel ( album en néerlandais, Oogachtend 2013 )
- Abadaringi ( album en néerlandais, 2016 )

J'ai publié dans des journaux et magazines tels que De Standaard, Mo\*, HUMO, De Morgen, 24h01, Zone5300, et XXI. Je publie aussi sur [www.drawingthetimes.com](http://www.drawingthetimes.com) et [www.urbansketchers.org](http://www.urbansketchers.org)

Depuis ma publication du récit « Doel » dans la revue XXI (2011) je me suis lancé à gogo dans le reportage dessiné. D'où est sorti mon album « Doel » (2013) et Abadaringi (2016). Même avant d'être parus en traduction française, mes projets ont déjà reçu des prix au festival du carnet de voyage IFAV de Clermont-Ferrand. Prix international pour « Doel » (2013) et prix de l'écriture pour « Muzungu 2.0 » (2014)

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ou Lien Devos, Fonds Flamand des Lettres ([www.vfl.be](http://www.vfl.be)), Ann Jossart, éditeur ([www.oogachtend.be](http://www.oogachtend.be))

## Abadaringi



« Nous sommes et restons des Abadaringi »

Au Rwanda, dans la paroisse de Nyundo, entre les collines vertes qui séparent les eaux du Nil et du Congo, et les terres de lave fertiles à l'ombre des volcans, se trouve la seule école des Beaux-Arts du pays. Dans les années 90, avant le génocide, j'enseignais le dessin là-bas. Je m'asseyaient souvent dans le jardin des frères, près de la salle polyvalente, pour assister les élèves qui dessinaient les arbres et les plantes. C'était, et c'est toujours un endroit inspirant : les oiseaux, le paysage et la rivière Sebeya qui s'élargit et gronde quand il y a trop de pluie...

Maintenant je dessine les élèves qui s'exerce sous la surveillance de la nouvelle prof, Anaïs.

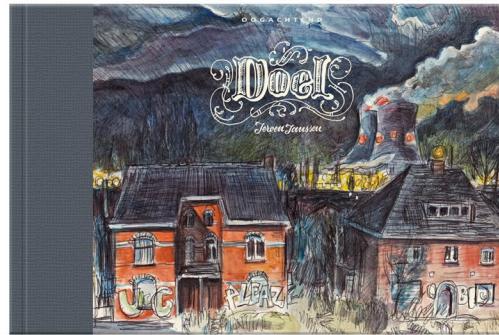
Je ne peux, je ne pourrai jamais me séparer de cette école. J'y retourne de temps en temps, et en ce moment je travaille sur un livre qui racontera l'histoire de ses habitants : les ouvriers, les frères des écoles chrétiennes, les voisins. Et l'histoire des anciens élèves. Ceux qui ont fait leur vie au Rwanda, ceux qui résident en Europe. Il y a une semaine, on a organisé en Flandre la première réunion des Abadaringi, les élèves de l'école des Beaux-Arts - au moins ceux d'avant 1994. Certains ont comme moi la chance d'y retourner de temps en temps, d'autres se sont réfugiés en Europe sans espoir, courage ou envie d'y retourner. Mais tous, nous sommes et restons des Abadaringi. ( texte publié dans « Le dessin du lundi », XXI )

[www.facebook.com/abadaringi](http://www.facebook.com/abadaringi)

Format A4 à l'italienne, 320 pages, en néerlandais, Oogachtend 2016 ( ISBN 9789077549940 )  
Prix de l'écriture 2014 au festival IFAV à Clermont-Ferrand

## About DOEL

Édité en néerlandais, 2013. Je travaille sur un nouveau album sur « Doel », titre provisoire « La vie est un drôle de village » qui paraîtra mai 2018.



In 1998 the Flemish Government decreed that the Port of Antwerp urgently needed expansion on the left bank of the river Scheldt, thus condemning the village of Doel to disappear. This small community would have been totally unknown for the rest of the world, were it not for the four nuclear reactors that had been built there in the preceding decennia, another endeavour that had not been without controversy.

