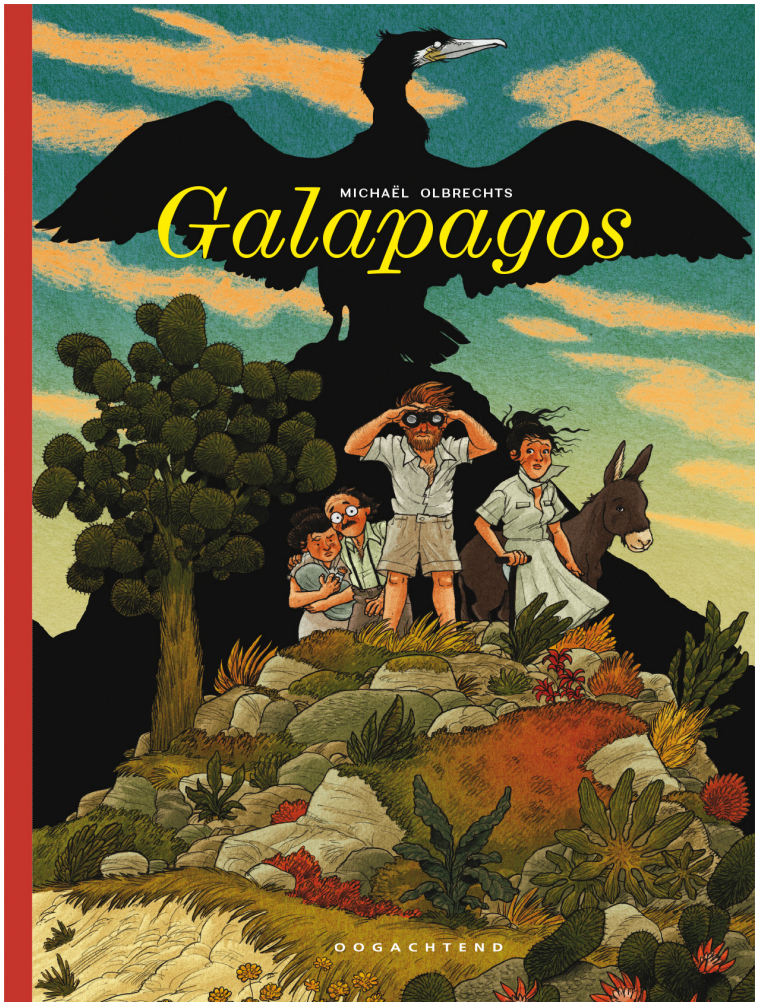


Galapagos

Michaël Olbrechts

"Galapagos" is based on the intriguing, mysterious, and true story of the first inhabitants of Floreana, one of the Galapagos Islands. The first to arrive on the island are Friedrich Ritter and Dore Strauch, fleeing Germany to create their own little paradise. Much to Ritter's discontent, pregnant Margret Wittmer and her husband Heinz follow their example shortly after. But the trouble really starts when a Baroness arrives with her two male lovers, intending to build a grandiose hotel on the island. The truth of what happens next must be left to speculation, for those who live to tell the tale do not tell the same one...

Michaël Olbrechts (b. 1987) *studied history at the KU Leuven and graphic storytelling at the Saint-Lukas academy in Brussels. He is a comic artist and freelance illustrator. In 2014 Olbrechts won the Silvester Debut Award for his first book "The Allerlaatste Tijger" (The Very Last Tiger), which was set in the Dutch-Indies and is based on his own family history. His stories centre around the frequently awkward dynamic between people. Both his characters and his narratives are quintessentially human. "Galapagos" will be his 4th graphic novel.*



Visit www.flandersliterature.be for information about translation grants.

"*Galapagos* is a tour de force. The story's structure has been built up stunningly, with baffling intermezzos."

NRC Handelsblad

"The facts in *Galapagos* are almost too strange to be true."

