

wallonia and brussels

winter 2018

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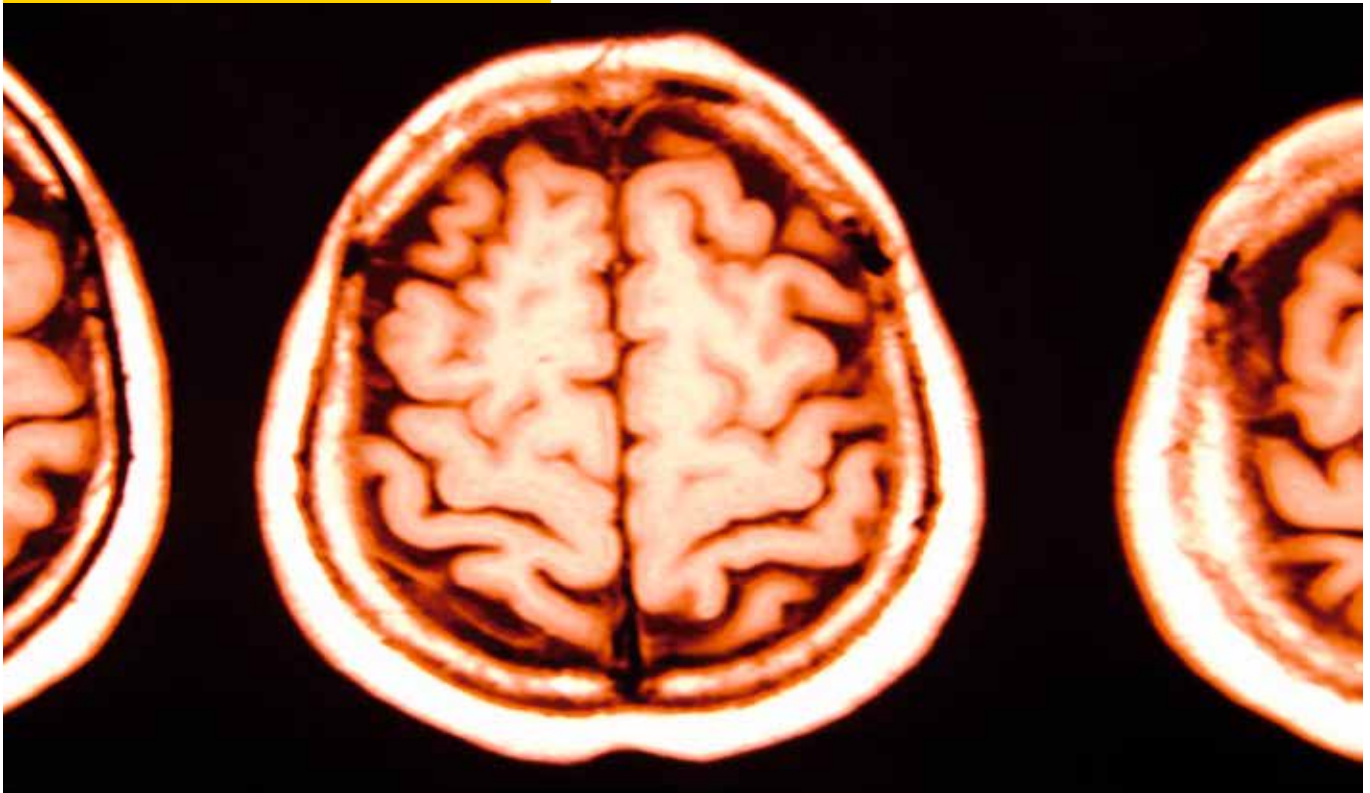
Discover a region that combines  
technical knowhow with quality of life

## SHE'S WORTH IT!

UCL NEUROSCIENTIST WINS  
L'ORÉAL-UNESCO RESEARCH GRANT

- Twist: 10 years at the forefront of the media landscape
- Arts, industry & tech join forces across borders





## Editorial

It's a pleasure to celebrate women in science, and our cover image honours Emmanuelle Wilhelm, winner of a coveted L'Oréal-Unesco grant for her exploration of neuroscience at the Université catholique de Louvain. The quality of academic research in the region's universities underpins its success in science and business, from spin-offs to international collaborations. Another local speciality is Wallonia's audiovisual and media industries, which benefit from the support of the Twist cluster. Its 10th anniversary is a perfect moment to dedicate the magazine's main feature to the work of the umbrella organisation and three of the exciting companies it supports.

Don't forget to download  
**the new 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.

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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)



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Morgan Barbançon Mestre © Tiffany van Halle

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**Cover:** Emmanuelle Wilhelm ©Lowette.com for L'Oréal



## BRIEFS

Wavre-based pharma firm **GSK** has been given the green light by the American Food and Drug Administration to market its shingles vaccine after more than 30 years of research. GSK will now be able to distribute its vaccine throughout North America. Marketed as Shingrix, "the vaccine is demonstrated to be more than 90% effective against both localised skin symptoms and post-herpetic pain, which is the greatest cause of suffering and for which there is no treatment", said Emmanuel Hanon, head of R&D at GSK Vaccines.