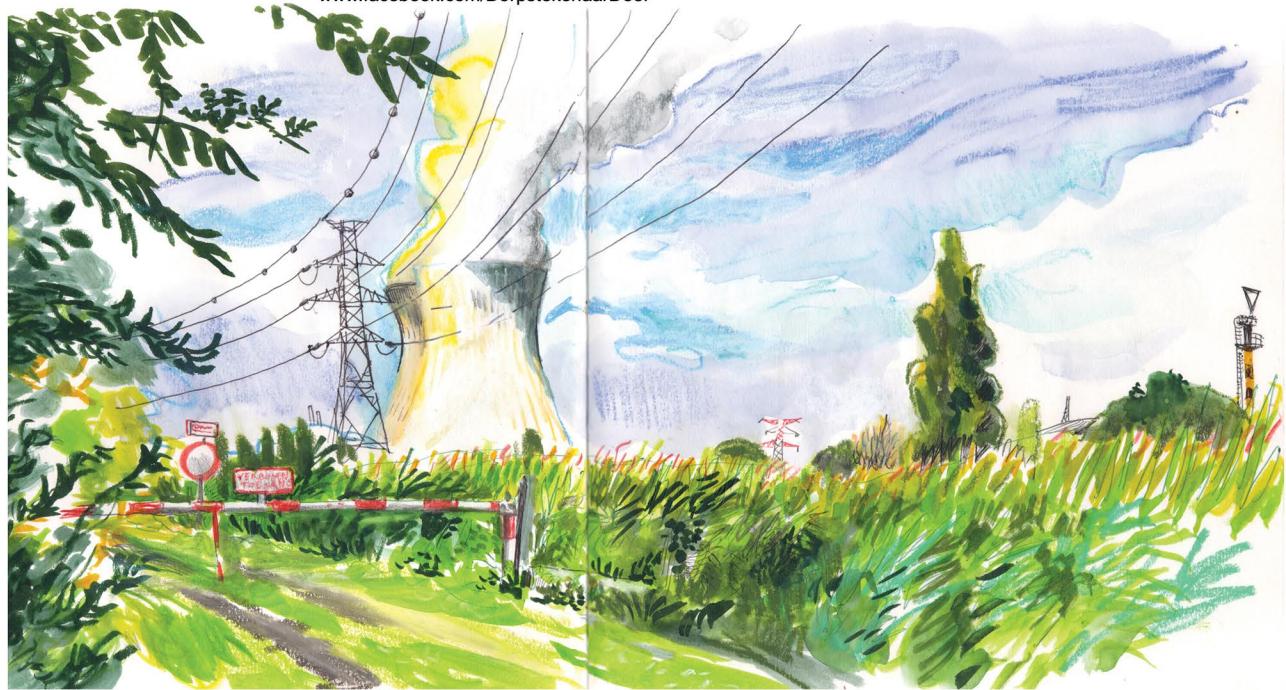
The result is Doel, a gem of a book, very luxuriously published by Oogachtend in an oblong A4 format, with 272 pages of sketches, notes, intricate drawings and stories. Janssen worked closely together with Lennert Gavel to combine artwork from his many notebooks

