

BRINGING LIGHT INTO DARKNESS

It is the guiding principle of everyone who cares about society. But for police officers, it is more than an ideal – it is their daily reality. They are a breed apart. Tirelessly, they commit themselves to building a safer society, in the light, in the dark, through wind and weather. Where others prefer to look away, they choose to stand firm. To face confrontation. Again and again. Trying to turn wrong into right, obscurity into clarity. Without magic, without illusion, but with unwavering determination.

Now, the Brussels Midi police are preparing to leave the past behind. The buildings that housed thousands of officers for years are being vacated. A new home awaits. This transition is like shedding an old skin, full of cracks, scars, and stories. Not beautiful in the classical sense of the word. And yet... those who take the time to look will discover a unique beauty in the decay. Scars that speak of times gone by, cracks that whisper of daily struggles. These are places most people would rather avoid, but for many, they were a second home, even more familiar than their own house.

Through the lens of Lieven Nollet, a photographer who sees the world with childlike wonder, walls and corridors are brought back to life. What was once hidden in the twilight now finds a voice. The images in this book are not a plea for nostalgia, but a quiet testimony to a chapter that has come to a close. Like a snake shedding its skin, we leave the old behind. A cycle begins anew, an uncertain time that consumes all, only to give rise to something new.

When you, dear reader, close this book, we hope you pause for a moment. That you look around at the world—at the grey, the white, the black—and that you have found beauty in the imperfection, in all its raw grace.

Jurgen De Landsheer, First Chief Superintendent, Chief of Police Brussels Midi

NOLLET'S PHOTOGRAPHY

The relocation of several departments of the Brussels police to a new building was the direct reason for this publication. That it became an art book was a consequence of the exhibition of Lieven Nollet's work on detention. We know Nollet from his photographic work on visual artists' studios, and later on, penal institutions, internment, mental health centers and the prison system.

In a conversation with the chief of police Jurgen De Landsheer, the idea arose to give shape to the procedure that precedes detention—the police work, the interrogation, the temporary confinement—together with photographs of the respective buildings and spaces. It was the right time for this because of the relocation of eleven of the departments to one new location. That explains why the old workplaces give a gloomy appearance, or why the photographs evoke a bygone era. This also explains the title *Move Box*, a somewhat paradoxical aspect that does not really match the bitter testimony of places where time has come to a standstill.

The intention was not to compile a document about the Brussels police. The photos are not about the police, they are not a portrait of the Brussels South police zone, but a representation of what the photographer was able to capture. Nollet has opted for a subjective interpretation and provides an atmospheric image without any embellishment. He emphasizes that no object was moved, nothing was taken away. With this series of photos, he presents his own vision of photography. In brief, we are asked to take our time and, as it were, to follow in his footsteps. Especially, to pay attention to the delicate approach of the photographer, who not only focusses on the content of the spaces he enters, but above all has an eye for the spatial and formal aspects.

HIGH

The photo shows more on the outside than inside. Outside, there is plenty: the parking lot with even empty spaces, apartments in various styles, two trees, a distant horizon, and to the left, a checkered tower. No people. Above all that is the gray-blue sky. The gray is partly due to something stretched in front of the windows, mesh. It softens the contours of the landscape and tempers the colors with the allure of pastel. In this photo, the landscape looks complex yet peaceful.

This seems to be the fifth floor, higher than the top of the tree in the middle of the image, lower than the sixth floor of the building behind it. From this bird's-eye view, we literally look down on the surroundings. If there were people, they would look tiny like little Playmobil figures. A high viewpoint reduces the problems on the ground. It is the viewpoint of the boss.

Inside, we see parts of three computer screens, items on a narrow windowsill, a messy table on the right, a lone wired computer mouse on the left, and on each of the tables a small plastic bottle half full of liquid, a chair with a blue backrest, and a blue plastic folder. The least noticeable is an artwork between the two windows. We see a construction of seven wooden sticks arranged in the shape of a triangle and tied together with rope. It is located among a striking network of pipes for central heating. Under the artistic triangle hangs a dark cloth drying on such a pipe.

As viewers, we benefit from the view from inside to outside. Outside is light, inside darker. It seems to me a police viewpoint: looking without being seen, from high up, with an overview. In this photo, we can wander, without thoughts and without anything demanding attention.

JdV

p 34 – 35















