

wallonia and brussels

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DIGITAL WALLONIA

THE REGION UNVEILS ITS
ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Culture 2.0: discover new
museum of urban art Mima

Conjuring up movie magic:
Benuts is visual effects maestro

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Mima: urban mural at Mons
 by MOMO © Serge Brison



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Editorial

Brussels' Place de la Bourse (pictured above), is an improvised memorial scene in tribute to the victims of the terror attacks of 22 March. Pascale Delcomminette, General Administrator of AWEX, responded to the atrocities with a statement calling for solidarity between colleagues, Belgians and the international community. She added: "Our work towards openness is a further opportunity for us to play an on-going role in bringing cultures closer together."

With the digital sector fuelling job growth and reshaping every aspect of the world's leading economies, Wallonia has launched its own digital strategy. In tackling the challenging task, the four-year project pinpoints the region's strengths: e-health, the internet of things and augmented reality. It has also defined international ambition as being crucial for digital expansion. In a six-page report, we outline the scope of the strategy and talk to some of the actors involved. They include two local companies who have benefitted from an investment fund for digital start-ups and are now targeting international expansion.

Similar cutting-edge technology is at the heart of our feature on University of Liège spin-off Revatis. The veterinary medicine department has patented a revolutionary regenerative treatment for horses. Meanwhile, our business section looks at the mastery of visual effects company Benuts. Specialising in film and music video, it plans to exploit its graphic artistry by adding English-language blockbusters to an already star-studded portfolio. For the La Hulpe company, like many other Walloon businesses, the future is definitely digital.



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Water world

After three years in construction, Liège Trilogiport is now open as a logistical hub at the heart of Europe. Inaugurated in the presence of King Philippe at the end of 2015, the water-rail-road platform is expected to increase traffic through the autonomous port of Liège. Belgium's first inland port confirms Wallonia as a major transport and logistics centre. The opening, which included a fourth lock at Lanhaye, enables boats of up to 9,000 tons to pass through the region. Located on the Albert canal at Hermalle-sous-Argenteau, it has connections with the ports of Antwerp, Rotterdam and Dunkirk. Its trimodal capacity provides links with Brussels, Antwerp, Paris, Aachen, Cologne and Maastricht. Walloon minister for public works Maxime Prévot predicts that the platform will create 2,000 jobs directly and indirectly. The infrastructure was financed by the Walloon Public Service and the autonomous port of Liège.

➔ WWW.PORTDELIEGE.BE

PAL - CHRIS REMAULT

New start-ups born thanks to Creative Wallonia

Six new start-ups have emerged from the sixth edition of the Nest'Up incubator, organised by Creative Wallonia, which brings young innovators together with coaches, experts and mentors. They are: Sportyme, a social network for members of the sporting community, from players to federations; Wordof, a network where members help each other find a professional by word of mouth, whether a lawyer or a plumber; Beauty Dash, a platform for brides-to-be to bring them together with hairdressers, make-up experts and similar; Flavour Of, a gift-box for visitors to Namur, but adaptable to other cities, which includes an app for touring the city, regional products and discount coupons; Utopiix, an image bank aimed at community managers; and Top-pings, original recipe pizzas delivered at express speed.

Anyone for T-rex?

Usually, dining out means the choice between meals from different places, but what if the choice was between meals from different times in history? That's what's on offer at a new archaeo-restaurant in Liège, on the site of the Préhistomuseum. In charge is food historian Pierre Leclercq, an expert on the history of food, and a trained wine expert and chef. The recipes, which will be prepared by another chef, come from historical documents, most of which required a great deal of analysis and interpretation. "I'll be front of house to present and explain the dishes," Leclercq said.

➤ WWW.PREHISTO.MUSEUM



Rare artwork found in Brussels

A previously unknown work by the artist Jean Delville (1867-1958) has been discovered in the collection of the Royal Library Prints Cabinet in Brussels. The work is a drawing, dedicated to the writer and critic Maurice Sivilie, depicting a spread-eagled man being attacked by a flock of black birds, and may represent the death of Orpheus. Delville was influenced by occult philosophy, including the Rosicrucians. The drawing was donated to Sivilie's widow, whose portrait Delville also painted, but remained hidden until now. The work can be seen at the Fin-de-Siècle Museum in Brussels until 5 June.

Pairi Daiza welcomes a pair of koalas

Two koalas will soon be making their first appearance at animal park Pairi Daiza in Brugellette, to take up residence in the Jardins du Monde section of the park. The koalas come from a centre for protection and reproduction in Australia and were descendants from a genetic line so far not present among specimens in Europe. The koalas are expected in mid-March, shortly before the park reopened to the public.

Power specialist wins Google challenge

Liège company CE+T Power has won the \$1 million Google and IEEE Little Box Challenge competition. The company was awarded the prize at the ARPA-E Energy Innovation Summit in Washington DC after its winning design was chosen over 18 other finalists and hundreds of applicants from all over the world. The competition was launched in 2014 after Google teamed up with the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) in search of a new technology that could successfully shrink an inverter from the size of a cool-box to the size of a small laptop. CE+T Power's innovative Effy project boasts a smaller design than the brief requested and uses technology already on the market. Robert Eyben, CEO of CE+T Power, said: "Winning presents us with a unique head-start to address the crucial improvements required in power backup. We identified some critical and necessary design alterations and through this innovation, we will change the future of electricity, power and even Smart Home technology."

➤ WWW.CET-POWER.COM

New rocket contract for Walloon space company

A Charleroi company has been retained to supply an important safety feature in the new Ariane 6 space rocket. Thales Alenia Space Belgium has signed an agreement with Airbus Safran Launchers (ASL) to manufacture the backup chain for the rocket, which cuts out the launcher if the rocket departs from its planned trajectory and presents a danger to people or property. Thales Alenia already makes more than half of the electronics on board the Ariane 5, as well as providing control systems for launchers on the ground. The Ariane 6 contract will supply about 100 new jobs.





© DAVID PLAS

Ikea opens in Mons

The Swedish home furnishings chain Ikea has opened a store in Mons, the only one in the country to be attached to an existing shopping centre, in this case the Grand Prés. The store covers 35,000 square metres, hopes to attract two million shoppers a year and will provide 350 jobs directly and 50 indirectly. It also features innovative elements, including 100% LED lighting, heat pumps and waste sorting. The car park has charging stations for electric cars. For the opening, in keeping with Swedish custom, a log of wood was sawn in two to bring good fortune to the store and its customers.



