



PILLOWS — GHENT

The writing profession is not what it once was. Nowadays you only get a few hundred euros for a well-formulated masterpiece, and that fee is only paid months after being published, but in earlier days, writing could assure you a pleasant life and even be quite profitable.

The Amsterdam 18th-century scientist and poet OLIVIER DE REYLOF, for example, received a fortune for his first collection of poems. In addition, he was ennobled almost immediately by the notables of Ghent when he decided to spend his newly acquired wealth in the Belgian city. He had a gigantic palace built for himself just outside the medieval city centre enclosed by the Scheldt and Lys rivers. That 'hotel' (the old French name for a noble residence in the city) is now home to one of the most beautiful places to stay in East Flanders, the five-star PILLOWS GRAND HOTEL REYLOF, a place in the historic city where even as an underpaid journalist it's easy to feel you're nobility.

Admittedly, DE REYLOF had endless fantasy (or delusions of grandeur); the writer spared no expense on classical décor and modern empire furnishings to give his palace an air of wealth and style. The current owner, the Dutch staffing and hotel tycoon ALEX MULDER, has a similar vision. Before PILLOWS opened its doors in 2018, he spent over two years (and a fortune) renovating the building and bringing back as many original elements as possible. Most eye-catching are the historic entrance, staircase gallery, cocktail bar on the first floor and library.

words

FLORIS MÜLLER

The rooms, especially those at the front, are also spacious and classically furnished — with modern adjustments. The suites have a wonderful king-sized bed, spacious sitting area and no less than three separate rooms to freshen up: a room with a spacious bath, a separate shower and a place with a gigantic mirror and sinks.

And if that's not enough, the hotel has an attractive spa with a wellness pool, Finnish and infrared sauna and a luxurious gym located in the former coach house, a coffee bar, a fine bistro (OLIVIER) and a top restaurant (LOFT). The latter is recommended by the French culinary critics of GAULTMILLAU; as far as we are concerned, it is only a matter of time before colleagues at MICHELIN hang a star (or two) on the facade. For less than 100 euros you can enjoy a seven-course dinner at LOFT with a lot of fish, served in the most artistic forms.

While we Dutch people often want to present 'everything at once', the Belgians are a lot more modest — and so is chef HANNES VANDEBOTERMET and his team of vinologists. Small amuse-bouche, a sea bass, a cod, Holsteiner beef with oyster and duck foie gras are served first, before the chef presents his masterpiece: a soft-cooked venison in beer. The wine also builds up slowly, from a fruity, light New Zealand chardonnay to the most powerful burgundy we've tasted in years

You would almost forget that there is so much more to do and see outside the complex. Because of its many canals, Ghent is sometimes referred to as the Flemish Amsterdam by Dutch travel journalists, but that is completely unjustified. After all, the city was already thriving as the third largest city in Europe after London and Paris in the middle ages while the Dutch capital was still a simple fishing village. Most popular historical sights are the fort of Gravensteen, the Belfry and Cloth Hall and the Sint-Michielsbrug. But visitors must not forget to step into the imposing St. Bavo's Cathedral and see the 12-part Ghent altarpiece painted by the VAN EYCK brothers, which became world famous when part of it was stolen. The theft is still one of the biggest mysteries in Belgium, giving rise to endless rumours and conspiracy theories.

Being an investigative journalist, we see it as our duty, to get into all of them to retrieve the painting... travelling back to Ghent as often as we can, and, of course, staying at the PILLOWS PALACE. We owe that to the city, to the REYLOF name (a fellow writer) and above all to ourselves.

TRAVEL