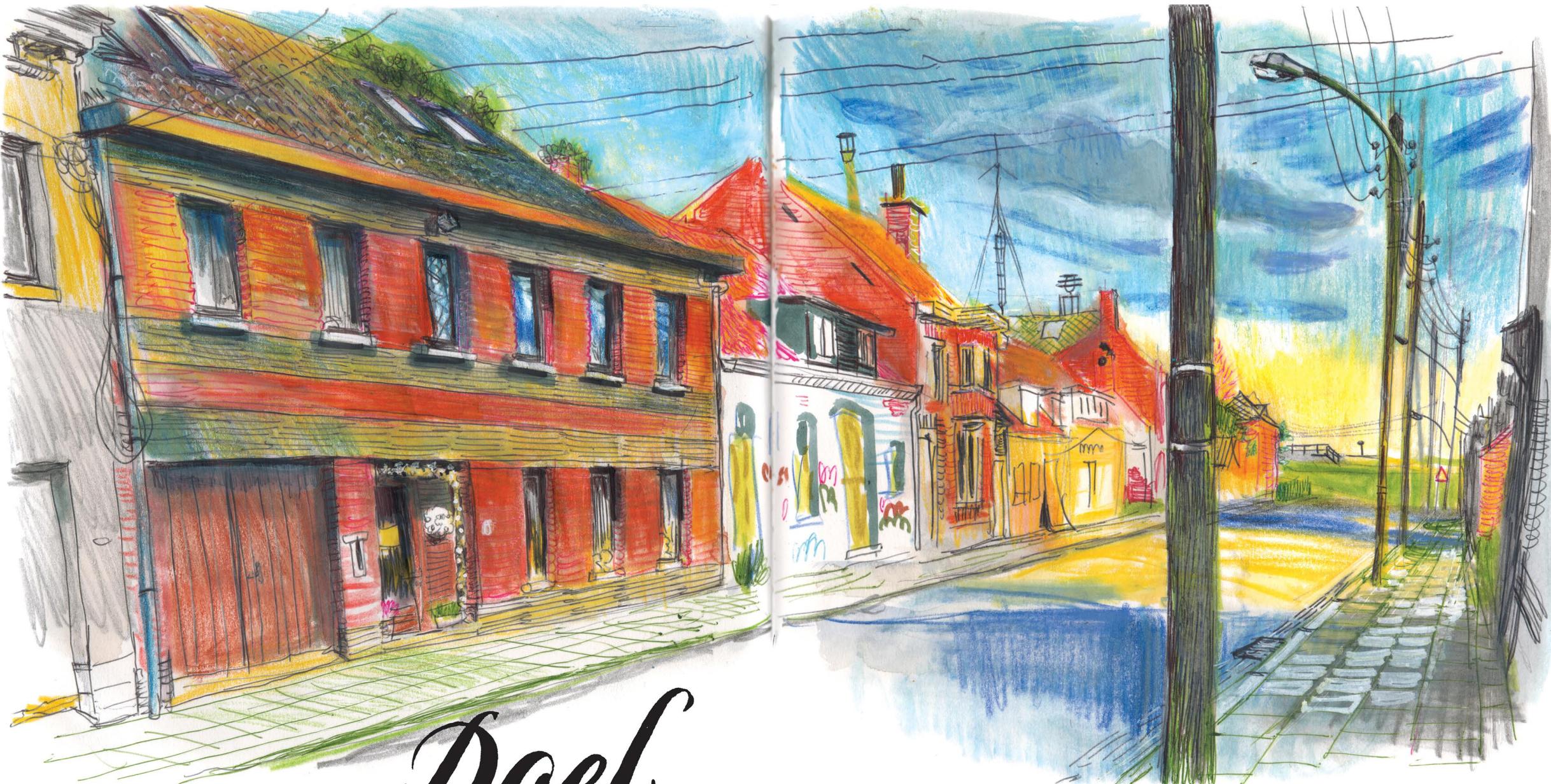
into something that transcended a mere artbook. In the best journalistic tradition, it is an account of how the reporter himself evolves from a mere observer to somebody who is choosing sides. Not in a political sense, but solely picking the side of the obvious underdog in this story: the people who try to eek out a life in a doomed village.

The refrain of this song is the story of Sjarel and Marcella, two old people who lived in Doel all their lives, but had to leave due to health problems. Their appliances shop had slowly changed into a hostel for all the cats that had been abandoned by the people who moved away from Doel, and with its very striking protest signs ("Doel Must Survive!") had become something of an icon in the protest movement. When it burned down because of a stupid short circuit, it seems like the final judgement has been called over the town...

[www.facebook.com/DorpstekenaarDoe](http://www.facebook.com/DorpstekenaarDoe)

Doel by Jeroen Janssen, 272 pages, is published by Oogachtend (ISBN 9789077549810)  
[www.facebook.com/DorpstekenaarDoe](http://www.facebook.com/DorpstekenaarDoe)





*Doel*  
CAMERMANSTRAAT

# KNAPPE KOPPEN

BRAINBOXES

Emilienne:

Even after midnight, they're walking around the place, those Dutchies.

