



Happy 400th birthday Manneken-Pis

October 2019 - May 2020



400
ans | jaar

Échevinat de la Culture, du Tourisme
et des Grands événements à la Ville de Bruxelles

INTRODUCTION

Every day, large numbers of tourists crowd around to admire our national Manneken-Pis. Despite his small size, he is the second most visited attraction in Brussels. But how many of us truly know the history and purpose of this little sculpture? Did you know that, in 2019, Manneken-Pis will already be 400 years old? Do you know when and why the original statue, created by Jérôme Duquesnoy in 1619, was replaced by a copy at the corner of rue de l'Étuve and rue du Chêne? And did you know that this Manneken-Pis, with his world-famous silhouette, wasn't the very first Manneken-Pis?

It is still an amazing phenomenon, the infatuation surrounding Manneken-Pis is multi-secular and over the years has taken many different forms. Brussels citizens quickly recognised themselves in this little chap and over time have made him the symbol of their own mischievous and irreverent personality. They considered him to be one of them and he was soon associated with public celebrations, at which it became the custom to dress the statue. He has also acted as the flag bearer of a certain wry humour, as well as being the spokesman for the city's beleaguered inhabitants.

For me as for every member of the Culture Department of the City of Brussels, this anniversary is an opportunity to highlight the surprising and eventful history of this fountain through a range of events aimed as much at young audiences as tourists. The idea is for everyone to discover or rediscover, in a festive, fun, scientific or commemorative way, the statue's origins and his incredible story, which is so closely linked to the story of Brussels – and this strange and unique tradition of dressing the statue. Whether through the city's primary school costume projects or during the family-friendly Winter Wonders, the 400th birthday of Manneken-Pis is an event that brings us all together.

And it's with a great pleasure and pride that I wish our favourite little ketje a very happy birthday!

Delphine Houba

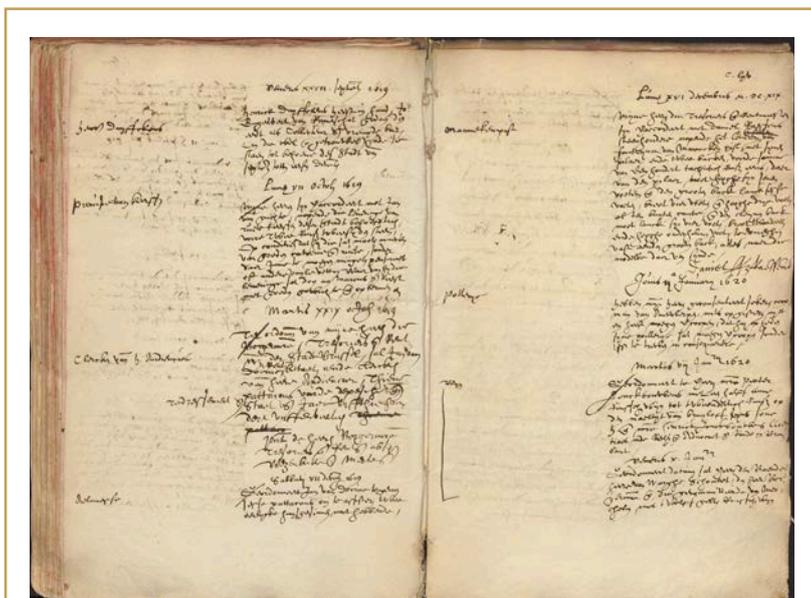
Alderswoman for Culture, Tourism and Major Events for the City of Brussels

400 YEARS AND NOT A SINGLE WRINKLE!

It was in 1619, when the municipal authorities planned to renovate a former Manneken-Pis fountain – the existence of which is attested from the mid-15th century at the corner of rue de l'Étuve and rue du Chêne – that the talented sculptor Jérôme Duquesnoy was called upon to create a new Manneken-Pis. Until that date, the fountain had been installed in the roadway but the original monument was moved to the location it still occupies today, in a space made available by the destruction of a house. The column, basin and statue making up the monument were all replaced at that point.

Although forgotten today, Jérôme Duquesnoy – known as “The Elder” – was a famous artist during his lifetime. He was born around 1570 in Béthune (Northern France) and already was a master sculptor when he moved to Brussels in 1595. His workshop wasn't large, but was responsible for many commissions, primarily for Brussels churches, the city authorities and Archdukes Albert and Isabella. The latter often called upon his services for the decoration of the Palace of Coudenberg and its park. Only six of his works have survived until today. Among these, the Manneken-Pis and the tabernacle in Sint-Martinuskerk in Aalst are the most remarkable. Jérôme Duquesnoy died in Brussels in December 1650 and is buried in the parish cemetery of St. Michael and St. Gudula. Two of his children were also sculptors and achieved some fame in their own right: François, Pope Urban VIII's sculptor, whose career took him to Rome, and Jérôme the Younger, who worked in Rome and Madrid as well as in Brussels.