De Volkskrant

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Prizes:
On the longlist for the Boon prize of literature 2024 (as the first graphic novel ever to be nominated for this prize)

Original title : Galapagos (Oogachtend, 2023. Hardcover, 21x28 cm, 176 pp.)
Rights Sold: French (Le Boîte à Bulles), Polish (Dom Literatury).

A "TRUE" STORY

In his new book, Michael Olbrechts tells the mysterious and intriguing story of the island of Floreana, one of the Galapagos islands. Although it is based on real accounts, so much of these accounts is clouded in mystery that the real truth of the story is anyone's guess...

In 1929, Friedrich Ritter and Dore Strauch arrived on Floreana. Ritter was a doctor and a Nietzsche fanatic, his lover Strauch was his former patient. It was their intention to live off the land, cut off from the world. For a while they were completely on their own, except for the occasional visit from the ship on which they came, which picked up and delivered their mail. It is through the letters they sent their family – who in turn sent these letters to the press – that all of Germany learned about their ambitious venture.

While most Germans ridiculed and mocked their undertaking, the pregnant Margret Wittmer and her husband Heinz admired their choice and decided to follow their example. They arrived in 1932, but, despite the Wittmer's admiration for their predecessors, the two couples did not get along and lived mostly separate lives on different parts of the island. Ritter did however come to their aid when Margret gave birth.

Not long after the Wittmers' arrival, three more people arrived: the (allegedly self-proclaimed) baroness Eloise Wagner de Bousquet, and her two lovers Rudolf Lorenz and Robert Pilippson. This is where the real trouble started. The baroness; an erratic, wild, and very openly sexual woman, thought herself the ruler of Floreana. Scarcely dressed, armed at all times, and acting like she owned the island, she made herself very unpopular with her neighbours.

Before long the baroness started to prefer her lover Philipps over the weaker Lorenz, who is said to have been suffering from tuberculosis. On top of his fragile health, Philipps started being physically abusive with Lorenz. After a while, the latter found refuge with the Wittmers who took pity on him.

What happened next will have to remain the subject of speculation, for the tales of those who live to tell them clash. The facts are that first, on the morning of the 27th of March 1934, the baroness and her lover Philipps disappeared, never to be seen again. According to Lorenz and the Wittmers, they had gotten on a boat to Tahiti. Strauch, however, deems this unlikely, as they had uncharacteristically left their most precious belongings behind. Later research also proves it unlikely that any ship would have passed Floreana island on that specific day. Shortly after the disappearance, Lorenz became eager to return to Germany and got on a boat headed for San Cristobal. The boat disappeared off track and several months later his mummified remains were found on the island of Marchena.

Some months after, Ritter died of – according to Strauch – food poisoning from eating bad chicken. This time it was the Wittmers' turn to be suspicious: both Ritter's vegetarianism and the fact that Strauch waited with seeking their help until her partner was beyond saving, left them questioning what had actually transpired...

While Strauch returned to Germany after Ritter's death, the Wittmers stayed on Floreana for the rest of their lives and even opened a hotel that remains open till this day.

SAMPLE TRANSLATION

1
There it is Captain.

2
The mast caught the attention of a fisher's boat.

They probably hung the shirt there as an emergency signal.

Don't be alarmed when you see their bodies, captain. It looks like they're mummified.

They must have suffered terribly. There is no fresh water on Marchena.

So, captain, is it them? Do you recognise them?

Captain?

3
GALAPAGOS
Based on a true story

5
Population: 0

D: Unbelievable!

6
Chapter 1
Übermenschen
This is paradise, Friedrich!

7
F: I didn't oversell it, did I?

D: Phenomenal!

Oh Friedrich, it's all so exciting!

Finally really alone.

F: Do you realise it, Dore? From now on we've only got each other.

This is what we've been waiting for, for years.

8
F: Come on! After two months at sea I'm eager to get started.
We'll explore.

We'll take only the bare essentials and go in search of a good place to settle.

D: I thought I'd freshen up first. We could take a dip together?

F: That can wait.

We don't have time to lose, my girl, come!

