

signs

a book to view and
read about the work
of Brother Leo Disch osb

English translation: Jos Welie

PREFACE (p 7)

Monks are not of this world. That is precisely why they can be a sign of God here on earth. Brother Leo was eighteen when he entered the abbey of Saint Benedict Mountain in 1973 in Mamelis-Vaals (The Netherlands). Asked about his motives, he once said: 'It is difficult to explain to an outsider. One thing is certain, it is not a flight from everyday reality. It is more the conscious search for how as a person you can mean something for someone else.' This calling to be a sign of God's love for the world became the leitmotiv in the life of Brother Leo Disch.

The original reason for making this book was the fortieth anniversary of his profession in 2015. What was initially intended for a small circle of family members and acquaintances grew into a full-fledged book. It is neither a biography nor a catalog but wants to provide an overview of the special signs that Brother Leo Disch has left behind in the Netherlands in the past four decades, but also elsewhere.

The first half of the book illuminates the sculptor himself, as a monk, as a craftsman, as an artist, and as manager of his studio in the Abbey St. Benedictusberg. The second half of the book wants to give an impression of the totality of his oeuvre. It is a selection of many signs in word and image. The emphasis here is on stones and bronze sculptures, because the majority of his works have been executed in these two materials. But also creations in wood and clay are covered, as well as paintings and some examples of works of art that he has restored. Each photo is accompanied by a fitting caption; in the majority of cases we let Brother Leo speak for himself. We hope that you will recognize him while viewing and reading.

This book could only come about thanks to the cooperation of a large number of people. Like the owners of the works of art that allowed us to photograph them; you will find the locations of the artworks in the annex at the back of the book. Then there were the dozens of friends of Brother Leo and of the Abbey St. Benedictusberg who supported the publication with their generous financial donations. Finally we owe a word of thanks to René Kunst, who helped with the editing of the Dutch text.

We wish you a lot of reading and viewing pleasure.

Paul Disch
Willem-Jan Mulder
Gerrit Prenger
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MONK (p. 9)

He wore his long hair and wide pants legs with style, and spent his money just as quickly as he earned it. He enjoyed life and many a night could be found in a disco in Maastricht, where he and his friends enjoyed one another's company and of course the beer that flowed abundantly. Until God, almost literally, grabbed him by his hair. He recounts about his vocation: 'Not the *how* is important, but *that* I was called'. And so, seventeen years old, he knocked at the gate of the abbey in Mamelis, determined to become a monk.

The inner core of monastic life is unchangeable. The monks of the sixth century sought God and those of the twenty-first century still do. 'Only on the basis of prayer can I do my work in such a way that it has a positive effect on my religious life. Ora et Labora, pray and work, these are the hallmarks of a Benedictine', says Brother Leo.

After his entry in 1973, he was put to work in the carpentry workshop, where he created furniture designed by Father van der Laan. Then he was instructed to cut letters in the tombstones in the cloister garden cemetery. He learned how to cut stone from Niels Steenbergen. The letter design was by Father van der Laan. About the latter teacher, Brother Leo recalls: 'Through my contacts with Father van der Laan I became aware that it is not so much a matter of tools, but that first of all my hands and especially the eyes have to do it.' In 2004 he received permission to set up a workshop in the abbey. The more orders he received, the more he developed himself. Brother Leo says of this unexpected turn in his life as a monk: 'Sometimes I wonder: why was I so lucky? I did not deserve it and yet it was given to me. I love doing this, but it is not my life. Stone cutting is a side issue, it generates income for the abbey. But I'm glad I can do it and I do it with pleasure, because only then do you make something beautiful. For every work that I do, I let myself be guided by God. I see prayer and the deepening of faith as my real work. Monk comes from the Greek monos, which means 'alone'. Being alone with God is what I try to put into practice. One of the sayings of Benedict is this: "Just as there is a bad zeal which distances a person away from God, so there is also a good zeal which leads to Him; one should put absolutely nothing above Christ." We are all created for joy. God has dreamed, wanted, and made us to be happy. I am grateful to God that I may perform this task. Everything is in God's hand and in that we place our trust.'

