

wallonia and brussels

autumn 2018

wab  
magazine

Discover a region that combines  
technical knowhow with quality of life

# HIGH FLYERS

WALLONIA EXCELS IN FIELDS  
FROM AVIATION TO ZOOLOGY

- Meet the companies pioneering green chemistry techniques
- Redu welcomes the region's newest art museum



© EKA/Belga

# Editorial

The first woman to head the Belgian Brewer's Federation is Nathalie Poissonnier who will be defending the rights of small brewers and increasing partnerships with interested parties. Belgian beer may have received Unesco recognition in 2017, but it's a sector that's proving dynamic and ambitious.

Another industry undergoing change is green chemistry, the subject of our focus in this issue. Read about how Wallonia is targeting clean working methods and leading the way in anti-pollution innovations. With the launch of its light aircraft destined for flying schools and the leisure market, Sonaca Aircraft is reviving a former area of excellence. The first new Belgian aeroplane in decades recalls a bygone age when aircraft design and construction was commonplace in Wallonia. Charleroi-based Avions Fairey paved the way for Sonaca Group, a global aerospace company that shows the region's continuing ambition to soar on the international stage.

Don't forget to download **the WAB magazine app**, now available for Android and iOS. Go to Google Play or iTunes and keep up-to-date with news and events in Wallonia and Brussels.

## Wallonia and Brussels - Contact

AWEX Wallonia Export-Investment Agency  
[www.awex.be](http://www.awex.be)

WBI Wallonie-Bruxelles International  
[www.wbi.be](http://www.wbi.be)

Welcome Offices  
[www.investinwallonia.be](http://www.investinwallonia.be)



Wallonia.be

EXPORT  
INVESTMENT

**Editor** Sarah Crew

**Deputy editor** Sally Tipper

**Reporters** Lisa Bradshaw, Andy Furniere, Betina Kiefer, Clodagh Kinsella, Paul McNally, Emma Portier Davis, Saffina Rana

**Art director** Patricia Brossel

**Managing director** Hans De Loore

## AWEX/WBI and Ackroyd Publications

Pascale Delcomminette – AWEX/WBI

Marie-Catherine Duchène

AWEX, Place Saintelette 2, 1080 Brussels, Belgium

**Tel:** 00.32(0)2.421.85.76, **Fax:** 00.32(0)2.421.83.93

**Email:** mc.duchene@awex.be



No Country for Old Men by Lanzavecchia + Wai

© Tomas Ivanauskas

- 4** News and business updates from around the region
- 6** Profile: Nathalie Poissonnier is the new head of Belgium's brewers
- 8** Medinbio offers a natural alternative to agricultural pesticides
- 10** Industry insights into textile and plastics at first international conference in Liège
- 11** Indian sugar giant Petiva invests in Hainaut manufacturing plant
- 13** It's a successful take-off for the Sonaca 200, Belgium's first new aircraft in decades
- 16** Meet Welshman Rhodri Thomas, a long-time Brussels expat
- 17** How is Wallonia's chemicals industry preparing for a green future?
- 22** Regional produce gets a boost thanks to the Bistrot de Terroir food network
- 23** Wallonia's rural Famenne-Ardenne area wins Unesco Global Geopark recognition
- 24** New museum Mudia makes 700 years of Western art accessible
- 26** Liège hosts extended third edition of respected Reciprocity design festival
- 28** Panorama: Exotic animal park Pairi Daiza wins international award
- 30** Our pick of cultural events in Wallonia and Brussels

**Cover:** Pairi Daiza © Virginie Lefour/Belga

## RESEARCHERS MAKE JUVENILE EPILEPSY DISCOVERY

Researchers at the University of Liège have discovered a gene responsible for juvenile epilepsy. The debilitating disease starts in adolescence and is marked by muscle twitches and convulsions – but it leaves no severe lesions on the brain that can show up on a standard MRI scan. The researchers found that the disease forms during the embryonic development of the patient in the womb. A first gene responsible for brain development, Myoclonin 1, was discovered by the Liège team in 2009. A second gene has now been found that is present in some families of epilepsy sufferers and plays an important role in controlling the migration of embryonic nerve cells.

## MADE IN LIÈGE: REBRANDED BASTOGNE BREWERY TAKES GOLD

A beer aged for six months in oak barrels has won a gold medal at this year's regional beer awards, the Concours Wallon. Brasserie Minne, the new name for the Brasserie de Bastogne, is celebrating winning five medals, including gold for its 11%-proof oak-aged Ardenne Wood My Deer. The brewery's Ardenne Stout also won gold, with silver medals going to the Ardenne Triple, Wood Givrée and Super Sanglier. The 10-year-old brewery, which started as a hobby, today produces 140,000 litres a year – about half of which is exported. "We try to anticipate trends," says head brewer Marc Cleeremans. "We aim to be a bit ahead, which encourages us to research, to develop new beers and to respond to customers' evolving curiosity. People are always keen for new products and new flavours." Brasserie Minne's more unusual products include salted varieties and beers flavoured with blackcurrant and cognac.

[brassiereminne.be](http://brassiereminne.be)



© C Lessire, KIKK

## Kikk festival gets digital

Wallonia's regional capital, Namur, lives up to its smart credentials as it stages the eighth edition of the digital and creative Kikk Festival from 1 to 4 November. Science and technology meet art at the event, from awe-inspiring installations and parties to conferences and workshops. While there are pro events for those working in digital arts and design, there's plenty to keep the casual observer busy, such as talks by the New York Times' Graham McDonnell, who creates stories for brands, and Nelly Ben Hayoun, creator of the International Space Orchestra.

[kikk.be](http://kikk.be)

## ABANDONED SUPERMARKET BECOMES TEMPLE OF URBAN ART

A Brussels non-profit has taken over an abandoned Delhaize supermarket in Ixelles and transformed it into a cathedral of urban art. A collective of the best Belgian and international street artists have covered the walls and ceilings of the disused store on Chaussée de Waterloo with an array of styles, colours and subject matters. The concept has been created by Strokar, an organisation that supports urban art.

[strokar.be](http://strokar.be)



## BUSINESS BRIEFS

A new air cargo service between Liège and the central Chinese hub of Wuhan aims to help European firms shipping car parts to China, and Chinese manufacturers of clothing, electronics and machinery exporting to Europe. Uni-Top Airlines will operate three return flights a week, using a wide-body Boeing B747-400F capable of carrying up to 110 tonnes.

Liège-based pharma firm Mithra, which specialises in women's health, has signed an agreement to sell its Estelle contraceptive pill in South Korea. It has reached a licensing deal with South Korean market leader Hyundai Pharm. The country's contraceptive market has an estimated annual value of €36 million.

Business funding group Meusinvest helped 175 companies raise capital or borrow money over the past year, injecting €100 million into the local economy, according to its annual report. The Liège initiative has supported local biotechs and contributed to two property renovation projects for digital entrepreneurs.

The University of Liège management school, HEC Liège, has won two major international accreditations, making it easier to partner with universities around the world. The EQUIS label, a sign of excellence in business schools, is awarded after a long process of assessment including the quality of the programmes, relevance of research and the relationship with the corporate world. The second accreditation, by AACSB, was also the result of a rigorous review process. Rector Albert Corhay said: "This new international recognition is a success for HEC Liège's careful international positioning strategy. For our students, it is the guarantee of a management training meeting the highest quality standards."

© David Stockman/Belga



## CERTIFIED FLIGHT SIMULATOR TAKES OFF

A young Walloon company developing a revolutionary new generation of flight training simulators has built and installed its first two models – and has plans for a further 50. Venyo, based in Gosselies, has spent a decade working on the technology, which aims to provide the most accurate representation ever of a plane cockpit. The first prototype was displayed at the 2013 Paris Air Show and the simulator has now received full certification. The first simulator is up and running in the Zaventem hangar of TUI Fly Belgium. The airline provided Venyo with real flight data to help the developers create software that imitates the real behaviour of the Boeing 737NG aircraft. The second simulator was built in Paris. With backing from the Walloon region, Venyo hopes to hire new staff and build 50 simulators in the next five years. Flight simulator training is expected to be in high demand as the airline industry needs to recruit more pilots to keep up with growing travel trends.