The fact that he was one of the most well-known sculptors of the time when a new Manneken-Pis sculpture was commissioned in 1619 indicates the importance the figure had already acquired. This is confirmed by what we know of the tradition of dressing the figure, which was already established. Duquesnoy gave his version of the urinating child – a fashionable subject in the arts from the 15th to 18th centuries, and one commonly employed in Europe for both public and private fountains – a typically Baroque air, both tender and muscular, with a mischievous smile.



Mention de la réception de la statue de J. Duquesnoy par les autorités de la Ville



400 YEARS WELL WORTH CELEBRATING!

1. Discover Manneken-Pis at this year's Winter Wonders!

From 29 November 2019 to 5 January 2020, visitors can set off to discover Manneken-Pis on the trail of the Winter Wonders – the unmissable end-of-year event organised by the City of Brussels. A grand treasure hunt available through a geolocalisation app takes players of all ages on a search for treasure and even – for the most dedicated – offers the chance to win a prize in the shape of the most famous symbol of Brussels, this year's guest of honour at the Winter Wonders. You can find the details on the Winter Wonders website, from early November: www.plaisirsdhiver.be

2. A treasure in the Maison du Roi

Visit the Brussels City Museum and explore its room dedicated to the famous fountain and its eventful history. Discover the history, from the 15th century to today, of this monument at the corner of rue de l'Étuve and rue du Chêne which has become a must-see for visitors. The exhibition also helps you understand the multi-secular infatuation with the figure of Manneken-Pis – a complex phenomenon which even now retains an element of mystery.

The Manneken-Pis Room

Brussels City Museum

Grand-Place

Tuesday to Sunday, 10.00-17.00

The entrance ticket to the Brussels City Museum also provides access to the GardeRobe MannekenPis.

3. Dressing Manneken-Pis: a long history of beautiful costumes

From 16 October 2019 to 31 May 2020, a pop-up display at the GardeRobe MannekenPis highlights the important milestones in the history of this unique practice – dressing the Manneken-Pis. When were costumes first presented to the statue? Why, and to celebrate what events? How does it work today? Dressing Manneken-Pis isn't easy – come and try it out!

GardeRobe MannekenPis

Rue du Chêne, 19

1000 Brussels

Tuesday to Sunday, 10.00-17.00

It may surprise you to learn that Manneken-Pis is often dressed: 137 days in 2015, 146 in 2016, 165 in 2017 and 181 in 2018! No less than 20 new costumes have been presented to him every year since the 1980s. And our infatuation shows no signs of waning: As of 16 October 2019, his wardrobe will contain no less than 1032 different outfits.

4. Design a costume for Manneken-Pis' 400th birthday!

A project organised by the museums and schools of the City of Brussels. To celebrate his 400th birthday, the museums are inviting young Brussels citizens to create a new outfit for Manneken-Pis. Every primary school in the City of Brussels can submit a drawing or prototype.

There are no rules or constraints other than sticking to the statue's measurements! In other words, there are no limits in terms of imagination, creation, boldness, materials or colours.

A jury will select an entry, which will be produced either by the winning class or by the statue's official dresser. Tagged as the 400th anniversary outfit, the design will be added to the GardeRobe's collection, following an official presentation ceremony to be held at Brussels City Hall on 7 May 2020. An exhibition will also present all of the schools' entries.

5. A scientific publication

To date, no scientific reference work has been published on Manneken-Pis. An edition of the Studia series published by the Museums and Archives of the City of Brussels will remedy this oversight. This lavishly illustrated work will explore the history of the famous statue, with contributions from historians and art historians such as Emmanuel Couvreur, professor of history at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, and Géraldine Patigny, scientific attaché to the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage and doctor of art history, whose thesis examined the Brussels workshop of the Duquesnoys. The statue's origins will be presented in the context of the installation of public fountains by the municipal authorities, and the work will also discuss the theme of the urinating child in art history; the sculpture of Jérôme Duquesnoy; the fountain at the corner of rue de l'Étuve and rue du Chêne and how it has developed over time, and the multi-secular infatuation that surrounds the sculpture, first as a symbol of Brussels and its inhabitants, and then as the incarnation of Belgium itself.

The publication will be available online on the CAIRN.INFO site in April 2020. This is a free platform for social sciences reviews and works.