MY CALLING (p 10)

I hindsight, I see it as pure grace of God. I have a very good life.

WHERE THERE IS CHARITY AND LOVE, THERE IS GOD (p. 12)

Holy Thursday Liturgy

He who says love says surrender, self-giving, sacrifice. Yes indeed, the monastic profession is a sacrifice, a sacrifice of the whole life, of the whole person, soul and body.

From the speech by Father Abbott during the solemn profession of Brother Leo Disch at the feast of St. Benedict, July 11, 1978

THE GOOD NEWS (p. 14)

If you do your work with love, you proclaim Christ.

LUCEM CHRISTI – LIGHT OF CHRIST (p. 16)

From a dark night suddenly a light can spring up. I often experience that when engaged in designing. A creation arises on the border between night and day, dark and light. In the Holy Week we all go from Good Friday to Easter, from death (dark) to life (light).

HIT HARDER, IT'S NOT YOUR MOTHER ! (p 18)

Instruction by Brother Leo to the boys while cutting stone.

I was unexpectedly asked at the end of March of this year [2008] whether I would like to teach cutting stone for several weeks at a high school in America. Of course, I stood there dumbfounded and initially thought it had to be a joke ... But no! I gratefully accepted this offer, in consultation with Father Abbott, who thought this would be an instructive time for me from which I would undoubtedly learn a lot.

The high school is connected to a Benedictine monastery, Mount Michael in Elkhorn, near the city of Omaha in the state of Nebraska. I start with a lecture on the origin and use of stone and then move on to practice. The project that we are undertaking is a large triptych that will be made in green marble (from an old altar). Three archangels in icon style will be cut in the stone in a semi-plastic manner, plus a verse from psalm 137, all in English. I let the boys cut the text, one letter in each tile, so that if something goes wrong, another tile can be used instead. Father Dan (monk and art history teacher at this school) and I make the main project.

AUSTERITY IS THE PUREST BEAUTY (p 20)

When redesigning this 'aula Dei' we did not strive for special decorations, but we took care that everything that is needed in a Catholic place of prayer was given a dignified form in accordance with the function of each thing.

OMNIA IN LUCE CARESCUNT - Everything becomes clear in the light (p 22)

Laurens, deacon for the downtrodden, who trusted until his martyrdom that he would be united with Christ.

ARTISAN (p 27)

'I have two right hands, I am more of a doer than a thinker.' This is how Brother Leo Disch describes himself. While other monks bend over texts of various kinds, he touches a block of Belgian blue stone, takes hammer and chisel, and begins to cut a line of text. The skill with which he manipulates the stone is ever the more impressive when we realize that he is self-taught. The cutting, sculpting, bronze casting, painting, it is all self-taught - with two exceptions. He learned the technical principles of cutting letters from sculptor Niels Steenbergen in Oosterhout (1911-1997). And his primary teacher in design was the architect Hans van der Laan (1904-1991), who was already a monk in Mamelis when Leo entered. Under his direction, Brother Leo studied his book *The Architectural Space*. Van der Laan's aesthetic principles are still at the basis of all of Leo's own designs.

The first principle is: architectural austerity. 'In a building no part can be allowed that is intended for decoration only. Instead, all parts that are needed to sustain the building must themselves be turned into ornaments', says Brother Leo. The crypt under the abbey church is a striking example of this 'nobilis simplicitas', or noble simplicity. He continues: 'In the crypt we see rough materials, matt colors, forms of little emotion, but from the total space to the smallest parts there has been a quest for unity of composition and proportions. In doing so, only the things that are strictly necessary in this space have been employed. By connecting everything together, a rhythm is created that is comparable to the rhythm that gives the music its quality.'