Ach, we're not breaking anything, they say.

Oh, sometimes there are some lovely boys among them!

But so young! Still children really.

And then drinking beer or spirits,

and they smoke cigarettes.

Well,

Cigarettes?

... I'm sure it's cannabis.  
Not yet sixteen, they are.  
I can tell.

Then I think about our Jean-Pierre:

Even when he was at university,  
in Ghent he didn't do things like that.

There were a few bars in Doel

and sometimes he'd meet up

with his friends there on a

Saturday night.

But I always

wanted him to be

home at midnight.

And he was too.

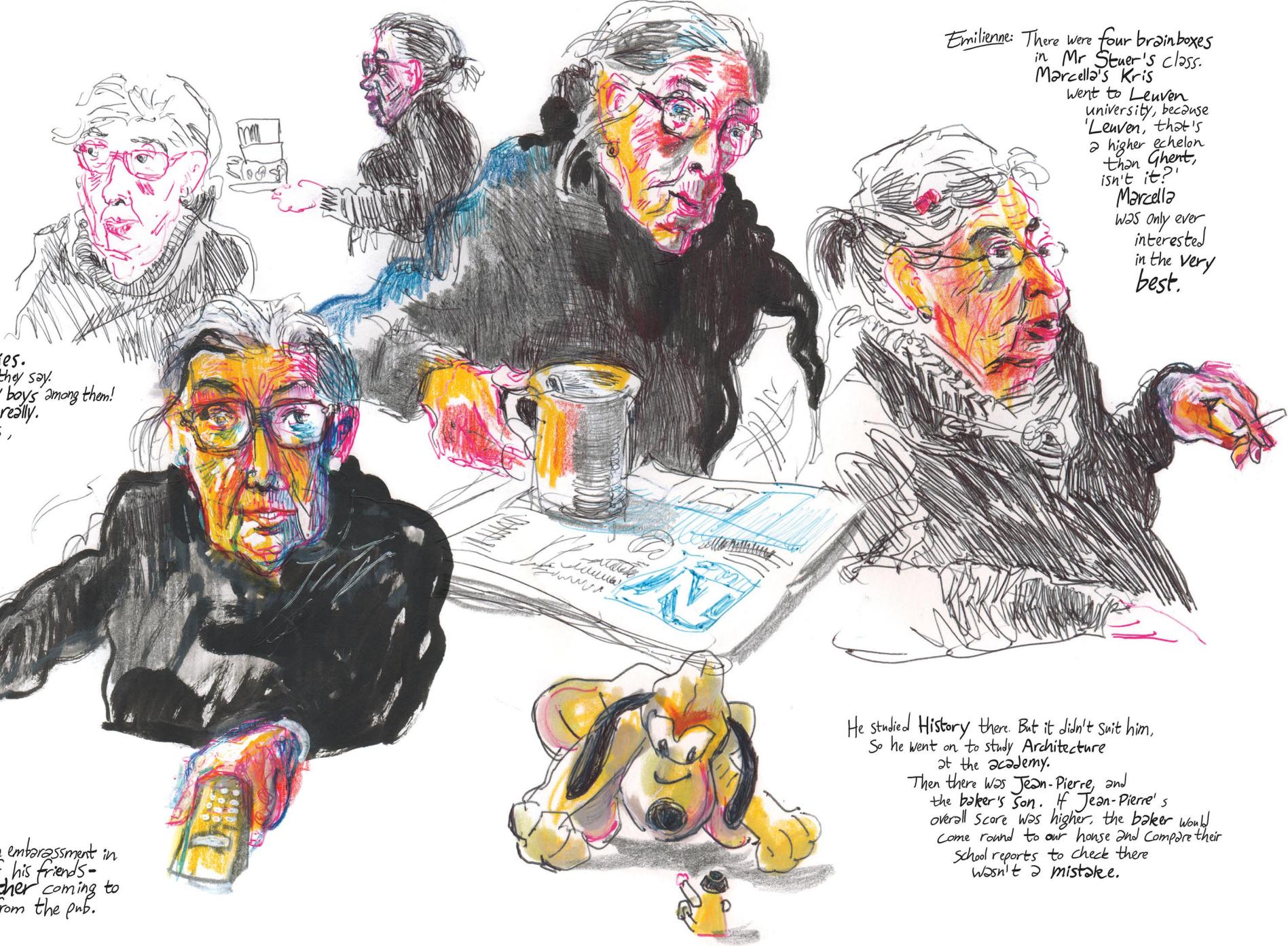
He knew I'd come to the bar

otherwise and cry out,

'Time to come

home,  
Jean-Pierre!'

What an embarrassment in  
front of his friends -  
his mother coming to  
fetch him from the pub.



Emilienne: There were four brainboxes in Mr Stuer's class. Marcella's Kris

went to Leuven university, because 'Leuven, that's a higher echelon than Ghent, isn't it?'

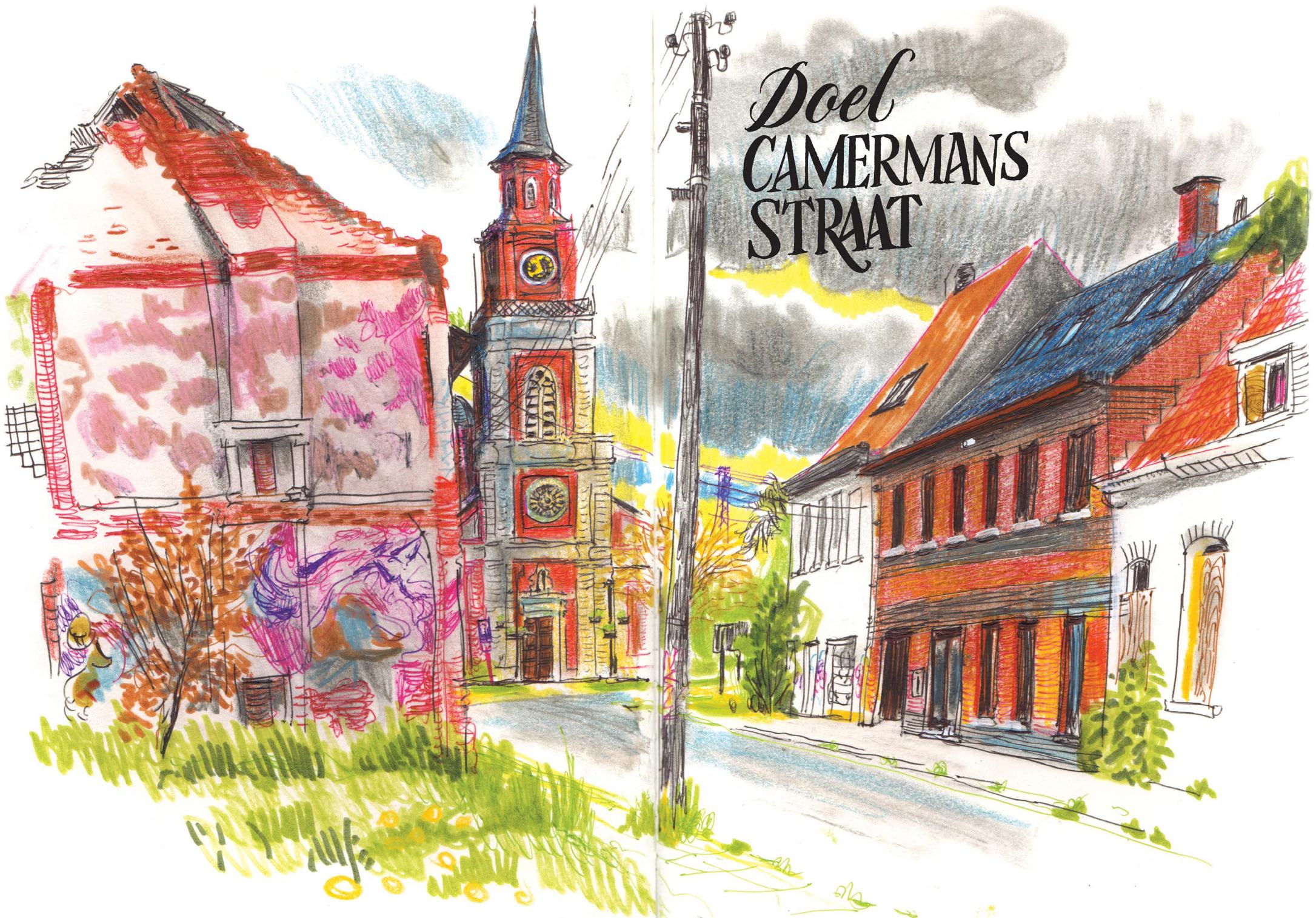
Marcella was only ever interested in the very best.