9
F: Listen, Dore, this island is magnificent, don't get me wrong. But our "paradise" we'll have to create ourselves.

This is why all those other people prefer to stay with "the herd".

They don't dare stand on their own legs. Are too weak to create their own destiny. So they just follow the rest.

That's easier than what we're doing here, of course.

Nature is relentless, my girl. We'll have to work tirelessly here.

On ourselves too, you know that.

D: Yes, yes… Of course.

I'll do everything to make our dream come true, Friedrich. I want nothing more!

Floreana will be our new home.

F: Good!

I'm proud of you, my girl.

11
I'm sorry Friedrich, I can't keep going!

The pain in my legs…

F: No problem, that's normal. Rest a little.

But you'll have to bite your teeth a bit, the first few months.

You're not having doubts, are you?

We've only just arrived.

D: No no, not at all!

F: ‘To live is to suffer’ Nietzsche says.

You can only control the illness if you believe in it yourself, Dore. Only then can you rise above yourself.

I’ve told you that from day one, ever since you walked into my practice.

Over there on that hill I see the perfect place for our camp.

Come!

12
F: Beautiful! Up here we’ll build our home.

D: But that means we’ll have to go up and down the hill all the time?

F: Look! From up here you can see almost the entire island and every ship that passes.

Convenient for the mail.

D: The mail?

F: You were so adamant about wanting to keep the home front posted?

I arranged it for you, my girl.

D: Oh, thank you Friedrich!

F: Hm. There should be plenty of tame donkeys around here.*

We could do with some pack animals.

I’m going to look for them, they’ll probably be at the spring nearby.

Are you coming?

D: I really can’t Friedrich.

F: ‘To live is to suffer,’ Dore.

Alright then! Eat something and go sit in the shade.

* Remnants of a brief Norwegian occupation (ca. 1924).

13
D: ‘To live is to suffer.’

and ‘pity is a waste of feeling.’

Nietzsche!

Sigh… Nietzsche!
Nietzsche!
Nietzsche!

…’if, however, thou hast a suffering friend, then be a resting-place for his suffering; like a hard bed, however’…

…’a camp-bed: thus wilt thou serve him best’…

Oh!

Aren’t you the cutest!

Little ‘Burro.’

14
D: Breathtaking!

Do you ever think of Berlin, Friedrich?

F: How can you think about that hellhole when you’re here?

D: And Mila?
F: Pff, that plain-Jane!

D: She’s still your wife, Friedrich!

F: Bah! Not here.

I don’t miss her a second.
She was a herd animal that only slowed me down.

An anonymous slave to capitalism.

Mila turned out to be a weak housewife who never really understood Nietzsche.

D: And me, Friedrich, don’t I slow you down?
With my fragile health?

F: The search for the “Übermensch” has nothing to do with physical strength, my girl!

It’s about strength of the mind. The iron will to get stronger.

You have that!

We've torn ourselves away from the herd, Dore. We've gone where no one's gone before!

And we did it together!

You shouldn't question it so much.
We'll be the first real übermenschen!
Here, on this beautiful island.

It'll be magnificent, my girl.

And you'll get healthy soon.


Marchena, 1934
Populatie: 0
Daar is het, kapitein.







