

# **,WHAT IS WISDOM???**

*"The moment a person realizes that reality has many faces, he/she takes the first step on the road to wisdom."*

**Hopstaken's Newsletter – the 10th edition – December 22, 2007**



***This edition is dedicated to those who believe in magic***

This newsletter is published by Loek Hopstaken of Hopstaken Bedrijfsadvies, Amsterdam, The Netherlands ([www.hopstaken.com](http://www.hopstaken.com)). Intended publics: Loek & Peter van Oosten's personal international networks, including DDU & Wittenborg alumni & alumnae. Photos: Peter & Loek; Sashanka Poudyal; Zhou Lincheng (Apple); Vo Ngoc Lien Huong (Jane), Jack Sun, Mr. Son (Prenn Falls, Dalat), Zeng Qian (Tracy), Manish Gaurav. All correspondence: [hopstakeninternational@gmail.com](mailto:hopstakeninternational@gmail.com).

## **1. Welcome to the 10<sup>th</sup> Edition!!! – by Loek Hopstaken**

### **Sinterklaas**

Magic is for kids, I often hear so-called adults say – the ones that also reject Harry Potter as 'unscientific'. They miss a point here, and miss a lot more. They may never have gotten over their disappointment in the magic of Sinterklaas, or Father Christmas, in magicians or even the most amazing kind of magic, love. Losing one's belief often occurs when one is disappointed: Dutch kids find out that Sinterklaas is just their uncle dressed in a red robe, a fake beard, a tall hat and a staff. Or they receive a 'magic box' as a birthday present, which teaches them to perform magic tricks, and thusly depriving them from the sensation of being lured into a world where magic rules. Later, they find out that love wasn't really what they hoped it would be, lose their faith in it, and ignore it when it happens to pass by. Some grow old long before their time, and become grumpy chagrins who had forgotten how to smile.

### **Spiritual healing**

Now, I believe in magic. Not so long ago, I went to see a spiritual healer. Was I ill? No. Just curious to find out if he could help me sort out a few things. He did. But ... this guy was magic. He read my mind, told me stuff he couldn't possibly know. He could accurately describe some of my closest family members and friends, and how they are looking at their relationship with me. Scary? No, on the contrary. The fact that someone faces you with some truth, or holding up a mirror in front of you, gave me new insights. Did he start with a 'magic box' when he was a kid? I doubt it. He's the real stuff; discovered his gift at an early age. It had been decades since my first encounter with the gift of magic: my aunt Rie Hopstaken was a spiritual healer. Apart from people, she would also heal pets, especially dogs. The local hospital would discretely consult her in diagnosis matters, when the doctors couldn't agree. She never had a medical education, but she knew the medical names and functions of all body parts. One in a while she used to be picked up by a taxi, came in through a hospital back door, started to work right away and set a diagnosis. Afterwards, she would be go back the same way she had come. Her diagnosis worked: she saved my father's life by telling the puzzled doctors what really was the matter with him. They ran a few tests, and found my aunt's diagnosis was correct.

The following operation saved my dad's life. When I was 19, I paid her a visit. She got into a trance, and made a few future predictions for my next 10 years. All of them have come out. So I have a 'subjective reality' on the subject. A long time ago, people experienced many things as magic. Reason: they didn't understand the laws of nature. What we now still experience as magic, such as psychic healers, may very well be because we don't yet understand the underlying laws of nature. We have a way to go! As for the magic of love, no one can explain it to me, not by astrology, not by mapping out the workings of serotonin or testosterone. It's magic. It will always be, thank God.

### **Serendipity**

Serendipity – two things happening at the same time, independent from each other – is one of those phenomena we sometimes experience, and if we admit it, it feels like magic. As I write this, I see Zeng Qian (Tracy) just wrote the word next to her name on msn. Did I tell her? No. Just a silly coincidence? Perhaps. A long time ago I had a girlfriend, and we seldom dated. We didn't need to. We would keep on running into each other. Not on predictable places; no, in a shopping crowd, in a side street, on the bus ... and for a few years we 'went with the flow'. December 2 Tung & Lan happen to see me at the Saigon airport, where 10's of 1,000's pass every day. Coincidence? Perhaps, but it feels like magic! Still, if you're not careful, it makes you crazy. Or better: if you refuse to accept the magic in daily life, you have a hard time understanding the irrationalities of reality. A genius like Brouwer – a famous mathematician – once remarked that mathematics and logic are not necessarily related, and that it's practice should encompass intuition. By saying this, he revolutionized math science, and one could safely say that by the introduction of a bit of magic thinking, he pushed it forward to where many other so-called 'exact' sciences could make their advancements. The so far undiscovered genius in the field of cross-cultural communication, Arnold Cornelis, called his major work 'The Logic of Feeling'. Basically stating we all have our roots in the world of magic.

### **Don't look for magic, it'll find you**

When something strange happens to you, don't rationalize it away. You may miss some real fun. I have a few other magical experiences, but hesitate to write them down at the moment. It'll only invite those who are afraid of magic and rationalists to try to kill my memory by explaining it away. I strongly recommend anyone who doesn't have this experience, to take a ride on an elephant. It's more than being transported by an oversized grey mammal (with a trunk) from A to B. It's magic.

## **2. What do you know? – by Loek Hopstaken**

### **So, what is wisdom? (source unknown)**

There are so many definitions of Wisdom. It is the practical application of knowledge and skills. Wisdom is often associated with maturity and experience.

But some people even those who are young can exhibit wisdom. Often people who exhibit sensibility and fairness are called wise. Their decisions are strategic and beneficial and are well thought out.

Wisdom is a mix of insight, common sense and experience and results to sound judgment. Wisdom is spontaneous and is not created. It may be developed but it cannot be taught or passed on to others. Wisdom is developed through the gaining of knowledge and experience but in the end, when a person lacks one aspect like common sense, then he will not necessarily develop wisdom. Wisdom is sometimes referred to as enlightenment or the capacity to understand natural laws and processes and be able to apply them in practical means. It is the ability to discern truth and exercise good judgment.



