

THE JEAN CAPART FUND



King Baudouin
Foundation

Working together for a better society

Cover :

Homage by Mark Severin to Jean Capart, 1941 (Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels).

Mark Severin (1906–1987), illustrator, engraver, calligrapher, and Belgian painter, depicted Jean Capart here in the guise of Ka-aper (Sheikh el-Beled or village chief) heading in the direction of the goddess Nekhbet (the protective deity of Elkab) and pharaoh Tutankhamun.

“Jean Capart was a man with an immense knowledge, while at the same time he was an exceptional organizer. (. . .) He was, without a doubt, among the specialists of his time, the one who in his publications drew attention to the limits of our knowledge of the ancient Egyptian culture, and he warned us for the dangers of too far-reaching conclusions.”

Kazimierz Michałowski (1901-1981)

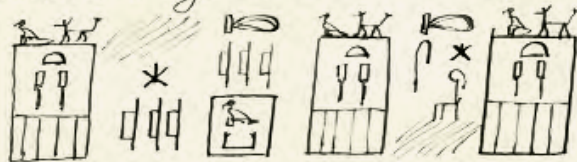
Director of Polish archaeology

L'Art de l'Égypte, Paris, Citadelles & Mazenod, 1971.

Il faut avec ces pressions de cylindres les incisions, ainsi les publications de
Pétrie et enfin compléter quelques unes de ces impressions: Autant: n° 51:



Un seul est intact. J'ai pu le reconstituer presque entièrement d'après un fragment
trouvé en voyant les bases de trois impressions différentes.



Ils sont honorés le Gouvernement et les résultats topographiques de ma collection
- Paris.

Les nombres, déduits de la liste descriptive des Musées, m'ont permis d'acquies-
cancer, à l'attention de ma collection un certain nombre de pièces. J'en
donne ci-dessous:

- n° 21 - Deux bulles à collage en ivoire en forme de colonnes du type dit proto-dorique
antichambre cylindrique (Époque indéterminée peut être XII^e dynastie). Ce qui
l'intéresse spécialement, c'est la forme en colonnes octogonales (Pétrie n° 11)
n° 22 - Un fragment de tablette en ivoire gravé avec la curieuse représentation d'un
sommage barbu, vêtu d'une longue robe. La partie inférieure manque. Le
manquant a été retrouvé au verso de, feuille de Pétrie n° 11 (Pétrie II, pl. IV n° 11) Il date de règne de Ménéphès ou de l'époque antérieure. Le
fragment, nous constatons que celui-ci se trouve actuellement à Chicago et
Philadelphie.
- n° 23 - Petit vase cylindrique en ivoire avec l'inscription mentionnée plus haut sous le n° 21
- n° 24 - Petite plaque en ivoire, percée d'un trou à droite en haut et avec un ligament
gracieux qui se retrouve peut-être sur quelques monuments préhistoriques.
- n° 25 - Fragment d'un petit vase cylindrique en ivoire, portant gravée
l'inscription mentionnée plus haut sous le n° 29.
- n° 26 - Large bracelet en ivoire, complet et fragment d'un bracelet analogue.



JEAN CAPART (1877-1947)

“For only the dead whose name is pronounced, live on” *

From childhood, Jean, headstrong but clever, devours all that appears on ancient Egypt. After a doctorate in Law, he studies Egyptology at various European universities, where he befriends the greatest scholars of his time, from the British William Flinders Petrie to the French Gaston Maspero.

In 1902, at the age of 25, the University of Liège entrusts him with the first Belgian academic chair in Egyptology. An enthusiastic and fluent speaker, the young professor delivers, alongside his academic courses, also lectures for the general public. He then begins to travel around the world with a briefcase full of glass slides in hand. His passion for ancient Egypt, and especially for Egyptian art, clearly shines through in the radio interviews he gives on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as in his numerous publications, both scientific as well as popularizing, of which he is the author or the editor.

In 1907, he initiates the first Belgian archaeological excavations in Egypt. Thirty years later, he sets his sights on Elkab, the ancient religious capital of Upper Egypt, which becomes the main site of Belgian archaeologists in Egypt under his guidance. But it is in Brussels, at the Cinquantenaire Museum, that the majority of his career takes place between 1897 and 1947. He accepts all challenges, starting with the joint leadership of the Royal Museums of Art and History and of the *Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth*.

