

Peeking in at the neighbors': we all love it. Boeskoolnijs, our local magazine, takes it just one step further. We even want to know what's on the wall above your sofa. We 'd love to hear your story about the work that impresses, irritates, moves and/or comforts you. American Arthur Coopchik visits our village on a yearly basis; to meet friends, photograph cloudy skies and celebrate King's Day. He tells us about his favorite work of art.



Lust and Love

"This is the story. It's a Saturday in the early fifties. We live in New York. My father says: 'I'm gonna go out. To buy sandwiches.' Comes back with a brown paper bag. Just puts it on the kitchen table. Shows what's inside to my mother and it is the Rodin masterpiece The hand of God."

THE GRANDPARENTS

Arthur's grandparents come from Russia. Between 1917 and 1922 the Red Army, fighting for the Bolshevik form of socialism, was combatting the White Army in the Russian Civil War. His grandparents fled to America for safety, freedom and work. At that time New York was split up in ghettos: a German, Italian, Polish and Russian section, each taking care of their own people.

His parents Robert and Norma were both born in New York and did not speak Russian. Learning English was important to survive. They wanted to assimilate, get a job, work, live and get a better position for themselves. According to Arthur people still like their children being born in America. Coming from China, Japan or other countries. For their financial and physical safety it's considered better for them to be American.

THE PARENTS

"My father was stationed in the Far East for three to four years during the Second World War. General MacArthur had a group named The Indispensables. Before the war started my father weighed 186 pounds, when he returned 128. He had blue eyes and was known for this thick black hair. Lost a lot of it during the war.

After the war he started in the fur business. Later he was a stockbroker, he felt thrilled on his first day: made more money on that day than before in one year. We lived in New Jersey. In the evening he took art history classes in New York at the New School. Very famous, it's on 12th Street. He really started to



Home is where
The hand of
God is.

appreciate art, which he even began to collect. His spare time was spent working in the garden. We lived in a split-level house: six levels, each having two or three rooms with some kind of art, mostly paintings. In general they were okay. But The hand of God was so much more.

When my father brought the work home, that Saturday, my mother was very excited. The way it was shown was very informal. She was so surprised, she couldn't get over it. What my father did was very smart. He mounted the statue on a black pedestal. He put something in the base of it so it could turn. So you could have the opportunity to see it from all sides.

I was in my preteens, eight or nine. Saw it and I fell in love with it. It just touched me. There are very few moments, things you taste, things or people that move you in a way that any of these senses are touched. Also intellectually. I was just fascinated. It's beyond love. More than love. Lust and Love."

TEXT

Linda Noordhuis

PHOTOGRAPHY

Arthur Coopchik



One day Coopchik senior was downsizing his art collection. He sold many works of art to another art collector, who happened to be a good friend of the family. Just as the work came into Arthur's life by surprise it left the same way. "I was selfish and hurt. My mother did not mind it being sold though, she was very philosophical. For example: they had a very pretty house in New Jersey. When they made the decision to move back to New York, she just lived with it. Reminiscing enhances the beauty of the past. People say: 'The good old days', but it's not that is was so much better then.

My father was an impulsive man. He did not even discuss it, just sold it. Finally, I did respect that though. He was a self made man from a humble background. Nobody gave him anything. My father and mother were married for 75 years. They both had a love for art. Nothing negative about them. It's still a piece of art. To me family is the most important thing. My parents were very, very special."

THE MAN

Many decades later the family that purchased The hand of God from his father were doing the same thing his father once did: downsizing the collection. "Only then did I tell them I would like to buy it."

Arthur's love for the statue never faded. Because it is more than love, it is a part of the family for him. "Like some families have a favorite bedspread, a letter or a musical instrument; this is that piece for me. It has been on my mind all my life. Never pursued actively to get it back; I let it rest. So it was not a burning desire to retrieve it but when the opportunity arose I seized the moment."

It is now in his New York apartment flat. "My wife likes the hand facing her. I prefer viewing the powerful hand where you see the man and the woman coming out of the rock. Partially the hand. Mostly the man and the woman merging from God's hand. So it is interesting that we perceive it differently. I know she loves it, because when I come home I see she has

turned the statue again: the hand is facing me. And now – you've seen my art collection - years later it's still my favorite work of art.

I'm not a religious person. I don't believe in God. But still, The hand of God is the most special piece. The whole thing: the concept. The execution. I love bronze by the way. You can get great detail. You can do so much with the different patinas. To me the statue is alive. It is a visual thing. Because when you touch it, it is cold. To me cold means not alive. And yet there it is, this feeling of it being alive."

Arthur's philosophy of life is Buddhism: the School of the Elders. It's his moral compass to live by. "I do have material things that are not important in Buddhism. We're all paradoxical. There are so many things going on in life. In general Americans find success more important than happiness in life. Up to a point we all have things. I'm kind of private about it. The statue does stand for achieving something though. Not because it is made by the genius Rodin, it's the piece, the piece itself."

THE WOMAN

Is there a relation between his favorite work of art and his favorite woman? "They both move me. Two or three weeks after I saw her for the first time I proposed to her. I knew it was right. I was having a good life on paper. Financially stable. When I met Kat she just enhanced it. She made it a complete life."

Kat Wildish is a ballet professor in New York City. "Ballet to me is one of the most beautiful works of art. Wholesome. You can bring the family. It is about movement and the human body. Art and ballet are beautiful in a classic and positive way. The world is getting ruder language-wise and people do outrageous things. I prefer elegance but stay realistic; do not believe in a sugarplum fairy world.

Arthur still marvels at the statue like when he was a boy. "I appreciate more the technical answers. I'm a little bit more sophisticated. Just a little. It's not a Mmmmm, that's for food. It's an Aaaaahhh." The work touches him so that he is not only saying the Aaaaahh but also feeling this sound in his hart and soul.

Basically, the statue feels like coming home. As much as Arthur loves to travel around the world, there's nothing better than that warm feeling of coming home. It's the same boyish feeling. "Smiling. Warmth. Completion. In my will, I want it to be in the family. Yes, forever and ever. I spoke about it with my nephews who will inherit it. They do not want it for the financial value but for its history."

The nephews Connor and Spencer know the story. Their grandfather who went for a sandwich on a Saturday and came home with The hand of God.

So they are aware of this, each in their own way: Home is where The hand of God is.

Opvallend, niet te missen: de roodborst.

Herkenbaar aan zijn opvallende precies ... rode borst. Ongeveer zo groot als een mus.

Vooral in de winter zie je ze veel. Ze komen op de voedertafels af. 's Zomers zitten ze meer verstopt onder het struikgewas. Hij eet insecten, spinnetjes en andere kleine diertjes.

Opvallend; hij is niet bang voor mensen, naar soortgenoten is 'ie echter een stuk agressiever. Hij gebruikt zijn rode borst om z'n tegenstanders te imponeren.

Het is een vrolijke zanger die duidelijk hoorbaar is. Hij bouwt zijn nest op of dicht boven de grond; soms in een holle boom.

WAT
VLIEGT
DAAR

AREND KRUIJER

Hobbyfotograaf
met een passie
voor vogels