[venyo.aero](http://venyo.aero)

## A NATURAL BOOST

Liège pharmacist Medhi Ben Brahim has launched a natural energy drink called Wise. The young entrepreneur spent three years mixing his Vitamin C-boosted cocktail. "Wise means being careful," says Ben Brahim. "The product contains no taurine and two to three times less sugar than other drinks on the market." Instead, he has added extracts of plant-based products, amino acids, electrolytes and other vitamins. Wise is widely distributed in Belgium, and Ben Brahim is aiming to sell it abroad.

[wisedrink.be](http://wisedrink.be)





## IN THE SPOTLIGHT Nathalie Poissonnier

**Nathalie Poissonnier from Brussels is the first woman to take charge of the historic Belgian Brewers Association in its 700-year history**

© Eric Laimand/Belga



“

Today we export about 70% of all Belgian beers

craftsmanship in moderation! The rapidly changing economic environment also poses a challenge for us, as for all sectors, in terms of Brexit, US trade conditions and climate change.

**Is there scope for the federation to embrace smaller, emerging craft breweries?**

The Belgian Brewers want to represent the beer sector as a whole and that includes small breweries. We already have 20 new craft breweries that will join us, but the goal is to double our membership by the end of 2019.

**You've been involved with biotechnology and industrial equipment sectors. How does coming from a non-beer sector strengthen the federation and the industry?**

As an outsider, it allows me to bring an out-of-the-box approach to directing. My experience in federations, however, makes it easier to understand the dynamics within a federation. I believe that's an added value. However, I don't underestimate the importance of insider knowledge of the sector you represent, so I'm currently taking a fast-track course on beer and the processes involved.

**You already had a passion for beer, though. How did that develop?**

As a child I read a book about an emperor's

visit to a medieval town and how they presented the local beer to him. That made me curious about the history of beer and beer culture in Belgium.

**You're the first woman to lead the association in its 700-year history. What would you say to those who claim this is a man's role?**

I'm a firm believer that the best candidate should get the job, whether this is a woman or a man. This being said, I also believe it shows that traditionally 'male' sectors – like the ones I used to work for too – are sending a strong signal that women can carry out a leading role just as well as men. I can only applaud the fact that the Belgian Brewers chose me to lead this federation into the future. It shows that they are not hindered by prejudice, but have an open outlook on the world.

**What's the best piece of advice you've ever had?**

“You might have a no, but you can always get a yes.” In other words: if you don't try, you won't know if something will work out.

**How do you like to spend your non-work time?**

I need a lot of sport to channel my energy, so cross-fit and running are two of my favourite sports. I also go hiking and love reading.

**Your new position had been unfilled for four years. What challenges do you face in this new role?**

There are quite a few challenges ahead in this fast-moving world and it's imperative to represent the whole sector and lobby for common goals. We'd like to see beer appreciation increase in Belgium. Today we export about 70% of all Belgian beers. The world recognises our craftsmanship, but nationally we are falling behind a bit. However, we emphasise enjoying our

# Natural solutions

## Walloon company develops efficient, eco-friendly alternative to pesticides

By Andy Furniere

**P**rotecting crops like potatoes using natural solutions instead of harmful pesticides, without compromising the yield: that's the goal of an award-winning Walloon enterprise

Today's agricultural sector falls into two major categories based on two strategies. There is

the traditional one, using pesticides to achieve a high yield of crops at a low cost, and the organic one, which works with natural methods but cannot achieve the same productivity. Medinbio, based at Crealys Science Park in Gembloux, Namur province, works according to a third way, which combines the best of both worlds: the bio-intensive agriculture

approach. The company has just received Walloon funding to support a prestigious project on bio-insecticides.

"We developed ways to cultivate crops with natural methods without a reduction of the yield and an increase of the costs," says founder and CEO Thierry Picaud. "The trick

© Nedsapa/Getty Images





is to boost the self-defence mechanisms of plants so they can protect themselves against pests and diseases without needing chemical additives.”

Reducing pesticides is better for our health and the environment, but it also makes sense economically. “It’s known that pesticides have toxic parts that are small but can have big effects as they pile up in your body,” says Picaud. “The stress caused by the chemicals also affects the strength of plants, so our method produces an even better yield of crops of a higher quality.”

Medinbio developed micro-organisms and plant extracts to enhance a plant’s natural defence mechanisms. These innovations have already led to concrete successes on fruits and vegetables. One, called Euclean, controls mildew – the leading potato disease – without the use of chemicals. Instead it uses a solution composed of plants rich in essential oils and minerals. The company has also turned heads with a product for strawberries.

Many of these achievements have benefited large agri-food companies elsewhere. Exports represent 95% of Medinbio’s activity, especially to France. In recognition of its accomplishments, the company received the prestigious Marianne de Cristal award, which rewards a Walloon enterprise that has an excellent commercial relationship with France. Medinbio is also valued in its own region. The Walloon government recently approved a subsidy of about €1.3 million, via its WALInnov programme, to the Biofungi project that Medinbio set up with research departments of the universities of Liège and Louvain. “The goal is to develop a toolkit with different sorts of bio-insecticides which can be used in different kinds of situations, to protect plants against specific insect pests,” explains Picaud. The project will last four years.

Medinbio is not the first enterprise set up by Picaud, who is from France but came to Belgium as a student. In France, he founded Phytosynthese, which developed natural additives to enhance the feed of livestock – and thus provided an alternative to chemicals

and antibiotics. The company is now part of the French Lehning Group. “The goal of both companies is the same: reducing the amount of chemicals in our environment,” says Picaud. “Although lobbyists try to convince us of the opposite, there are eco-friendly alternatives that work efficiently.”

[medinbio.com](http://medinbio.com)



“

Our method produces an even better yield of crops of a higher quality

Thierry Picaud

# Material gains

## Liège conference showcases local expertise in composite technology

By Sally Tipper

**A** local textile and plastics specialist has welcomed 100 industry representatives to the region to learn, network and share their expertise.

The first International Conference on Composites was held in Liège at the beginning of October, featuring lectures, a company visit, matchmaking and pitch sessions. The two-day event was organised by Centexbel-VKC, a textile and plastic competence centre based in the city.

“The aim was to bring together an international panel of participants to show technological advances made in composite structures and materials and to discuss the challenges they face in bringing these technologies to new applications,” says Bernard Paquet, an R&D manager at Cen-

texbel. “Our mission is to help companies translate ideas into concrete concepts and products. We also test their quality, composition, recyclability and legal conformity and verify with the company how they can protect their intellectual property rights.”

Delegates at the conference included industrial innovators, technology providers, researchers and economic promoters from the aeronautic, energy, transport, sport and leisure sectors. During the pitch session, participants learned about local technology providers and took part in tailored face-to-face meetings. There was also a visit to the headquarters of JDC Innovation, a Liège SME that provides composite products for the aeronautics and defence sectors.

“In Wallonia you can find large companies active in aeronautics, aerospace and defence, but there is also a strong presence of high-tech SMEs offering innovative composites products,” says Paquet. “This industrial ecosystem is supported by research institutes and universities, poles of excellences and clusters. These are the ideal conditions in which to develop innovative products and to stay competitive.”

Composite products is just one of the sectors to be showcased in 2019 by Wallonia Export-Investment Agency (AWEX) and Wallonia Brussels International (WBI). Among the many upcoming events is a presence at the Hannover Messe trade fair in Germany from 1 to 5 April.

