

Painstaking descriptions of the things in life

It Was What It Was

GEERT VAN ISTENDAEL

At first glance, there is something comforting about the way in which poet Geert van Istendael sees the world. He carefully observes the things around him, and uses words to demonstrate his love for those things... But time and time again, a light feeling of unease creeps into the poems. Van Istendael's love for objects is shown, for instance, when he breathes life into a letter scale in the first section of 'Object and Animal'. Nowhere else will you find such a poignant description of a letter scale. While such equipment nowadays gathers dust in most post offices, in this poem it takes on the power to weigh and measure secrets.

For the brief duration of a poem, Van Istendael manages to save people, things and a dialect from fading into obscurity

COBRA

Van Istendael takes notice of people as closely as he observes the objects around him. He serves up beautiful, melancholic poems of earthly tragedy. The 'People' section is an ode to the (almost lost) dialect and (almost) bygone times.

The title 'It Was What It Was' sounds like someone choosing resignation – but that is clearly not the case. Van Istendael is not giving up quite yet.



AUTHOR



Geert Van Istendael (b. 1947) was a renowned reporter and newsreader for Flemish television. Since 1993 he has worked as an independent writer based in Brussels, publishing novels and collections of short stories, fairy tales, essays and poetry. He has earned great respect for his translations of German writers Goethe, Hölderlin and Brecht, and is the celebrated author of well-documented and, not least for foreigners, instructive books about Belgium and Brussels.

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