A new **Chinese business incubator** is to be based at Liège Airport. It has been created by the Wallonia Export-Investment Agency AWEX, Liège Airport and Logistics in Wallonia to help Chinese companies set up in Wallonia. The incubator is the first of its kind in Europe and will provide customised support for Chinese businesses, including office space, assistance in finding warehouse space and local logistics partners, access to business networks and help with job creation and investment.

Six youngsters from Wallonia won prizes at the annual **WorldSkills competition** in Abu Dhabi in October. It was a record haul for the under-23s, who were competing against 1,300 young people from 57 countries. The six winners were awarded for their skills in fashion technology, electrical installation, joinery, restaurant service, cooking and automobile technology.

Local chocolatiers impressed with their creations at the **International Chocolate awards** in London in October. Brussels' Laurent Gerbaud picked up a gold medal in the 'Unflavoured dark chocolate ganache or truffles' category, while Liège-based Mélanie Lemmens and Didier Smeets of the Carré Noir brand took silver in the same category.

## TWO RESTAURANTS JOIN MICHELIN ELITE

Brussels seafood institution L'Ecailler du Palais Royale and Bistro Racine (pictured) in Braine-le-Château in Walloon Brabant have each been awarded a coveted star by Michelin inspectors. The culinary mark of distinction, an international benchmark, rewards fine cuisine. In other gastronomy news, two-star chef Éric Fernez of d'Eugénie à Émilie near Mons was named chef of the year by the 2018 Belgian edition of French guide Gault&Millau. The chef saw his rating rise to 17.5 out of 20. His restaurant's name honours his grandmother and daughter.



## FUNDING BOOST TO IMPROVE CYCLING

The Walloon government has voted to make €5.46 million in subsidies available to develop cycling infrastructure across the region. Some 62 towns and villages will each receive up to €100,000, to cover no more than 75% of the cost of each proposed project. Regional mobility minister Carlo Di Antonio said the funding would allow the municipalities to develop new cycle paths and facilities, or to improve the safety of existing bike infrastructure. The aim is to strengthen the accessibility of the RAVeL cycle network by creating new bike path connections and filling in missing links between residential areas and business centres.



© WBT / JP Remy



## TOP TITLES FOR GOFFIN AND THIAM

Liège-born tennis player David Goffin has become the first Belgian in the tournament's 48-year history to reach the final of the ATP World Tour Finals. Goffin beat the world's two top-ranked players, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer, to make it to the final in London, where he lost to Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov. The number seven-ranked player then headed to Lille, to represent Belgium in the Davis Cup final against France. While Goffin won his leg against Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, Frenchman Lucas Pouille beat Belgium's Steve Darcis in the decisive match of the final. Meanwhile, Olympic and world heptathlon champion Nafi Thiam of Namur was named female athlete of the year at the IAAF Athletics Award 2017 in Monaco. Thiam won the Female Rising Star Award in 2016 after winning the Olympic heptathlon title. She followed this up in 2017 by claiming the World Championship title in London.

## STAR STRUCK

University of Liège astrophysicist Yaël Nazé has received the Prix Jean-Perrin from the French Society of Physics. The award highlighted her popularisation of massive stars and their interaction with the environment. "Yaël Nazé takes advantage of the attraction that astronomy exerts on the public to catch the interest of people and lead them to other subjects such as chemistry or physics, but also art, or to the question of the place of women," said the prize's jury. Nazé, who teaches science communication at the university, is the author of 10 books on astronomy and regularly speaks at conferences.

## SPRUCED UP

Wallonia's Christmas gift to the city of Brussels will grace the Grand'Place for the festive season: a 22m-high spruce fir tree. Originating from the Osthertogenwald forest near Eupen in East Belgium, the 45-year-old tree was carefully selected for its perfect triangle form.



© BELGA / Benoit Doppagne

## REAPING REWARDS OF INDIAN VISIT

Charleroi video specialists **Dirty Monitor** projected a 3D video map on to the facade of the Embassy of Belgium in New Delhi, as part of a state visit to India by King Philippe and Queen Mathilde to celebrate 70 years of diplomatic relations. Founded in 2004, Dirty Monitor is a creative studio that specialises in video mapping, VJing, digital art and other audio-visual productions. Video mapping creates a 2D image using three-dimensional perspective, projects it on to a flat surface and provides an illusion of depth. The process becomes much more complex when the canvas is not a rectangular plane but has its own textures and features, and when it's a large surface – such as the side of a building. Dirty Monitor also adds animation to the mix, which makes each commission even more demanding. [dirtymonitor.com](http://dirtymonitor.com)

Indian natural sugar company **Petiva** is to set up a base in Wallonia, following an agreement signed by Wallonia's minister-president, Willy Borsus, during the state visit. The start-up is looking for local farmers to help develop its production of low-sugar beetroot-based products. The multi-million-euro investment could create up to 50 jobs and be operational by 2019. Two greenfield sites are being studied for the site. Petiva products use 'rare sugars' that are found in the nectar of flowers or beehives, but which exist in too small quantities to be exploited economically.

Trappist brewery **Chimay** signed an agreement in India to commercialise its Chimay Rouge et Dorée brews in the country. It is teaming up with Flemish brewer Huyghe, which produces Delirium Tremens, to reduce costs. Both brewers will distribute their products via Indian company Hema Connoisseur Collections. Chimay's brews continue to be brewed within the abbey's walls under the supervision of monks, with a majority of profits supporting social projects.