[centexbel.be](http://centexbel.be)

“

The aim was to bring together participants to show technological advances and to discuss the challenges they face

---

Bernard Paquet



# Sweet talking

## Indian company to produce zero-calorie sugar in Wallonia

By Betina Kiefer



© nanDphanuwat2526/Belga

An Indian sugar manufacturer is investing €150 million in the industrial zone of Seneffe in Hainaut, and is setting up a local headquarters there. Petiva Europe SA was established in May as a first stage of the investment, with a pilot plant being built this year to develop and demonstrate technology. An industrial plant is also to be installed in 2020 to demonstrate industrial feasibility. The investments should eventually create an estimated 75 jobs in Wallonia.

Petiva specialises in producing zero-calorie, natural sugars. The company's main activi-

ty in Wallonia will be producing honeytose – the trade name of allulose, a zero-calorie rare sugar. Rare sugars have properties superior to those of natural sugars, with a low glycaemic index as well as antioxidant and antibacterial properties. Petiva will also produce nectarose and caneose – the trade names for trehalulose and isomaltulose respectively – sugars that are processed by the body more slowly.

While allulose is already produced in small quantities by other companies, Petiva has pioneered an efficient production

method that is significantly less costly, estimated at or below €10 per kilogram – the outcome of 16 years of research involving about 120 people. The pilot project in Wallonia will be an opportunity to develop the technology, present the product to B2B customers and demonstrate the continuous production of about 300kg a day. The project is already drawing interest from local industries, including chocolate and biscuit producers.

“In our diet, we consume twice as much sugar as recommended by the WHO, re-

© Easyfotostock/Zoomar/T Francois/Belga



sulting in a phenomenal cost to our health and our health services,” says Dr Marc Noël, senior sustainable development expert at Awex, Wallonia’s export agency. “Petiva uses table sugar and transforms it into something healthy, just like nature does.”

This investment comes as a result of an agreement signed by Wallonia’s minister-president Willy Borsus with Petiva to produce rare sugars in the region. Petiva had an initial interest in investing in the US, but was drawn to Wallonia because of local support, a highly skilled workforce that could provide the level of expertise required, and a more promising market with fewer competitors. “Belgium is one of the best regions in the world for sugar production,” says Noël. “We can provide very high-quality feedstock at a competitive price, we have an established expertise in biotech, our R&D environment is excellent and we can support ambitious projects in our region.”

There are significant investments coming from India, according to Joachim Galand, Awex project coordinator specialising in the Indian subcontinent. “Most of the investments are in heavy machinery and biotech, but we expect more interest from

the agri-food sector within the next two or three years.” If Petiva’s first efforts in Wallonia are successful, a commercial-sized factory is planned for 2024-26.

[petiva.com](https://petiva.com)

“

Our R&D environment is excellent and we can support ambitious projects in our region

Dr Marc Noël



# Wings over Wallonia

## The certification of Sonaca 200 aircraft is a historic moment in Belgian aviation

By Sarah Crew

**T**aking off from Temploux Aerodrome in Namur this autumn is the Sonaca 200 training aircraft – a new single-engine, two-seater plane destined for the flight school and leisure market. It's the first time in decades that a Belgian aeroplane has been launched. The awarding of the EASA airworthiness certificate means the aircraft is fit to fly in Europe and the rest of the world – a major achievement after the end of a three-year procedure.

With the first aircraft already delivered in October and a further eight to be completed by the end of the year, the Sonaca 200 order book is surpassing expectations. "We were hoping to have orders for ten aircraft and we are already at over forty, which is massive," says Pierre Van Wetter, chief commercial director and co-founder of Sonaca Aircraft, a subsidiary of Sonaca Group.

Proudly displayed on the fuselage of the silver aluminium aircraft is the tagline 'Designed by pilots for pilots'. Van Wetter adds: "It's an extraordinary aircraft, lively and fun yet very precise." And crucially for a training plane, it has the lightness and stability that are key in enabling pilots to move on to heavier aircraft types.

"It's important to have an aeroplane that is not too buffeted by turbulence and wind. It needs to be robust, which is not always the case with our competitors," says Van Wetter. "In developing it, we focused on the training aspect, preferring an aircraft with a not-too-

high flight speed that forgives errors when taking off and landing or experiencing loss of speed." Two versions are on sale (Trainer and Trainer Pro), with two more in the pipeline: the "Upset Prevention and Recovery Training" (UPRT) and the "IFR - Instrument Flight Rules" versions.

With an ambition to deliver up to 80 aircraft each year, Sonaca Aircraft is counting on its after-sales technical service and Made in Belgium label to fuel its reputation. It benefits from being a subsidiary of the Sonaca Group, a renowned Belgian aerospace company based at Gosselies, near Charleroi. Largely owned by the Wallonia Regional Investment Company (SRIW), it has a 90% stake in Sonaca Aircraft. "Sonaca appreciates that even if we are not a major business in terms of turnover, it continues the aeronautical spirit at the heart of the company because it gives the group an excellent image and is an example of internal innovation and a complete aircraft," says Van Wetter.

It was in 2014 that a couple of Sonaca engineers – all with a passion for flying – had the idea of developing a complete aeroplane. With the group keen on diversifying while remaining in the aeronautical domain, it gave the project the green light on condition that the budding entrepreneurs sought specialist advice from business coaches. "This enabled us to advance very quickly and by 2015 we had a clear idea of the type of aircraft, certification and market to target," Van Wetter says. "But the coaches said it would be crazy to

invent a new aircraft, so with feedback from flying schools across Europe, we found an interesting aircraft in South Africa, the Sling 2." The ensuing collaboration allowed Sonaca Aircraft to heavily modify it to develop a type that would meet European certification standards and the criteria necessary for training pilots.

Since its launch, the company has been targeting international sales. "Having EU certification enables us to enter the major markets," says Van Wetter. "With after-sales service, it's easier to sort out a problem when it's on your doorstep rather than further afield. Since conception, we've had maintenance costs in mind because it's one of the major expenses when operating an aircraft," he adds.

The structural parts of the Sonaca 200 are made in Romania and transported overnight by road for final assembly at Temploux. "But all the know-how remains here," points out Van Wetter. Today the company has almost 30 employees, the majority of them aeronautical mechanics from the Namur, Liège and Charleroi area. Once in full production, Van Wetter predicts a workforce of around 50.

While the company is currently operating from a temporary hangar, a new purpose-built building is being constructed and will be completed by the beginning of 2019. Conveniently situated next to the aerodrome's new hard runway, it has space for engine testing and easy access for test flights; the aircraft has to complete two

hours of flight time before it is ready for delivery.

Namur's location offered numerous advantages, says Van Wetter. "Clients can arrive from Brussels National or Charleroi airport and hire a car to drive to Temploux, or fly in directly. Being in the centre of Belgium, between France and Germany, is strategically important."

The aerodrome at Temploux, which specialises in light aviation and leisure activities, has been undergoing a modernisation programme since coming under new ownership in 2017. In addition to the tarmac replacement of the grass airstrip, the infrastructure is being updated and the aerodrome is diversifying its activities, which include the agreement with Sonaca Aircraft.



• Pierre Van Wetter

Even if the order book is looking healthy, the company has additional aircraft types in its sights. "We are developing and testing the Sonaca 200 structure to have authorisation for basic aerobatics as well as an Instrument Flight Rating version," says Van Wetter. "The former is in high demand by the army as well as flight instructors because they realise that certain airline company accidents and incidents could be prevented if there was a return to basic aerobatic skills, useful for recuperating an aircraft in some situations," he explains.

The company is equally aware of the symbolism of making the first new Belgian aircraft since the 1970s. The Sonaca Group began life as Avions Fairey, a subsidiary of British manufacturer Fairey Aviation, which was set up in 1931 by Belgian aviation pioneer Ernest-Oscar Tips and commissioned to make aircraft for the Belgian army. Tips also designed light aircraft, known as the Topsy family, which were widely successful at home and abroad.