The second principle is: proportionality. Father Van der Laan's view of proportionality is based on the insight that humans live in three spaces, the range of which is determined by hands, feet and field of vision. Bigger and smaller is not a matter of measurement, but of emotional proximity. He discovered that if an object is no more than a quarter smaller than another object, both are experienced as equally large. That discovery was the basis for Van der Laan's 'plastic number', on the basis of which he was then able to distinguish eight different core proportions. And those proportions still influence the design of every work that Brother Leo makes. Because these proportions not only occur in buildings, but also in the human body. A statue that reflects these proportions automatically becomes a well-proportioned and therefore beautiful work of art.

Yet his work is certainly not numerical in nature, let alone mathematically determined. It is mainly the eyes and hands of the maker that direct the creative process. 'If I see something and I think it's beautiful, I can recreate it right away', says Brother Leo. The material itself also plays a decisive role. Hard stone is called hard for a reason; it resists being reshaped. It can even happen, according to Brother Leo, that such a block of rock is 'startled' when you begin cutting into it. After all, you only see the outside. At the core you sometimes encounter unexpected surprises! And even though Brother Leo has an image in

his head, and sometimes even an example standing beside him, the statue that he then cuts into stone always turns out to be just a bit different.

Brother Leo Disch may be a doer and not a thinker, but when the abbey bells start to ring, alerting the monks that it is time for communal prayer, this doer immediately puts down his hammer and chisel and heads for the abbey church.

HAMMERING (p 28)

Labor is also prayer, but if I think too much about God, I hit my fingers.

PLASTIC FONT (p 30)

This font is based on the basic proportions of the 'Plastic Number' developed by Father Hans van der Laan. It is a spatial, and hence three-dimensional theory of proportions, which differs from the Golden Ratio having only two dimensions.

A FRONTAL PROFILE (p 32)

This furniture, which comes into direct contact with the natural forms of our body, only needs very simple forms for us to generate unity. The shapes have been reduced to basic simplicity and the proportions are pure according to the limited range that Father Hans van der Laan discovered together with several architects in Den Bosch. Both the tables and the chairs have a frontal profile.

FOUNDATIONAL (p 34)

In March of 1962, the crypt was blessed and inaugurated. The crypt would become the resting place of the founders, that is, individuals who donated a certain sum to the abbey for the building of the crypt and church and who, in return, would receive a burial place in this church building financially supported by them.

Abbott Adriaan Lenglet about the reconstruction of the abbey in the 1960s and about the role of the founders

TECHNIQUE HOUSE (p 36)

Without the alphabet we would not have gotten very far; with the alphabet we have the means to universally master the world of the written word.

BELL RINGERS (p 38)

Just before half past nine the bells of the abbey – who are named after the prophets – ring as a sign that in a few moments the Mass will begin. But in my case, the bells are in my head, it is my rhythm.

CORNERSTONES (p 40)

Cornerstones, they all carry the tranquil atmosphere of texts carved into to stone many hundreds of years ago.

ARTIST (p 45)

How do the concepts of artist and craftsman relate to each other? Brother Leo says: 'An artist must be a craftsman, and a craftsman can be an artist'. He has fairly specific views about art. 'Art is a product of creative human expression. We call a person who uses his creative gifts an artist. A work of art has to represent a message and that message must be in the image itself, and must be obvious. 'If you have to explain what the meaning of the image is, it is not right.' That is why abstract art is often a problem for him: the message is usually ambiguous or vague and forces the viewer to an extremely personal interpretation. If the story of an artist regarding his or her abstract work is no longer known, the work can turn into an ornament that merely adorns the space.

Early in his career, working as a carpenter, he produced a lot of furniture that was conceived by Father van der Laan. Here he was mainly a recreative artist, who executed works designed by others, a bit like a conductor who recreates the piece of music created by the composer. He now sees himself primarily as a creative artist. That creative process takes place in phases. Before starting a statue, he looks at the space where it will be situated. He has to make it so that it fits into its environment. Relocation to a place for which it was not designed can reduce the aesthetic quality of the work of art. Often it is the contrast between environment and work of art that causes the image to speak, as well as contrasts within the work of art itself. Against a completely smooth wall, a bronze statue on a rough pedestal contrasts well.