**Vésale Pharma** finalised a partnership deal with Indian company Morepen Laboratories to exclusively distribute four of its flagship products. The five-year contract is worth an estimated €4.5 million for its first three years, but could rise by 20% in each following year. India's increasing appetite for probiotic products is worth around €135 million a year and is increasing by 15% a year. In December 2016, Eghezée-based Vésale Pharma opened an office in New Delhi with the assistance of the Wallonia Export-Investment Agency, AWEX. It also recently created an outlet in Texas, US, in a research collaboration with the University of Texas A&M.





## IN THE SPOTLIGHT Emmanuelle Wilhelm

The 28-year-old is a neuroscientist at the Institute of Neuroscience in Brussels. She won the prestigious L'Oréal-Unesco grant in October to support her PhD research on the neurodegenerative disease Parkinson's



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It's amazing to learn about the workings of the brain, the body's most complex and noble organ

**What is your PhD project studying?**

We're looking at the role of the basal ganglia in preparatory motor inhibition. The basal ganglia are deep in the brain and play an important role in functions like movement. We're looking at their role in mechanisms controlling our actions of daily life. Imagine being at a cocktail party and waiters are running around with plates of glasses of champagne. What determines whether you reach out for that glass? Will you take one, two, three glasses? Our simplest actions are controlled by fine neurophysiological mechanisms that have to behave appropriately and not yield to every little impulse. We are working with Parkinson's patients who have undergone neurosurgery. By turning on and off electrodes in one of the ganglia (the subthalamic nucleus), we can see the effect on motor inhibition.

**How could this lead to new treatments for diseases like Parkinson's?**

If we understand better the mechanisms of motor control, which exist in every human being, we might also understand why they don't function properly. This is the case in diseases like addictions, obsessive-compulsive disorders, ADHD and – to a lesser extent – Parkinson's disease, which are all characterised by a lack of motor control over impulses.

**You won a grant from Unesco and the L'Oréal Foundation to promote women in science. What caught their eye?**

You should probably ask them! But I know my CV matches their criteria. Medical graduates don't often become researchers – only two people from my year did. And I come from a very tiny country, Luxembourg. This is an unusual mix, so I guess they said to themselves, "She's worth it" [laughs]!

**What obstacles do women face in science that men tend not to?**

I actually work with many female researchers, and I have not personally had problems that other women might face. However, through L'Oréal-Unesco, I have learned how difficult it can be for woman to be taken seriously in science. Women are sometimes seen as too emotional and not rational enough, and their work is expected to be less well thought through. I think women have to work harder than men to earn the same recognition. I was shocked by a L'Oréal Foundation survey that said 90% of Europeans feel women have the talent for everything but science.

**Where do you see yourself in 10 years?**

I see myself practising neurology, taking part in research projects and giving classes – which is something that I really like. In addition, I hope to have started a family. It may sound ambitious but I hope to manage it all!

**How did you get into neuroscience?**

At school, I was always interested in human biology, the basic functioning of the human body. I studied medicine at the Brussels campus of the Université catholique de Louvain (UCL), and in my third year, we studied neurophysiology. I was totally drawn to it: it's amazing to learn about the workings of the brain, the body's most complex and noble organ.

# Water works

## Family-run Spadel wins Enterprise of the Year award

By Sally Tipper

**G**rowth, innovation and a commitment to the environment: just some of the factors that have seen Spadel named Enterprise of the Year by global consultancy EY.

The prize is awarded to companies around the world each year; the family-run company follows in the footsteps of previous local winners including healthy fast-food chain Exki, babywear specialists Noukie's and Pairi Daiza animal park.

Spadel distributes water from its two sources in Wallonia throughout the Benelux region

under two brand names. It also manages two springs in France and one in Wales, and has just acquired a further site in Bulgaria. Each brand – Spa, Bru, Wattwiller, Carola, Brecon Carreg and Devin – is only sold within a 500km radius of the spring. This local focus is key to Spadel's identity.

“Unlike the big multinationals who export their products around the world, our strategy is based on strong regional brands,” says Jean-Benoît Schrans, spokesperson for Spadel based at the company's headquarters in Brussels. “We don't export water to other countries. Our commitment is to be a region-

al product, and we want to reduce our ecological footprint by limiting the transport zone to 500km. For natural mineral water, you are obliged by law to bottle at source: you cannot transport it in bulk to somewhere else where you can produce it at a lower cost. So it's also one of the economic activities where you have guarantees of local employment.”

Across Europe, Spadel employs almost 1,300 people, with 600 of them in Belgium. The majority work at the source in Spa, where the company is investing €12.5 million in a new production line due to be finalised in February.







• CEO Marc du Bois, centre, and the Spadel team

In a competitive market, Spadel stands out for its commitment to health, of both the individual and the environment. In 2013, responding to market demands for healthier options that would encourage people to drink the recommended 1.5 litres of water a day, the company launched a range of sugar-free, all-natural flavoured waters.