*Left: label on the shower of my first hotel in Saigon. Right: communicating with an elephant, near Dalat*

Wisdom has many definitions because it is a virtue that is recognized in many fields or aspects of human life. There are religious definitions of wisdom as well as psychological and philosophical. In religious terms, wisdom is the

virtue by which a person can discern the truth and the good from the evil. In Christianity, the story of King Solomon who is considered a wise king, tells the story of justice and good judgment. Wisdom is also exhibited by rightful conduct and good morals in religious terms. It means that the person is both prudent and morally upright and he is able to uphold widely held values.

In any case, wise people have a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of life and understand the science of cause and effect. They are self-aware and understand the ripple or butterfly effect. This is the reason they exercise good judgment, they know that even the smallest action a person makes can change the course of the universe, just like dropping a stone in the water will cause ripples to appear, affecting almost the whole surface of the water.

One simple decision can change a person's life forever and people who have wisdom can make decisions that are fair and beneficial to those who really need to benefit the most. They understand that the interconnectedness of life results in one action affecting others, with each character in the world moving, making the world go round and round, and changing it so often.

Wise people are able to make decisions and stick by them even if the decision seems wrong in the beginning. These people have insight and foresight and understand that sometimes sacrifices have to be made to be able to achieve a good result. Wisdom means understanding that cutting the leg saves it from gangrene, never mind that it also means losing the leg. In the end, if a person or a group stands to benefit from a morally upright or ethical decision then the decision is deemed wise.

**Thaumatology** (source: Dr. Goodword – AlphaDictionary)

Pronunciation: thaw-mê-tah-lê-jee

Part of Speech: Noun, mass

Meaning: 1. The study of miracles. 2. The world of miracles, miracles as a general phenomenon.

Notes: Like all nouns on -ology, today's Good Word comes with a full panoply of the usual derivations. The adjective is thaumatological and the practitioner is a thaumatologist. This word is not frequently used but it is out there with its rather large extended family (for which see Word History).

In Play: Since miracles by definition are not given to explanation, the range of this word's use is rather limited and it is used mostly tongue-in-cheek: "We have not completed the thaumatology of Bunny's graduation from college but it seems to be real and we are much relieved." I must admit, however, as twice a father and thrice a grandfather, that the emergence of a new person into this world strikes me as something of a genuinely thaumatological event.

Word History: The root, thaumato- comes from Greek thauma- 'wonder, marvel' which is found in several other words. Thaumatology is the worship of or excessive reverence for miracles. Thaumageny [thaw-mê-tah-jê-nee] is the assumption that the origin of life was a miracle, as opposed to nomogeny [nê-mah-jê-nee], the assumption that the origin of life was natural—terms that could find a use in the current 'intelligent design' debate. A miracle worker is either a thaumaturge or thaumaturgist and the working of miracles is thaumaturgics, although this word is also used to indicate feats of legerdemain or 'magic'.

**Clairvoyant \klair-VOI-unt\ adjective** (source: Merriam-Webster's Word of the Day)

1 : having the ability to see beyond the range of ordinary perception

2 : of or relating to the power or faculty of discerning objects not present to the senses

Example sentence (2<sup>nd</sup> definition): Minna has such an uncanny ability to predict which books will be bestsellers, I'd swear she's clairvoyant.

In French, 'clairvoyant' literally means 'clear-seeing', mentally or optically. The term made a brief appearance in English in the 17th century, as an adjective suggesting a keen sense of perception, but it did not become firmly established in the language until the 19th century. Today we most often apply this adjective to someone who essentially has ESP, an unexplainable ability to know or perceive things that others cannot. (We also now use 'clairvoyant' as a noun for a person who has this ability.) But although 'clairvoyant' is nearly always used in the ESP sense these days, the allusion to special powers frequently isn't dead serious. ('Are you clairvoyant? How did you know I was going to wear my flamingo shirt?')

### 3. Confessions of a greyhaired kid from Haarlem with an Asian dream – by Loek Hopstaken

A long long time ago, this kid had a dream of relocating himself to a far away place. As he lived in Haarlem, and later in Amsterdam, Holland, he looked at places as far as the Americas, Africa, Asia and Australia. As a backpacker at 20, he toured parts of Asia – the Indian subcontinent. At 22, North and at 25, South America. Never made it to Africa and Australia. Why Asia as his first destination? Because he read 'Tintin in Tibet' when he was 6 or 7? Feeling so much at home when being a guest in Asian-type households? Who found 'The Far East Suite' his favorite music? In any case, he never really got over his first love. So when much later in his life Asia came to him in the guise of dozens of Asian



students, this revived his old dream, and also, his first love. Early summer 2006 he formulated an idea to find out about the possibilities to work in 'The Far East'. Preferably with his alumni/ae. (See What is Wisdom??? no. 5)



*November 20, Teacher's Day surprise: dinner and bowling. With Thao (Amy), Huong (Jane), Chu (Joey), Cuong (Chocho), Duc (Tony), Dung (David) & Van. Van, who started bowling at Graduation, June 06, & Tony won. Nga (Anna) couldn't make it.*

From Nov. 18 – Dec. 3 I made my 3<sup>rd</sup> trip to Vietnam. With help from Huong (Jane) and Nga (Anna), another meeting-packed stay. Results: realistic hope for concrete work assignments, starting March 2008. A major opportunity is to develop a new course for the no. 1 training company, another to work as HR consultant for a starting training & consultancy firm. Apart from this, there are a few other interesting leads. One lesson learned, is that to be successful in Vietnam, one has to be there for a longer period. Ideally: to be committed 100%. Another lesson: carefully study the market and be prepared for a constant change in demand. So be flexible; 'go with the flow'.