When he is assigned to make a portrait, he uses photos, which he prefers to take himself from very specific angles. If the work of art has to represent a particular saint, then Brother Leo first immerses himself in that person by reading historical information or stories about his life. When it concerns a famous person, for example an author, he reads what has been written by and about that person and talks to survivors. If he has met that person in real life, then he is acquainted with whom he portrays and that makes it easier to create the portrait. If this is not the case, he can only base himself on a series of existing random photographs, often from different life periods. Then it is more important not to strive for an exact likeness, but instead to capture the essence of the person. If a grandchild says, on seeing the result: 'That's Grandpa!', you have reached your goal. According to Brother Leo, that 'capturing of the essence' is also possible outside of portraiture, such as in the manufacture of tombstones. He tries to match the nature and color of the stone to the character of the deceased. And during the cutting, Brother Leo often also speaks to him, because 'The deceased is alive!', so he says.

With bronze sculptures, the design must first be executed in wax or clay. But even when working in stone he likes to start with a version in clay, so that both the customer and he himself can see how it is roughly going to be. With emphasis on the word 'roughly'. After all, every subsequent version in the creative process becomes a new creation, never an exact copy. If you want to make an exact stone copy of an earlier version in clay, you should use measuring equipment. Brother Leo does have that equipment in his studio and hence can, if requested, make an exact copy of an existing sculpture for the customer. But the end result is not actually a new work of art. That is why he does not like working with measuring equipment. He prefers to make every next version with his own hands, and thus on his own. Being engaged creatively, what could be better? And that makes this thorough professional a passionate artist!

LEO DESIGNS (p 46)

One-and-a-half hours in the morning and two-and-a-half hours in the afternoon. We do not have more time for this. Sometimes that is a shame, because as experience makes clear, creativity arises from one moment to the next. If I get an idea in the middle of the night or if I suddenly know exactly how I can give a face more expression, being on a break from work can sometimes be difficult for me. And as soon as the clock is ringing for the prayer services during the day, I have to stop my activities and go to church. I do not even think about continuing.

BURIED (p 48)

In the face of death, man experiences his powerlessness and perhaps unconsciously searches for Him, about whom the first Christians testified beautifully on so many tombstones: IN MORTE CHRISTI SECURUS - being safe in the death of Christ.

TERRACOTTA (p 50)

Clay is a wonderful material to work with. When modeling a head, it is primarily about recognizing very individual forms.

PATIENTLY (p 52)

An statue is not there for today or tomorrow, it can exist for thousands of years and then still speaks the human voice.

BIBLICAL INSPIRATION (p 54)

I have to keep silent and I place my hands over my mouth.

Brother Leo Disch in reference to Job 40: 4

THE WORKSHOP (p. 59)

As sober as is the monastery part designed by Father van der Laan, so exuberant is the artist's workshop of Brother Leo Disch, which is located since 2004 in the former bakery of the monastery.

Sober and stark is the monastery, with its emotionless forms and matt colors, because the architecture strives for unity of composition and proportions. Buoyant and even homely is the office of Brother Leo, decorated to his own taste, the walls filled with photos of his own artistic pieces. The customer, who is king after all, is received with coffee or tea. For the guest who eagerly comes to visit, cozy candles are flickering on the rough wooden table.

The actual work takes place in the workshop. It is full of workbenches, tools, elevators for moving heavy stones and wax models of works of art previously made by Brother Leo. The walls are adorned with a large number of posters. Donatello's prophets Jeremiah and Habakkuk look down at him and he, in turn, looks up at famous sculptures by artists like Michelangelo, Bernini, and Leonardo da Vinci. There is also a large picture of Mount Rushmore, where four American presidents have been carved in the mountainside. All these images are inspiring examples for him. He looks at them with great regularity in order to gain a better understanding of how, for example, a knee joint or a particular pose should be depicted. But also living persons are constantly studied by him. Where most people look at other people's posh clothing or fancy jewelry, Brother Leo examines exactly where a fellow brother's ears are fixed to his head, how long the nose of that church-goer is, or how muscular the neck of an abbey guest.