“All our products are natural; even our lemonade is made with natural ingredients,” says Schrans. “And I could talk for hours about sustainability! All our bottles use recycled PET and are 100% recyclable. In Belgium, 85% of water bottles are recycled, it’s kind of a

closed loop. It’s a communal responsibility; a big part is industry but the consumer also has to respect the recycling system.”

The most important impact of winning the Enterprise of the Year award is on the employees, he says, adding that it’s a recognition of all the good work that’s been done by every employee of the company, “from the blue-collar workers to the CEO. We are one team, one company. We’re still family-owned and there’s a family culture within the company.”

The name Spa is also very strong. The Romans discovered water in this area of Wal-

lonia and valued it for its healing properties. When the mineral springs attracted those seeking therapeutic baths, Spa went on to become the generic term for wellness facilities.

“Very few people know that the spas they find in hotels come from this very small town in Belgium, which is the source of thermal water culture around the world,” says Schrans. “In some ways we are not proud enough. So this prize gives us the opportunity to be proud of what we do.”

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

# A radiant future

## Radiopharmaceutical company teams up with US network to distribute diagnostic tool

By Andy Furniere

**N**uclear medicine may sound a little unusual because of the link with radioactivity, but it is increasingly being considered a powerful and safe way to battle and diagnose cancers. Hainaut's IRE-ELiT, a global frontrunner in the field, has signed a deal with American network Cardinal Health to distribute its Galli Eo diagnostic tool in the US.

For decades, Wallonia has been an important player in nuclear medicine, with the National Institute for Radioelements (IRE) founded in 1971 in Fleurus, near Charleroi. In 2010, the region strengthened this position by creating the half-public, half-private subsidiary IRE-ELiT – ELiT being short for Environment & Lifescience Technology.

“ELiT is a lab that uses the radioisotopes produced at IRE to develop pharmaceutical products for hospitals,” explains Bérénice Pignol, business development product manager at IRE-ELiT. “We also offer services to analyse the radioactivity level of certain commodities, like water, for various industries.”

IRE-ELiT has two flagship products: Galli Eo and the Rheni Eo therapeutic tool. Galli Eo is used to diagnose neuroendocrine cancers and prostate cancer, among other diseases, through positron-emission tomography (PET) scans. Rheni Eo is used mainly to treat liver cancers and bone metastases.



• Galli Eo diagnostic tool





The tools are what are known as generators, technology that combines a radioisotope with a molecule that guides the radioisotope to a certain part in the body. For diagnostic purposes, a radioisotope is used that emits radiation to give a better view of a certain tumour or organ on a scan. For therapeutic goals, the radioisotope targets the tissue of a tumour so it can destroy it.

The use of Galli Eo in Europe is still limited to research and clinical trials. By April 2018, European hospitals should be able to use it in PET scans. Because of regulation differences, the tool can already be used in the US, Australia, Turkey and South America.

Last summer, IRE-ELiT signed an agreement with the American Cardinal Health network to distribute Galli Eo in the US from January. "Cardinal Health has about 120 radiopharmacies, each of which delivers products to about 10 hospitals," says Pignol. "While not all these

hospitals will immediately switch to Galli Eo, the deal is still a major boost for us."

Cardinal Health wasn't the only company that showed an interest, as Galli Eo has important advantages over other products. "Galli Eo allows for a very precise and patient-friendly diagnosis, such as limiting the emission of radiation in the patient's body to only one hour," explains Pignol. "Its innovative, simple design also limits the risk of errors by staff." While previous products needed to be first connected to a cyclotron, an expensive machine, the Galli Eo can be used directly by medical staff. "It makes the whole procedure quicker, cheaper and simpler."

IRE-ELiT is supported by BioWin, the Walloon region's health competitiveness cluster, while AWEX, Wallonia's export and foreign investment agency, encouraged its commercial development.

Despite success stories like Galli Eo, nuclear medicine is still not entirely mainstream, because of its link with radioactivity. "We strictly respect both the pharmaceutical and radioactivity regulations," says Pignol. "Our products don't entail any risks to the health of patients."

According to Pignol, the future of the sector looks bright. Lutathera has been approved by the EU as first-line therapy for gastroenteropancreatic neuroendocrine tumours. "It means radiopharmaceutical treatments are no longer considered a last resort," she says.

The firm that created Lutathera, French firm AAA, was bought by the Swiss pharmaceutical company Novartis. "As major pharmaceutical companies get more interested in nuclear medicine, the budgets for the development of these products are becoming bigger, which is good news for the sector," says Pignol.

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

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## Radiopharmaceutical treatments are no longer considered a last resort

Bérénice Pignol

# Hot metal

## While the European steel industry slumps, one company is pouring €15m into its innovative Charleroi plant

By Mari Eccles

**T**he European steel industry is not in a great way. Last year, the EU became a net importer of steel for the first time in seven years, despite a strong tradition of manufacturing across the bloc. And in recent years, 40 000 jobs across the EU have been lost in the sector as the financial crisis took its toll.

While the EU is working to tackle the lack of demand for European steel with action plans and funding, the sector is struggling to compete with Asian companies, particularly those in China, which is responsible for almost half of the global crude steel production. Foreign supply remains a critical issue for the sector, according to forecasts this year by the European Steel Association.

And yet in Châtelet, 10km east of Charleroi, the engines aren't coming to a standstill but whirring even faster as the Walloon site bucks the gloomy European trend.

