

# Wennig & Daubach

# Blow-up

# History

*Blow-up History* is a project by Wennig & Daubach as part of *loop – down the hills, across the land*, a programme curated by Anna Loporcaro, produced by the municipality of Sanem and coordinated by Services for Creatives for Esch2022 – European Capital of Culture.

# 02



How are historical narratives constructed?  
And how are they passed on?

Drawing on oral and written sources, Wennig & Daubach bring to life more or less well-known events and characters who have left their mark on the municipality of Sanem. Their temporary installation, which takes the form of a series of inflatable sculptures disseminated across several locations, encourages viewers to question the very notion of historicity.

The remains of a fighter plane that crash-landed in a field, a chapel dedicated to an imaginary saint, a memorial for a mythical locomotive, a collection of columns from an ancient temple: the life-size relics created or recreated for the purpose of this project find their origin or inspiration in the recorded traces of local history.

By choosing to produce their artefacts in reinforced hessian, a material used for inflatable castles, the artists evoke the historical repurposing of the Château de Sanem into an orphanage. The black textile material is the visual thread that runs through the entire project and serves a formal vocabulary based on reduction and deformation. The fact that their monumental creations need to be fed a steady stream of air

illustrates the idea that history requires constant tending if it is to be kept alive. Likewise, the provisional nature of their works resonates with the material fragility of archaeological relics, which demand considerable conservation efforts.

The distortions produced by the bulging of the objects reflect the inevitable approximations and deformations of historical narratives. The fragmentary state of the remains, some of which are shown in a transport or storage situation, evokes the incompleteness of historical sources as well as the theoretical and practical framework of their preservation, interpretation and presentation.

All the same, the artist's approach is essentially playful, both as regards the staging and choice of materials and the decision to merge reality and fiction in order to allow for an informal reading of history. This humorous inflection is further supported by the swelling of the objects, synonymous with exaggeration, which illustrates and simultaneously questions the assumed authority, if not monumentality, of historical facts. Here, it is the culture of remembrance itself that finds itself subjected to a slightly irreverent rereading based on hyperbole and cross-references.

# Kannerschlass vun Suessem

Sanem Castle was built in the Middle Ages on the ruins of Roman fortifications. Its current appearance, as well as that of the park surrounding it, dates back to the turn of the 18th century.

In the hands of the Tornaco family for two centuries, it was sold in 1950 to the municipality of Esch-sur-Alzette, who planned to convert it into a care home for orphaned children.

From 1951 to 1999, the Fondation Kannerschlass ran an orphanage on the premises based on the principles of secularism, diversity, communal life and integration.

The castle was listed as a historic monument in 1971. The following year, it became the property of the Luxembourgian state. From 2016 to the present day, it has not served any function.



© Fondation Kannerschlass

Children playing in the castle courtyard around 1955.

Current situation of the unoccupied castle.



© Gemeng Suessem

# Forced landing at Ehlerange

On 8 September 1944, a P-47 Thunderbolt of a US Army Air Force fighter squadron was hit by German flak above Trier.

Forced to make an emergency landing, Lieutenant Colonel George R. Brooking touched down in a cattle pen near a country road known as *alen Zolver We* in Ehlerange.

The pilot managed to extract himself from the aircraft and make off before a German patrol arrived on the spot and blew up the remains of the plane with a grenade.

Hiding in a haystack in the barn of butcher Fred Keup, he escaped the Germans. In the dark of the night, he was taken to Esch by the Résistance.

The first American soldier on Luxembourgian soil, he remained in hiding in Esch until the city was liberated two days later, on 10 September.

Thirty years later, in 1974, he attended the inauguration of the monument commemorating the liberation of Esch by the US Army.



The Republic P-47 Thunderbolt was America's main fighter aircraft during the Second World War, with production numbers exceeding 15,000. It was affectionately called *Jug* in reference to its round shape.



Lieutenant Colonel George R. Brooking (1918–2008) was the commander of the US Air Force's 365th Fighter Group during the Battle of the Bulge. His actions during the Second World War earned him numerous distinctions, including the American Legion of Merit, the French Croix de guerre, and the Belgian Croix de guerre.



On 9 September 1944, the citizens of Esch celebrate George R. Brooking ahead of the imminent liberation of the city by US troops.



Photograph annotated by George R. Brooking showing the place in Ehlerange where he crash-landed his plane, nicknamed *Hot Fat II*.

# Den Zolwerknapp ass kee Parnass

*Kuck wou's de stees a wien's de bass,  
den Zolwerknapp as kee Parnass.*

Aimed at his colleague Michel Lentz, this caustic remark by Edmond de la Fontaine, better known as Dicks, illustrates the rivalry that opposed the two national authors.

By connecting Mount Parnassus, a prominent place of worship in antiquity, to the small hill known as Zolwerknapp, Dicks pokes fun at his colleague's poetic writings.