© BRYAN LEROIVRE

Second life for Belgium's World Expo pavilion

The government of Wallonia is to acquire the Belgian pavilion used during the universal exposition in Milan and install it in Namur. Subject to engineering studies, the pavilion will be placed at the end of the Citadelle esplanade, where the planned cable car will arrive. The acquisition was paid for 80% from Wallonia's tourism budget and the remainder from the budget of minister Jean-Claude Marcourt, whose portfolio includes innovation. It will provide a shop window for the region's technological know-how and innovative talent. Namur has been named the leading smart city in Wallonia by the tech industry federation Agoria.

La Louvière to host Belgium's Special Olympics

The 34th edition of the Special Olympics Belgium will be held in May in La Louvière, featuring 3,400 athletes with a disability and 1,200 coaches from 306 clubs from across Belgium. The games include 19 sporting disciplines, mainly in the Louvexpo but also at La Drève sports centre in nearby Manage, and the Haras Sainte-Marguerite riding school in Binche. The games take place from 4 to 7 May.

➤ WWW.SPECIAL-OLYMPICS.BE



Behind the scenes

From flying carpets to global pop stars, visual effects specialists Benuts make movies and music videos come alive

BY RENÉE CORDES

La Hulpe is no Hollywood, but a lot of movie magic is being made here at Benuts, a small company that makes visual effects for feature films.

It all happens just off the town's main square in a brick house that feels more like student housing than home to a rising star in Wallonia's creative industries, best known for its recent work with Brussels musician Stromae. But don't be fooled by the relaxed atmosphere. Graphic artists

and producers are hard at work everywhere, one transforming cracked yellowed windows to grey – think Edward Hopper meets Alfred Hitchcock – as another adds a row of buildings to a skyline shot on film.

As opposed to special effects, which are common to science-fiction films, visual effects blend live-action footage with computer-generated imagery to create scenes that appear realistic but would be impossible – sometimes too dangerous

– or too costly to film. Using computer-generated technology, Benuts can make it rain or snow in any location, land a helicopter on a crowded football field and even launch a flying carpet through the skies of Baghdad, desert Stop sign included, as seen in *The New Adventures of Aladdin* (pictured above).

“There’s a big difference between visual effects and special effects,” explains Benuts CEO Michel Denis, who is also a producer. “In visual effects, we start



©PATHE



To be nuts means to be enthusiastic and passionate about something. That's very fitting for this profession

MICHEL DENIS

from what is shot on film, and then create computer-generated imagery, to add the two- or three-dimensional elements in post-production the director wants.”

Benuts, which employs just five people full-time but regularly works with freelancers, was founded in 2010 by Belgian investors backed by a company based in France. Together, taking advantage of the Belgian Tax Shelter (a federally funded tax incentive scheme open to Belgian audiovisual productions and international co-productions that meet certain criteria), they could offer a complete and competitive solution for visual effects, computer graphics and motion design for feature films, TV series and commercials. Wallonia also has its own support and promotion fund for audiovisual works in Wallonia. After starting with offices in both

Charleroi and Brussels, Benuts moved everyone to La Hulpe, which is still an easy commute from the capital.

Why the name Benuts? “It wasn’t my idea,” admits Denis, who has been with the company from the start, “but ‘to be nuts’ means to be crazy as well as enthusiastic and passionate about something. That’s very fitting for this profession.”

Everyone on the team clearly is passionate about what they do. “Since I started working here a year ago, I’ve never watched a film the same way as I did before,” says line producer Virginie Breydel de Groeninghe. “I’m always amazed at the visual effects, especially in movies like *Star Wars*.”

Benuts works almost exclusively on feature films by French or Belgian

directors. One of its first projects was *CloClo*, Florent Emilio Siri's 2012 biopic of Claude François, the late French pop star best known for co-composing *Comme d'Habitude*, the melody later used in Frank Sinatra's *My Way*.

Other early credits include *La fée*, a 2011 French-Belgian comedy directed by and starring Dominique Abel and Fiona Gordon that picked up several prizes at Belgium's 2012 Magritte Awards, and *Un plan parfait*, a 2012 action adventure comedy starring Dany Boon and Diane Kruger. Belgian film credits include Vincent Lannoo's *Au nom du fils* and *Les rayures du zèbre* directed by Benoît Mariage, along with *L'économie du couple*, the latest by Uccle-born Joachim Lafosse scheduled for release this year. It's also done work for the small screen, like the opening titles for *La Trêve*, a new TV police series for RTBF.

Benuts has also made a big splash in the music world, through several

FACTS

Who? Benuts

What? Visual effects for feature films

Where? Based in La Hulpe, Walloon Brabant

FIGURES

2010 Year founded

5 Number of full-time employees

€2 million Annual turnover

collaborations with Belgian pop star Stromae, starting with a YouTube 'lesson' on the song *Humain à l'eau* in 2012. Several months later, Stromae enlisted Benuts to work on the visuals for his Racine Carrée concert tour, including projections for a giant video wall (pictured below), and for the music video of *Quand c'est?* a haunting song about cancer. The video, in which spidery cells invade an abandoned concert hall, has had more than 20 million views on YouTube and was named best clip in Belgium's D6bels Music Awards, the Music Industries Association Awards and the One Screen Film Festival in New York.

While Benuts would relish working with Stromae again, films remain the company's focus. It's increasingly branching out into English-language productions, such as the British science-fiction thriller *High-Rise* and *What Happened to Monday?*, an upcoming film for which Benuts made actors Glenn Close and Noomi Rapace look 15 years younger via a three-dimensional, moveable digital mask placed over the face. "That's not possible with make-up," says Denis.

In the future, Benuts hopes for more work from England and from Canada, which is eligible for the Belgian Tax Shelter, with plans to participate in an upcoming AWEX-sponsored mission to Toronto and Montreal to hunt for partners and projects. "We have a lot of graphic artists who work here who stay for one or two years and then go to England or Canada to work on blockbusters like *The Avengers* or the latest James Bond film," says Denis. "If we can get just one sequence for that type of project, that would be the way to grow."



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➔ WWW.BENUTS.BE



Ready for take-off

Sonaca announces first light aircraft production in Wallonia

BY JON ELDRIDGE

The Belgian aerospace supplier Sonaca is teaming up with South African manufacturer The Airplane Factory to develop and produce the first aircraft to be assembled in this country. First commercial production of the light aircraft is expected to begin in early 2018.