Brother Leo - as contemplative Benedictine - prefers to work within the walls of the abbey. Even large tombstones or altars to be restored should, if possible, be brought there. But if it really cannot be done otherwise, he will agree to work at location. He recently spent many hours on his knees on the floor of the cathedral in Den Bosch. He had been commissioned to cut a text commemorating the five hundredth anniversary of Jeroen Bosch's death in an old floor tile that was too fragile to be moved to Mamelis in Limburg.

How does Brother Leo work? He uses the computer for e-mails and quotations. But not for designing; a computer is too cold for that purpose. If the customer asks for a figurative image, he soon has a design in his head. Tombstones and name plates, on the other hand, require prior drawings. That is why he has a drawing room with a large drawing board in the abbey, where he likes to make designs at full size.

The age-old Benedictine rhythm of alternating work and prayer leaves him relatively little time to create works of art. As a result, he can seldom make artistic works of his own choosing; he does almost everything on commission from others. That is no problem for him, because he just likes to make works of art, regardless of who asks for it

or what exactly they ask for. And if the customer wants a bust designed by Brother Leo to be changed just a bit, he always tries to adapt his artwork to those wishes. That does not mean that everything he makes for his customers he too has to consider beautiful. However, because cutting stone is fun in and of itself, he enjoys making those pieces too. It is irrelevant to him whether it is a religious image, a portrait or, for example, a euro monument. In the end all good things were created by God and Brother Leo appreciates being able to take part in that creative process. If the customer leaves happy, then Brother Leo is completely satisfied, although it also hurts somewhat when the work of art – still a little bit *his* child - leaves the workshop forever.

THE GATE TO THE ARTISTIC WORKSHOP OF THE FOUR CROWNED (p 60)

NULLA SALUS EST IN DOMO
NISI CRUCE MUNIT HOMO
SUPERLIMINARIA

There is no wellness in a house

Unless one marks the lintel with the cross

From a Sequens of Adam of St Victor (+1146)

ANYTHING BUT BORING (p 62)

Whoever does a job well achieves much. But an artist also has to enjoy the craft in order to make something beautiful; if that's missing, the result is a boring piece.

WORK AND PRAY (p 64)

It is like a bolt and a nut. Prayer and work must go well together, the one turning into the other, so to say.

ENDURANCE (p 66)

Laboring for something, sweating. Leonardo da Vinci called it: 'Martyrdom to make something beautiful'. That appeals to me, it is what Christ did!

BUSINESS MAN (p 68)

The client is king. Nothing is out of the question, everything is possible.

From the business flyer of Brother Leo

ARTISTIC DOMAINS (p 73)

Carpenter by profession, he naturally started doing wood work when he entered the monastery. His earliest products included coffins, and he would continue making those for years to come: when a monk dies, he is buried in a simple wooden box, after the design of

Father van der Laan. The stone grave tombs on the cemetery of the monastery are executed following the same design.

Brother Leo's career as a sculptor began when he was asked by the abbot to cut the letters in those tomb stones. This too he still does today. But it would take some time before he could devote himself entirely to sculpting. For during the next ten years as the abbey's chef de cuisine, he kneaded not clay but dough for his fellow brothers and the abbey guests; he did not sweeten stone but soufflés; he did not bake terracotta portraits but casseroles; and on Fridays he prepared a meal of leftovers, 'Omnia restantia'. Stone kept luring him and, finally, in 2004 he was allowed to hang the ladle on the willows and he got his own studio.