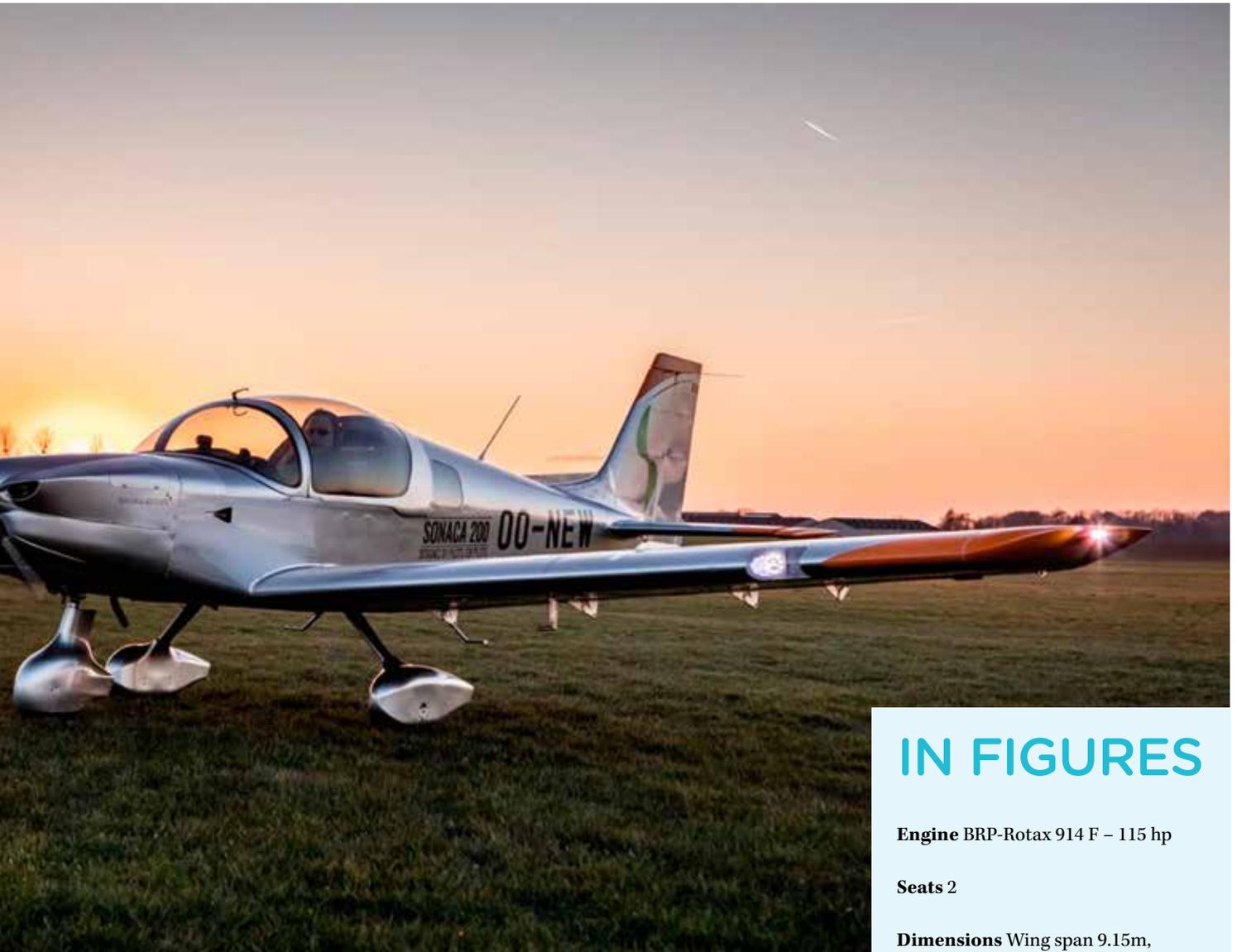
A restored Topsy Trainer is on display at the Royal Army Museum in Brussels, on loan from the designer's two grandsons. The pair take a keen interest in Sonaca Aircraft's activities. "They may suspend the Topsy from the roof of our new showroom," says Van Wetter. "It would be a nod to the history of the company. If we created a complete aircraft, it surely arose from the company's continual passion for flying."

[sonaca-aircraft.com](http://sonaca-aircraft.com)



“

It's an extraordinary aircraft, lively and fun yet very precise



## IN FIGURES

**Engine** BRP-Rotax 914 F – 115 hp

**Seats** 2

**Dimensions** Wing span 9.15m,  
length 7m

**Weight & load** Weight empty  
460kg, max take-off weight 750kg,  
fuel capacity 150l

**Performance** Max cruise speed  
115knots, rate of climb 750 ft/min

**Fuel consumption** 18 l/hr

**Price** From €177,500

## MEET THE BRUSSELS EXPAT



**Rhodri Thomas  
from Wales - chair  
of Brussels' Welsh  
Society and a fan  
of history and  
beer - shares some  
of his highlights of  
Wallonia**

I'm Welsh and, apart from Wales and Belgium, I lived in England for three years as a student many years ago and in Sweden for a year directly before coming to Belgium. I moved here in 1995 after the accession of Sweden to the EU. I had been teaching English as a foreign language to adults in Sweden and carried on doing that for a while here, too. Then I got a job in the European Commission, where I still work; I'm currently in the Editing Unit of the Translation DG.

Outside work, I'm the chair of the Welsh Society of Brussels, which is a social organisation for Welsh people who live here and anyone with a connection to or an interest in Wales. We hold monthly meetings in the Wild Geese pub, near Schuman. Saint David is the patron saint of Wales, so our most important event is the Saint David's Day dinner on or around 1 March each year. We also get together to watch Welsh rugby and football matches. We have a couple of hundred members, but more are always welcome.

Another interest of mine is beer. I have contributed to the Good Beer Guide to Belgium, a publication in English that lists the breweries, beers and places to drink them here in our host country. I'm a member of the Belgian beer consumers' organisation Zythos, and the British group Camra Brussel/Bruxelles. I'm also interested in history and, when I had more time, I was a certified guide at the Waterloo battlefield. That there are so many interesting historical sites and places here in Belgium is one of the reasons for liking it (along with the beer).

I love Wallonia, and in particular the Ardennes, because it reminds me of Wales with the hills and the forests and the old mining culture. It really is very pretty both in the winter and the summer. I've visited a lot of beer festivals in Belgium and one of my favourites has to be Brassigaume in Marbehan, Luxembourg province, in October. It's an international event in a small village with a great local atmosphere.