Earlier this year, Aperam – the second largest stainless steel manufacturer in Europe – announced that it would be pouring €15 million into its plant in Wallonia, the only site that boasts a hot rolling steel mill. The company also owns operations in France and Brazil.

The investment is proof of the company's confidence in the "innovative and forward-looking" site, an Aperam spokesper-

son says. Not bad for a site that was established only six years ago.

This financial boost is part of a larger investment package worth €57 million. The most recent investment, announced last month, will go towards two new giant rolling steel motors, each 140 tonnes in weight. The aim is to make the site more efficient – the new technology will turn at 100 revolutions per minute, reducing the steel to sheets of just 10 millimetres in thickness.

Efficiency is key in a sector that sees much of its expenses go towards energy costs. A study by economic consultancy Ecorys estimates that energy represents 40% of steelmakers' total operational costs.

Aperam are not speculating publicly about how much steel the plant aims to produce following its modernisation. Until now, the site has been manufacturing 2.8 million tonnes of steel per year. The steel, after being sent to a transformation site, is used for everything from cars to building materials – even the kitchen sink.

The company is also planning to roll out a monitoring system to verify the plant's environmental impact. This is part of a growing trend by European steelmakers who, despite the sector's poor environmental past record, are beginning to take sustainability into account.

This has been reiterated by the company's CEO, Timoteo di Mauro, who says Aperam's identity as a "socially responsible company" is at the heart of its commitment to sustainability.

Aperam, which employs 2,200 across its two sites in Belgium – the other is in Genk – has said it will be hiring 60 new staff members as a result of the investment. That's no small thing in an area that has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country and which recently saw the high-profile closure of the Caterpillar factory, just 15km from Châtelet.

"It's good news for the region and allows us to remain a major player in terms of jobs," Aperam spokesperson Guillaume Focroulle said.

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





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It's good news for the region and allows us to remain a major player in terms of jobs

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Guillaume Focroulle

# Saddle up

## From stable accessories to showjumping equipment, Dy'on is a world leader

By Sarah Crew

**F**rom the rustic village of Durnal, near Namur, former blacksmith Philippe Dion has grown an equestrian empire. Among his superstar clientele he counts Belgian showjumper Grégory Wathelet, French film director Guillaume Canet, Arab sheiks and a host of international showjumpers and celebrities.

It was after crafting his own leather chaps as an impoverished horse rider that Dion was inspired to launch his own artisan business. In 1989, he abandoned his riding career and founded Dy'on, first employing his sewing teacher aunt to make customised chaps, the leather coverings and buckles that protect riders' legs. As orders increased, more staff joined the company, which diversified into making other accessories. Dion invested in specialised equipment and started working with stores and wholesalers, and business boomed further when Dion took stands at equestrian events.

Today, the company is a market leader. Ten seamstresses are responsible for the production of chaps from an atelier in Durnal, while a factory in India makes bridles, employing around 300 people. Each piece is designed by Dion, tested on horses and guaranteed for life.

The administrative, commercial and logistical part of the business is run from the nearby village of Assesse, where 12 people work. Turnover is around €5 million and is increasing by 15 to 25% each year. Dy'on's products, which include textiles for horses and their riders, are sold in 48 countries.

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



© Tiffany Van Halle

• French showjumper Philippe Rozier





## MEET THE BRUSSELS EXPAT



**Johnathan von Fürstenmühl on international workplaces and discovering new countries**

**I** was born in America but I'm half German, half Italian. I spent my childhood in many different countries, because my father was a diplomat. I've lived in Japan, America, Italy, Germany, Spain, Austria, Sweden, the Netherlands, France, Argentina, Russia, and now I'm in Belgium. I came here to complete the last internship for my master's programme while I was studying in France. I fell in love with Brussels: the atmosphere, the culture, everything about it.

My internship was in marketing and communications. I was working in a software startup here in Belgium; we were creating an app for influencer marketing and social media. It was an interesting experience and gave me a clearer view of digital marketing, communications, event preparation and so

on. My colleagues were amazing. We were an international group with this particular vibe and different points of view. There were people with backgrounds in various domains, so I learned a lot. I would sometimes work long hours: when we were preparing the app launch event, for example, we started very early and finished at night. Working in a start-up is sometimes like this.

I'm now looking for a job. I would like to work in a European institution or an NGO because I want to contribute to society. Communications and marketing are my passion, as well as international affairs because of my life and work experience and all the languages I speak. I am looking for a job in marketing and social media, but I also want to explore other areas like event organisation and international marketing.

My main interest is music. I've been playing the violin for 17 years; I enjoy classical music but also electronic music. I often go to the various music festivals here in Brussels, as well as cultural events, even sports events. I also like going to language exchange events and meetups, because I speak several languages and I enjoy sharing ideas about linguistics.

For me it's not important to research what you're supposed to see in a new country. I prefer the adrenaline you get, being astonished when you go to a place and start to figure out for yourself the beauty of the new country. I've had really great experiences of Wallonia. I've visited the Ardennes with their beautiful landscapes and views, those magical forests. And La Hulpe, not far from Brussels, is great for a weekend trip to the countryside.