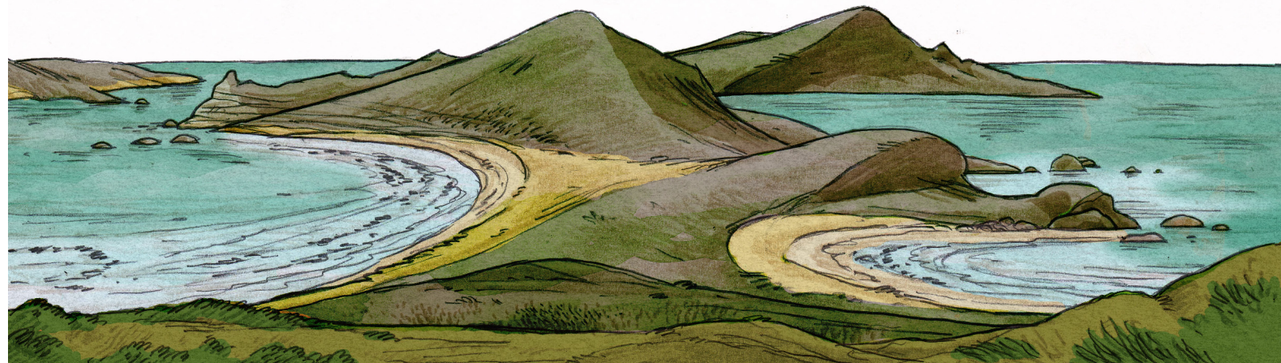




GALAPAGOS



Gebaseerd op waargebeurde feiten



floreana, 1929

Populatie: 0

Ongelofelijk!

Hoofdstuk 1

übermenschen

Dit is het paradijs, Friedrich!

Ik heb niet overdreven, toch?!

Fenomenaal!

Oh, Friedrich. Het is zo spannend allemaal!

Eindelijk écht alleen.

Vanaf nu hebben we enkel elkaar, Dore. Besef je het?

Hier hebben we jarenlang naar uitgekeken.

Kom! Na twee maanden op zee wil ik erin vliegen.

We gaan op verkenning.

We nemen het hoogst-noodzakelijke mee en zoeken een goeie plek voor ons huis.

Ik dacht me nog even op te frissen. We kunnen samen toch even de zee in?

Dat kan later nog.

We hebben geen tijd te verliezen, meisje. Kom!

Weet je, Dore. Dit eiland is natuurlijk prachtig, begrijp me niet verkeerd.

Maar 'Het Paradijs' gaan we er zelf van moeten maken, hoor.

Er is een reden waarom al die andere mensen liever bij 'de kudde' blijven.

Ze zijn te bang om op eigen benen te staan. Te zwak om zelf hun geluk te maken. Dus ze volgen maar.

Dat is gemakkelijker dan wat wij hier gaan doen, natuurlijk.

De natuur is meedogenloos, meisje. We gaan hier keihard moeten werken.

Ook aan onszelf. Dat weet je.

Jaja... Natuurlijk.

Ik ga er alles aan doen om onze droom te doen slagen, Friedrich. Ik wil niets liever!

Floreana wordt onze nieuwe thuis.

Mooi, zo!

Ik ben trots op je, meisje.


?


Het spijt me, Friedrich. Ik kan niet meer!
Die pijn in m'n benen...
Geen probleem, dat is normaal. Rust maar even uit.
Maar je zal ook wat op je tanden moeten bijten, de eerste maanden.
Je begint toch niet te twijfelen?
We zijn hier pas.
Neenee. Zeker niet!
'Het leven is lijden' zegt Nietzsche.
Je kan die ziekte enkel beheersen als je er zelf in gelooft, Dore. Dan kan je jezelf overstijgen.
Dat heb ik vanaf dag één gezegd, toen je mijn praktijk binnenkwam.
Daarginds op die berg zie ik een perfecte plek voor ons kamp.
Kom!

Prachtig! Hier bouwen we ons huis.
Maar dan moeten we voortdurend die berg op en af!?
Heu!
Heu!
Kijk! Vanaf hierboven zie je bijna heel het eiland en elk schip dat passeert.
Dat is handig voor de post.
De post?
'Het leven is lijden.'
En 'Medelijden bestaat niet.'
Nietzsche!
Zucht...
Nietzsche! Nietzsche! Nietzsche!
Jij wilde toch zo nodig het thuisfront op de hoogte houden?
Dus dat heb ik voor je geregeld, meisje.
Heu!
Heu!
Oh, dank je Friedrich!
Hm...
Hier zouden een hoop tamme ezels moeten rondlopen.*
Heu!
Heu!
We kunnen wel wat lastdieren gebruiken.
'...Hebt gij echter een lijdende vriend, wees dan een rustplaats voor zijn lijden. Doch gelijk een hard bed...'
'...Een veldbed: zo zult gij hem het meest tot baat zijn...'
Also Sprach Zarathustra
OH!
Also Sprach Zarathustra
Ik ga op zoek. Ze zullen wel in de buurt van de bron zitten. Dat is hier vlakbij.
Kom je mee?
Hoe sneller we naar hier kunnen verhuizen, hoe beter.
Ik kan écht niet meer, Friedrich.
'Het leven is lijden', Dore.
Vooruit! Eet iets en ga in de schaduw zitten.
Wat ben jij een schatje!
Kleine 'Burro'.

