

The Forgotten Green History

The Things We Knew in 1972

GEERT BUELENS

Geert Buelens, cultural historian and a writer of historical nonfiction and poetry confronts us in *The Things We Knew in 1972* with the momentous report of the Club of Rome published half a century ago. It was an international bestseller. Sometimes it seems as if we have only just become aware of the dangers of pollution. But at the time everybody was thoroughly aware that we were on our way to destroy the planet. Nearly all ecological problems were known fifty years ago, they were thoroughly discussed by scientists, politicians and artists.

Yet not much was done. How is it that we didn't act more boldly, more resolutely? It was five to midnight then, it is in some respects well after now. How did those discussions go? And, above all: why have we evidently not learned the right lessons from them? Buelens' approach is clear, original, and personal, embedding the legendary moment of this hugely important and shocking report in the cultural history of that era and the largely forgotten details. *The Things We Knew in 1972* is admirably concise, it is both alarming and positive, informative, activating, entertaining and simply a joy to read.

Everyone talks about the legendary report by the Club of Rome, but no-one remembers what really happened in 1972. Geert Buelens unravels the fascinating history behind one of the most important texts of the modern world and wonders: why did the extraordinary momentum it generated get lost.

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Geert Buelens (b. 1971), poet, literary critic and cultural historian. Professor at Utrecht and Stellenbosch universities. Buelens has won multiple awards in the Netherlands and Flanders. His book on the European poets of World War I, *Europe, Oh Europe!*, has also been published in English (Verso), German (Suhrkamp) and Serbian (Karpos). His cultural world history of the 1960s was received as a standard work on publication and voted Book of the Year by various media in both the Netherlands and Flanders. The translation rights have been sold to Germany (Suhrkamp) and France (Éditions Saint-Simon).

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