• Freecaster

# Twist and shout

Wallonia's cluster for image, sound and text unites dozens of organisations carrying out pioneering work in the audiovisual sector

By Ian Mundell

For the past decade, Cluster Twist has been working with Wallonia's audiovisual and media industries, helping to build new businesses and stimulating cooperation. As it celebrates its 10th anniversary, Twist is also looking forward, to the challenges of a constantly changing media landscape and the need to build new international markets.

Twist – Technologies in Wallonia for Image, Sound and Text – brings together around 100 organisations, mostly large and small companies but also universities and other actors in Wallonia's audiovisual industry. Unlike many other business clusters in Europe, it is a private rather than a public initiative.

"Here we are really working for the companies, understanding their needs and thinking about how to bring them solutions," says Pierre Collin, Twist executive manager.

The cluster's community falls into three broad markets. First there are content providers in the cinema, TV and animation sectors, such as sister companies DreamWall and KeyWall. For Thibault Baras, general manager of both companies, networking is the most important aspect of the cluster. "Twist helps us to know the other companies involved in the industry, from animation studios to special effects companies," he says. In addition, the network also nurtures closer partnerships. "For example, it can help to establish links with research centres and universities," he says.

The second market sector is broadcast and event technology, providing the services and knowhow that underpin the media industry. One of these companies is Freecaster. "In B2B [business to business], you need a good, strong

## VIRTUAL REALITY

DreamWall was created a decade ago as a joint venture between Belgian public broadcaster RTBF and comic book publisher Dupuis. The aim was to build a company that could produce animation and TV channel branding, and create designs for virtual sets. These sets are ubiquitous now in television, providing digital backgrounds for news broadcasts, weather reports and magazine programmes.

The man behind DreamWall, Thibault Baras, built Belgium's first virtual studio for RTBF in 2005. When the time came for DreamWall to create its own virtual studio, a second company was created so its facilities and services could be offered to third parties. Called KeyWall, it has two virtual studios and a conventional live studio in Charleroi.

Baras manages both companies, and they work closely together. "At KeyWall, for example, you are shooting in a virtual studio, on virtual sets that have been designed by DreamWall," he explains. Hardware and software are sourced outside the company. "We are always looking for the most powerful technology," says Baras, "and we are developing new workflows, new content and new ways of using that technology to provide high added-value to our customers."

For example, a partnership with Turkish company Zero Density means highly realistic 3D virtual sets and other content can be produced using technology developed for the video game industry. This was used to deliver virtual sets and infographics to enhance France Télévisions' live coverage of the 2017 presidential elections.

keywall.be  
dreamwall.be

## BIG SCREENS

Freecaster began its business of managing and streaming video on the internet in 2004, a year before the creation of YouTube and three years before the first iPhone. Much has changed in the intervening years. "We have always evolved as a company," says Baptiste Fosséprez, chief development officer. "There have been a lot of technological changes, for example in the technology used to manage and stream content, but also in the devices on which people watch."

Freecaster's business remains video delivery on the internet based on its own platform. Content is accessed on clients' websites, apps and social media sites. Freecaster will arrange production of the content as well, if clients request it, offering services across the entire value chain. It has a staff of 12, around half of them busy with software development. "Our core product is a video platform, so we need these guys to maintain and develop the platform, and to tailor it to customers' requirements," says Fosséprez.

Freecaster's online video platform is used by media companies, including Belgian public broadcaster RTBF, and also by event organisers. This includes fashion shows (for clients such as Louis Vuitton, Yves Saint-Laurent, Givenchy and Kenzo); sports events such as motocross and cycling; and music festivals, such as Tomorrowland. It also works for businesses and public institutions, helping screen meetings internally and to the public.

freecaster.com





network to find partners, to get new ideas, and to be recognised for who you are and what you do,” says Baptiste Fosséprez, the company’s chief development officer. He also appreciates Twist’s research connections and eye on the future. “When you’re in a small company you always have to balance the short-term imperative to generate revenue with the need to think of longer term developments.”

Finally, there is the transmedia market, where content crosses from traditional media to the new screens of mobile phones and tablets, and entirely new experiences emerge such as augmented reality. Being part of the Twist cluster

helps companies such as Memovie address the challenges of this rapidly evolving sector. “It’s an important moment for the media sector,” says co-founder Olivier Gaillard. “People are looking for new business models, mixing traditional production methods with approaches using new technologies. Twist is the only place in Belgium I’ve found where I can have conversations about that and meet experts and professionals – not just consultants but CEOs of companies – who are thinking about it.”

Twist also provides a constant stream of intelligence about the market, along with invitations to meetings and missions abroad that

can help develop new business contacts. “It’s a way of permanent research for us.”

Participating in projects supported by the European Union is one of Twist’s most important activities. These not only address specific goals, such as research and development (R&D), but also help build broader relationships with partners across Europe.

“We’ve developed strong links with the regions of Paris, Barcelona, Malmö and Munich. And we are working on links with Greece, Madrid, Lyon and Bordeaux,” Collin says. This in turn benefits individual companies. “It’s another

## MEMORY LANE

Memovie began with a family that wanted to celebrate its grandparents. The idea was to collect memories from them and other family members, and turn this material into a themed party, including a short movie. The result was so impressive that other people started asking how it was done – not just other families, but in time also institutions and companies with a story to tell.