6. “400 years of Manneken-Pis” souvenir coin

The Royal Mint of Belgium and the Royal Dutch Mint are officially producing the new Belgian €2.50 coin marked “400 years of Manneken Pis”. This coin, specially struck to honour the most famous Brussels citizen, is packaged in a colourful coincard and is legal tender in Belgium. This €2.50 piece also forms part of the new Fleur de Coin 2019 set, containing all of the Belgian euro 2019 values.

The coin is available from www.herdenkingsmunten.be

The Royal Mint of Belgium is responsible for ordering Belgian coins for circulation, including design, quality control and the screening of counterfeit coins. The Royal Mint also represents the Belgian State on an international level. Since 2018, striking and marketing Belgian coins and commemorative medals has been sub-contracted to the Royal Dutch Mint, while the King of Belgium remains the issuing authority. Official issues ordered by the Royal Mint of Belgium bear the mark of the Belgian Mint Master, Ingrid Van Herzele, and that of the Royal Dutch Mint. The Royal Dutch Mint is one of the five foremost producers in the world of circulation money, commemorative coins and collector’s products.

400 YEARS, THREE SITES

The GardeRobe MannekenPis



GardeRobe MannekenPis, 2019 © E. Danhier

Located just a stone's throw from the fountain, this unique museum first opened its doors in February 2017. Almost 150 beautiful costumes belonging to the statue and originating all over the world are presented via seven different themes: geography, folklore, charity and citizen associations, professions, personalities and characters, sports and stylists.

While it is common practice to dress some religious statues, such as the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus, Manneken-Pis is the only known example in the world of a secular statue with its own wardrobe. The custom of dressing Manneken Pis during major events dates back to the early 17th century. Between 1918 and 1940, Manneken-Pis received around 30 new costumes. From 1945 and until the 1970s, this increased to 5-15 outfits per year. And since the 1980s an average of 15 new costumes have been added to the collection every year. Manneken-Pis currently possesses more than 1030 costumes, and is dressed around 180 times a year (and an official calendar is drawn up of such days). While Manneken-Pis' outfits are today part of the folklore of Brussels, his wardrobe forms an integral element of the city's historical heritage.



Brussels City Museum

Stolen on several occasions, but always recovered, the original statue of Manneken-Pis was retired to safety in the Brussels City Museum in 1966.

With the opening of the GardeRobe MannekenPis in February 2017, the room housing the authentic Manneken-Pis was reorganised as a cabinet of curiosities around the original statue, which the visitor can now admire from all angles. And the history of the statue is also explained, enabling a better understanding of its importance. When was it first constructed? Who was the sculptor? Since when, and how, have the Brussels citizens demonstrated their attachment to the sculpture? Why is there such devotion to this small statue?

The fountain

It was probably in the 15th century that the Manneken-Pis fountain was installed at the corner of rue de l'Étuve and rue du Chêne. But as early as the 13th century, the Brussels authorities had created public fountains in order to provide drinking water to a growing population. These urban features rapidly became popular as locations where people gathered to socialise. For the inhabitants, they were useful landmarks in an expanding urban space.

The sculpture and the monument are in no way related to each other. In 1770, the simple column that had previously supported the statuette was replaced by this imposing rockery-style setting taken from another public fountain. In the new Rococo decoration, the Renaissance statuette seems very small and it is no longer possible to see his delicately worked back.

In 1851, Manneken-Pis became a unique ornamental fountain. The water now poured into a blue stone basin rendered inaccessible by a new wrought iron grille imitating the Rococo style. Brussels was one of the first European capitals to provide a domestic water distribution network for its inhabitants. The public fountains thus gradually lost their purpose and the majority was dismantled. But as a result of the statue's renown, the Manneken-Pis fountain escaped this fate.



La fontaine, mars 2009 © Dohet-Peeters

400 YEARS... OF HISTORY AND MORE

1451

The earliest reference to the fountain daer dmenneken pist (“where the child is peeing”), in an administrative document relating to the water network supplying the Brussels public fountains.

1572

First simplified representation of the Manneken-Pis at the crossroads of rue de l'Étuve and rue du Chêne on the plan by Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg. The fountain appears to have been installed in the roadway.

1615

First appearance of the Manneken-Pis in costume – as a shepherd in the painting by Denis van Alsloot representing the procession of the Ommegang. A preparatory sketch for this painting shows the statuette standing on a column and pouring its water into a double basin.

1619

The Brussels authorities commission a new version of the Manneken-Pis from the sculptor Jérôme Duquesnoy for the refurbishment of the fountain. The column, basin and sculpture are replaced.