The joint venture, known as Sonaca Aircraft, will be based in Charleroi and will have a starting capital of €2 million. With the aid of a loan from Société régionale d'investissement de Wallonie, Sonaca will contribute 65% of this amount, while 25% will come from The Airplane Factory and the

remaining 10% from private Belgian investors.

The first aircraft to be developed by the new affiliate company will be called the Sonaca 200, a two-seater plane adapted for training and leisure flights. The model will be based on the Sling 2 aircraft currently manufactured by The Aircraft Factory. It will be certified in the European CS-VLA category with a maximum take-off weight of 750kg and a cruising speed of 115 knots, according to the European Aviation Safety Agency.

A demonstration model was assembled in April last year in Johannesburg and

flown to Gosselies in Hainaut – a trip across East Africa lasting more than eight days. The flight enabled engineers to evaluate the aircraft's performance over a long distance.

The company says the plane has excellent handling at very low speed, a good climbing rate and flight autonomy, and allows more than 320kg of payload. The manufacturer believes the aircraft is very secure with a robust structure.

Pierre Van Wetter, one of the engineers at Sonaca who initiated this project and is now the commercial director, is confident there is sufficient demand for the small plane. "For the first year of production, we expect to produce fifteen aircraft, increasing progressively to eighty a year," he says. The company is finalising pre-orders for the first year of production.

Currently, Sonaca Belgium employs eight people, but Van Wetter expects that the new venture will lead to the creation of 40 to 50 jobs. These will be in

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For the first year,
we expect to
produce 15 aircraft,
increasing to 80 a
year

PIERRE VAN WETTER

the fields of engineering and design, leading eventually to manufacturing positions. Sub-assembly may be subcontracted, but the final assembly and delivery will be performed locally.

Sonaca Aircraft is already assessing the feasibility of an electric version of the two-seater craft as well as a four-seater aircraft.

The initiative is in line with Sonaca's long-term strategy to extend its expertise in the field of aviation and widen its client base. The company employs 2,500 people around the world. Its main customers are Airbus, Embraer, Dassault and Bombardier. It is active in the development, manufacture and assembly of advanced civil and military aircraft structures as well as in aerospace.

Van Wetter is excited about the possibilities. The team in Belgium initially had meeting with enterprises in the field of development, he says, as well as potential customers, to explore what they could bring to the market. Instead of attempting to develop the plane from scratch, he explains, "Sonaca decided to be associated with another company that already has some experience in the field of general aviation and combine both companies' expertise."

The goal was to produce an aircraft that has a low total cost of ownership and a low impact on the environment. The plane combines proven technology and a new-generation engine that has a low (unleaded) fuel consumption. According to Van Wetter, by assembling the craft in Wallonia, a high level of quality is assured, while the central European location allows the company to deliver responsive after-sale services.



➔ WWW.SONACA-AIRCRAFT.COM

Courses for horses

A Liège spin-off is revolutionising treatment for sick and injured horses

BY SENNE STARCKX



Revatis, a spin-off rooted in the veterinary medicine department of the University of Liège, is valorising a concept that could turn the horse trading industry upside-down. Due to its patented technology to retrieve and store stem cells from individual horses, Revatis makes regenerative medicine available for every horse owner.

The horse trading industry is an important economic sector, a sector with significant involvement from emerging economies like China and Brazil and rich oil states like Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Prize-winning steeds are sold for huge amounts of money, so buying a sport or racing horse is seen as a considerable investment.

But disease and injury often throw a spanner in the works. Disorders in the locomotive system are still the main reason why sport and racing horses are discarded by their owners, for whom this is often a tragedy. Painkillers and anti-inflammatory drugs only work in the short term.

But modern veterinary medicine can help. With regenerative medicine, damaged tissues and organs can be repaired by using functional living tissues – stem cells. Indeed, although stem cell therapy is still in its infancy in human medicine, vets can already make use of several remedies, curing animals with an eye on the long term.

Just like with organ and blood transplantation, the best results are achieved if the host body recognises the new tissue as its own. Didier Serateyn, professor in veterinary medicine at the University of Liège, identified this window of opportunity a couple of years ago and developed an innovative

kit to take samples from healthy horses. More specifically, he designed a toolkit for muscle biopsies. The removed tissue can subsequently be cultivated in the lab, yielding healthy stem cells that can be stored for years in cryogenic conditions.

The lack of optimal stem cell therapies convinced Serateyn to valorise his patented technology and biopsy toolkit. In 2014 he founded the spin-off Revatis. The core business of Revatis, based in a new business and technology incubator in Marche-en-Famenne, is the biopsy of stem cells from horses and storage inside a separate, unique biobank.

“The best way to apply our veterinary medicine department’s results was to set up a spin-off,” says Jean-Philippe Lejeune, a doctor in veterinary medicine who worked with Serateyn for 15 years and joined Revatis as a business development manager in 2015. The new company has rapidly become the flagship of the university’s veterinary science department. Among Revatis’s stakeholders are the university’s



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veterinary horse clinic, the Centre for Oxygen, Research and Development – for fundamental research – and the European Horse Centre of Mont-le-Soie in Vielsalm – for applied research.

Although it's Revatis's core business, stem cell therapies are not the only remedies it offers. The company also specialises in treatments that are popular among vets to support tissue growth in horses, like matrix therapy (using a new generation of hyaluronic acid) and growth factors. "These are applied in the treatment of joints, tendons and ligaments," says Lejeune, "in case of inflammation, tears or as a complement to joint surgery."

The functioning of stem cell therapy in horses rests on the observation, discovered by Serateyn, that pluripotent cells – cells that can transform themselves into any type of cell – stimulate the recovery of elastic and functional tissue, such as in a tendon. The key element in this function is the autologous character of the stem cells. Lejeune: "Because every horse only gets stem cells that we've cultivated from cells taken from this horse, we avoid rejection symptoms. Moreover, the technique we developed, which is available in a special toolkit, is minimally invasive. So biopsies can be applied routinely without hindering a horse's physical condition or training schedule." The fact that it's minimally invasive is a property by which Revatis wants to distinguish itself from other providers of horse stem cells, which are mostly derived from fatty tissue, the umbilical cord and bone marrow.

The cultivation of stem cells happens in a modern laboratory inside the Novalis Business Center. "The fact we have such infrastructure is important, as the legislation regarding stem



With our biobank,
every horse can
have a supply of
its own stem cells
at its disposal
immediately

JEAN-PHILIPPE LEJEUNE

cells in veterinary medicine will soon become more stringent," says Lejeune.