“People want to share their stories, but it’s difficult for them to gather all their memories and then to produce a story. And that’s our job,” says co-founder Olivier Gailard. The platform allows people to gather photographs, films and other documents, which can then be opened up to the community involved, whether family and friends or employees and other stakeholders in an organisation. They can then add their own material or provide further information, for example adding memories or identifying people in old photographs.

Community input also helps decide which elements are the most important in telling a story. Then Memovie transforms this archive into a story that can be told through different media, for example a movie, a book, an exhibition or an event. The company has existed for four years, but with the transmedia market still developing, it is challenging to find the right business model. “We have more and more big clients, so the market exists and the need is real, but finding a business model that combines transmedia and technology is not easy.” Clients so far include the Brussels metro, the castle at La Hulpe and restaurant chain Exki.

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



• Dreamwall

way of finding new prospects and new partnerships, and to be able to gain new markets.”

Twist recently won EU funding, together with Munich, Paris and Malmö, for a project to support the internationalisation of small and medium-sized enterprises beyond Europe. “This project aims to establish an internationalisation plan to understand what markets we can focus on and how we will approach them,” Collin explains.

On the research front, Twist coordinated the Eurotransmedia project, a €2 million initiative between 2013 and 2016 that developed an R&D agenda for the transmedia sector. Its findings are now being applied in the Arena 3.0 initiative, which will explore how transmedia can transform the experience of arena events.

“What we are trying to do is to develop secondary content around the primary content, which is the music or the sports event within the arena, in order to enhance the users’ experience,” Collin says. That might mean providing new services, such as apps that allow people to order food and drinks from their seats, or complementary entertainment during or

after an event, such as games, or analysis and information on mobile phones.

The test case for this work is the Spiroudome in Charleroi, which hosts concerts and sports such as tennis and basketball. The Twist community will be asked to come up with new ideas for entertaining the public and building customer loyalty at the digital level. Well-developed ideas will then be tested in the arena, while those that require more work can be brought on in a ‘living lab’ that Twist has set up with partners in Flanders and northern France. Called C2L3Play: Cross Border Living Labs, the project is funded by EU’s Interreg France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen initiative.

The aim across the transmedia sector is to encourage companies to become unique. “To be a service provider is very interesting, but it has to be over the short term, because then you have competitors who may be less expensive or have innovations, and you lose your business,” Collin warns. “If you don’t develop technological and narrative intellectual property, it is complicated to survive in the long term.”

[twist-cluster.com](http://twist-cluster.com)  
[crossborderlivinglabs.eu](http://crossborderlivinglabs.eu)



# The Trappist trail

A 290km walking tour takes in Wallonia's three iconic Trappist breweries, with plenty more to discover along the way

By Alan Hope



© WBT- Denis Erroyaux

• The abbey of Orval



Fancy a visit to three of Belgium's most iconic breweries? You'd better get your boots on, because this trip involves a new walking tour covering 290km.

The tour takes in the three Trappist breweries in Wallonia – Chimay, Rochefort and Orval – and is the first themed itinerary organised by Sentiers de Grande Randonnée (SGR), which already provides more than 5,000km of signposted walking routes in the region, as a means of promoting tourism in Wallonia.

The Trappist tour comes in two sections. One is the 174km between Chimay (to give its proper name, the Abbey of Scourmont close to but not actually in the town of Chimay) and the Abbey of Our Lady of Saint Rémy at Rochefort. Chimay is the biggest of Belgium's six Trappist breweries and produces four regular beers. Rochefort makes three known as 6, 8 and 10, all brown beers with varying levels of alcohol, rising up to the bracing 11.3% of the 10.

The second leg of the tour covers the 116km from Rochefort to Orval. Orval, famously, makes just one beer, but it's regularly listed by beer-lovers as among the best in the world. The brewery also has the distinction of having the only female brew-master in the Trappist universe.

The Trappists are an offshoot of the Cistercian tradition, based on the motto 'Ora et labora' – prayer and work. The International Trappist Association states that a beer may only carry the Trappist label if it is made within the walls of an abbey under the supervision of the monks themselves. The production of the beer must not be the abbey's primary activity and it is not intended to make a profit; income should cover the upkeep of the abbey and the care of the monks, with any surplus donated to social and pastoral works.

While the distances involved may be daunting, those taking part can travel at their own pace. "It's rather long because it covers 290km and crosses 20 municipalities," says Pierre Wiliquet, spokesperson for René Collin, the minister responsible for the initiative. "The time it takes depends on the individual. But in general, when walking we cover five or six kilometres an hour. There aren't just the three abbeys; we cover 20 communes, and there are seven tourism offices involved in the partnership. Our guide gives you the route to take and provides a range of suggestions of where to stay, where to eat and drink, as well as museums and sites of cultural heritage. So the walk is also accompanied by a series of discoveries."

Unfortunately, none of the three abbeys allows visitors to visit the brewery itself. "That's not permitted, because of the hygiene conditions in force," explains Anne Neuville, public relations manager for Wallonie-Belgique Tourisme. "And at Rochefort there's nothing to visit at all," she says. At Orval, visitors can be guided through the ruins of the old abbey and shop for abbey products. At Chimay, there's a 'Chimay experience' visitor centre complete with exhibition, restaurant and shop.

