

WILLEM VAN GENK

(1927 - 2005)

Van Genk was born in Voorburg in the Netherlands, the youngest child and only son in a family of ten. He suffered from severe health and behavioral problems. His mother died when he was five. He started drawing at home and at school, using a substitute for his dreams of travels to distant countries. HE was eventually placed in an orphanage, and then a Christian school specializing in arts and crafts. Here he studied advertising and graphics for two years but proved incapable of adapting to demands made on him. HE was transferred to a home for the mentally handicapped in The Hague, where he received a small salary for his activities in the workshop >With this , he bought himself painting materials. His principal; sources of inspiration were tourist guides, the photographs he collected, and in particular his voyages to the Soviet Union, Rome Paris, Madrid, Copenhagen, Cologne, and Prague. He often portrays the conflict between good and evil, with God, Lenin, and Mao Zedong facing up the Devil, Hitler, and Stalin. His work appeared in exhibitions but he refused to sell to private collectors. He gave up painting in 1988.