He studied History there. But it didn't suit him, so he went on to study Architecture at the academy.

Then there was Jean-Pierre, and the baker's son. If Jean-Pierre's overall score was higher, the baker would come round to our house and compare their school reports to check there wasn't a mistake.



**I**t was good for children, growing up in Doel. Lots of places to play, to mess around, to go on adventures: the dikes and the county paths, the orchards, and the playground. My granddaughter Lou came every school holiday for years because she could do anything here, it meant total freedom. All the things city children have to do without.



*Doel*  
**CAMERMANS  
STRAAT**

# HIER KOMEN TOCH ALLEEN MAAR ZOTTEL WONEN

ONLY FOOLS WOULD WANT TO MOVE HERE

Emilienne: They say Marcella's started losing her marbles. Have you heard anything to that effect?

me (diplomatically): She's become very forgetful...

Emilienne: Forgetful... Yes! Don't best about the bush. She's not right in the mind anymore, I heard. I was in Beveren recently and she was wandering around the shops with Ruoli. But she wasn't sitting in her wheelchair, no, she was pushing it. And Ruoli was walking beside her. Ooh! I'd want to sink into the ground in shame if it was me. That's not right! He should be pushing the wheelchair and his mother should be sitting in it.



Emilienne: That's Marcella to a tee. Once she's got something into her head there's no budging her. She's as stubborn as a mule. With that Dael 2020 banner hanging endlessly across the front of her house back then: DAEL MUST STAY!!! But look who's stayed. And where's she now? In an old folks' home in Beveren.



me: It's good she'd moved there before the house burned down. And thanks to the Dael 2020 campaign, the plans to extend the harbour have been scrapped.

Emilienne: Oh, so is Dael a residential area again?

me: Yes, the Council of State decided that. I heard it yesterday on the news.

Emilienne: But I don't want people to move back again. I don't want any neighbours.

me: But what if I wanted to come and live here? Say I go ask 'The Corporation' and they agree I can rent the ruined house opposite for a pittance?

Emilienne: Oh, not you. By the way, those houses opposite, I'd like them be torn down. Then I could watch the big container ships sailing into the Diergaarde dock. I asked the mediator about it. But they're not allowed to demolish any more houses, he said.

Emilienne: In my case, only fools would want to move here.







DOEL'S A JOLLY PLACE TO BE  
**'T IS LEUTIG?  
IN DEN DOEL**



Every week, Vandals turn up from all over the place. To the despair of the inhabitants. When you cycle into Doel, there's no avoiding it. Left and right, everywhere the ravages of recent years.

**C**an metal burn?  
What does Carbonized  
glass look like? How  
do asbestos panels respond  
to a temperature of  
2,000 degrees?



All of these things are  
subject to experiment in Doel.



This time they set fire to the monastery.  
Black holes gape in the roof.  
Just as well they closed off the street,  
I think. Apparently asbestos dust has  
been released. While unsuspecting tourists  
slip behind the barriers and over the  
plastic tape, I stay sensibly  
the other side.



Rather them than me, I think.

Dying of lung cancer in a  
decade or two isn't my  
idea of fun.

