

Bridge Poem

Vincent A. Cellucci

When I moved to the Netherlands in 2019, I had no idea where poetry would be waiting for me.

If I'm being honest with myself, I had become a regional poet. Back home, in Louisiana, I could not pen a poem that wasn't steeped in place, a fertile funky silt I had sunk myself deep into for the last two decades.

I joked with friends I was 'upgrading swamps', and I threw myself into the foreign.

The pen remained capped for some time as I learned to attune myself to South Holland.

Until I saw something in Delft, on my daily commute, just after the bicycle bridge that connects the city to campus. This specific moment forever lifted me out of the seasonal depression of my first winter in the Netherlands.

One gigantic puddle covered the entire bike path. Everyone needed slow down, pull their feet up off the pedals, and coast through.

It was the delight of my frequently rainy days, and I began to look forward to this event as it allowed me to tap into a childish state of simple joy as well as exchange rare grins and consideration with my fellow citizens.

I knew I had to commemorate this moment with a poem. 'one puddle' was the first poem I wrote about Delft and the Netherlands.

The first colleague I met at the TU Delft Library later translated the poem into Dutch for an arts exhibition, so it was also my first poem situated in the language of the land.

Not long after I discovered something else uniquely inspiring to me: poems inscribed on Dutch cities.

Poetry murals waiting for me on walls of Leiden, poems on garbage trucks in Rotterdam¹...

The more I looked, the more poetry there seemed to be.

(This was COVID times, and I was equally inspired by the banners of poetry spreading throughout Tehran on the news too.)

Eventually, I came across the Parkhaven poetry bridge in Rotterdam and the scale stopped my bicycle in its tracks.

I thought: how does one go about getting a poetry bridge?

My next thought was of the Hambrug, how the main bicycle bridge in Delft deserved a poem.

The longest part of the project was gaining the courage to propose my own poem. But I knew I had a site-specific poem about the exact place.

Years passed until I reached out to the typographic designer of the Parkhaven poetry bridge. We had a coffee and rode bikes to the proposed bridge, where Monice agreed to reach out to the Delft municipality.

We had impeccable timing; it turned out there was a window of opportunity as the bridge was undergoing a major maintenance, and we could paint the poem on its underbelly while it was removed.

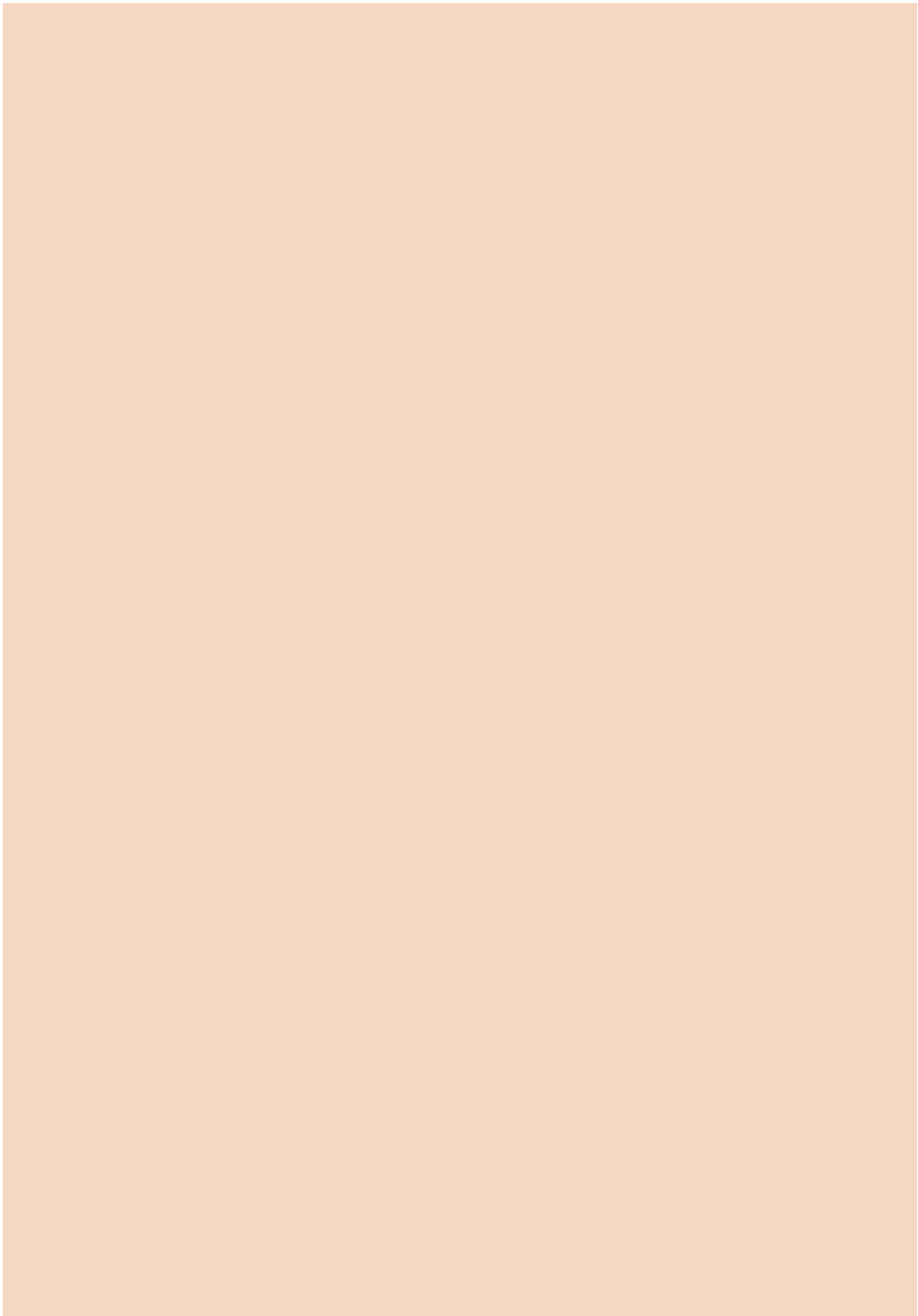
We made a proposal, we pitched it to the city and the university as a partnership, and we started designing.