*Left: Singapore skyscrapers. Middle: Jane & I showing the latest Saigon hard-hat fashion. Right: back from Dalat, we ran into Tung (Fire) & his wife Lan at Tan Son Nhat Airport, Ho Chi Minh City. They just arrived from Hanoi for a week's holiday. More pictures at <http://hopper1951.spaces.live.com>.*

My 3 visits have turned me into an 'amateur Vietnamese'. One who is learning more and more about the country's cultures, who is quite aware of its major problems but also its major opportunities, who doesn't speak its language yet finds it easy to exchange thoughts and ideas with Vietnamese, who has several close friends (among them, the best assistant I could dream of), who believes he has something valuable to offer to the Vietnamese business world, who developed a real passion for this country & its cultures, and who even found an area where he could resettle. This year, these experiences, have changed my mind, my goals, my strategy. Yes, Vietnam is changing my life.

On the way back, I made a city tour of Singapore, as Caroline had recommended. If you're ever passing this city, do the (free) tour. Impressive for its multicultural society, its wealth, its cleanliness, its safety, and its delightful weather.

#### **4. A Message from George Carlin (forwarded by Monique Lateste-McCue)**

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings but shorter tempers, wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We spend more, but have less, we buy more, but enjoy less. We have bigger houses and smaller families, more conveniences, but less time. We have more degrees but less sense, more knowledge, but less judgment, more experts, yet more problems, more medicine, but less wellness.

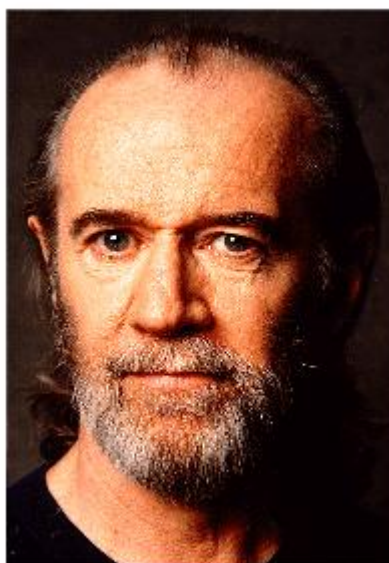
We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom. We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often. We've learned how to make a living, but not a life. We've added years to life not life to years. We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet a new neighbor. We conquered outer space but not inner space. We've done larger things, but not better things.

We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul. We've conquered the atom, but not our prejudice. We write more, but learn less. We plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, but not to wait. We build more computers to hold more information, to produce more copies than ever, but we communicate less and less.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion, big men and small character, steep profits and shallow relationships. These are the days of two incomes but more divorce, fancier houses, but broken homes. These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throwaway morality, one night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill. It is a time when there is much in the showroom window and nothing in the stockroom. A time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose either to share this insight, or to just hit delete.

Remember; spend some time with your loved ones, because they are not going to be around forever.

Remember, say a kind word to someone who looks up to you in awe, because that little person soon will grow up and leave your side.



*George Carlin (b. 1937)*

Remember, to give a warm hug to the one next to you, because that is the only treasure you can give with your heart and it doesn't cost a cent.

Remember, to say, “I love you” to your partner and your loved ones, but most of all mean it. A kiss and an embrace will mend hurt when it comes from deep inside of you.

Remember to hold hands and cherish the moment for someday that person will not be there again.

Give time to love, give time to speak! And give time to share the precious thoughts in your mind.

AND ALWAYS REMEMBER:

**Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.**

If you don't send this to at least 8 people ... Who cares?

George Carlin

NB. On Youtube you can find Carlin's famous 'The Modern Man' monologue, and more from this genius.

## 5. MIC / DDU is getting there ... - by Loek Hopstaken

After starting up the BA Intensive class in September, the MBA class now also started. It'll take time to build up the new school, but we keep the ol' fire burning. We: mr. Deelstra, Peter van Oosten & me. Caroline is helping out on administration. The students of course form the body of our work: we want them to succeed, and earn their diploma's.



*DDU Deventer veterans (see WiW??? No. 8), now MIC/DDU MBA students Lixia Su (Summer), Mallick Aurangzeb, and Sharath Kumar Anugula: China, Pakistan & India collaborating. Below: Mr. Deelstra supervising.*



We're now in the 3<sup>rd</sup> block, and everyone's working hard to make it a success. For those who live and work in Amsterdam, MIC/DDU is now easy to reach. We're at a stone's throw from 'De Nederlandsche Bank', the central bank of the Netherlands. The class room is also used by a language school. As the academic year rolls on, and the first graduation is getting closer, more students are enlisting. It takes lots of work, and time, to rebuild a school.





*The Block 2 BA Intensive class at MIC / DDU, Amsterdam (December 7, 07). Students from China, Nepal & India.*

## 6. A Very Deep Pooh Wisdom



**“Those who are smart,  
those who have brains,  
never understand  
anything.”**

(Winnie the Pooh was created 80+ years ago by A.A. Milne, and drawn by E.H. Shepard. Before the Walt Disney studios made him look rather silly, by painting him brown, dressing him in a red sweater, and polishing his personality, he was the most liberated of all bears. See for the background, but also for the crazy copyright law suits [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winnie\\_the\\_Pooh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winnie_the_Pooh))

“I wanna be loved by you, just you, and nobody else but you. I wanna be loved by you, alone: Pooh Pooh pe-doh.”  
( as sung by Marilyn Monroe in the most hilarious movie ever made: *Some Like it Hot*)