Located in the centre of Greece, Mount Parnassus was dedicated to Apollo and home of the nine Muses, along with Mount Helicon.

Apollo is the Greek god of the arts, poetry, song and music. One of the Delphic maxims attributed to him states: 'Know thyself!'

The turn of phrase chosen by Dicks also refers to the collection of poems *E' Schrek ob de' Lezeburger Parnassus* by Antoine Mayer (1801-1857).

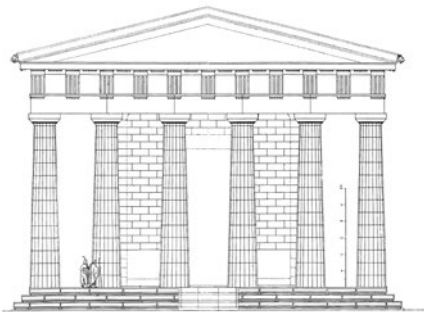
This work, published in 1829, is the first book in Luxembourgish language. The author's mother hailed from Sanem, the municipality in which the Zolwerknapp is located.



The jurist, writer, poet and composer Edmond de la Fontaine (1823–1891), aka Dicks, was known for his irreverent style, as illustrated by vaudevilles such as *De Scholtscheîn* or *D'Mumm Séis*. He is considered the founder of theatre in the Luxembourgish dialect.



The writer and composer Michel Lentz (1820–1893) penned the words to Luxembourg's national anthem *Ons Heemecht* and the song *De Feierwon*, played for the first time in public at the departure of the first train from Luxembourg station in 1859.



The Temple of Apollo at Delphi is a Doric hexastyle-peripteral building, that is, surrounded by columns, six of which forming the portico on its façade. It is located at the centre of the Panhellenic sanctuary.



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The ruins of the Temple of Apollo as they appear today in the Panhellenic sanctuary at Delphi. The building, located at the foot of Mount Parnassus, dates from the 4th century BC.



# 804 locomotive and Wënschel platform

The 804 is a diesel-electric shunting locomotive operated by CFL between 1954 and 2010. It produces 800 hp and weighs 74 tons.

It was mainly assigned to the transport of cargo. Departing from Wënschel platform, it pulled the wagons of crushed ore from the Belvaux mines.

In 1953, the CFL placed an order for 6 locomotives for a total amount of 40 million Luxembourg francs. They were delivered the following year.

The Class 800 locomotives were produced under a General Motors license by the Belgian company AFB. The engine was entirely imported from the United States.

In 2010, the CFL's 804 locomotive entered the collection of the Luxembourg National Institute for Architectural Heritage. It was completely restored from 2014 to 2018.

Although in perfect working order, it is confined to the CFL workshops in Pétange. Following a change in railway norms, it is no longer allowed to run on the national network.



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804 Locomotive departing from the transport and crushing facilities near the place known as *Am Wünschel* in Belvaux. The terminal was inaugurated in 1950 and definitively shut in 1977.

The General Motors EMD SW8 is a long hood forward locomotive that served as a model for the design of the CFL 804.



The CFL 804 locomotive in its current state, after its restoration by volunteers of the 1604 Classics preservation society.



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# The chapel of Sankt Mëffert

*Du sot den Här: Da gees de,  
Wi ees Sankt Mëffert gung,  
No Eilerenge bieten,  
Mat Ierbsen an de Schung.*

(IX. Gesank, 217)

Sankt Mëffert (lit. Saint Moaner) is a fictional saint who makes a brief appearance in *Renert oder de Fuuss am Frack an a Maansgréisst*, a fable published in 1872 by Michel Rodange.

By using the literary technique of anthropomorphism, the author mocks his fellow humans and their countless vices: ambition, greed, cowardice, idolatry...

After he was made to confess, the fox, who lends his name to this satire in verse, is summoned to undertake a penitential pilgrimage to Ehlerange.

The parish of Ehlerange traditionally held ritual offerings of meat to Saint Anthony to ensure the prosperity of its pig herds.



The writer, poet and playwright Michel Rodange (1827–1876) is best known for his verse fable *Renert oder de Fuuss am Frack an a Maansgréisst*, inspired by Goethe's *Reineke Fuchs*.



The monks of the Order of Hospitallers of Saint Anthony raised pigs donated by the peasants to feed the poor. The father of monasticism thus became the patron saint of pigs and, by extension, of all domestic and stable animals.



The main protagonist of this political satire is the fox, who stands for cunning and deceit. He is depicted as a human-sized character (*a Maansgréisst*) wearing a tail coat (*am Frack*).

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The Portiuncula is a small church from the 6th century now located within the Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels in Assisi.

The bell tower with a framed spire, typical of churches in Luxembourg, consists of a parallelepipedal belfry housing the bells and surmounted by an octagonal spire.