This public art project was realised in 2025, so that the Hambrug serves as a literal and symbolic bridge between the municipality and the university.

The poem, 'one puddle', is an allusion to Bob Marley's 'One Love' and it celebrates the interdependent inspiration of poetry and place.

I hope it is the first of many poems to inhabit this bridge.

¹ Later research uncovered these moving murals are a decades-long collaboration between the Poetry International festival and the municipality.



Original stenciled ‘rain’ concept by typographic designer Monice Janson.



A visit to the Hollandia maintenance ‘shed’ (warehouse) to measure the removed bridge for design planning.

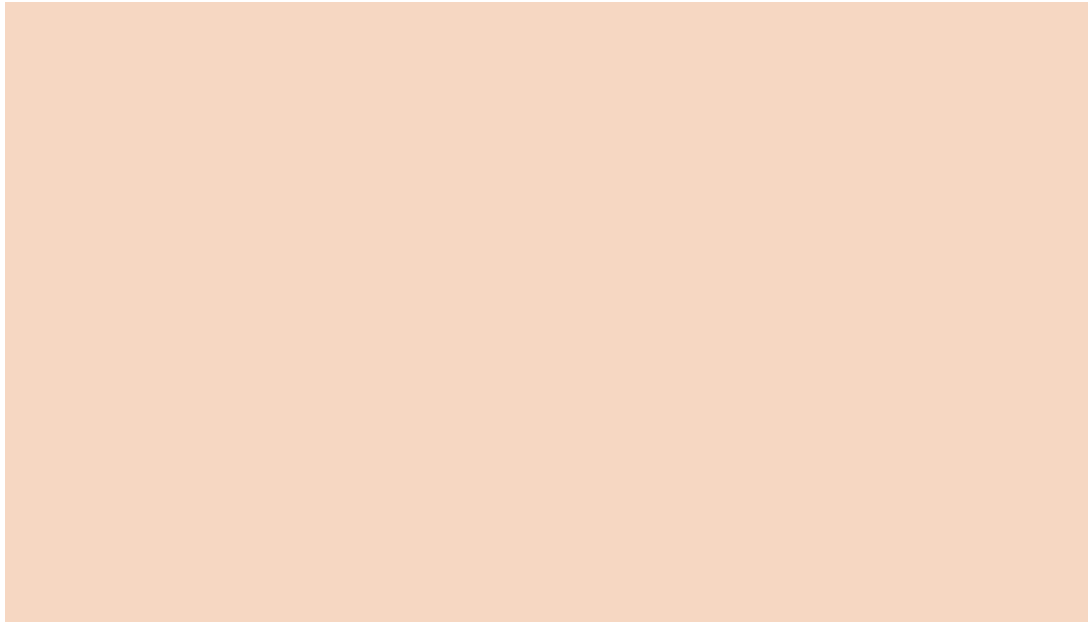
Bridge Poem

Preparing the text stencils for painting.

Renovated bridge with poem is placed by barge the night before final installation.



Final installation of renovated bridge by Hollandia. This bridge was out for many months so it was a special occasion to have it back.



Detail of the undulations of bridge poem final design with reflections from the canal below.

one puddle

in particular
makes my
rainy days

most days
it's the mere
formed in
the middle
of the bike
path under
construction
heading to
campus

and away
from delft's
center city
canal's
southern
drain

the dampest
of spirits
is no match
for crossing
this puddle

as we speed
in packs
like sunk rats
to face our duties
and whatever
gnaws on us

there's a moment
in passing
where everyone
secretly
delighted
slows down

pulls their feet
off the pedals
(some even rise!)
as if about to float
and coasts
out of their
brooding into
the inevitable
splashing
out of
personal
paths

we
acknowledge
our own role
in
jeopardy
and
the oncomer
making
us
all kin
in our brief exodus
from everything

een plas

met name
maakt mijn
dag neerslachtig

meestal gevormd
in het midden
van een
fietspad
opengebroken
voor wegwerkzaamheden
op pad
naar campus

weg van Delft
weg van het centrum
de gracht voert
naar de zuidelijke
afvoerput

zelfs de
verdoemde geest
is niet
opgewassen
om de plas
over te steken

terwijl we versnellen
en herpakken
om als
natte honden
onze taak
uit te voeren
met alles wat
er aan ons vreet

en dan het moment
van passeren
heimelijk
verlang je
langzamer
te rijden

het trappen stopt
voeten van de pedalen
(soms omhoog!)
drijf je weg?
weg van de kustlijn
richting einder
om het door het
onvermijdelijk
spetteren
uit je
persoonlijke pad
tegemoet te treden

met gevaar
voor eigen leven
accepteren
we onze rol
en zorgen we
dat we overleven
in dit korte moment
tot onze uittocht

Poetics of Place

Reflection of bridge poem in the canal below—a reminder that life, poetry, the planet, are all ‘one puddle.’

Acknowledgements

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(Unlikely Books, 2021), a collaborative book written with fellow poet
Christopher Shipman about leaving New Orleans to make new homes elsewhere.