

HAUSBESUCH

LET'S THANK OUR (G)HOSTS

By Sam De Wilde

When on an autumny Thursday night I arrive at the Antwerp apartment where Adrien Tirtiaux and Franziska Schutz have invited jazz musician Christopher Dell, I walk straight into a live reenactment of the saying that *too many cooks spoil the broth*. It is either that one or *many hands make light work*. Someone is dicing parsnips, someone is going through all the pots and pans and someone else is scavenging the fridge. In the merry chaos snippets of French, Dutch, German, English, and onionskins are thrown around the kitchen. Nobody seems to mind though, it's as if they're playing Charades and I'm just there to guess who's who.

My guess is that Christopher Dell is the protectively bespectacled man who's chopping onions. There's something in the rhythm and grace with which he's attacking the layered vegetable that makes me suspect he's the one with a history in percussion. Later tonight when he'll be *attacking* the bars of his vibraphone with two mallets in each hand someone will remark that this man must be a master at eating food with chopsticks. But however he eats his Asian food, the chaos in the kitchen soon settles down into efficient soup making and Mr. Dell's attention to his chopping duties starts to waver when a vibraphone is brought into the room. 'Hmm, the M-52', I hear him grunt approvingly before he hangs up his apron to give the enormous instrument a closer inspection.

When the soup is on the stove and the guests start coming in, Goethe Institute's Tonie De Waele, organizer of the Hausbesuch series, decides to kick off the evening with what'll turn out to be a prophetic slip of the tongue. In thanking our (g)hosts he provides Christopher Dell with the perfect excuse to launch his talk on urbanism with quotes from Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Le Corbusier.

It's been almost three weeks since that night now and I'm still not sure what impressed me most. The seemingly effortless way in which Mr. Dell walked us through a critical history of ideas on urbanism or the seemingly effortless way in which he improvised on the vibraphone when he wasn't talking.

There's no adequate way to describe the way he handled the instrument. To get an idea of what it sounds like, you would have to start by forgetting all about the colorful little tinny things you were given as a child. Or you could turn to YouTube, but then you would completely miss out on why the thing is called a vibraphone: it vibrates. Through its pipes. Through the floor. Through you.

If I'm completely honest, though, I do know what impressed me most. It was, again, the seemingly effortless way in which Christopher Dell managed to convince everyone present that talking urbanism, stroking your soul into a couple of aluminum bars and eating soup are all perfectly logical parts of the same urban experience. The experience of being alive, somewhere, in a city, with friends, a hot meal and a lovely *hausbesucher*.