## 7. Plato's Chair – by Loek Hopstaken

I don't like shopping. When my partner is shopping for clothes, I look around for a chair. Hopefully, there are some interesting magazines to read. Ever been to IKEA? The advantage of this megastore is, that they have plenty chairs. And when you choose one, and sit down, you don't need magazines for entertainment. Provided you have chosen a strategic position, you can quietly observe dozens of people trying out chairs and couches. This remind me of Plato, the Greek philosopher who says that 'chair' is a universal idea, and that a real chair is just a projection of this idea. So any object you can sit on, which has legs and something for your back to lean against, is a chair. The design may be completely different, yet, a chair = a chair = a chair. Gertrude Stein, whose "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose" we quoted in WiW #9, referred to a lady called Rose, but perhaps also to Plato. Today, we have different ideas about the world of ideas that Plato was talking about some 2,500 years ago. Most people don't believe in a separation of the idea and the object. The idea has become materialized. 'Hard science' has 'proven' that matter and spirit are one and the same. Body = soul. Still, I like Plato's idea. I can think, function, live, with the idea that body and soul are separate entities. I mean, 'hard science' desperately wants to prove they are right. Arrogant guys! The suggestion that all questions have been answered by science, is just ludicrous. It suggests that any further research and development is unnecessary. No, when watching the IKEA customers – actually, visitors – trying to make up their mind about which chair, couch or bed to choose, I get more and more convinced that Plato was right. Those are not bodies looking for something to sit or lay on. Those are people who have a certain taste, who seek comfort, who compare, who discuss their choice with their partners. You almost see the thousands of thoughts and ideas dancing above the chairs and tables. And how about this: guess what happens in the minds of designers, who try out ideas and then see if they can be materialized. Hard science .....HA!



Peter van Oosten's way of demonstrating Plato's chair is something most of his students are not likely to forget. Whether everyone recalls the meaning of it, is a different matter. He recently introduced the chair at Wittenborg, and by doing this marked his presence in a way, that Wittenborg somehow will never be the same.



*Left: even space freaks deserve some comfort. Middle: chair 'Plato' €44,95 at Morris stores. Right: Lei (Teddy) prevents Peter from breaking his neck as he demonstrates a different use for a chair.*



## 8. Things to do in The Netherlands – by Loek Hopstaken

What is Wisdom??? is not your guide to cultural, sports, music and other events in the Low Lands. Nevertheless, here are a few things to do in these dark winter weeks which may be of interest. Art is a mirror of life. Great art mirrors the many facets of life, surprising ones, naughty ones, crazy ones, funny ones. It may help you catch a glimpse of life's rich core. This winter those who need help to survive the cold and the dark season: check out these unique exhibitions!

### 1. Dutch Masters in The Hague

Next to the Dutch Parliament, there is an elegant 17<sup>th</sup> century building that houses a small museum, called 'Mauritshuis' (<http://www.mauritshuis.nl/index.aspx?siteid=54>), the Royal Picture Gallery. Apart from world famous paintings such as Vermeer's *The Girl with the Pearl Earring* and Fabritius' *Goldfinch*, it features major exhibitions. This winter you have a unique chance to see a vast collection of portraits by some of the great 17<sup>th</sup> C Dutch painters. Dozens of canvasses by Rembrandt, Hals and other noted artists from the era when Holland ruled the world are now on display (<http://www.mauritshuis.nl/index.aspx?SiteID=56>). One of the Rembrandts is owned by the Six family. One of their ancestors was Jan Six, mayor of Amsterdam in the 1650ies. This lifesize portrait (1654) is rarely seen outside the Six family home. In terms of artistic quality it is considered to be among the top 5 of all of Rembrandt's paintings. Why? For one thing, Rembrandt was a master at suggestion. A few seemingly random strokes are enough to give you an accurate impression of the ornaments on the man's cloak. The colors he used, the light, the layout: all of these elements combine in such a way, that you feel like you can go over and shake the man's hand – not because he's perfectly painted. The man's posture – almost humble yet dignified, the slightly enquiring look in his eyes, bring to life a man who was kind, intelligent, compassionate yet also severe when he needed to be. Rembrandt has created a man you start admiring, as he himself must have been admiring him.



*Left: top section of Jan Six' portrait by Rembrandt. Right: one of Picasso's harlequins.*

### 2. Picasso in The Hague's Gemeentemuseum

Pablo Picasso was voted the Artist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and rightly so. This winter Holland is very rich in Picasso's. In The Hague's Gemeentemuseum you can see many of his works, ranging from his early drawings till the magnificent pottery he made shortly before he died. Some of this I last saw in 1974, shortly after the artist's death, in the 'Palais des Papes' in Avignon. Believe it or not, my friend Enid Perll and I were the only visitors. Remember, for many Picasso is an 'acquired taste'. You may not like his work at first. But once you get caught by Picasso, he keeps pulling you back. He's addictive. (<http://www.gemeentemuseum.nl/index.php?id=035020>).

### 3. Barcelona in Amsterdam

Picasso was born and raised in Barcelona. The Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam offers an opportunity to see some of the great art produced in this great city, around 1900 (<http://www3.vangoghmuseum.nl/vgm/index.jsp>). Of course there is work by Gaudi, the architect and designer who is a class in his own right, with apartment buildings, a park (Parc Güell) and a huge cathedral which is still under construction (and will be for another 100 years). But my personal favorite Spanish painter has several works on display. No one ever painted women the way Ramon Casas did: in everything he tells you he admired women. He makes them all self-conscious, confident, humorous and fun-loving, and very attractive. If you see this exhibition, look at the Rusiñols and more Picasso's, and lots of other work representing the art style known as 'Modernista'.

## 9. A seminar at Wittenborg

Back in the Hofstraat, Deventer. Dec. 14, I arrived early at Wittenborg University to deliver a seminar. Topic: Change Management. This topic suits me: 2007 is a year of major changes in my life. It was also more than just a teaching job at a new school: Change Management was the first topic I taught at DDU, early 2003. One difference: at DDU I had 6 days to deliver a complete workshop, here I needed to compress the subject within 5 hours, and make sure to interact as much as possible. Apart from the content – I use John P. Kotter's brilliant and highly practical books 'Leading Change' and 'The Heart of Change' – it was a great opportunity to link up with some Wittenborg students, both BA & MBA. The world of Deventer international business administration (IBA) is a small one, so it was no surprise we rapidly found out we have some common friends. Another aspect of Wittenborg which helps making it a familiar environment, is the presence of Peter van Oosten. He succeeds in injecting a group with the fruits of his free spirit, painting smiles and raised eyebrows left and right, and inspiration in the middle. When he entered the class room with his camera, I wasn't surprised: it was more a kind of 'déjà vu experience'<sup>1</sup>. I enjoyed delivering the seminar.



