

MARCO
GERRIS

JOHANNES
VERMEER
PRIJS 2025

PLAY
1011

Eulogy by Alida Dors

Marco back then? Who belonged to the first ISH wave?
You mean him?

*The one acting and sharing without always thinking first,
sometimes even a little wild ...
a soul never to be trapped in a corset.
Never to follow well-trodden paths but instead ... go where he feels something has to
change, something to conquer, something to create, something that doesn't yet exist.
Something you and I can't yet imagine, but that he already misses.*

*Walking? Not quite his cup of tea.
The pace doesn't suit him.
But the outdoors does, close to the green, underneath the high light, blue or dark and
grey.
He takes a run-up and then...
briefly free from everything...
watching it all from another perspective, just above the field, among the branches, amid
so much more space...
where the body feels different, simply lighter,
everything briefly in perfect harmony.
And then, back to earth, where only Soniq can beat him.
Then, gaining speed again, only to leave us once more, briefly, but often.
Through the city, following his heart, which beats fast for adventure.
No beaten paths, to him they seem like nothing but a puffed-up façade.*

So, it's now really, truly, officially Marco Gerris — hmm, Marco Gerris.

Started from the bottom, now on top of the world!
You know, Marco, we go back a long way. We've shared intense times, and as life goes,
there were also times when we didn't speak or see each other. But somehow, we always
meet again.
Like now.

Looking back now, with the knowledge I have today, when I think of you, Marco, I see a
young man who, out of love for life, turned life itself into an adventure.
I see a boy who, through play, rediscovered who he truly was.
I see a boy who chose a kind of deliberate naivety as his companion on his journey.

A young man who could freeze everyday reality, see it as a source, then deconstruct it, polish it, enrich it, and in doing so, free himself.

A young man who didn't believe in the lone visionary, the single leader, but believed in many like-minded souls together, with, through, and for each other.

At most, a danger only to anyone who wasn't quick enough on skates to zip past him in the streets of Amsterdam, the training ground of this, well, community.

This community, one born from an intrinsic need, not from the popularity of the word. Not then, and not now.

This community became a place that offered freedom to many, a place of recognition, a place to grow together, to meddle in each other's private lives, to challenge one another, to question each other's next steps.

You couldn't just make claims here. In fact, many of us learned to debate here. To mimic moves from Bruce Lee films or Dragon Ball Z, to function as a group, to set aside every challenge.

We decided what we wanted to learn, we were free...

And that place became a movement.

A community, but not just any community, an urban one... One of the first, in its very own way.

Urban, no hip-hop, no skate, no dance, no tricking, no ballet, no theatre, no spoken word or opera.

But instead, ISH-like, a name you embraced as a badge of honour, not the sum of common denominators, but the intersection of all of the above, the sum of multiplication by the ISH factor.

And now this. This special award.

Sorry ... had I even congratulated you yet?

No really ... congratulations.

I hope this award serves as confirmation that what you do is noticed, that it matters, and that it can no longer go un-seen.

An acknowledgement that your work over the years not only matters to a small group in our society, but that people see the impact your practice has had truly, for generations all right, at least for decades, on the growth and empowerment of young people.

The young people back then and today.

Those young people of back then, who've now found their place in our industry, bringing new voices,

new knowledge, new intelligence, and a new awareness around something called "quality." And others, who found their voices through their time at ISH, and now take their place in society.

All those lives you've touched. That is exactly what I've come here to celebrate today. That's what I'm congratulating you for.

Your impact. Your legacy in the making.

In honour of our relationship, it would be strange if I only praised you — not because you don't deserve it, but because so many already do. They celebrate you. And our relationship... is of a different nature. I'd say we're still working on a respectful, honest, constructive, playful, even loving — professionally speaking (just saying) — relationship. One that has, at times, known a bit of tough love. And in the spirit of transparency, and trusting the odd bond we share, I'd like to share a wish with you.

I wish for all of us — but especially for you — that you never grow lazy.

Actually, let me put it this way:

that you don't start acting as if you've made it.

That's the tricky thing about awards, about recognition, about applause — they can be intoxicating, they hold a kind of magic power.

They can distort your sense of self-worth.

That's how they pull you into the system you used to kick against, remember?

Yet, awards can also give you wings, lift you up.

And that's what I wish for you — and for us.

With this award you know for certain you're on the right track— so let's gooooooooooooo!

Dear Marco, when I say “don't grow lazy”, I mean — you're probably going to live to ninety, so you're only halfway there... fair enough, a little over halfway.

But don't become like those we (glancing discreetly at the audience) used to see, you get to do things differently, you get to be you — after all, that's what you're being celebrated for.

You've made it ...

But to where exactly?

To ground that you yourself have tilled, watered, and fertilised? A landscape transformed by your own hands — one from which we are all now reaping the fruits?

I said lazy, didn't I? But perhaps I should say ... vain?

That's a sin you can't often be accused of. No — what I mean is *content*. Grateful, yes — but not excessively content, if you know what I mean. You see, I understand that, perhaps against your will,

you were made into an example — a poster boy, a leader. Living life under a magnifying glass.

I can imagine people telling you that you are not *this*, and that, by all means, you should not be *that*.

That you should have done more for this or that. Should have spoken out more, should have moved differently, reacted differently, given differently.

I hear you.

Perhaps... perhaps... perhaps...

Of course, we know it's easy to shout from the sidelines, especially for those who've never walked in your shoes. Still — those words can hit home, and maybe, just sometimes, they sting — even if only a little.

And there are few who truly understand.

Being a leader can be lonely at times, I can imagine. Walking your path — much of it, you do alone.

In bed, seething, then in short moments like that boy from back then — floating, gliding through the city, searching for your truth, your kindred spirits, fighting for some space within the system —

not always consciously, not always by choice — but because you know what it feels like to be free.

And as part of being free, you're allowed to be lazy sometimes — to grant yourself moments of weightlessness. At least, that's how I remember those days. But we had ambition, we had dreams, and we worked for them — driven by hunger for life itself.

I wish you contentment — because it too carries challenge.
Enjoy the here and now, but there is more to come, for sure.
In you, I see an artist, a father, a brother, a friend, a pioneer, an innovator, a leader.
Leadership, in my view, requires the trust to allow yourself to be surprised — especially
in the moments when you think: this is it, it's over.

And then — suddenly — old scars turn out to be gills, and you realise you can breathe
through them,
that they create new oxygen for the next part of the journey.
To discover those gills, you must dare to live.
You must dare to go, to let go, to lose, to be.
You must dare to dare. That's all. And I believe that's one of the things I've learned from
you.
I'm giving that back to you now.

I wish for you to keep daring — especially now — to never forget that it was courage
that got you here. Even if you might think you don't need it anymore ...

Because you've made it.

But this — this moment, this celebration — to me, is merely a beautiful way station.
I wish you the journey you came here to make.
The one your soul alone knows — what it's meant to learn, and where it's meant to go.
A journey you share with us in parts, through which you continue to inspire so many —
myself included.

Enjoy *this* ... and enjoy your journey.

Alida Dors
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