* Quote from the Book of the Dead of the ancient Egyptians.

Left : Letter of Jean Capart to Eugène van Overloop, 20 February 1907 (Arch. FERE).

Eugène van Overloop (1847–1926) was the chief curator of the Cinquantenaire Museum between 1898 and 1925. He had the ambition to turn the museum into a scientific institution, surrounding himself with young specialists whom he placed as the heads of various departments. He especially promoted Jean Capart, who became his deputy in 1912, and who eventually succeeded him as chief curator.

Under his guidance, the Cinquantenaire Museum takes its current form and the collections start to grow considerably. As organizer of international meetings, he turns Brussels, his hometown, into the European capital of Egyptology and Papyrology.

As if this was not enough, his career moreover takes an international turn: the Americans rely on him to reorganize the Egyptian section of the Brooklyn Museum in New York, the British appoint him to Honorary Vice President of the Egypt Exploration Society in London, and the Danes entrust him the presidency of the International Association of Egyptologists.

When he dies in 1947, at the age of 70, Jean Capart leaves behind a devoted wife, as well as a pyramid of children and grandchildren, friends and students, thriving institutions, and a grandiose scientific and literary oeuvre that has led to more than one vocation. He is therefore unanimously recognized as the founder of Egyptology in Belgium and one of the greatest art historians of the 20th century.

Right : Jean Capart and Marcelle Werbrouck photographed by Alban. Thebes, 14 February 1946 (photo © RMAH).

Marcelle Werbrouck (1889–1959) was, for more than a quarter century, the closest collaborator of Jean Capart, together with whom she published numerous works, including the two masterpieces *Thebes: La gloire d'un grand passé*, and *Memphis: A l'ombre des pyramides*. As the first female Egyptologist in Belgium, she succeeded her mentor as curator of the Egyptian Department of the Cinquantenaire Museum (1925–1954), and subsequently as director of the Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth (1947–1958)



Comité local de Bruxelles

Année Académique 1900-1

COURS

DE

M. J. CAPAL

Docteur en Droit,

Conservateur-adjoint au Musée royal des Arts décoratifs et indu

Pourquoi les Égyptiens faisaient des **(4 LEÇONS)**

La première leçon aura lieu le **Dimanche 28 Octobre** à 10 h. 1/2 du matin, au **Musée royal d'Antiquités (Parquantenaire)**. — Les leçons suivantes auront lieu les Dimanches 18 Novembre, à la même heure et au même local. — La première leçon est gratuite. — Un syllabus résumant le cours sera distribué aux auditeurs.

Prix du Cours, 1 franc.

Une réduction de 20 p. c. sera faite au personnel enseignant.

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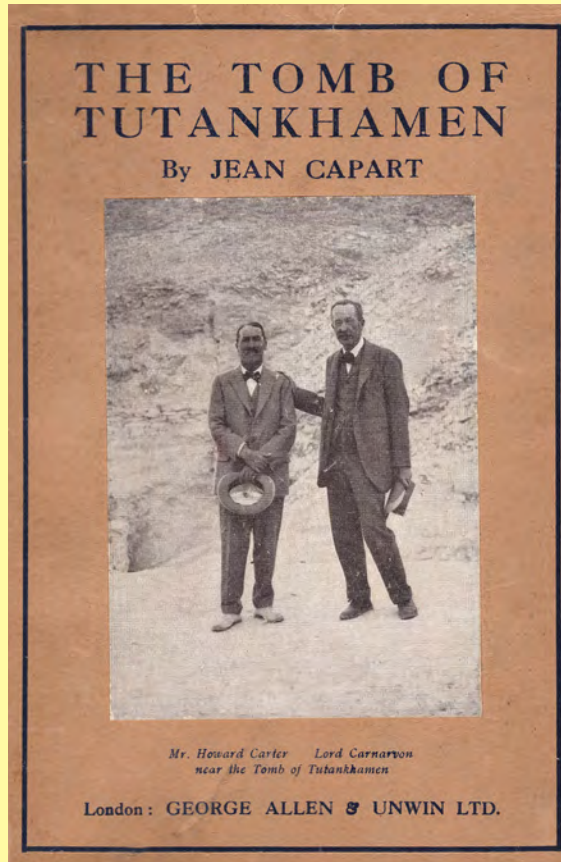
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Left : Poster of the first lecture series given by Jean Capart at the *Université Libre de Bruxelles* in 1900. (private collection of Jean-Michel Bruffaerts)