Above: conducting a seminar.



With Chinese, Vietnamese & Dutch (with Turkish roots) seminar survivors.

<sup>1</sup> Check <http://serendip.brynmawr.edu/bb/neuro/neuro98/202s98-paper2/Johnson2.html> for an interesting essay on this psychological phenomenon.



## 10. An excursion to Düsseldorf (Germany)

One of the attractions of studying in Europe is a chance to see more of this old continent. Many graduates take the opportunity to do some travelling before returning home. Popular destinations are Italy, France and Spain. Universities and schools often offer opportunities to go on excursions. In the old DDU days, I recall excursions to the tulip fields, and The Hague.

December 19 Wittenborg staffs (including the students, who work at school) went to the German city of Düsseldorf. This is a real shopping town, and December is the time when 100's of 1,000's of visitors go there for the Christmas market. Apart from experiencing this city, excursions are a great excuse for having some good, clean fun. Peter van Oosten (and the bus driver) took the pictures.



See Portfolio 6 (page 21) for more pictures.



## 11. Born in 1968 – by Loek Hopstaken



When I say that I didn't really start living until 1968, I'm also saying that to me, to some degree, it's still 1968. Does this mean I stopped my development the same year I started living? Certainly not. Born in 1951, when I was 16, 17 it was as if I woke up out of a long sleep, having grown up in a safe and secure family and social environment. In 1968 I realized there was life beyond my cosy circle ... not just knowing it, but experiencing it. The news media played their part, as did rock & roll music, movies, art in general, and rapidly changing attitudes towards authority of parents, teachers and 'bosses'. In a blog I mentioned that meeting students from China and Vietnam kind of revived the Loek of 1968. 'The year everything changed' is the subtitle of a book entirely devoted to the social and political events of 1968: the murders of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King. Two of our heroes, the massive demonstrations against the war in Vietnam, student demonstrations against authoritarian university professors and management, plus the 'soundtrack' of all this provided by the rock musicians of the day. (I still believe some of the best popular music dates from the year between 'Sergeant Pepper' and 'Woodstock' ...)

It seems that the current generation of Asians is going through somewhat similar changes: with one foot in the old traditions, the other actively exploring the offerings of new forms and styles of living & loving, entertainment, learning to make up one's own mind, developing new viewpoints on authority and culture, and this all in an atmosphere of increasing global awareness. We didn't have mobiles and chatrooms in 1968, but we did have phones, radio and TV, we wrote letters (we did! We did!) and found other ways to communicate with kindred spirits. It's also the time kids went backpacking: the real birth of the world wide web. The rest is history.



*Around 1968: my highschool teachers (Triniteitslyceum, Haarlem).*

## 12. Wise quotes & crackers

“You can achieve anything you want in life if you have the courage to dream it, the intelligence to make a realistic plan, and the will to see that plan through to the end.”

Sidney A. Friedman (1935-, American Entrepreneur)

“He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things he has not, but rejoices for those which he has.”

Epictetus (50-120, Stoic Philosopher)

“Quality never says ‘Sorry!’”

Kedar Acharya (trad. Nepali?)

3 wise quotes by Hillel (50 BC – 10 AD):

“If I am what I am because you are what you are, and you are what you are because I am what I am, then I am not I and you are not you.”

“If I am not for myself, who will be? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?”

“That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow.”

“Friendship consists in forgetting what one gives and remembering what one receives.”

Alexandre Dumas the Younger (1824-1895)

“Friendship renders prosperity more brilliant, while it lightens adversity by sharing it and making its burden common.”

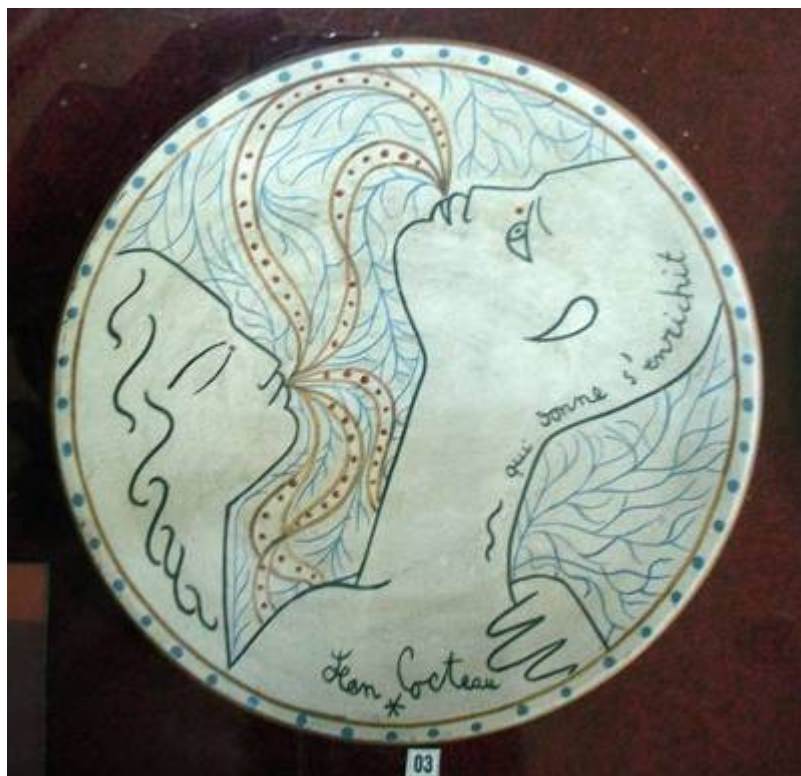
Marcus Tullius Cicero (c. 106-43 BC, Great Roman Orator, politician)

“Always demanding the best of oneself, living with honor, devoting one’s talents and gifts to the benefits of others - these are the measures of success that endure when material things have passed away.”

