

The neglected story of the van Eyck sister

Margriete

KATHLEEN VEREECKEN

Jan and Hubrecht van Eyck are world famous, but few people know that they also had a sister who painted. In this novel, Margriete van Eyck is given the spotlight she deserves. Vereecken reconstructs the life she might have led.

After the death of her parents, Margriete travels to see her oldest brother Hubrecht, who lives in prosperous Ghent. While her brothers paint and decorate, as commissioned by the rich and powerful, Margriete spends her days in the convent, where she illustrates manuscripts. But her restlessness grows. She has an irresistible desire to roam and observe; she is curious about books and fascinated by outcast women. Her fervent friendship with the herbalist and midwife Cateline makes her think time and again about the choices that await her. Will she opt for the obvious fate of marriage and motherhood? Or will she give in to her love of freedom and her longing to carry on painting, even though it means that she will remain a virgin for the rest of her life? The allure of the artistic calling proves stronger. Under Hubrecht's wing Margriete is given the opportunity to develop her talents further, whilst he creates the first drawings for 'The Ghent Altarpiece'. When Hubrecht dies, Margriete takes over the leadership of his painting workshop, a position never before held by a woman.

As if Vereecken is writing with a brush in her hand, so precise, apposite, and original.

LITERAIR NEDERLAND

In 'Margriete', Vereecken brings to life the story behind one of the world's most iconic paintings. She also paints a colourful and varied portrait of the social and political activities of the Burgundian era. In this lively profile she creates a vivid picture of the position of women in a challenging time period, one in which, although a child of her own pious era and upbringing, Margriete becomes a feminist *avant la lettre*.

A subtle and penetrating novel

DE STANDAARD



AUTHOR



Kathleen Vereecken (b. 1962) is a freelance journalist and writer of fiction and nonfiction for children, young adults and adults. She made her debut in 1993, and published her first novel for adults in 2016. She has written mostly historical youth novels. Vereecken paints a convincing and almost sensorial portrait of the age, embedded in a meticulous structure that keeps the reader engaged. Photo © Eugene Hertoghe

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