



Press release

JOKE SCHAUVLIEGE

FLEMISH MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, NATURE AND CULTURE

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Stefan Hertmans wins the Flemish Culture Award for Literature - Prose 2012-2013

Today, Flemish Minister for Culture Joke Schauvliege presented author Stefan Hertmans with the Flemish Community Award for Literature - Prose 2012-2013. The presentation took place during the inauguration of the annual book and current affairs festival 'Mind the Book' in Vooruit Gent. The jury praised Stefan Hertmans' novel 'Oorlog en terpentijn' which is both monumental and personal.

The book 'Oorlog en terpentijn' is based on a number of booklets which the author received from his grandfather Urbain Martien. Martien was a deeply religious war hero who tried to deal with his traumas by making paintings. On the basis of the memoirs and his own memory Hertmans tries to imagine what his grandfather's life was like, before, during and after the First World War. Through his intimate life, Hertmans succeeds in making us feel the impact of war violence.

Hertmans' novel navigates masterly between the small and the big, between the biographical anecdote and the great movements at the time, between Flanders then and now, between the meticulously described detail and the long brushstrokes of the imagination. This is a book about a family history and a war. But also about painting and writing, about the different ways in which an artist can conjure up something of the hell and heaven of life in well-chosen lines and colours. Stefan Hertmans approaches the actual war experience with caution, through a diversity of forms and styles, always realising that the reality of the past life remains beyond reach. As a result, 'Oorlog en terpentijn' takes its own place in the flood of fiction and non-fiction which is currently being produced in commemoration of the First World War. The book is also a warm plea for literature and all the things it can achieve.

'Oorlog en terpentijn' is an interesting novel for everyone. It links up with a prominent literary oeuvre that continues to move boundaries. In 2014, Flanders cannot remember what happened one century ago and is still felt today in a better and harder way and with more love and dismay. Not because 'Oorlog en terpentijn' is about this trauma, but because Stefan Hertmans describes how it was survived.

Flemish Minister for Culture Joke Schauvliege said: "'Oorlog en terpentijn' is a touching book for literary connoisseurs. Yet, by moving the boundaries in time and space, the author manages to appeal to everyone and to connect generations."

Mind the Book

The fourth edition of Mind the Book, the annual book and current affairs festival of Vooruit and deSingel runs in Vooruit Gent from 20 through 23 February 2014. The festival is a mecca for committed non-

fiction, featuring guests like Noreena Hertz, Luke Harding, Andrew Solomon and Jonathan Holslag. Fiction is duly represented as well by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Kristien Hemmerechts and Gerda Dendooven, and others.

More information is available at www.mindthebook.be.

Culture Awards Flanders 2012 -2013

A jury of experts pays tribute to individuals or an organisation that in the course of the past season made a notable contribution to cultural life in Flanders. The Flemish Culture Awards create public awareness of the laureate at a major event in the sector, which generates attention and appreciation for both the sector and the winner.

A cash prize of €12,500 is connected to the Culture Award. The Government of Flanders sets aside €20,000 for the Flemish Community Award for General Cultural Achievement. Each laureate receives the bronze statuette 'La ultima isla' by Philip Aguirre.

More information is available at: www.cultuurprijzen.be and www.vlaanderen.be/cultuurprijzen