The creation of a unique biobank for stem cells allows a preventive approach in the treatment of injured or sick horses. "The delay between the sampling of a horse's healthy tissue and the availability of cultivated stem cells meant that valuable time was lost before the treatment could start," says Lejeune. "With our biobank, every horse can have a supply of its own stem cells at its disposal immediately."

Horse owners have to pay when they want to create a stem cell culture in Revatis's biobank. Afterwards, when their animal needs treatment, they pay again for receiving a batch of stem cells. Revatis's business model supports the involvement of vets, for whom the company has designed a toolkit to take biopsies. "The rehabilitation process of horses after treatment can last three to six months," says Lejeune. "We think it's a real plus if we stay connected with these professionals during the follow-up care of the horses."

Treating a horse with its own stem cells also has an inherently local dimension, says Lejeune. "When stem cells come to our biobank, or when they're sent to vets and horse owners, we have to respect a time window of 48 hours. This of course means we can't send our cell cultures to the other side of the planet. Sanitary regulations also prevent us from doing this." But Revatis has found a way round this geographical limitation. Last year the company set up smaller biobanks in Texas and in Dubai, two important markets in the horse trading business. "We are proud to have set up in three continents already. That's not bad for a spin-off that was only created two years ago."

Digital everything

Wallonia has a new strategy to boost its digital economy, from smart cities and e-health to the internet of things

BY IAN MUNDELL

Wallonia is at a crossroads in its digital development. It has some excellent companies that have taken innovative digital products and services to international markets. But this hasn't been enough to transform the region's traditional economy into a digital economy, with all the benefits this would bring.

André Blavier, who is in charge of communication at Wallonia's Digital Agency (AdN), sees a parallel in Belgium's national football team. "The Red Devils are strong at the moment, but no player on the national team plays for a Belgian club, so we don't have clubs that are able to play at the European level," he says. "What we want is for our companies to play at least on the European level, because if you can play at the European level you can play on the world level."

So the challenge is to create a strong digital economy at home that will push more Walloon companies up into the European league. This is the aim of the Digital Wallonia strategy, adopted by the regional government in December last year and backed with a budget of €503 million over four years.

The task is not to be underestimated. Wallonia is a small market, in which demand for digital products and services is still limited. "Both public services and the classic economic sectors are not mature enough, and so they don't ask the digital sector for big or intensive digital projects," Blavier explains.

This in turn gives digital companies little incentive to innovate. "It's a vicious circle: there is a lack of demand, and so this has a direct impact on the offer from the digital sector."

At the same time, many digital companies appear satisfied with the modest business they can do on home ground. "We know that if you want to be a leader in the digital sector you have to have international ambition, and too many digital companies in Wallonia are happy with their small markets."

The key to breaking this vicious circle is to target specific areas where Wallonia is strong, such as e-health, the internet of things, and augmented reality. "These are sub-sectors where we know that we have good companies, with good knowledge and good skills."



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If you can play at the European level, you can play on the world level

ANDRÉ BLAVIER



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The Digital Wallonia strategy is broader than this, however. Actions are grouped under five major headings:

- The digital sector, with goals such as helping digital companies grow and develop international business
- Doing business digitally, which will encourage other companies to go digital
- A smart and connected territory, which addresses deficiencies in broadband, wireless and other networks
- Digital skills and education, in schools and beyond
- Converting public services to digital

“It’s only the beginning of the strategy, but we hope to go quickly,” says Blavier. “We will have initiatives in the long term, but also quick wins, so we can say that it’s running, it’s a success and we can see the results.” This is one of the major roles of the Digital Wallonia platform, which is already online and will benefit from a collaborative governance involving the major actors and federations of the region’s digital ecosystem.

The focus on smart cities is already well advanced, for example. “There is a working group involving all the big cities in Wallonia that will create a smart region strategy in place of having a separate strategy for each city.” Other

sectors, such as health and construction, will get a similar targeted approach. Progress is also being made with a programme encouraging the retail sector in Wallonia to adopt e-commerce, and the public sector will be encouraged to open its data and services.

Another early project will be the creation of the Digital Wallonia Hub, which will network researchers in the region's universities and research institutes, ensuring that they work on issues that are strategic priorities for the digital economy. It will also create a brand for digital research in the region, with the aim of raising its profile across Europe.

The most advanced initiative is the Wallonia Innovation and Growth fund, which was launched in February. Worth €50 million, the fund will invest in digital start-ups at the very beginning of their lives, allowing entrepreneurs to refine their ideas to the point where they can approach new investors, and again when they have some private investment but need a boost to go further.

"When you're a digital start-up you have to go quickly," Blavier explains, "and the classic mechanisms for finance and support are not well adapted to this task."

Two companies have already been supported during the fund's pilot stage. One is Listminut, a sharing economy website that helps people find neighbours willing to help with tasks such as assembling furniture, looking after pets or gardening. The other is Neveo, which has ideas for keeping senior citizens connected with their families.

The internet of things, one of the hottest digital sectors at present, will benefit

Thingsplay opens up the internet of things

Thingsplay is involved in the nuts and bolts of the internet of things, providing a service that allows companies to collect, move and store data extremely quickly. The kind of data is irrelevant, but it could be from sensors, from machines or industrial installations.

Its product has three components: an electronic board that gathers data and can move it to any kind of network; a data management backbone that allows information to be moved very quickly; and a database for storage.

The innovation here is not in the technology, but in knowing how existing systems can be combined to meet a need. "This is industrial technology that is well known but which we bring together to provide a good, low-cost solution," says co-founder Frédéric Jourdain.

The business model is also innovative, with companies paying only for what they use, when they use it, rather than buying an off-the-shelf system that may be over-specified for the task. "We are much more flexible and agile in providing an adapted solution."

One customer is Stûv, a Walloon company that sells stoves burning compressed wood pellets. Thingsplay's system connects with sensors in each stove, collecting data on their performance and allowing users to control the device remotely. This data also allows Stûv to see when stoves need a maintenance check.

Another client is Veolia, where Thingsplay's system is used on data from the company's water treatment systems. "We gather all the data and provide it to the customer's desktop business intelligence system."

Based in Namur, the company employs five people, with plans to grow to seven or eight by the end of the year. A funding round in December brought in €450,000 from public and private investors, to support further growth and international expansion.