Experimenting with different materials, he cut a large gravestone from hard blue stone, modeled a child's portrait from clay, Easter candle ornament from wax, painted a crucifix, and designed a bronze statue of Saint Laurence. This does not mean that Leo uses every material: 'Many sculptors have become constructors, by experimenting more and more with other materials, such as iron, glass, jute, rope, polyester, adhesive plastic, polystyrene, formica, acrylic paper. That is not my style. Too often those are contrivances, they are devoid of passion. In contrast, I am always about somehow connecting with the sensitivity and emotion '.

Each material offers its own challenges. Working in stone is physically heavier. Moreover, a stone can 'frighten' when you cut into it: because of the vibrations a piece can break off. If on tapping the stone with an iron rod you hear a low dull tone, there is air in it and the chance of this 'fright' is great; if you hear a clear tone, it is solid and you can go at it unrestrained. With stone you can only cut away ... gone is gone! So Brother Leo always makes a stone statue too big at first, and then smaller and smaller, until it reaches the right size; and only then can finishing work begin. Soft materials such as clay and wax - and therefore also bronze, which is cast on the basis of a wax form - make it possible to remove material as well as to add it again, and that offers much more freedom. Even water becomes a sculpting material in his hands. For example, at the Tiltenberg Seminary he used the water in the fountain of the four evangelists as a metaphor for the living gospel that flows from their hands to the earth: a beautiful message to the deacons and priests in training to likewise make the word of God fruitful!

Brother Leo works in all possible sizes. He designs small commemorative medals, regularly makes cornerstones, and even cuts a huge floor of about 40 m² for a nearby care facility. He carved Christ symbols in cobblestones from the Market Square in Maastricht, made several new altars for churches at home and abroad, and restored the 14 m high obelisk in Vaals.

For restoration assignments it is important to restore the original piece as accurately as possible. This often does not work out fully, because it is unknown, for

example, what the missing part or the original looked like, or because the space has changed and hence the light falling on it.

For Brother Leo, every assignment is a new challenge. Stone or bronze, tiny or gigantic, new creation or accurate restoration, he finds it all equally interesting. 'When I entered the abbey, I never knew I would ever be allowed to do this wonderful job'.

BRONZE (p 75)

THRUST (p 76)

I have not simply and exclusively sought to make a 'spitting image' of Antoon Coolen. He is pictured here in the fullness of his life, at about the 1940s when he was about forty himself. I have indeed emphasized some characteristic features: the glasses and the bow tie, the usual cut-back and flattened hair, the curl of hair that often came falling forward when he was bent over his work, the grin-like facial tug that is accentuated by the small right-sided cheekbone muscle. And finally, the thrust upwards of the whole bust, that seeks to portray him in his capacity as a writer.

RIGHT ON THE MONEY (p 78)

A medal is a hand-made instead of a factory-engraved disc, and delivers a dramatic play of light and shadow. It is extremely precise and fine work, where every change of a detail can produce a totally different effect. Simple as this may sound, the execution is actually difficult and challenging.

THE CALL OF THE THRUSH (p 80)

What I have made comes from my hands, but especially from my eyes and 'ab imo pectore', from the bottom of my heart.

EXEMPLARS (p 82)

I am not a saint who has no mistakes. No, I still do a lot of things wrong. But God is saving me from breaking my vow.

JOINED (p 84)

The years teach us what the days do not know.

STONE (p 87)

THREEDIMENSIONAL (p 88)

It should be a statue for the garden of a couple. I stood in the garden and suddenly saw the image in front of me: A globe, carried by four figures representing the four seasons and at the same time the four directions. But when the enormous block of Belgian blue stone arrived, I was frightened out of my wits. It gave me a stomach ache. Because I had never worked three-dimensionally. That stone stood outside for a year-and-a-half. Someone in the abbey finally contacted the couple: 'Brother Leo is just not able to get it done'. Shortly thereafter, they called me and asked, 'Shall we pick up that stone?' My answer was: 'No, that statue is going to get done!' Two months later, in January, I started, and at the end of June it was finished.

COBBLE STONES (p 90)

Street pavers from the Market Square in Maastricht. That's something this monk can appreciate – some Maastricht soil under his feet after all.

