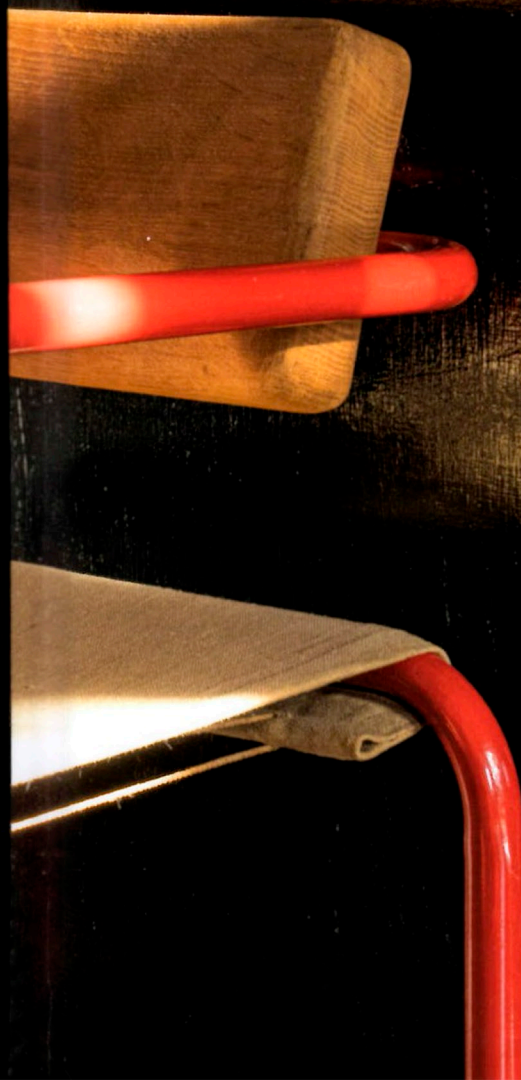




# CHRISTOPHE GEVERS



JEAN-PIERRE GABRIEL



Jean-Pierre Gabriel and Muriel Logist wish to highlight those who supported this research work with their exchanges, advice, comments, and so much more.

Glenn Sestig, with his foreword, who brings an architect and creator's unique view to Christophe Gevers' work.

Nathalie Gevers, for the enthusiasm with which she breathes life into her dad's memory.

Philippe and Sophie Niels, for displaying what forty years of collaboration created and maintained.

Sarah Niels, with the complicity of Charles Verbruggen, for passionately pursuing the work of her parents and grandparents.

Thierry Belenger, for his exchanges, his time, his participation in the photoshoots, and for giving access to the archives and models of "Archives Design Projects." And for his daily support.

Thierry Aughuet, for putting into perspective each event and detail which fueled the eleven years during which he was Christophe Gevers' assistant.

Morgane Teheux and Alexis Van Hove, who are kindly taking on the Gevers family home.

Céline De Backer, who provided the English translation with the enthusiasm of her youth.

Fabienne de Morteuil, who, more than just securing the printing of this work, has accompanied this project from its earliest days.

This book couldn't exist without those who shared their testimonies and knowledge, or who accepted to open their homes, their collections and archives. And for their memories, filled with respect for the interior sculptor that was Christophe Gevers.

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"I had an exceptional first year. There, I discovered his teaching and the way he analyzed what we were doing without ever tearing us down. He pulled his students up, doing everything to help them succeed, and defended them to the end of the year jury."

Éric Ickx

We are now in 1959, a year after the creation of the Cap d'Argent, the tavern situated in front of the Palais des Beaux-Arts of Brussels, entirely designed by Gevers, who would exploit it for thirty years! This is where one of his connections from Antwerp came into play, the wife of modernist architect Léon Stynen, who was principal of La Cambre between 1950 and 1964. Stynen, who was searching for a head of workshop for the Mobilier & Agencement department, was seduced by Gevers' non-conforming modernity.

In early October of 1959, Gevers was hired at La Cambre for two probationary years; the official appointment was confirmed in November of 1961. "During these two years, I can recognize that I was too demanding, negative, even. I changed starting with my third year."

"Gevers' workshop is, first and foremost, a synonym of extreme freedom on a creative level. It helps you in life. However, one couldn't be his student without having a critical mind and without accepting to be the subject of the critiques. This distinction between who you are and what you do is very valuable. It's part of his transmission."

Anne Cosyn

This demanding nature never left him. Jean Loui de Ridder, a former student, remembers a mailbox project: "For the first version of the model, I'd worked night and day. He looked at it and, without saying a word, broke it. It was like that until he accepted... the seventh version."

The first contact students have with the one who would become their head of workshop takes place during the entrance exam, a week of theoretical and practical tests. Éric Ickx remembers with detail one of these, an exercise which revealed the importance Christophe Gevers gave to proportions. "We received two sheets of A2 paper (42 cm by 59.4 cm), one black and the other white. We had to position three to four black or white geometric shapes given to us as well as one we were free to choose. He wanted us to understand that the contrast of colors could act differently according to the background and the shape." Patrice Levecq, who went through a similar test, added, "we realize that this work of proportion occurs constantly in our profession in order for us to create a dynamic with lines."

There were many called, but our selection interview, he told off herding sheep in the Pyrenees. Debbaut, who, to her greater anyway and saw her course through. Canart lived a similar experience. exam, I was all over the place. to be drawn... I didn't understand me because I wasn't prepared. the feeling that he thought I was

"He was sitting at the table a year. He had a strong presence of thinking, silence, everything that killed or dazzled. He expected arguments, we would when faced with

Anne Cosyn analyzes that week. "He immediately puts you into the swing of what your work at La Cambre will be, meaning something like 'Here is your task for tomorrow, figure it out.' It felt unattainable. We understood, from that very first moment, that if we weren't self-sufficient and endowed with a great desire to succeed, we wouldn't make it very far with him."



"Gevers was a school of life and rigor. He taught us the life philosophy of organization, of work well done, of the fact that things age well, of anticipating problems. Of respecting the materials."

Patrice Levecq

Between criticism and admiration, the majority of his old students see him on the opposite side of one who delivers a traditional teaching. Olivier Simon decrypts him as such: "His type of teaching is to acquire the profession on your own. He doesn't explain how to do it to you. He provokes you to see if it's going to hold. His teaching method was 'Learn on your own.'"

"Gevers structured me. I wasn't sure of myself. But I still have that way of looking at things. Every time that I draw, or I do something, I have this analytical thought process. Who is it going to serve. What's going to be done in it?"

Pascale van Oost

Claudine Lambert puts this in a broader context: "He pushed competent people very hard because he knew they could excel." Étienne Binard gives a similar reading. "We were very proud, telling ourselves that we weren't going to find an entrepreneur or a trade by saying, 'Here is what I want to do. What can you do for me?' On the contrary, we will tell

them, 'You're going to replicate exactly what I drew. There is a way of doing it.' It's the strength which I still hold today."

Each one expresses the "Gevers years" with their own personal spin, but they all come together when it comes to the summary of what was learned.

"If I speak of him, I speak of myself. Because he had—and I'm not the only one—such an influence in my life, not only in my field, interior architecture, but in the entirety of my life. His logic was such that we couldn't help but be influenced by his way of thinking."

Éric Ickx



"Jean Loui De Ridder and I were at Constant Van Marcke's house to sign a design contract for a Flandria boat. It was the first time that I was faced with a private interior that he had designed. In this house, you could feel the strength of his contributions. And there was the view from this triple window onto the meadow where horses grazed. An unforgettable scene."

Patrice Levecq

