

Elsje van der Ploeg

an angel in Origami Land

Pepi and Kalmon, Elsje and Thoki's counterparts have just got together again in a paradise for imaginary creatures. Elsje departed from our material world last July 17th. But for all of her Ori- and ELFA friends, she will forever be with them. The memory of the numerous messages exchanged by snail-mail over the years, and the manifold treasures that she was always keen to share, spread and teach, will forever bear the mark of her benevolence.



Elsje lived for a long time in the city of Elst in the Netherlands. Born on 12th April 1951, she committed her life to social work, especially towards the younger generations encountering difficulties. She possessed a large share of generosity and overflowing creativity. Her favourite activity was folding, of course, but also hand-made or decorated paper, including marbled, paste-paper, suminagashi (see a tribute to Elsje's "Sumi" art: www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wgrm2ZN9_M) ebru, painting, decoration, in a word anything that relates to colours and handicrafts. She was keen to unite her two facets to let joy and love flow between people.

Elsje's journey in origami is essentially linked to the Envelope and Letter-Fold Association (ELFA), of which she was a founding member alongside John Cunliffe and Thoki Yenn, back in 1988. As a postman by profession, I had a natural partiality for envelopes. Pepi, a joyful and mischievous elf in the shape of a square of paper, which she created as a bosom buddy for Kalmon (Denmark Thoki Yenn's famous alter ego) can be seen throughout the many diagrams she created, in particular for ELFA.

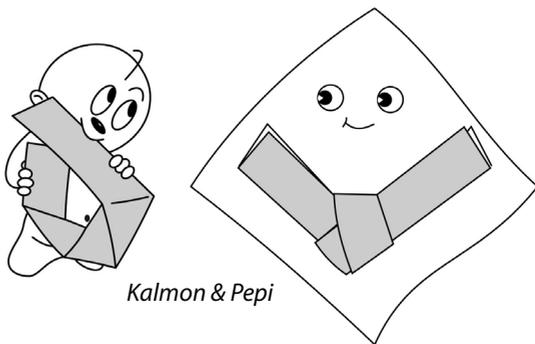
I met Elsje for the first time during the MFPP's Rencontres de Mai in 1991, through Geneviève de Gouvion Saint Cyr, who was then president of the MFPP and represented France in ELFA. I made my debut within this trans-national team of envelope folders. I soon discovered Elsje's cheerful prose carried by her soft and round handwriting, in the portfolio that the members of this informal group exchanged by way of snail mail and enriched by way of contribution of their new creations at each step of the portfolio's journey.



One of the few group photos was taken in 1994, during an Origami Deutschland meeting in Altenberg, Germany (published in Der Falter 15). One can observe a certain connection between OD and ELFA over time : publication of booklets, members of honour, celebration of the 25th anniversary, etc. In September 2003, ELFA's epistolary contact via portfolio (last portfolio #22, dated Dec. 2003 and 7 booklets compiled by John Cunliffe) was converted into a physical meeting at an ELFA day, bringing together Heide Karst, Sjaak Adriaanse, Paula Versnick amongst others.

Following this meeting, Elsie and Nabil Beitinjaneh created ELFA-e, in 2004, a Yahoo-based exchange group. <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/elfa-e/info>

Time passed and friendships grew, the annual ELFA day became for me a chance to enjoy longer visits, staying in Harry and Elsie's lovely house.



Kalmon & Pepi

I now invite you to discover her manifold riches in surfing the various blogs she opened: www.blogger.com/profile/04704646496721140480, as well as the ELFA webpage that she had created hoping to improve it at some point. <http://ploegevd.home.xs4all.nl/> The site will remain accessible thanks to the generosity of the British Origami Society.

✉ **ichel Grand** (translated by Claire Landre)

Bibliography

Elsje's bibliography includes about 20 titles from various publishers and about 10 self-published among which I shall point out the following:

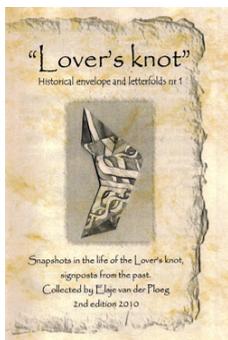
"Papiervouwen : de geschiedenis van een cultuur" (1991), about the history of paper folding.

"Origami - Sehen mit der Händen" (1994) written with Hilly Jongsma and printed by the Library for the blind de Nijmegen, Nederland. The book is destined for blind people and includes diagrams in relief with a special pattern so the different sides of the paper can be recognized. It comes with an audio tape Dutch/English.

"Grondregels voor origami" (1993), a new edition of a paperfolding book by Aart van Breda dated 1963. Elsie made the illustrations and redrew the diagrams to the international standard.



Letter-fold posted by Elsie



Elsje's publications for the general public have been essentially released in the Netherlands because they are written in the Erasmus language. Her "ELFA" publications, though in small quantities (but in English) enjoyed an international circulation.