A TOMB STONE YOU MAKE TOGETHER WITH THE DECEASED (p 92)

All those months, every night just before bedtime in my cell, I spoke softly to the small card of Cardinal Willebrands. His image was an indispensable point of contact for me. Without these conversations I would never have been able to make this funeral monument.

Text in the cardinal's weapon: Veritatem in Caritate - the truth through love

THE IMAGE OF GOD (p 94).

The 'thinking' that goes on during my work and that may well be indispensable, is actually hardly more than looking carefully at what I am working on. You can call it 'visual thinking'. Photos help me get a better internal picture. It is the image-to-be that does not yet exist in reality, but exists vaguely in my imagination. The internal image, taken from and evoked by the impressions.

ALL WHO THIRST – COME TO THE WATERS (p 96)

The water basin is an octagon, an image of perfection and of happy new beginnings.

LAPIDARY (p 98)

Truly short are texts carved in stone; lapidary is what such texts are called, according to the Latin root *lapis* for stone.

WHITE AS STONE (p 100)

The artfulness in marriage is the whetstone of the mind.

IT ROCKS (p 102)

Michelangelo once said: 'The statue exists already inside the stone'. And so brother Leo says: Simply cut away what does not belong to Gerlachus.'

UNIT (p 104)

It was Louis the Pious who obliged all monks in his realm to live according to the Rule of Benedict. In this way he tried to promote the unity of his enormous empire. When Pope Paul VI proclaimed Saint Benedict as the patron of Europe on October 24, 1964, he sought to acknowledge the wonderful work that the saint accomplished for the formation of European civilization and culture through his Rule.

TRACES (p 106)

Even monks leave their traces, close to home in their hometown, and on the other side of this globe.

WHERE THE GAU ONCE FLOWED (p 108)

The Gau * Once the Moving Power Mills for the Copper and Needle Industry * Soft Water for Filling Wool and Rinsing And Dusting of Fabrics in the Cloth Industry * Spring Water for the People * Feed for Fish Ponds (Caption on the floor)

A GOD WITH PADDLES (p 110)

The Geleen creek personified as Glanis, the river god of sparkling water. That was the plan. But what about a stone? And so on Friday, 17 April 2015, we drove around on the 15 acres of the castle farm Hartelstein in Itteren, inspecting one pile of boulders after another. Sometimes we got out of the car to more closely examine stones that had surfaced from the quarries along the Grensmaas. Until Brother Leo suddenly exclaimed: 'That's it!' And he pointed to a two-ton boulder, 2.20 m long, 1 m high, and 0.60 m thick.

BRONZE AND STONE (p 113)

FORMATION (p 114)

A foot, a water bowl, half a globe with a bronze sculpture group on it, representing the four evangelists. Now foam and flowing shapes and details molded from wax, later soft and shiny bronze on rock hard granite.

Brother Leo about the formative phase

+EGO VOBISCUM SUM + EUNTES ERGO DOCETE OMNES GENTES BAPTIZANTES EOS+
+ I am with you + so go forth and teach all peoples, baptizing them + (Mt 28, 19-20)

Caption on fountain, compare Mt 28, 19-20

WORK OF ART (p 118)

LOVE: that is dedication to the trade and mutual recognition and appreciation of employer and employee.

ORGANIC BEHAVIOR: that is behaving appropriately according to the company's customs and, above all, working in a beautiful way and not as a work horse.

WORD: Good instruction should be given from the management to the staff and everything should take place in the best possible dialogue. It must be possible to ask questions.

DEED: It is an honor to be able to deliver good work of high quality, decisively and ambitiously.

These four attitudes mutually fertilize each other and form a unity which I wish the firm MOONEN-WANDERS.

from the speech of Brother Leo on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Moonen-Wanders firm while handing over the plaque on Friday, 2 September 2011

HANDS OF UNITY (p 120)

In the same way as a painting generally requires a frame, so a plastic work of art like this one usually has a pedestal, which is part of the entire composition.