▲ Frédéric Jourdain

"Now we are addressing the French market. After that we will go to Germany and the Netherlands, then all over Europe," says Jourdain. The longer term is harder to predict. "The internet of things market develops very quickly, and perhaps in three or four years we will be integrated into a major company. That could be IBM, Microsoft, Google... Why not?"

➔ WWW.THINGSPLAY.COM

Opinum makes buildings smarter

Opinum was inspired by Loïc Bar's desire to use his skills as a data analyst to benefit the planet. "I was always interested in the environmental sector, and in talking with another entrepreneur I figured out there was a need for a platform that would help energy-efficiency experts and building owners take better care over what their buildings consume."

The energy consumed by buildings accounts for around 40 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, so making them more energy-efficient will both reduce emissions and save building operators money. But in order to achieve this you need detailed information about how and when energy is being consumed. "This is something utility bills cannot tell you," Bar says.

The internet of things approach adopted by Opinum allows the building itself to say more about how it's using energy and water, thanks to sensors installed for the purpose or already in place. "We help to collect this data, often across multiple buildings, then we provide the analytical tools to make sense of the data," Bar explains. "People can then use this information to take action to decrease energy consumption in the building, and our tools will then tell them how much they saved."

Customers pay a licence fee to use the platform, called opiSense. At the moment Opinum is focusing on business and public-sector clients, such as Microsoft in Belgium and municipalities such as Herve and Louvain-la-Neuve. "The business model and the cost of this system is not yet right for single households, but that will come in the future."

In October last year the company raised €1.1 million from public and private investors to support further growth. The next step is to scale up. "We have 10 customers and we need to prove that the model works for 100 customers," Bar says.

"The second thing is to prove that we can be international." Projects are already under way in France and Luxembourg, with other countries to come.

Opinum currently has 10 full-time employees in Liège and Braine-l'Alleud, but plans to move its headquarters to Charleroi in the near future.



▲ Loïc Bar

➤ WWW.OPINUM.COM

from many of the actions in the strategy, but it's one of the hardest to pin down. The initial idea that everyday objects can be made to communicate across digital networks has expanded so quickly that it now covers a vast range of applications.

"The internet of things is a car, it's a device, it's a wearable," Blavier says, "so it's very difficult to see that as a unique technology. We see more opportunities for targeting specific uses of the internet of things, so the internet of things for smart cities, for e-health, for mobility and so on."

Walloon companies working with the internet of things have their own priorities, of course. For Frédéric Jourdain, co-founder of Thingsplay, the most important goal is to improve the infrastructure that allows it to function. Some kinds of network have yet to be fully deployed across Wallonia and Brussels, or are in the hands of just one operator, limiting choice.

"We can see that things are improving, but we are late," he says. "I see my competitors in France and Germany already testing their products in large proof-of-concept trials, on various types of network, which is not possible in Wallonia."

He also worries that insufficient resources will be available to address all the strategy's priorities. But the consultation and networking involved in drawing it up has already produced benefits. "Everyone knows who is who, and the relationships created in preparing the plan have produced a real digital ecosystem in Wallonia."

Loïc Bar, chief executive of Opinum, thinks the strategy is pressing the right buttons. His company has already



© IMAGEZOO/CORBIS

benefited from the kind of support that will come through the Wallonia Innovation and Growth fund, and he is positive about the research initiative. “We already get some subsidies for research and development,” he says, “and we want to foster collaborations with universities and research centres in Wallonia, to make sure that we stay ahead of the competition.”

But he also thinks the big opportunities lie in a particular approach to the

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Perhaps in three or four years we will be integrated into a major company

FRÉDÉRIC JOURDAIN

internet of things. “The challenge is not really in creating billions of devices or ensuring that the connectivity is there, but what you do with the data generated by these devices,” he concludes. “And I think that’s where we need to support companies, making sure we have the engineers and the skills to make sense of the huge amount of data we’re going to generate though the internet of things.”

➤ WWW.DIGITALWALLONIA.BE

Art 2.0

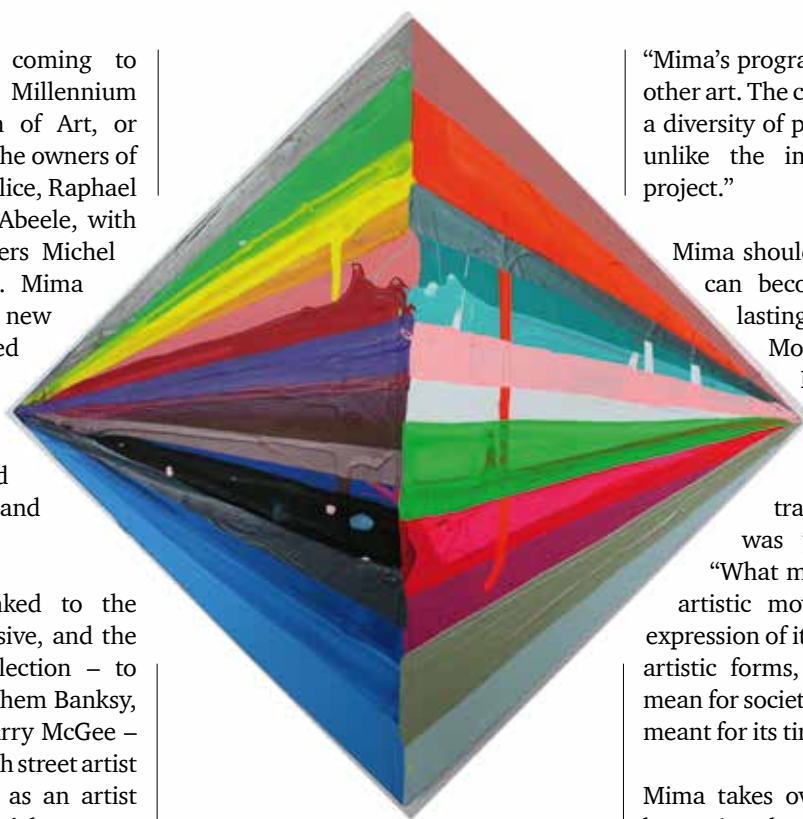
Brussels is about to open its doors to plastic and urban art

BY LIZ NEWMARK

A new museum is coming to Brussels. The Millennium Iconoclast Museum of Art, or Mima, is the brainchild of the owners of contemporary art gallery Alice, Raphael Cruyt and Alice Van Den Abeele, with help from artistic producers Michel and Florence de Launoit. Mima will trace the history of new urban art forms influenced by the internet since 2000 – namely plastic and performance art, graffiti and graphics, skateboard and surfing art, tattoo and fashion design.