Gerald R. Ford (1913-, 38<sup>th</sup> President of the USA)

“Class is an aura of confidence that is being sure without being cocky. Class has nothing to do with money. Class never runs scared. It is self-discipline and self-knowledge. It’s the sure-footedness that comes with having proved you can meet life.”

Ann Landers (1918-, American Advice Columnist)



*The text on the plate reads: ‘He who gives, enriches himself’ Jean Cocteau (1889-1963).  
You can admire it in the Saigon History Museum.*

### Working definitions (relayed by Sashanka Poudyal)

Boss: Someone who is early when you are late and late when you are early.

Committee: Individuals who can do nothing individually and sit to decide that nothing can be done together.

Compromise: The art of dividing a cake in such a way that everybody believes he got the biggest piece.

Conference: The confusion of one man multiplied by the number present.

Conference Room: A place where everybody talks, nobody listens and everybody disagrees later on.

Etc.: A sign to make others believe that you know more than you actually do.

Experience: The name men give to their mistakes.

Lecture: An art of transferring information from the notes of the lecturer to the notes of the students without passing through the minds of either.

Marriage: It's an agreement in which a man loses his bachelor degree and a woman gains her masters.

Office: A place where you can relax after your strenuous home life.

Philosopher: A fool who torments himself during life, to be wise after death

Politician: One who shakes your hand before elections and your confidence after.

School: A place where papa pays and son plays.

Smile: A curve that can set a lot of things straight.

Tears: The hydraulic force by which masculine willpower is defeated by feminine waterpower.

**“It’s our choices that determine who we really are, far more than our abilities.”**

Professor Dumbledore (Harry Potter’s teacher in J.K. Rowling’s books)

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### **Adopt a chicken!**



A new Dutch phenomenon: when you don’t like the idea to eat chicken, but you do like chicken eggs, you can now ‘adopt a chicken’. You pay some money, you get 6 eggs a month, and a guarantee for a good life for the chicken. You can also give your friend a chicken to adopt. A ‘chicken gift’ (‘kipkado’).

The logo states: “Break through the chicken – egg situation”.

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**“You must learn from the mistakes of others. You can't possibly live long enough to make them all yourself.”**

Sam Levenson



### 13. PORTFOLIOS

Most readers of What is Wisdom??? turn to this section immediately. Apparently, pictures attract attention more than text. This is the same everywhere, and holds true for all ages. Pictures tell stories, and we love to hear stories from real life. So, enough talk. Immerse yourself in the wonderful world of images.



*Left: invitation to Sashanka Poudyal's wedding party (see portfolio 6). Right: Saurav Aryal (background: the Himalayas)*



*Peter van Oosten with Candy and Minh during the arrival of Sinterklaas in Deventer*



*Anyone recalls the name of this Dutch winter delicacy?*

## PORTFOLIO 1: LADIES & GENTLEMEN



*Singapore & Deventer Lady Caroline Chiang, who advised me to do a Singapore city tour, and my Singapore tour guide. It was no real surprise that she spoke English with exactly the same accent and choice of words, as Caroline.*



*Thu Thao (Amy) & Nhat will get married June 15, 2008*



*Left: with Nga (Anna), Saigon, Nov. 18; Lien Huong (Jane) & Van, Saigon, Nov. 26*



## PORTFOLIO 2: ELEPHANT FUN

Elephants seem to belong to another age. They are unique animals, with their wondrous trunk, their unpredictable playfulness, their huge body. After Sashanka sent us his Chitwan collection, a few days later Huong & I happened to run into elephants in both Saigon and Dalat. For the first time in our life, we took a ride on one. Highly recommended.



*Elephant nuts: Sashanka, Saurav & friend playing in Chitwan National Park, Nepal (November 2007)*



*Huong (Jane) making an elephant happy with a sugarcane stick, at the Ho Chi Minh City zoo (Nov. 28, 07)*



*Jane & I riding elephant at Prenn Falls, near Dalat (Dec. 2, 07). Yippee!!!!*



### PORTFOLIO 3: TWO RECENT CHINESE REUNIONS



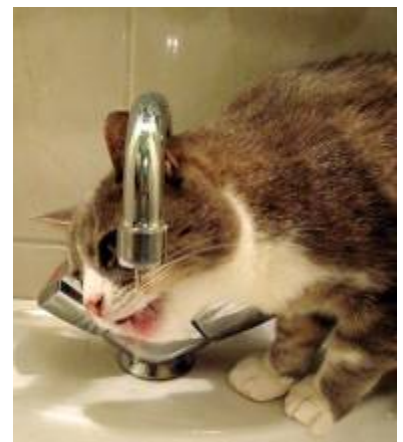
*November 2, 2007, Shanghai: Dai Jiaying (Wing), Zhou Lincheng (Apple), Liu Fan (Sarah) & (CK).*



*Chen Xiaole (Lily), after graduating from Hong Kong Baptist University, with her friend Sun Wei (Aaron), who now studies there. Lily is now working as a marketing assistant.*

## PORTFOLIO 4: RARE SPECIES & COLLECTOR'S ITEMS

*uncategorized pics*



*What is what, who is who: a tropical fish in the Amsterdam Aquarium; a Santa Claus doll; two inhabitants of the Amsterdam Zoo ButterflyGarden; my nephew Sam playing 'Blackbird'; Deniz' baby boy Andrew Arda Kooij (Nov. 7); Tessa's water drinking habit*



## PORTFOLIO 5: RANDOM SHOTS



*Left: Orchids & Koi fish at Changi Airport, Singapore. Right: Manish Gaurav in his new shop (Nov. 07)*