ENJOY LIFE (p 122)

Sjef, you taught us how to enjoy life

Enjoy life as long as you can,

have fun and joy, you live only once

Because soon, when it's too late, you'll regret it,

enjoy life as long as you still can

Refrain from the song (in Limburg dialect) entitled "Enjoy life" (1978) by Sjef Diederer

TOO EARLY (p 124)

For me it's all about staying connected with the sensitivity and emotion.

SILENT EXPERIENCE (P 126)

We all try in one way or another to color our lives, to live easier, more enjoyable, more colorful lives. Those colors originate somewhere in a silent dark place deep within us, where they are mixed and cherished and come to life. It is the place where our imagination and creativity are stored, a sanctuary that each of us, human child, harbors. It is the place out of which we live, our life gets direction and purpose. The place where we are who we are, and the place where we become what we are not quite yet. In the silence we can experience this, not in the noisiness of the day.

From the 2014 Easter Wish by Brother Leo

OTHER MATERIALS (p 130)

UNIQUE (p 130)

A child may resemble both parents, it also has its own looks.

DO NOT WANT TO REFUSE THE WORK (p 132)

For the Benedictines everything must be in balance, both praying and working. When I work, I really have to work and not be reciting prayers. But if we work well, I believe we also pray.

MARY OF SEVEN SORROWS (P 134)

May the triptych receive your first greeting when you enter the house, so that Mary-as-hostess can welcome you and encourage you. May it also be your greeting if you leave the house so that it guides you and supports you on all the roads you will walk.

Images on triptych

Mary finds Jesus back in the temple 3 days later

Foretelling of the Passion by Simeon

Meeting with her Cross-bearing Son

Flight to Egypt

At the death of Jesus on the cross

At the burial site

Mary holds the dead body of Jesus

PIGMENT (p 136)

Whoever has tasted how sweet the Lord is, always wants to stay in his love. He understands the deeper meaning of the words of Christ: 'Remain in my love, that my joy may be your part, and your joy may be full.'

PAST SIGNS (p 138)

Signs, signals and symbols are part and parcel of our life.

VIVID (p 140)

On 6 June 2005 our chapel was placed under the patronage of Saint Scholastica: 'May she teach us the secret of the prayer that completes the monastic life.'

RESTORATION (p 143)

PREACHING IN IMAGES (p 144)

Whether you are baking bread, writing a story, changing diapers or chiseling a new sculpture: if you do it with love, you will proclaim Christ.

RESTORED TO ITS FORMER GLORY (p 146)

This Aachen blue stone is very special. You should not sand it or you will hurt the stone. This stone type protects itself. Also, you must never attach something new to the old one, then the old one will tear.

HE KEEPETH ALL HIS BONES, NOT ONE OF THEM IS BROKEN (p 148)

Corpus, made by the Maastricht sculptor, Jef Courtens (1923-2009)

Heavily damaged by Rotterdam vandals in 1996 and restored by the artist

Again vandalized in 2011 and restored by Brother Leo Disch

Now safely behind glass in the exhibition space of the Sint Brigidakerk in Noorbeek

BREAKS AND BRICKS ARE A MONK'S TRICKS (p 150)

Where people work, peopling happens.

BIOGRAPHY (p 155)

1954 birth of Leo Disch in Maastricht on 7 July

1971 graduation from construction education program of 3 years duration at the Episcopal Trade School Voorhout (today the KTS Voorhout, a division of the Teylingen College)

1973 Entry into the Abbey Sint Benedictusberg in Mamelis/Vaals

1974 In addition to his work as carpenter, he begins cutting stone

1975 Temporary vows

1977 From two-dimensional to three-dimensional in bronze: The bust of Antoon Coolen

1978 Final vows

2004 Brother Leo receives his own workshop: The Four Crowned

2005 His first large three-dimensional work in stone: A globe, carried by four human figures.

2015 Stone workshop becomes artistic studio The Four Crowned

SOURCES (p 158)