* Overblijfsels van een kortstondige Noorse nederzetting op FLoreana (ca. 1924)




Adembenemend!
Hm.


Denk je nog wel eens aan Berlijn, Friedrich?


Hoe kan je aan dat hellegat denken als je hier zit?


En aan Mila?
Pff, die burgertrut!
Ze is nog steeds je vrouw, Friedrich!

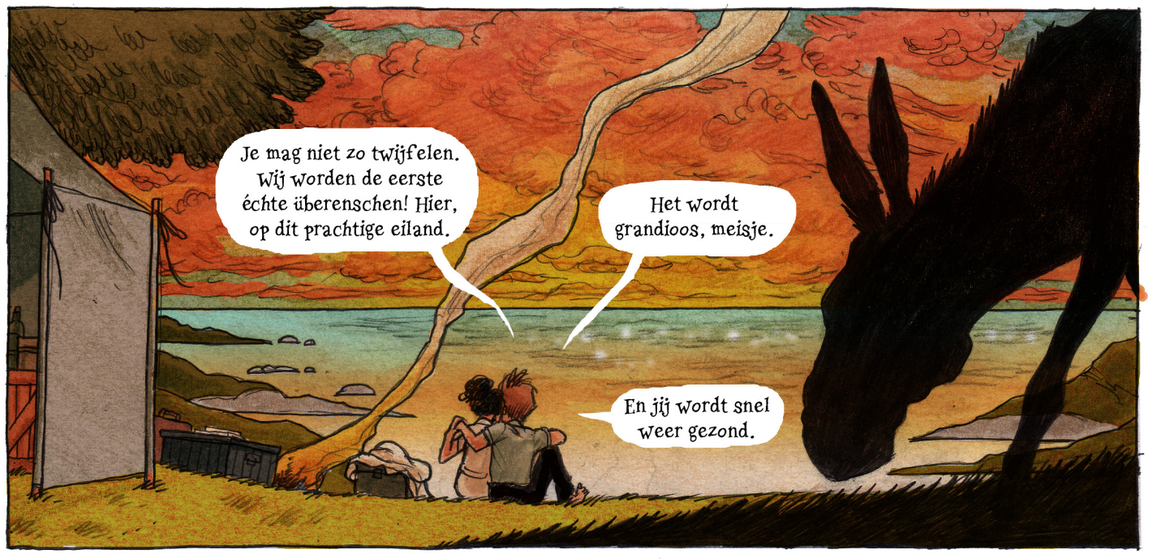

Bah, hier niet!
Ik mis haar geen moment. Ze was een kuddebeest dat mij alleen maar afremde.
Een anonieme slaaf van het kapitalisme.


Mila bleek een laffe huisvrouw die Nietzsche nooit écht heeft begrepen.


En ik, Friedrich? Rem ik jou dan niet af?
Met mijn zwakke gezondheid...


De zoektocht naar de 'übermensch' heeft niets met fysieke kracht te maken, meisje!
Het gaat om de kracht van de geest. De ijzeren wil om beter te worden.
En die heb jij!


We hebben ons losgerukt van de kudde, Dore. Zoals niemand ons ooit heeft voorgedaan.
En dat deden we samen!


Je mag niet zo twijfelen. Wij worden de eerste échte übermenschen! Hier, op dit prachtige eiland.
Het wordt grandioos, meisje.
En jij wordt snel weer gezond.