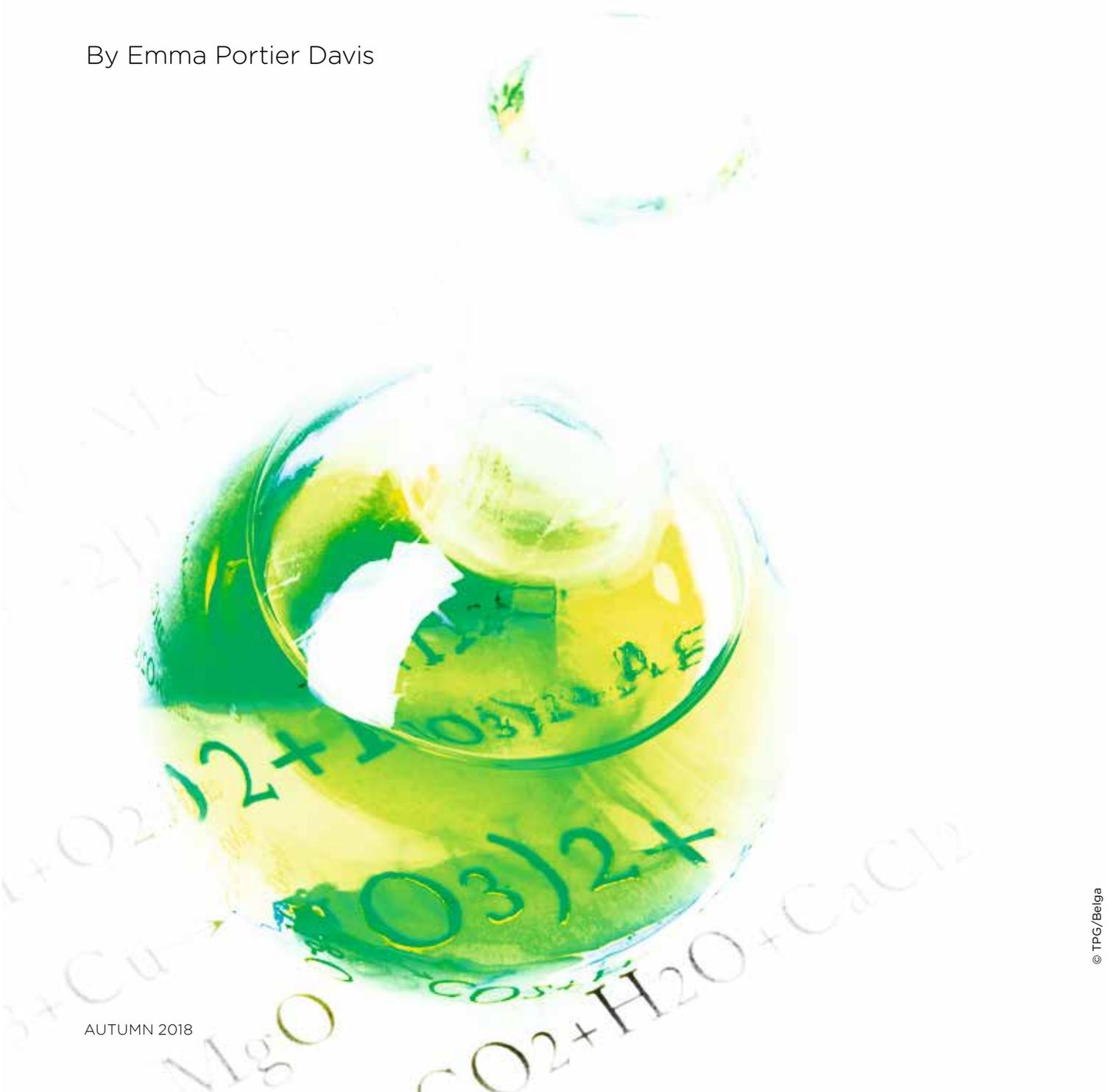
[cymdeithas.blogspot.com](http://cymdeithas.blogspot.com)



# Green giants

Wallonia is a frontrunner in Europe's bid to clean up its chemicals industry

By Emma Portier Davis



**Y**ou could be forgiven for thinking of green chemistry as something of a contradiction in terms. But with heavy industry among the world's biggest polluters, finding sustainable, clean working methods has become a necessity and thus a primary goal for many governments, notably Wallonia's.

The region has a long history as a centre for industry, especially steel, glass and chemicals. Even today, Belgium ranks number one globally in terms of the size of its chemicals industry per capita. It's important on a local level: jobs in the chemicals industry total 26,400; that's more than a fifth of total employment in industry. In terms of trade, the industry accounts for more than a third of exports, or €15.2 billion.

Meanwhile, the industry faces enormous scrutiny and increasing regulation on the environmental front as governments seek to tackle climate change and pollution. And in a world where resources are increasingly scarce, industry is obliged from a regulatory point of view as well as economically to go green. "Ecology and economy are both sides of the same coin," says Véronique Graff, managing director of the Walloon government's Greenwin cluster, a working group comprising government officials, academics and industry stakeholders

dedicated to green chemistry. "You don't want to hack down the tree you're sitting on."

When Ernest Solvay developed his eponymous ammonia-soda ash process to produce sodium carbonate – a component in a range of industries from glass-making to paper production – this was just one of the first steps to put the region's industry on the map. From the development of one of the world's wealthiest multinational companies, the region is now gaining recognition for its development of green chemistry along with crucial investments, in accordance with internationally recognised standards.

Green chemistry is nothing particularly new. It's based on 12 principles developed by Paul Anastas from Yale University about 25 years ago when he worked for the US Environmental Protection Agency. In simple terms, it's about minimising the use of energy, cutting back on raw material use and reducing waste. These 12 principles have been adopted by Unesco and other supranational organisations such as the EU, which has dedicated funding for research and development in the field.

The European Commission, the EU's executive, has also set up a programme of regional demonstration models to promote the development of green chemistry and allow the EU

to showcase technologies and processes to the rest of the world. In 2016, Wallonia was one of six regions selected from 28 applicants to be a 'model demonstration region'. This means it receives funding (in 2016, it was awarded €245,000) and advisory support from the European Sustainable Chemicals Support Service. The aim is to encourage investment in sustainable chemical production in Europe and to contribute to the development of a circular economy where materials are fed back into the production system rather than winding up as polluting waste.

"Supported by the authorities, Wallonia shows the way for green chemistry," says Frédéric Druck, chair of industry association Essencia, adding that the selection of the region as a demonstration model "underlines the immense potential of our region for the development of green chemistry".

There are several features that make Wallonia such a hub for the chemicals industry. Aside from its historical greats, it maintains sizeable steel and pharmaceutical industries, which have funded much research into the development of chemical skills. With a North Sea coastline and its central position in Western Europe, Belgium as a whole has also been a big draw for the major players in the oil industry.

“

Wallonia is a land where technological innovation is part of her DNA

Véronique Graff, Greenwin



© Reptile8488/Getty Images

Though Belgium represents only 2% of Europe's population and 3% of its gross domestic product, it is the continent's sixth largest chemicals producer. Thanks to already strong investment over the years in the chemicals industry, the region is home not only to a range of international industrial players but also to a flourishing academic sector dedicated to developing highly skilled chemicals workers. Added to that, says Graff at Greenwin, is the local work ethic. "People in Wallonia are highly skilled professionals. They are committed hard workers. We are easily approachable people. Walloons are really friendly, which helps a lot in multiple partnership projects and business relations."

In short, she says, "Wallonia is a land where technological innovation is part of her DNA. We have been excellent manufacturers and dynamic – though discreet – entrepreneurs." This predilection for technological innovation is what Graff says will spur on the development of the region into a world-class example of sustainable, clean industry. "Natural resources are clearly limited and climate change is an additional factor that can only boost the transition to a new way of undertaking business," she says. "The transition to a greener economy is a global phenomenon and Wallonia has strong assets to play her part in that transition."

The Walloon government set up Greenwin, a partnership, or cluster, between companies, research centres, universities, business associations and the government, to assist in particular with priority industrial fields that offer a high rate of return on investment and drive the region's international presence. According to Essenscia, which represents 750 companies or about 95% of the sector's turnover, greenhouse gas emissions per tonne of product have fallen 77% in the past 20 years.

Its goal is to advocate for a fair emissions trading scheme and to help companies meet energy-efficiency targets without jeopardising profit. Such a scheme is a platform on which heavy polluters can trade emission allowances with other companies, incentivising reductions in climate-harming gases. While advocating for an optimum economic advantage, the association says the industry has seen an increase of just 31% in energy use since 1990 while production has tripled. The use of coal in energy-intensive industries has been phased out completely, while petroleum as a fuel has been reduced to 1%. About 99% of petroleum used by the sector has been converted into higher-value materials, meeting a goal of the circular economy. More recently, the use of highly contaminating nitrogen and phosphorous emissions have decreased by almost 80% since 2001.

For the government, these are all steps in the right direction. "Conventional industry is clearly part of our past but thanks to these innovation clusters, Wallonia is ahead of the game and building her future with confidence and lucidity," says Graff at Greenwin.

For the future, the industry remains ambitious. According to Graff, a primary goal is supporting universities and research centres with a view to developing international partnerships and European projects. This goal will largely depend on the European Commission's Horizon Europe R&D programme, which will be the successor to the Horizon 2020 programme and will have €100 billion of funding up for grabs for research and innovation programmes across the EU. This, says Graff, is "clearly our main playground to achieve that target".

Also on the funding front will be the development of foreign innovation clusters to allow for the launch of bespoke funding programmes. As for Essenscia, Druck states an ambitious, albeit fairly simple-sounding goal: "We have to stay at the top."