Jean Capart gave his first lecture on ancient Egypt as early as 1892, at age 15, to his fellow students from St. Boniface College in Ixelles. In October 1900, when he was recently appointed as assistant curator at the Cinquantenaire Museum, he addressed the public of the extension school of the Université Libre de Bruxelles. For this occasion, he chose the catchy title "Why did the Egyptians make mummies?".



Stamp issued by the Belgian Post in 1977 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birthday of Jean Capart.



Above : Jean Capart, *The Tomb of Tutankhamen*. Translated from the french by Warren R. Dawson (London, Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1923).

In this "little book of impressions," as he himself defines it, Jean Capart describes the famous tomb of which he had the privilege to visit it as one of the first in February–March 1923, before its treasures were carried off. Although Capart escaped the "curse of Tutankhamun," which would allegedly befall all those who violated the tomb, he did not escape the wrath of his British colleague Howard Carter (1874–1939), who blamed him for disregarding his rights as the discoverer. An international bestseller, *The Tomb of Tutankhamen* was repeatedly re-released in different languages (French, English, Dutch, Danish . . .).

TOWARDS A QUADRUPLE BIRTHDAY

The year 2022 will be marked by the bicentenary of the decipherment of hieroglyphs by Jean-François Champollion, the 125th anniversary of the birth of Belgian Egyptology, the centenary of the discovery of the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun, and the 75th anniversary of the death of Jean Capart.

These commemorations will have a special resonance in Belgium because, if Champollion may be regarded as the spiritual godfather of Capart, it is the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun, and the first visit of Capart there in the company of Elisabeth, the Queen of the Belgians, that led to the foundation of the *Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth* in 1923.

The *Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth* (today the Association Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth) – based at the Cinquantenaire Museum – is a non-profit organization designed to promote Egyptology in Belgium. From 1923 to 1947, it was led in a fairly paternalistic manner by Jean Capart, who also imbued it with exceptional dynamism. For several decades, the association contributed to make the Library of the Antiquity department of the Royal Museums of Art and History – of which the personal library of Capart forms the core – into one of the richest libraries in the world for the fields of Egyptology and papyrology. The association holds photographic archives on Egypt, participates in excavations in the Nile Valley, organizes lectures and exhibitions, etc. It publishes numerous works, and twice a year it puts out one of the most renowned scientific journals, the *Chronique d'Égypte*. One century after its creation, its members diligently continue the work begun by Jean Capart.



OUR PROJECT

Over the years, the *Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth* has built up an extraordinary archival patrimony. Central to it is the rich correspondence of Jean Capart and of his associates and successors. All the great names in Egyptology worldwide from the 20th century are represented, in addition to numerous other prominent personalities from the political, scientific, or artistic world in Belgium and abroad. In total there are thousands of letters (sent and received) between the chairmen of the association and their correspondents, regular or occasional, known or anonymous.

In addition to this mass of documents, there are manuscripts and proofs of the books by Jean Capart, texts of his articles and lectures, as well as excavation diaries and reports, as well as plans, posters, photographs, drawings, caricatures, etc. Additionally there are the archives of the International Association of Papyrologists, which the Fondation also preserves. In other words, it is an irreplaceable testimony to the history of Egyptology, papyrology, and the museum world; Belgian, European, and global intellectual history in a nutshell.

WE MUST SAVE PHILAE . . . *

And yet, despite their richness, the archives of the *Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth* are in danger. Due to a lack of material and human resources, they cannot be preserved in a proper manner nor be made available to researchers. This is also the case for the Capart family archives and other private archives that house treasures such as photographs, sound recordings, films, and diaries, in which their ancestor recorded his travels to Egypt, to the United States, or elsewhere. Although they are scattered today, these archives should be collected in one place to prevent that they become lost forever.