Culture 2.0 is often linked to the subculture and the subversive, and the museum's permanent collection – to include 40 works, among them Banksy, Blu, Parra, Invader and Barry McGee – will reflect this. As the British street artist Banksy put it, to succeed as an artist today, with 2.0 art, "You don't have to go to college, drag round a portfolio, mail off transparencies to snotty galleries or sleep with someone powerful. All you need now is a few ideas and a broadband connection." Mima will bring this philosophy to Brussels.

"Mima will further strengthen Brussels's position as a tourist hub and expand its cultural opportunities, but also its place as an innovative platform for contemporary art," says Cruyt. "We want to show atypical artists in the contemporary arts scene that are nevertheless very present in the public eye. The aim is to renew an emotional connection with the public."



▲ Maya Hayuk, courtesy Alice gallery

"Mima's programme is very different to other art. The capital of Europe deserves a diversity of points of view, something unlike the image of the European project."

Mima should also prove that 2.0 art can become as iconic or long-lasting as Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa or Andy Warhol's Heinz tomato soup can – even if its nature is more transient. "The world is in permanent transition today, just as it was yesterday," Cruyt says.

"What makes a work of art or an artistic movement relevant is the expression of its era. This is why Mima's artistic forms, our culture 2.0, could mean for society tomorrow what Pop art meant for its time."

Mima takes over the former Bellevue breweries by the canal in central Brussels, next to the trendy Meininger hotel. After the grand opening at the end of March, Mima aims to attract 30,000 visitors in its first year, increasing to around 50,000.

The 1,200m² space in the red brick building will contain eight exhibition rooms over three floors hosting the permanent and temporary collections, with the fourth reserved for workshops. With a video room and art shop, Mima promises conferences, lectures, live music and children's events to accompany its temporary exhibitions. The rooftop offers a panoramic view of the city.

Cruyt explains that Mima's artistic, educational and academic initiatives are boost to the Molenbeek district of Brussels. "I think the image of Molenbeek will improve rapidly by itself." Molenbeek is poor but cosmopolitan and has a promising future with a growing social mix.

"The target audience is mainly international, so we expect Mima to have an impact on tourism; and beyond that it will improve the image of the



▲ Give Up by Dutch artist Parra, who also designed the museum's logo

region. It could also develop city trip tourism in Brussels and in Charleroi," he says. The Alice gallery recently hosted Charleroi's biennial of urban art.

Mima will present two temporary exhibitions each year. Its first, *City Lights*, chosen with a nod to the classic Charlie Chaplin movie, will be welcomed in with live music in the first four days. The exhibition, which runs until the end of August, showcases five acclaimed American, mainly New York-based, artists, with the idea behind the title that these artists have lit up cities through urban projects or playful street corner art.

Monumental abstract and psychedelic painter Maya Hayuk is due to present a giant fresco; construction genius Swoon (her real name is the intriguing Caledonia Dance Curry) will showcase one of her sustainable wooden installations; the duo Faile will show off their pulp image creations; and urban artist Momo – already known here for his vibrant street art for Mons 2015 – is set to treat the public to more exciting urban art experiences.

Mima has been made possible thanks to several partners including building owners Nelson Canal, A2M architects, Circles Group, Promo Signs, Boomerang and Clear Channel communication agencies and printers Artoos/Hayez. The museum will also be funded by the museum's takings, private sponsors, friends of the museum and subsidies.

➤ WWW.MIMAMUSEUM.EU



Growing local roots

Wallonia's gastronomic chef movement is revolutionising the region's food identity

BY SARAH CREW

Generation W is going from strength to strength. Since its foundation in 2012, the collective has more than doubled the number of chefs that have signed up to its charter promoting regional gastronomy and artisan producers. It has also launched a successful publishing wing and is playing a key role in creating sustainable food for the future.

At the heart of the movement is the special relationship between local food suppliers and the chefs who

put their food and products on the table. Wallonia, with its rich culinary heritage, has a flourishing number of Michelin-starred restaurants. Many have a rural location, and in their pursuit of a new *cuisine du terroir*, restaurateurs have developed a close link with their suppliers.

Some have taken the 'farm-to-table' movement one step closer by growing herbs and vegetables on the premises. One such chef is media-savvy two-Michelin-star Sang Hoon Degeimbre, who founded Generation W with fellow

passionate chefs, Jean-Luc Pigneur and Benoît Cloes. Pigneur runs the Vieuxart Academy of Culinary Arts in Wavre (pictured above), while Cloes is the proprietor of culinary bookshop Le Libraire Toqué in Namur.

The collective has grown from 10 to 24 of Wallonia's top gourmet talents, along with the number of artisans and food producers. They have all signed up to a charter that has expanded from 10 to 13 points; pledging to work sustainably with local produce and suppliers and to pass on their skills to a new generation.



▲ Sang Hoon Degeimbre

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The chefs are there to show off the producer, as we've forgotten that we are reliant on their produce

Forget the cliché about chefs and outrageous egos: Generation W places artisans centre stage. Pigneur says, “Our philosophy is that the chefs are really there to show off the producer, as we've perhaps forgotten that we are reliant on their produce.” Artisans include local artists, such as ceramic designers, who create handmade tableware for some of the restaurants.

He believes Generation W's promotion of *produits du terroir* and a dynamic creative cuisine plays a special role in boosting tourism and the economy. “This is one reason why it makes sense to develop our activities and showcase them abroad,” he says. He thinks this is partly due to Wallonia's occasional lack of chauvinism. “In the mindset of Walloons, it's necessary to be recognised abroad before being proud of themselves.”

On the national and international scene, the movement has been championing the region's culinary and artisan talent in a series of high-profile events. In Wallonia there has been a banquet for loyal clients and charity work such as Noël Solidaire.

As Generation W's charter includes a pledge to encourage culinary exchange and innovation, one of its key activities is the Smart Gastronomy Lab (SGL). Showing that Walloon cuisine is not only about tradition, the project explores the future of food and sustainable healthy eating. This includes 3D food printing and developing ingredients such as insects and algae. The experimental laboratory is run by Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech and the University of Liège.