[greenwin.be](http://greenwin.be)  
[essenscia.be](http://essenscia.be)

## “ Wallonia shows the way for green chemistry

Frédéric Druck, Essenscia



• AGC Europe

## RISING STARS

### AGC Europe

A global player in the production of glass, its R&D department is turning an industry that's one of the heaviest in terms of production of greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants into one that is energy efficient and pursues the circular economy. The company results from the acquisition by Japan's Asahi Glass of Belgium's Glaverbel, which was once the biggest glass producer in the world.

[agc-glass.eu](http://agc-glass.eu)

### Realco

Makes enzyme-based hygiene solutions, including the removal of biofilm contaminions for businesses, medical applications and for households. Realco is based in the Science Park in Louvain-la-Neuve and following its listing on the Euronext stock exchange in 2006, it has opened an office in the US. Using enzymes that are 100% biodegradable, the company is able to stick to its goal of developing sustainable business practices.

[realco.be](http://realco.be)

### Galactic

A biotechnology firm that specialises in lactic acid fermentation and provides natural solutions to the food, feed and cosmetics industries among others, with a strong emphasis on green chemistry. The company started operations in 1994; by 1998, it was the world's second largest producer of lactic acid and lactates, exporting to more than 40 countries. The company has achieved economic success while maintaining its vision to develop solutions that are best for nature and mankind.

[lactic.com](http://lactic.com)

### Vinventions

Sells wine closure solutions globally while striving to minimise its carbon footprint, enable recycling and produce corks and caps that are safe, clean and regulatory-compliant. The company, a world-class leader in this sector that punches above its weight as an enterprise with just 550 employees, aims to use natural raw materials and plans to use only glue-free sustainable wine closures for still wine by the end of 2018, thus meeting a goal of the 12 principles to cut down on solvent use.

[vinventions.com](http://vinventions.com)



# Local flavour

## A network of regional cafes and brasseries is promoting local produce

It's become a familiar and welcoming phenomenon: step into many a cosy cafe or bistro and you'll discover a host of local drinks and dishes ready to tempt you. Since 2011, Wallonia's tourist board has been promoting rural commerce via the Bistrot de Terroir network, with a focus on good quality produce and cooking.

Now it has given the label a makeover to further spotlight regional specialities and local producers in collaboration with the Walloon agency for sustainable agriculture, Apaq-W. Throughout the region you will find the Bistrot de Terroir sign and a variety of rustic and quality food and beers from the simple to gastronomic.

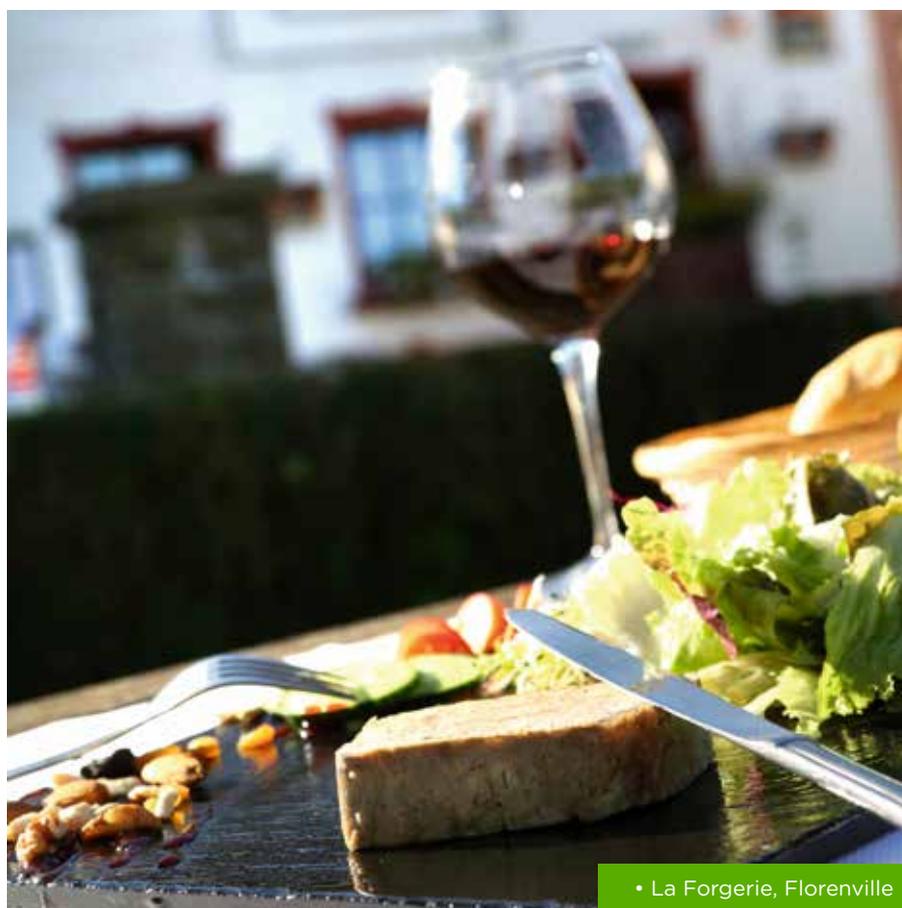
Diners at participating addresses are invited to question their hosts about the best local produce and regional specialities. Owners have signed up to serve as ambassadors for the network.

To obtain the label, an establishment needs to satisfy certain criteria. Their drinks list must include at least five local products among their non-alcoholic beverages and beers, wines and spirits.

On the food menu, there must always be at least one local dish, and they must use at least 10 regional products from the following list: charcuterie, condiments and spice, snails, foie gras, cheese, fruit and vegetables, eggs, bread, potatoes, dairy produce, fish, syrups and honey, meat

and poultry. They must also mention the producers who supply them with the specialities. In return, they receive publicity via the label's promotional tools, which include Facebook and a mobile app.

[bistrotdeleterroir.be](http://bistrotdeleterroir.be)



• La Forgerie, Florenville

© CGT - A. Siquet



• The newly recognised Geopark

# Geopark life

## Unesco area of special significance is first of its kind in Belgium

**I**n a major boost to local tourism, the UN has recognised a large area of Wallonia as a Unesco Global Geopark. The Famenne-Ardenne area – home to the popular Grotte de Han tourist attraction – is the only part of Belgium to have gained this recognition.

A Geopark is a unified area featuring geological heritage sites and landscapes of international significance. Organisers strive

for sustainable development and aim to raise awareness of its distinctive natural and cultural heritage, enabling locals to feel a sense of pride and identification with the area.

The recognised area stretches from Bauraing on the French border to Durbuy in Luxembourg province, and includes three river valleys: the Lesse, Lomme and Ourthe. As well as promoting tourism and

environmental development, Geoparks also aim to advance scientific research and open existing works up to the public. For example, at the Jemelle limestone quarry, operated by local mineral producer Lhoist, there are plans to create a public viewpoint and guided tours to allow visitors to admire the various strata in the rock that have formed over 380 million years.

[geoparkfamenneardenne.be](http://geoparkfamenneardenne.be)

# Art for everyone

## European artworks spanning 700 years have found a new home in the Ardennes

By Saffina Rana

A new museum of didactic art has just opened in Wallonia, with a collection of more than 300 works spanning 700 years of Western art history. Housed over four floors in a renovated 19th-century presbytery in the picturesque village of Redu, Mudia is a private venture by Eric Noulet whose collection includes celebrated works by the likes of Picasso, Modigliani, Magritte, Kandinsky, Brueghel and Léger, as well as photography, film and comic art.

The range of art on show spans the period from the Middle Ages to the present day and is arranged to take visitors on a hands-on, interactive journey through art history. It's diverse, covering Primitive Flemish art, Rococo, Classicism, Cubism and Pop Art, right through to comics and graphic novels. The multimedia element of the museum includes an animated version of *The Temptation of St Anthony* by Hieronymus Bosch, where several of the fantastical characters come to life in the triptych. Animations are triggered by a QR code given to each visitor, which also triggers the language of the animation (French or Dutch).