But it does not have to come to that. Simple solutions exist, but they must be put in motion: the archives should be collected, organized, inventoried, digitized, and housed properly. They should also be revalued and put back into the spotlight. Whether a scientist or a layman, the public has the right to make this exceptional heritage its own. The Jean Capart Fund is not lacking in ideas by which to make this happen. But for this purpose, it needs important financial support. Your financial support!

* Reference to the work of Pierre Loti *La mort de Philae* (Paris, Calmann-Levy, 1908), often cited by Jean Capart in his daily struggle to make Belgian Egyptology flourish.

MILON LA CHAPELLE (s. et c.)

le 9 Septembre 1887

Cher Monsieur Capart

Adressez-moi la demande officielle avant
le premier mercredi de décembre et je
la ferai passer; plus tard, il faudrait at-
tendre jusqu'à ~~mon~~ retour en Mars ce
qui vous ferait perdre une année.

Je ne crois pas qu'on ait fait votre obser-
vation sur les vases de Touraine. Si vous
m'envoyez votre note avant le 15 Octobre,
elle paraîtra dans le Recueil en Janvier
prochain.

Votre tout dévoué,
J. Maspéro



Above : Necropolis of Saqqara, winter 1905–1906
(Photo © RMAH).

Left : Gaston Maspero (1846–1916) is, together with Jean-François Champollion and Auguste Mariette, one of the great figures of French Egyptology. As a professor at the *Collège de France*, he was also the director of the Antiquities Service of Egypt and the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. He was a friend and mentor of Jean Capart, and let him discover Egypt for the first time in 1900–1901. It is also he who, from his position, launches Capart on the international scene of Egyptology and who supports him in difficult times.

Gaston Maspero and Jean Capart investigate the recently cleared mastaba of Neferirtenefer. Thanks to the generous patronage of Edouard Empain, the cult chapel with its beautiful reliefs will be cleared of sand, be removed, and shipped to Brussels, where it is rebuilt at the Cinquantenaire Museum.



Above : Heliopolis, 1907. Jean Capart excavates on behalf of Edouard Empain (photo ©RMAH).

Right : Letter of William Matthew Flinders Petrie to Jean Capart, s.d. (Arch. FERE).

William Matthew Flinders Petrie (1853–1942) was one of the most prominent figures in British archaeology in the 19th and 20th centuries. He taught at University College London where he taught Capart as a student. From 1899 he became, through the British Egypt Exploration Society, the main source of Egyptian antiquities for the Cinquantenaire Museum.

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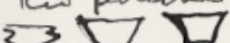
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7 Oct. 1945

Cher Monsieur Capart,

Qu moment où vous repartez
pour l'Egypte accompagné de
votre distinguée collaboratrice
Mademoiselle Verbrueck, pour
y reprendre vos fouilles
d'El Kab, je désire vous
envoyer mes meilleurs vœux.
Je suis persuadée que toutes
les personnes qui pourront
vous apporter une aide en vue
de surmonter les difficultés
actuelles de voyage, le feront
volontiers avec le sentiment
d'aider aux progrès de
l'Egyptologie.

Je vous souhaite
bon voyage, cher Monsieur Capart,
et vous envoie mes bien
affectueux souvenirs.