For Pigneur, the lab is an opportunity for the public to see what technology brings to gastronomy. “While we are concerned with going back to basics such as home-grown vegetables, at the same time we have to look to the future.”

This theme continues with Generation W's participation in Intelligent Nutrition by SiiN. The Scientific Institute for Intelligent Nutrition was set up to scientifically explore the links between nutrition and health. Chefs work with doctors, pharmacists and nutritionists to create healthy dishes. Pigneur says: “We aim to increase fibre, protein, antioxidants and non-allergenic foods, while the other specialists are there to explain why one particular ingredient works best with another, for example the benefits of combining pepper with turmeric.”

Another integral part of Generation W's charter is for chefs to pass on their skills to a future generation. Five years ago, Pigneur set up the non-profit Vieusart Academy for newly-qualified and ambitious chefs. On leaving catering college, they spend six weeks at the academy, sharpening their skills, before completing three successive apprenticeships in Belgium's top restaurants. “We serve as a platform for young talent and place them directly in the gastronomic world,” he says.

For culinary inspiration from the region's chefs, publishing wing Generation W Editions produces beautiful books of mouthwatering dishes. Following a first work in 2013, presenting its initial line-up of chefs in *Une Terre, des Hommes et des Recettes*, a collection of recipes by ‘Top Chef’ Julien Lapraille followed in 2014. The collective's chefs then reappeared in *Saveurs & valeurs. Recettes du terroir*, while in December 2015, Generation W Editions published *L'Amandier – Cuisine, père & fils* by chef duo Martin and Marc'O Volkaerts. Four more titles are planned for 2016 dedicated to Generation W chefs, as well as a book on the gastronomy of Namur commissioned by the city.

WWW.GENERATIONW.BE

All aboard the design train

Shared workspace and business centre opens near Liège's landmark station

BY KAREN MCHUGH

An ambitious space for designers has been launched in Liège's recently revamped train station district. Intended to be a platform where creative professionals can network and establish their projects, Design Station Wallonia provides the blueprint that will pave the way for the designers of the future.

Design Station Wallonia is a one-stop shop for local designers, with a showroom, meeting and conference amenities, a workshop and co-working spaces, as well as a business centre, parking and office space. Designers and creators will find all the resources they need to develop their skills and advance their projects. The forces behind the project are SPI – the economic development agency for the province of Liège – and two other associations active in the sector, Job'In Design and Wallonie Design.

The idea, according to SPI design manager Isabelle Kruyts, came from the Walloon minister for economy, Jean-Claude Marcourt, who has always been involved in design as part of his remit. He saw design as a plus for the economy, something that helps to boost companies and SMEs. Wallonia was then chosen by the European Commission in 2013 as a European Creative District, making it a good time to introduce a dedicated workspace to encourage the creative industry. It was to be open to

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It offers designers professional surroundings that they won't find at home

ISABELLE KRUYTS

everybody and would highlight what design can bring to companies and to people's lives by creating a centre where designers and businesses could meet and work together. The building was realised with a grant from the European Regional Development Fund.

The Design Station is a short walk from the Liège-Guillemins station, designed by acclaimed Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava. Was this association with design a happy accident or did they seek out such an inspiring site? "We didn't exactly choose," says Kruyts. "We had to use land belonging to the city of Liège – that was the deal. But for us it's an excellent location, being so close to the station, and the fact that it was built



▲ The opening of Design Station Wallonia



by a well-known architect is of great interest for us. Plus the new Finance Tower is just a few metres away, and it's near the centre of Liège and the Médiacité media complex. It really is the best location, even though we didn't specifically choose that spot."

The plan is for the Design Station to be open to as many as possible. "A few years ago, the neighbourhood around the station used to be a place where you didn't want to hang around," says Kruyts. "But now the whole area is being regenerated and it will be great when everything is finished – full of life, and the Design Station will be part of that."

Fittingly, there are some surprising aspects to the architectural features of the building itself. It has a textile skin, the first building in Liège to do so. The idea came from the director, who had attended an innovative materials fair where one of the exhibitors was displaying the material. "The colour changes according to the weather," says

Kruyts. "So it changes quite a lot!" It's a modern environment with very bright spaces, conceived by the architect to help the designers based there be creative. It also includes an exhibition centre and conference rooms, where people can meet and work together, while also having a place to exhibit their work.

Kruyts explains the need to support designers as they establish themselves. "Firstly, you have the difference between being an artist and a designer: as a designer, you always have to explain your job. An artist works under his own inspiration, but a designer has technical rules to follow, not just aesthetic. They have to pay attention to marketing, they must make sure the product can be produced, that they have the tools. For things like furniture, graphic design, textile design and packaging – designers have a role to play in all of this." And this support extends further, with plans to get people from other professions to give workshops on

topics such as intellectual property and marketing.

The Design Station management are recruiting prospective clients and expect most designers to come through Job'In, a kind of middleman that will rent spaces to designers and help people find work and start their own businesses. What other advantages does the workspace provide?

"There's easy access, thanks to the station. It's very flexible: you can rent for an hour, half a day, or two days, and it won't be very expensive, because of the help from Job'In and public funds," Kruyts explains. "It also offers designers professional surroundings that they won't find at home, that business aspect that means they don't have to meet a client in their garage." There's also a workshop where they can use tools provided and create prototypes. "It gives designers the chance to talk about their ideas and exchange information, as opposed to being at home alone."

What does the future hold for design in Wallonia? "The government is still promoting design," says Kruyts. "If companies want support, design can be one entry to that. The government of Wallonia will support companies that are creative and want to innovate – and they can innovate through design."

➔ WWW.DESIGN-STATION.BE

Runway success

Rising fashion stars from the Walloon province of Luxembourg were in the spotlight at the first ever Lux Fashion Week. Designers, stylists, hat makers, jewellery and accessory designers presented their creations on the catwalk in front of a sell-out crowd in Arlon last autumn. They included students from the dressmaking section of Institut Notre Dame d'Arlon and hairdressing and make-up department of Institut de la Sainte-Famille in Virton. The show was

designed to promote the work and know-how of young talent in the province. The week-long event included fashion parades, photo shoots, pop-up stores, talks, workshops and a walking tour of designers in Arlon town centre.