This sets Mudia apart from other big art museums, curator and director Karlin Berghmans explains. "It's not about just seeing the artwork, it's more of an interactive tourist attraction, with games and

multimedia that help you discover the evolution of European art," she says. "Art galleries often only include very brief explanations alongside displayed work, but Noulet wanted to make the art come alive for people. What you see is Noulet's passion for the evolution of art. He is not interested in just one period or one artist."

The idea behind the interactive multimedia at Mudia is to make the art accessible for parts of the population who don't have a knowledge of European art history or who usually feel out of place in art museums. Noulet wanted to do this by answering the most common questions that arise about the work and did much of the preliminary research himself. "Questions from younger generations on why people don't look that realistic, or why they have large heads, as well as the stories behind some of the more allegorical works," says Berghmans.

Comic art takes up one whole room and includes pieces by Belgian artist Hergé, creator of *Tintin*. Noulet's collection is also augmented with works lent from Belgian, French and Luxembourg art collections. The rhythm of the visit is fairly fast "so it's not too saturating for families, and especially people who feel an art museum is not for them," explains Berghmans. "The most important thing is that they have fun finding out."

Having trained as an art historian, Berghman comes to Mudia from curating at the Bastogne War Museum. Her favourite pieces are Kandinsky's *Les Arabes* from 1909 and Fernand Léger's *Composition Cubiste*, painted in 1929. "It's fantastic to be around them. What's new for me is that I feel the same emotion seeing the Hieronymus Bosch painting come to life with animated characters," she says.

Housing the museum in Redu, in the heart of the Ardennes, was both a financially and personally motivated decision. Already popular because of the high number of specialist book shops that line its little streets, the village attracts around 200,000 national and international visitors a year. "It was a strategic decision, since the museum is entirely a private venture, but it also has another layer, because it's where Eric Noulet met his wife," says Berghman.

[mudia.be](http://mudia.be)



© Mudia

• Pietro Rotari La Coquetterie 1755

“

Noulet wanted to make the art  
come alive for people

---

Curator Karlin Berghmans

# Handle with care

## Reciprocity Design Liège explores design for precarious times

By Clodagh Kinsella



© Germain Ozer



**D**esign festivals are usually about glossy and ingenious new objects, but Reciprocity Design Liège triennale, which hosts its third edition this autumn, takes a markedly different tack. “There’s still this view of design as a commercial practice, but I always say design is a political act,” says artistic director Giovanna Massoni. “What we’re trying to do is to use design as a method and not as a product.”

The event draws on academic networks formed during the REcentre European project, involving schools from the Euregio Meuse-Rhine, which ended in 2012. “There are bienales and triennales all over the world, and we’ve really tried to adapt this quite complicated medium to the local situation,” says Massoni. “Liège is very different to Milan and London. It’s a provincial centre and in the middle of three cultures: the French- and Dutch-speaking communities in Belgium, and Germany.”

One of Reciprocity’s main drives is to focus on students and young designers. “For me the big issue is managing a lot of public money, with the government of Liège and Wallonie Design, the co-directors,” she says. “We want to give back the money to the people, so we’ve created a programme where we really produce what we display, building the triennale over two years with meetings, workshops and training in schools with local designers.”

The previous edition drew 40,000 visitors mainly from Belgium and the surrounding regions. This year it returns with an extended format lasting almost two months. Alongside myriad exhibitions, a symposium will explore this year’s theme of fragility, analysing design’s social and ethical responsibility via speakers such as John Bingham-Hall of London’s *Theatrum Mundi* – a sign of its growing multidisciplinary.

Another difference from previous years: it will occupy two major Liège museums – the Musée de la Vie Wallonne, and La Boverie, which was still under construction during the last edition in 2015. In the cloister of the former venue, a guest project by local design studio Signes du quotidien will present 45 flags created since 2017 through Liège graphic design festival Fig. “We wanted to question graphic designers and artists around a specific format,” says Benjamin Dupuis. “What can the medium mean in itself? Is it a promotion tool, about aesthetics or geographic identity?”

La Boverie will host Confessions, an introspective show about the need for a sense of fragility before work begins, by creatives from Fabrica, an Italian communication research bureau run by Benetton ad designer Oliviero Toscani. Its other tri-partite exhibition, Fragilitas, spans design for handicaps and design ‘hacks’. “My part looks at the

relationship between precariousness and the architecture and design world,” explains curator and University of Liège professor Jean-Philippe Possoz. “I want to help visitors explore responses to an uncertainty that’s gaining ground because of issues like migration and society’s troubled economic trajectory.”

Works displayed include a library in Yunnan province, China, built after the 2012 earthquake, and makeshift camps in the Calais ‘Jungle’. “We’ll show a project in Mexico created exclusively from very local materials, and with this unusual renegotiation of the roles of producer and creator,” Possoz says. “In general I’m exhibiting very few completed projects, but rather people working on processes. I’m interested in new alliances and strategies when the ‘classic’ methods no longer work.”

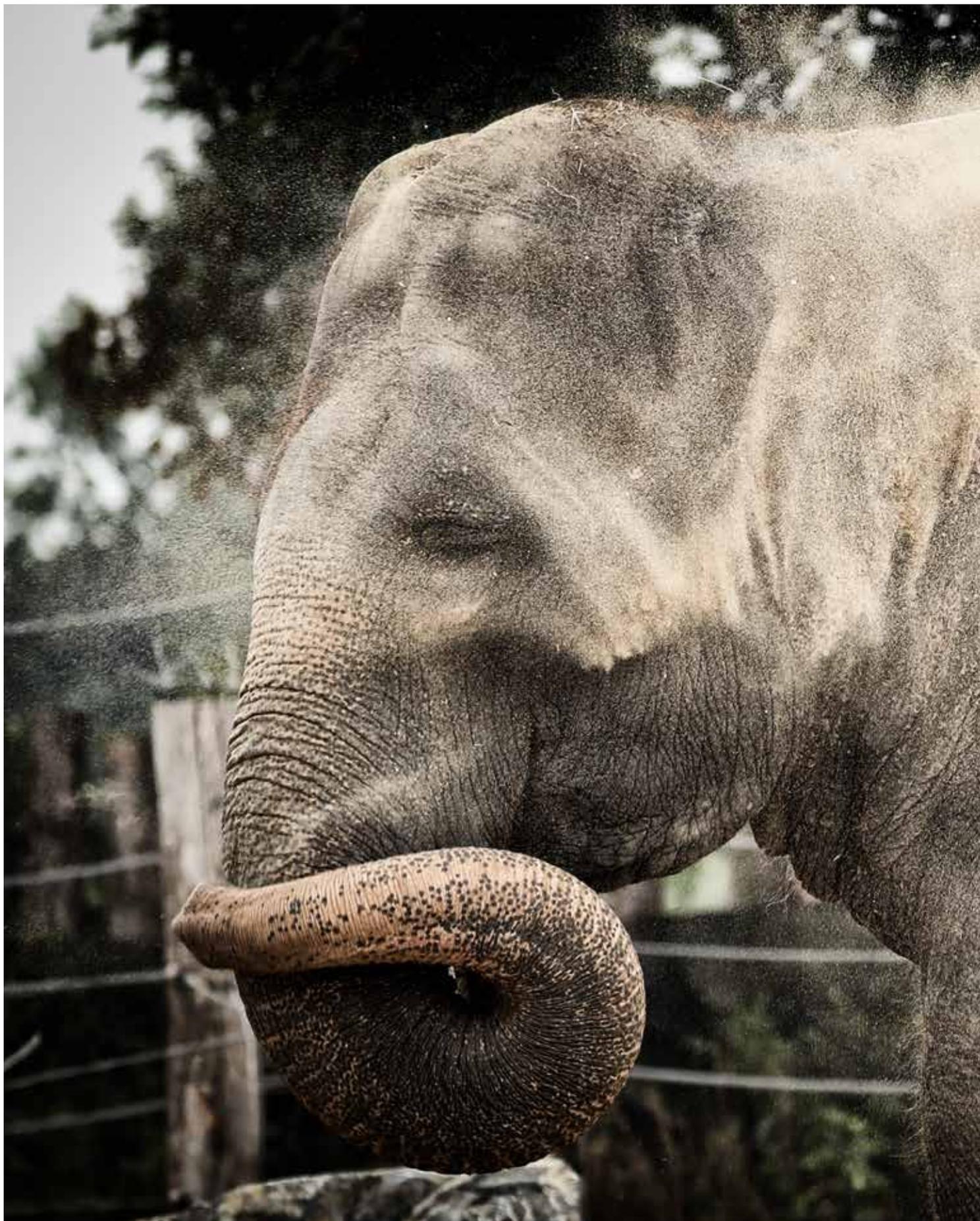
It’s a heavy topic, especially for the regular La Boverie crowd, but Massoni hopes visitors will unite behind it. “Bringing attention to designers cooperating with citizens to overcome problems like handicap and precarity is a way of reaching out to people,” she says. “It’s a positive series of exhibitions. We’re not saying the government can’t provide answers, we’re saying that you as a citizen can do something.”