Elisabeth

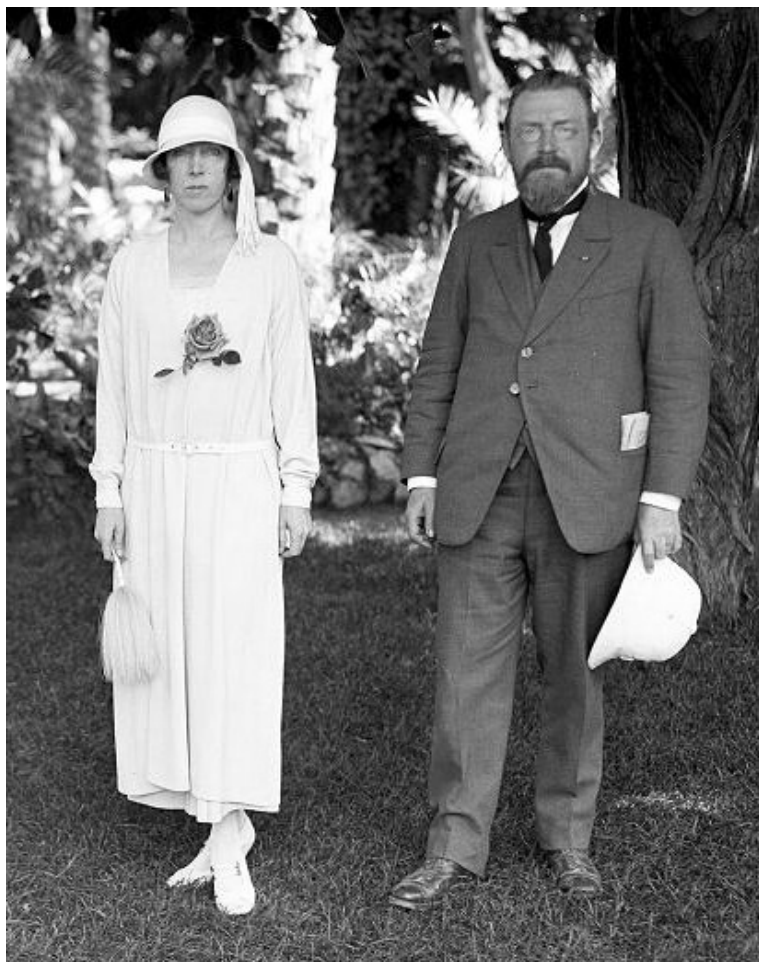
THE JEAN CAPART FUND

The Jean Capart Fund, founded in 2016 at the initiative of his family, is a private fund with the aim to safeguard, to revalue, and to raise awareness of the work and historical patrimony of the father of Belgian Egyptology. This fund enjoys the support of the King Baudouin Foundation – a charitable foundation active on a Belgian, European, and global level – and is placed under the honorary presidency of one of the granddaughters of Queen Elisabeth, Her Royal Highness Princess Esméralda of Belgium.

In collaboration with the *Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth* and the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels, this fund primarily supports the project set up by the historian Jean-Michel Bruffaerts, specialist of Jean Capart and the history of the Belgian Egyptology . It is composed of a Board of Directors and a Board of Experts. The first, chaired by Dominique Capart, the oldest of the grandsons of Jean Capart, is responsible for the proper management of the funds; the second unites Egyptologists, Papyrologists, and historians from the academic world and museums, whose expertise and scientific knowledge guarantee the success of the project.

Left : Letter of Queen Elisabeth of Belgium to Jean Capart, 7 October 1945 (Arch. FERE)

Elisabeth (1876–1965), born Duchess in Bavaria, wife of King Albert I, was the third Queen of the Belgians. She visited Egypt several times. On 18 February 1923, accompanied by her son Leopold (the future King Leopold III) (1901–1983) and Jean Capart, she travels to the Valley of Kings to assist in the opening of the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun. To commemorate this visit, Jean Capart proposes to initiate a Queen Elisabeth Fund under her protection, which would soon bear the name *Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth*. Elisabeth remained closely connected to the director of the fund and granted him until his death both moral as well as unwavering financial support.



Above : Luxor, 1930. Queen Elisabeth and Jean Capart (photo © RMAH).

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HOW CAN YOU JOIN US ?

If you wish to participate in our project, you can make a donation to
the bank account of the King Baudouin Foundation

IBAN : BE10 0000 0000 0404

BIC : BPOT BE B1

Mention the 'Jean Capart Fund' or the structured communication
016/0560/00071

Gifts from 40 euro give rise to a tax deduction of 45% of the actually paid
amount, which is also mentioned on the certificate.

The donors will be personally informed of the progress of the project and
the events organized in this context.

"For thirty-five centuries... I repeated to myself, no one has been in here; no other human breath has come to disturb the motionless atmosphere: here everything has remained unchanged, whilst outside empires have passed away, civilizations have disappeared, migrations have changed the habitations of races, languages have completely died out and religions have lost their last devotees."

Jean Capart, *The Tomb of Tutankhamen*. (Translated from the french by Warren R. Dawson. London, Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1923, p. 50).