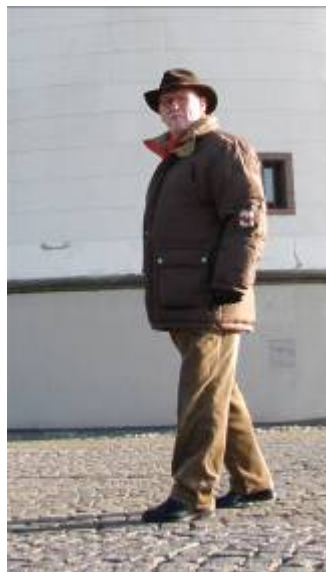
*Sinterklaas arriving in Deventer. Left: Nguyen Thuy Duong (Tracy), now a Saxion student. Right: 3 Wittenborg students Sunday, Jordan and Fiona with the new Mayor of Deventer.*



*A team at Voerman International (UTS), after completion of my workshop 'Communication & Coaching' (Nov. 07)*



## PORTFOLIO 6: WITTENBORG STAFF EXCURSION





**PORTFOLIO 7: December 2 - SASHANKA & PRADIPTA'S COLORFUL WEDDING**



*Sashanka sent us several photo collections, which give a fine impression of a Nepalese wedding ceremony. The pics shown here offer just a glimpse of the real event. The lady below right, next to Sashanka, is Shreeya, his sister.*



## PORTFOLIO 8: DEVENTER' WINTER SCENES



## PORTFOLIO 9: (Projectweek- & Dissertation-)PRESENTATIONS AT WITTENBORG





## PORTFOLIO 10: GOOD TIMES & WISE WORDS



*Jack Sun shooting a self portrait from his camel*

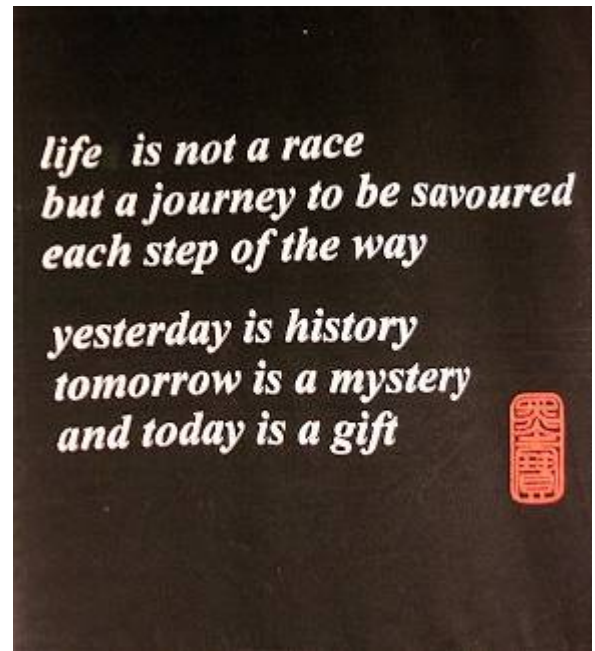


*Jack Sun on holiday in Marrakech, Morocco*

(Right)

*The great Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu said on Leading:*

Go to the people, live with them.  
Learn from them, love them.  
Start with what they know,  
Build with what they have.  
But of the best leaders,  
When the work is done,  
The task accomplished  
The people will say:  
"We have done this ourselves."



*Zeng Qian (Tracy), Luo Man (Romana), Cao Yue (Chrissie) & friend, with an artist-admirer at a Dutch flower exhibition.*





## PORTFOLIO 11: DECEMBER 22, THE NETHERLANDS



### *Around Amsterdam*



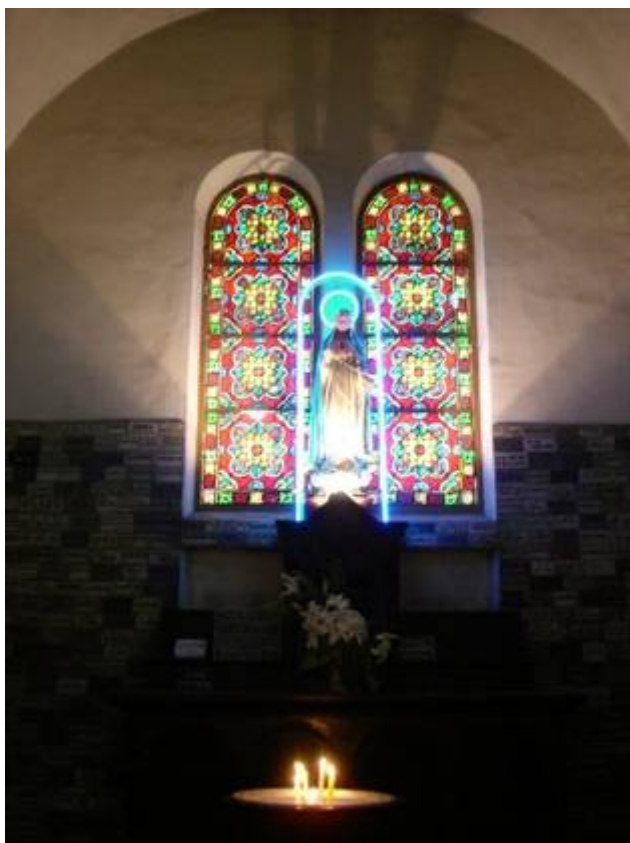
**Peter confronting a man-with-a-problem**





Sure, Christmas is a Christian event. Still, when you look at its history, the early Christian monks who moved north from the mediterranean regions, found people who celebrated the shortest day, when the light would return. In a smart move to establish Christianity, they re-labelled this Light event, 'Christmas', the birth of Christ, the One that brings light. Since dozens of years, Christmas is no longer just a celebration of the birth of Christ. All over the world, people have re-labelled it as a day of peace, to refuel our hopes for a better world, one without war, crime and famine. And sure, the commercial world has claimed it as a great business opportunity to get people to buy each other gifts, and spend their year's savings. Last but not least, Christmas is the ultimate time of year for family life, when people like to dress up, and create wonderful dinner parties. For many, it's a romantic time to spend with their lover, while it's also a lonely time for those who don't have one. The worst Christmas is being unable to spend this time with your loved one. Then Christmas becomes a time of melancholy, of hope, at best. So we all do what we can to be with our loved ones, family, close friends. To celebrate the return of the light. With the new year just around the corner.