[reciprocityliege.be](http://reciprocityliege.be)

“

I always say design is a political act

Giovanna Massoni





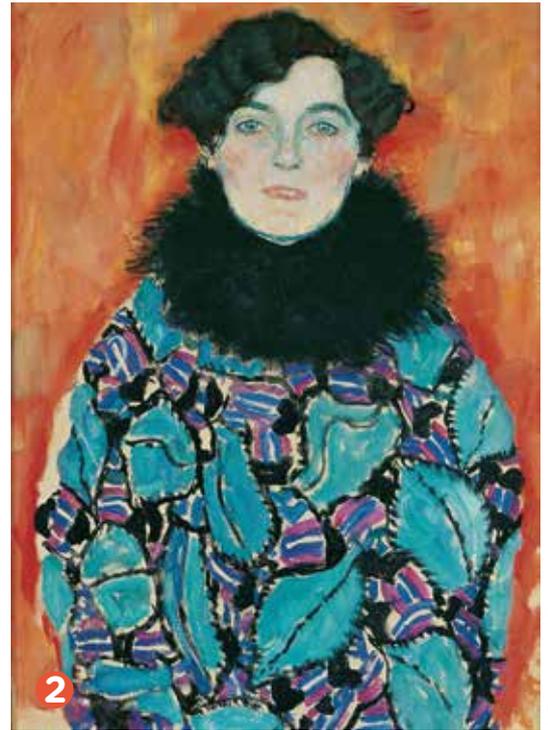
## CREATURE COMFORTS

Animal park Pairi Daiza has been named Best Zoo in Europe in the eighth edition of the Diamond ThemePark Awards. It also won recognition for its gorilla enclosure and flower temple. The annual awards mainly focus on the Benelux, but certain categories are open to parks from across the continent, and the winners are chosen based on a mix of expert and public votes. Pairi Daiza, in Brugelette, near Mons, is a privately owned park and botanical garden that's home to more than 5,000 animals. It will celebrate its 25th anniversary next May.

[pairidaiza.eu](http://pairidaiza.eu)



© Tomas Ivanuskas



© Belvedere, Wien



© 2018 NIKI CHARITABLE ART FOUNDATION. All rights reserved Photo by André Morin. Courtesy Galerie GP & N Vallois, Paris



© L'Usine A Bulles

## EXHIBITION **NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE** ①

Whether it was the lack of formal training or of expectations of a woman artist, French-American sculptor Niki de Saint Phalle went her own way, exhibiting a refreshing approach to conceptual art in general and New Realism in particular. Though her early pieces had her taking a shotgun to bags filled with paint that then sprayed themselves on assembled objects painted white, she is best known for her art brut style of sculpture: some utilitarian, some figurative. This first retrospective of her work in Belgium is the kick-off for the Mons, Cultural Capital biennial.

. UNTIL 13 JANUARY, BAM, MONS  
[bam.mons.be](http://bam.mons.be)



## EXHIBITION BEYOND KLIMT 2

Not that Bozar has anything against the brilliant symbolist painter Gustav Klimt, but *Beyond Klimt: New Horizons in Central Europe, 1914-1938* looks at the dozens of art movements that sprung up in Eastern Europe between the world wars. It was a time when artists thought of their genres, rather than their nationalities, as defining who they were. Some 80 artists are included in the Brussels art centre's flagship autumn show. Don't miss Klimt's *Magic Garden*, a virtual reality experience that topples visitors into the artist's world.

• UNTIL 20 JANUARY, BOZAR  
BRUSSELS  
[bozar.be](http://bozar.be)

## FESTIVAL NEXT FESTIVAL 3

Tournai makes up one-third of the Eurometropolis cross-border economic development initiative, with Kortrijk to the north and Lille to the west. Ten years ago, five arts and performance houses came together to add a cultural element to the mix, and the Next Festival was born. Next brings more than 40 international productions to the region. Some will be performed in two or all of the cities and some in just one; the idea is to get you moving between them. In Wallonia, don't miss Lithuanian director Oskaras Korsunovas's version of Bertolt Brecht's *A Respectable Wedding*, the ultimate critique of bourgeois society.

• 8 NOVEMBER-1 DECEMBER  
TOURNAI  
[nextfestival.eu](http://nextfestival.eu)

## FESTIVAL L'USINE A BULLES 4

Whether your interest in comics is old school – Spirou, say, or Tintin – or lean more towards avant-garde graphic novels, you'll find something to pique your interest at this international festival. This second edition combines comic art with many other forms, such as the visual and performance arts, to create a multimedia meeting space for all kinds of fans. You'll find exhibitions, workshops, lectures, live drawing demonstrations and more.

• 25-26 NOVEMBER, LIEGE  
[theatredeliege.be](http://theatredeliege.be)

## EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE

**The Niki de Saint Phalle retrospective at the BAM and in public spaces around Mons is curated by Kyla McDonald. She co-curated a major exhibition on the self-taught Franco-American artist's work at Tate Liverpool in 2008.**

"This is a very different show to the one staged in Liverpool and a great opportunity to curate another Saint Phalle exhibition. It's a chronological retrospective showing the genesis of her work. The title, 'Here, everything is possible', is a statement Niki made about her monumental life work *The Tarot Garden* in Tuscany. It also serves as a perspective for the 140 works on display here.

The main exhibition is arranged chronologically, showing some of Niki's personal journey. Her art process is a response to a lot of things going on in her life and she clearly found it cathartic. Always true to her style, she was guided by her imagination. She was a pioneering spirit: her early paintings from the 1950s are fantasies and landscapes while later she became more interested in pushing boundaries. As a female artist, she was determined to be accepted as an equal among male peers and she wanted women to be seen outside the domestic space.

In the early 1960s, series such as her shooting paintings [symbolic executions of the male art establishment] showed her anger and frustration at women's role in society. It was in this decade that we see her first foray into outside space, including the emblematic *Nanas* [on display in the BAM gardens], which are larger-than-life, colourful, joyful depictions.

Niki felt that art in public spaces was important in creating a community and it was a utopian view of how public space should be used. I first discovered her work when looking into New Realism and when I first saw one of her works at the Tate, I thought 'wow!' She is a fantastic artist who deserves to be better known."

[bam.mons.be](http://bam.mons.be)



“  
She was determined  
to be accepted as  
an equal among  
male peers

# Feel inspired



Wallonia, a world of opportunities

**1250** FOREIGN INVESTMENTS  
in 14 years

**400 M** CONSUMERS  
reachable  
WITHIN ONE DAY

Very high density of  
**UNIVERSITIES** and higher  
education establishments



**6** COMPETITIVENESS  
CLUSTERS in  
LEADING-EDGE sectors

an exceptional  
**QUALITY  
OF LIFE**



Highly skilled  
AVAILABLE  
**WORKFORCE**



**70%** — of business  
turnover comes  
from **EXPORTS**



Wallonia.be