Right : Grossgrabenstein in *The Adventures of Blake and Mortimer: The Mystery of the Great Pyramid*, 1954.

Jean Capart, who by some will be considered as the archetypal round-bellied scholar who likes to talk at great length, inspired several Belgian comic book artists, including in the first place Georges Rémi aka Hergé (1907–1983) and Edgar-P. Jacobs (1904–1987). The first, in *The Adventures of Tintin: The Seven Crystal Balls* (1948), used his characteristics to revive the figure of Professor Hippolyte Bergamotte, one of the victims of the curse of Rascar Capac. The second, after having thoroughly documented himself about Egypt and Egyptology at the *Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth*, transferred the characteristics of Capart onto the Egyptologist Doctor Grossgrabenstein in his two volume *The Adventures of Blake and Mortimer: The Mystery of the Great Pyramid* (1954–1955). In the excerpt published on the right, Doctor Grossgrabenstein holds a speech inspired by the book of Capart, *Tut-Ankh-Amun* (1923).

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IN THE MEANTIME, GROSSGRABENSTEIN
TIRELESSLY PURSUES HIS EXPLANATION.

Ach, my dear man, no one has entered this
tomb for 35 centuries while, outside, empires
tottered and civilisations disappeared. The ...

...DERS THROUGH THE STREETS
LIKE A SLEEPWALKER.

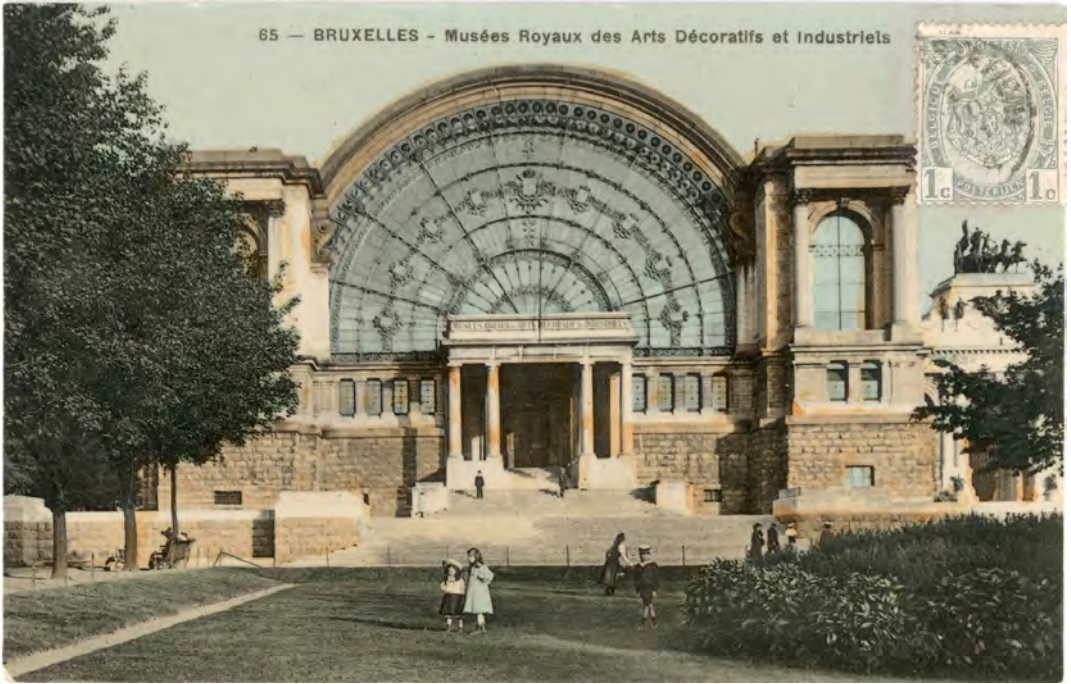
He has a very
strange look. What's
he up to now?

And suddenly ...



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“I bring you joyful tidings: you have collected a rich heritage... You are in the full sense of the word, the owners of a valuable treasure, that would render the most wealthy collectors pale of envy.”

JEAN CAPART

Le Temple des Muses, Brussels, RMAH, 1932, p. 9.