Whatever you'll do these final weeks of December 2007, make sure you'll be with kindred spirits, with those who warm your heart and whose hearts you warm. And if you can't be with those you love, for whatever reason, let them know your heart is with them. In that way, you help a bit to relieve the loneliness – the other's, and yours. And if you prefer to postpone this celebration until your own, Chinese or Vietnamese New Year, fine. Just make sure to be connected, and tell those you love, you love them. Not only during the Christmas days. Do this often. If you need any more inspiration, re-read George Carlin's message.



*Saigon, Monday morning, Nov. 26: I take a picture of a chapel in the Notre Dame Cathedral. What strikes me, is the use of neon light around the statue of the Holy Mary. I mail it to Peter van Oosten. Peter's wife Annelies then uses it for a poster to announce a Christmas performance of their choir, Cappella Calluna, on December 26, in Apeldoorn.*

*So if you're in the area and would like to hear some great classical choir music for Christmas, join us.*

Christmas is always associated with snow. At THE Singapore Changi Airport, just 137 kilometer north of the Equator, a singer sang Christmas songs, including: "Let it snow! Let it snow! Let it snow!" So strange ...

## 15. Growing up in the final days of colonialism – by Loek Hopstaken

Many of your teachers were born in resp. grew up during the days when colonies became independent nations – one after the other. To us, this was a fact of life. I recall watching on tv the independancy celebrations on many continents. Often this was hard-won freedom, as the colonial powers wouldn't just leave their 'overseas possessions' – major sources of income – voluntarily. So we grew up, at a distance, with wars of independence, revolutions and, like in my country, the frustration of losing an empire – the Dutch East Indies. At the same time, we grew up with people who used to live there, used to a different life style, and had to adapt to the cold climate and ways of their home country.



In tropical climes there are certain times of day  
When all the citizens retire,  
to tear their clothes off and perspire.  
It's one of those rules that the biggest fools obey,  
Because the sun is much too sultry and one must  
avoid its ultry-violet ray -  
Papalaka-papalaka-papalaka-boo.  
Digariga-digariga-digariga-doo.  
The natives grieve when the white men leave their  
huts, because they're obviously, absolutely nuts

Mad dogs & Englishmen go out in the midday sun.  
The Japanese don't care to,  
the Chinese wouldn't dare to,  
Hindus & Argentines sleep firmly from 12 to 1,  
But Englishmen detest a siesta,  
In the Philippines there are lovely screens,  
to protect you from the glare,  
In the Malay states there are hats like plates,  
which the Britishers won't wear,  
At 12 noon the natives swoon, and  
no further work is done - but  
Mad dogs & Englishmen go out in the midday sun.

*First two verses of Noel Coward's 1930'ies hit*



Besides, many nationals from the colonies who didn't feel safe in the new situation came along as well, and settled in a country completely new to them. Yes, the current 'multicultural problem' in Europe didn't start with foreign workers in the 60ies; it started earlier, when the citizens of former colonies arrived and settled. The start however wasn't so bad: although there was a strong nostalgia among the new arrivals for the 'old days', they mostly found their ways fast in their new environments. When spending a few hours in Singapore, and learning about its history (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singapore>), I realized that this small state somehow has succeeded where most others failed, in small to high degrees. How? Perhaps the answer lies in the simple yet basic premise, that tolerating cultural differences is inherent to those who want to succeed in trading across national and cultural borders. The Amsterdam city government did so in the early 1600's, and rapidly became an economic world power. It started losing this position the moment its started colonizing big time. Singapore has rapidly become an economic world power, especially since the British left their 'Straits Settlements'. Chinese, Indians and Moslims live together in a small area, with representatives from many small minorities. They are all real 'Singaporeans', having a very strong common interest: maintaining good living conditions, while facilitating trade, in a safe environment. Peace it's called. Peace.



## 16. This Issue's song lyric: It's All Your Fault

Blaming is not exactly the most tactical way to improve a relationship. Until a girl sent this song (by Wild Orchid) to her lover, who then forwarded it to What is Wisdom???. The sender chooses to remain anonymous. I can't blame him. After all, it's all his fault.

### IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT

Every time you look at me, I forget to breathe  
Now can't you see?  
How I like how you make me feel.  
When I act this way, you're the one to blame. Oh no!  
You should be careful what you're wishing for  
You make me lose all my self-control. Don't you know?

What I need, what I needed from you  
What I want, what I want you to do  
You make me feel this way inside my heart: it's all your fault  
What you do when it's already done  
I want more, I can't get enough  
You make me feel this way you are the one, it's all your fault.

Oh yeah, you've only got yourself to blame  
Baby, it's all, it's all, it's all your fault  
Every time that you try to play so innocent  
You're not so innocent (no no)  
But you got me right, right where I want to be  
Oh can't you tell you can blame yourself  
You know exactly what to do and say  
I don't know how much more I can take (oh, you know)



Weren't you the one that had me right from the start?  
Weren't you the one who really broke into my heart?  
But you know I left the key right, right there where you could reach it  
You started this, so you, you've got to finish it

What you did is done  
You've only got yourself to blame  
Blame it on you  
It's all, it's all, it's all your fault  
Blame it on you, only on yourself  
Can't blame anybody else  
Blame it on you, only on yourself  
Everything you do you do so well.

Message from your Editors

*Enjoy your holiday season!  
Merry Christmas! Happy New Year!  
Make 2008 a grrreat year!*

*Realize your dreams!  
Be healthy, wealthy & wise!  
And above all, we wish you  
LOVE! LOVE! LOVE! LOVE!*



*spot your editors: who is who?*

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