1695

Manneken-Pis is chosen as the spokesman for the Brussels citizens by the author of a satirical text castigating King Louis XIV of France, who has just bombarded Brussels. This is the first publication to describe the fame acquired by the statuette.

1720

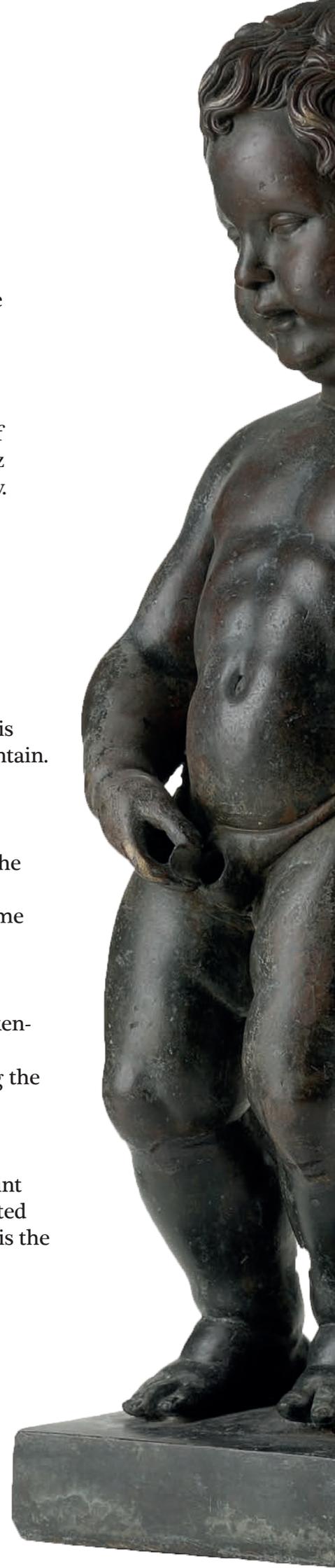
A story confirms the tradition of costumes regularly adorning Manneken-Pis during the festivals punctuating the everyday life of the Brussels citizens, and the habit of strangers to the city making a point of visiting the statuette.

1747

King Louis XV of France decorates Manneken-Pis with the Order of Saint Louis and offers him a gentleman's costume in apology for the attempted theft of the statuette by his soldiers from the garrison at Brussels. This is the oldest preserved costume.

1756

First known nomination of a dresser for Manneken Pis.



1770

Placing of the statuette in a new monumental rockery-style setting previously intended for another fountain. From now on, the statuette seems rather small and it is no longer possible to see the back of it.

1817

The Manneken-Pis is stolen. Rapidly recovered in 11 pieces, the statuette is restored and the perpetrator heavily punished.

1824

Publication by the French writer Jacques Collin de Plancy of a story of the Manneken-Pis in which he relates the legends that explain the choice of sculptural theme. Although fictional, this tale forms the basis of many later works on the subject of the statuette.

1851

Manneken-Pis becomes a unique ornamental fountain. The water now pours into a basin rendered inaccessible by a new wrought iron grille.

1965

The statue is once again stolen. Manneken-Pis is broken in two pieces, with his feet and ankles remaining attached to the base while the upper part of the body disappears. A copy of the sculpture is installed on the fountain, where it remains today.

1966

Following an anonymous phone call, the part of the statue stolen the previous year is recovered from the Brussels-Charleroi canal. The two pieces of the sculpture are preserved in the museum.

2003

The statuette is restored.

2017

Opening of the GardeRobe MannekenPis at 19 rue du Chêne (a stone's throw from the fountain).

2018

Manneken-Pis receives his 1000th costume, produced by Jean-Paul Lespagnard. The costume is presented by the Atomium to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the famous edifice with its nine spheres.

2019

The original statue is 400 years old.

400 YEARS OF MANNEKEN-PIS

DATES

16 October 2019 - 15 May 2020

ADDRESS

GardeRobe MannekenPis

Rue du Chêne 19

1000 Brussels

www.mannekenpis.brussels

Brussels City Museum

Grand-Place

1000 Brussels

www.brusselcitymuseum.brussels

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Opening hours

Tuesday to Sunday, 10.00-17.00

Closed Mondays and 1/1, 1/5, 1/11, 11/11, 25/12

Prices

- GardeRobe MannekenPis: €4 | 0 (under 18)

- Brussels City Museum: € 8 | 6 | 4 | 0 (under 18). Combined ticket with the GardeRobe MannekenPis

THE TEAM

Director of the Culture, Youth, Leisure, and Sports Department

Anne Vandebulcke

Director of Culture, Museums and Archives

Denis Laurent

Curator of the Manneken-Pis collection

Gonzague Pluinage

Official dresser

Nicolas Edelman