➤ WWW.LUXFASHIONWEEK.BE





© DOMINIQUE GAUL

MUSIC



©JULIE CALBERT

LES NUITS BOTANIQUE

Well-known as one of the main concert venues of the city, Le Botanique also hosts its own major music festival every year in Brussels. Les Nuits Botanique offer 10 days of music and encompasses all genres, ranging from up-and-coming new artists to more established names. Both international and local groups feature, with many bands having started their careers here. Concerts take place in various venues from the Orangerie to the Cirque Royal. Rising Walloon star Alice on the Roof (pictured) is among the performers this year.

WHAT? LES NUITS BOTANIQUE

WHEN? 5 MAY-7 JUNE

WHERE? BRUSSELS

www.botanique.be



MITHRA JAZZ

This jazz festival started with big ambitions in 1990, with Chick Corea on its programme. It continues the high standard to this day, bringing together international and Belgian jazz musicians who perform the genre in all its styles. The festival has grown over the years and now takes place over five days in May, with different ticket types available including a full festival pass. It now takes place in the centre of the city, making it more accessible. Pictured: London act Sons of Kemet.

WHAT? MITHRA JAZZ

WHEN? 10-14 MAY

WHERE? ACROSS LIEGE

www.jazzalliege.be

FESTIVAL



©VISITBRUSSELS

FÊTE DE L'IRIS

Now in its 27th year, the festival of the Brussels-Capital Region unites all its communes in one annual celebration. It takes its name from the iris, the emblem of the city and an homage to the marshes on which Brussels originally stood. On the programme are free concerts, street parties and activities for all. At Schuman there'll be a European Village where citizens can learn more about the European institutions and this year it will also incorporate the Brussels Food Truck Festival.

WHAT? FÊTE DE L'IRIS

WHEN? 7 & 8 MAY

WHERE? ACROSS BRUSSELS

www.fetedeliris.brussels

FILM

BRUSSELS SHORT FILM FESTIVAL

With 25,000 spectators, the Brussels Short Film Festival draws together lovers of cinema, both audience and professionals. It presents a wide range of short films around the city including at Bozar, Flagey and Cinéma Vendôme. Over the course of the festival, more than 300 films will be shown, either fiction or animation, and at just half an hour per movie, there's plenty of time to catch a few flicks.

WHAT? BRUSSELS SHORT FILM FESTIVAL

WHEN? 27 APR-8 MAY

WHERE? ACROSS BRUSSELS

bsff.be

HERITAGE



© WBT - J. JEANMART

WATERLOO RE-ENACTMENT

The big celebrations for the 200th anniversary of the battle were last year, but the re-enactment at Waterloo is worth a look any year, as the actors honour the memories of the soldiers who took part. Participants – at least 700 every year – come from all over the world to act out the famous battle with a keen eye on authenticity. The town comes alive on the day as people flock from far and wide to witness history unfold before their eyes.

WHAT? BATTLE OF WATERLOO RE-ENACTMENT

WHEN? 19 JUNE

WHERE? WATERLOO



DUCASSE DE MONS

The Doudou festival, as it is known locally, happens every year on Trinity Sunday and along with its neighbour Binche is classed as a Unesco Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Traditionally there is a procession and a fight between Saint George and the dragon, in keeping with to the old legend. Join the townsfolk as they watch the festivities, usually with a beer and some frites in hand. Military bands play throughout the weekend and there is a concert to kick off celebrations on the Friday night.

WHAT? DUCASSE DE MONS

WHEN? 22 MAY

WHERE? MONS

www.doudou.mons.be

EXHIBITIONS



© THE DUTCH NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND SPAARNESTAD PHOTO

J'AI ME LES BELGES

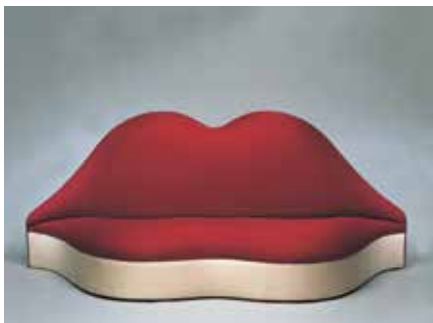
This exhibition at the Jacques Brel centre in Brussels explores the celebrated singer's love-hate relationship with what he called "the flat country" – Belgium, his country of birth. Through interviews with Brel and accounts from those close to him, we can delve into his world, his songs and his bond with his homeland. With five areas devoted to the story, it's a great opportunity for fans to get to know the singer more profoundly in his native city.

WHAT? J'AI ME LES BELGES

WHEN? MAY AND JUNE

WHERE? EDITIONS JACQUES BREL, BRUSSELS

www.jacquesbrel.be



© FUNDACIO GALA SALVADOR DALI

DE SALVADOR A DALI

Liège's high-speed railway station, designed by Spanish modernist Santiago Calatrava, is a work of art in its own right. This year the architectural marvel hosts a treasure trove of paintings and sculptures by Calatrava's countryman, Salvador Dalí. The sprawling 2,000-square-metre exhibition plunges visitors into the wild and crazy world of the 20th-century Surrealist with life-sized recreations of many of his most iconic works. It promises to be a smorgasbord of melting clocks.

WHAT? DE SALVADOR A DALI

WHEN? UNTIL 31 AUGUST

WHERE? LIEGE-GUILLEMINS, LIEGE

www.expodali.be



© ASSEL BATAILLE DE WATERLOO 2015

LET BATTLE COMMENCE

Franky Simon comes from Tubize and works at the Royal Library in Brussels. He has been taking part in the Waterloo re-enactment for 17 years, starting out in the infantry and working his way through the ranks to become Maréchal Ney for last year's bicentenary celebrations.

For the actors, the re-enactment is a complete immersion in the practices of the time, he explains, and each actor has to find their own costume. "We don't use modern fabric. We use material like they did back then. We eat like them, we sleep like them," he says. Authenticity is very important and Simon uses his experience in the library to carry out research on what costumes and customs were like. "When I started, the internet was not a big thing, but now we find a lot on the internet. We're always looking for primary sources throughout the year, things we can use in the re-enactment."

On the weekend of the battle, the soldiers get into character and even sleep in tents on the Saturday night. The morning of the battle they do drills, clean their weapons and train, before eventually starting the re-enactment in the evening. The main event can last up to two and a half hours. There's no age limit, with children as young as 12 participating, and a number of 70-year-old veterans who still take part. "And then the next day, it's back to normal life. You play a role, you're an actor for two days."


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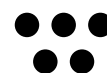
Very high density of 
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education establishments

6 **COMPETITIVENESS**
_____ **CLUSTERS** in
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OF LIFE

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AVAILABLE 
WORKFORCE

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