The minister in charge of all of this, Collin, has a portfolio including tourism, agriculture, nature and heritage, all of which come together in the project. "The idea was to create a project that links all the dossiers: the nature aspect of the walk, the tourism aspect, and the heritage aspects associated with the abbeys, which are of course also related to agriculture with brewing and cheese-making," says Wiliquet, who was instrumental in putting the project together.

The trip is well-signposted throughout and participants can download a guide for sale on the SGR website with maps, descriptions and other tourism information.

[grsentiers.org](http://grsentiers.org)

“

Orval, famously, makes just one beer, but it's regularly listed by beer-lovers as among the best in the world



• The village of Cuesmes, once home to Vincent Van Gogh

# Party on

## Capital of Culture celebrations continue in Mons with a year-long encore performance

By Georgio Valentino

**I**n 2015 Mons shone as European Capital of Culture. For an entire year the Montois strutted their stuff, putting on spectacles, exhibitions, concerts and parties in cultural institutions and public spaces alike. One of the biggest hits of Mons2015 was the Grand Huit, a free, itinerant folk festival brimming with

community warmth, family fun and culture of all stripes, from folklore to pop to fine art.

Now, in 2018, the Grand Huit returns for a year-long encore performance celebrating the people and places that make Greater Mons.

In keeping with the rootsy vibe of the original concept, the Grand Huit follows the rhythm of the seasons. This second edition kicked off in September 2017 with a grand late-summer garden party in Greater Mons' southwestern fringe. Yes, another one of the Grand Huit's signatures is its emphasis on the area's diverse



communes in addition to its historic city centre.

By the time all is said and done in September 2018, the Grand Huit will not just have guided us through an entire annual cycle of hibernation and rebirth, it will have also showcased all 19 Montois communes. Each will get the chance to show Belgium and Europe what it does best. It's an all-hands-on-deck effort, with local govern-

ment, cultural institutions, community organisations, artisans, agricultural producers and residents are all on board.

The programme unfolds in five geographic clusters, each grouping a handful of neighbouring villages. The inaugural event, L'Écllosion, spanned the bucolic villages of Cuesmes, Hyon, Ciply and Mesvin. The area's deep-rooted equestrian tradition was centre stage with horse shows and pony rides galore.

But there was much more besides. Visitors enjoyed local food and drink, arts and crafts workshops, falconry, dance lessons, poetry slams, sports, live music and street theatre, not to mention a Van Gogh-themed tour of Cuesmes, a village that the famed 19th-century Dutch painter once called home.

The Grand Huit's second stage, L'Arbre, unfolded in October and found autumn in full swing in the leafy north-eastern villages of Saint-Denis, Obourg and Havré. Much of the weekend was devoted to that most mysterious of seasons. The changing foliage was accompanied by fairy tales, folklore, wooden sculptures and autumnal light shows.

The remainder of the Grand Huit lies ahead in 2018. The villages of Spiennes, Harveng, Harmignies, Villers-Saint-Ghislain, Saint-Symphorien and Nouvelles – all clustered on Greater Mons' south-eastern fringe – are set to celebrate spring with Flower Power (27 April-2 May) while the north-western villages of Nimy, Maisières and Ghlin herald the end of the rains with L'Arc en Ciel (18-20 May). Summertime brings Le Soleil (8-10 June) to Jemappes and Flénu.

The grand finale will take place in the autumn of 2018, in the context of the second anniversary of Mons2015. Details haven't yet been announced but expect a block party for the record books.

As if all this wasn't enough, the Grand Huit also has an official partner artist who will accompany, entertain, instruct and document throughout. French folk artist François Andes, who performed at the climax of the inaugural event and exhibited a Grand Huit retrospective at Mons' Maison Folie in 2016, was a natural for the job. Andes will be present at every stage of the year-long event.

The Grand Huit is only the first element in a new initiative aimed at following up the success of Mons2015. If all goes to plan, the newly minted Mons2025 foundation will keep putting the culture in the erstwhile Capital of Culture for years to come.



• The Grand Huit celebrations in Saint-Denis

© Mara De Sario

[mons2025.eu](https://mons2025.eu)





© Marc Antoine

# Lights on

## €1.8m investment puts spotlight on Namur citadel

By Sarah Crew

Namur's citadel is no longer lying in the dark ages. A new eco-lighting system has set the historical site alight, following a €1.8 million investment by the city, Walloon Region and European Regional Development Fund. The installation is part of a smartening-up of the city designed to attract more visitors. It also improves Namur's green credentials: replacing sombre halogen spots with 295 LED lights will reduce energy consumption by more than 60%.

Towering over the city at the confluence of the rivers Meuse and Sambre, the 80-hectare citadel is one of Europe's largest fortresses. Its ancient stone walls, precipices and turrets flank both sides of the river. As night falls, the new Philips Lighting illuminations play with a nuance of two white lights, creating an atmospheric vision that can be seen from far.

At the inauguration in October, citizens were treated to a weekend of sound and light shows, tracing momentous events in the history of

the citadel and its European dimension. They included its occupation by France, the Anglo-Dutch siege of 1695 and Belgium's independence in 1831.

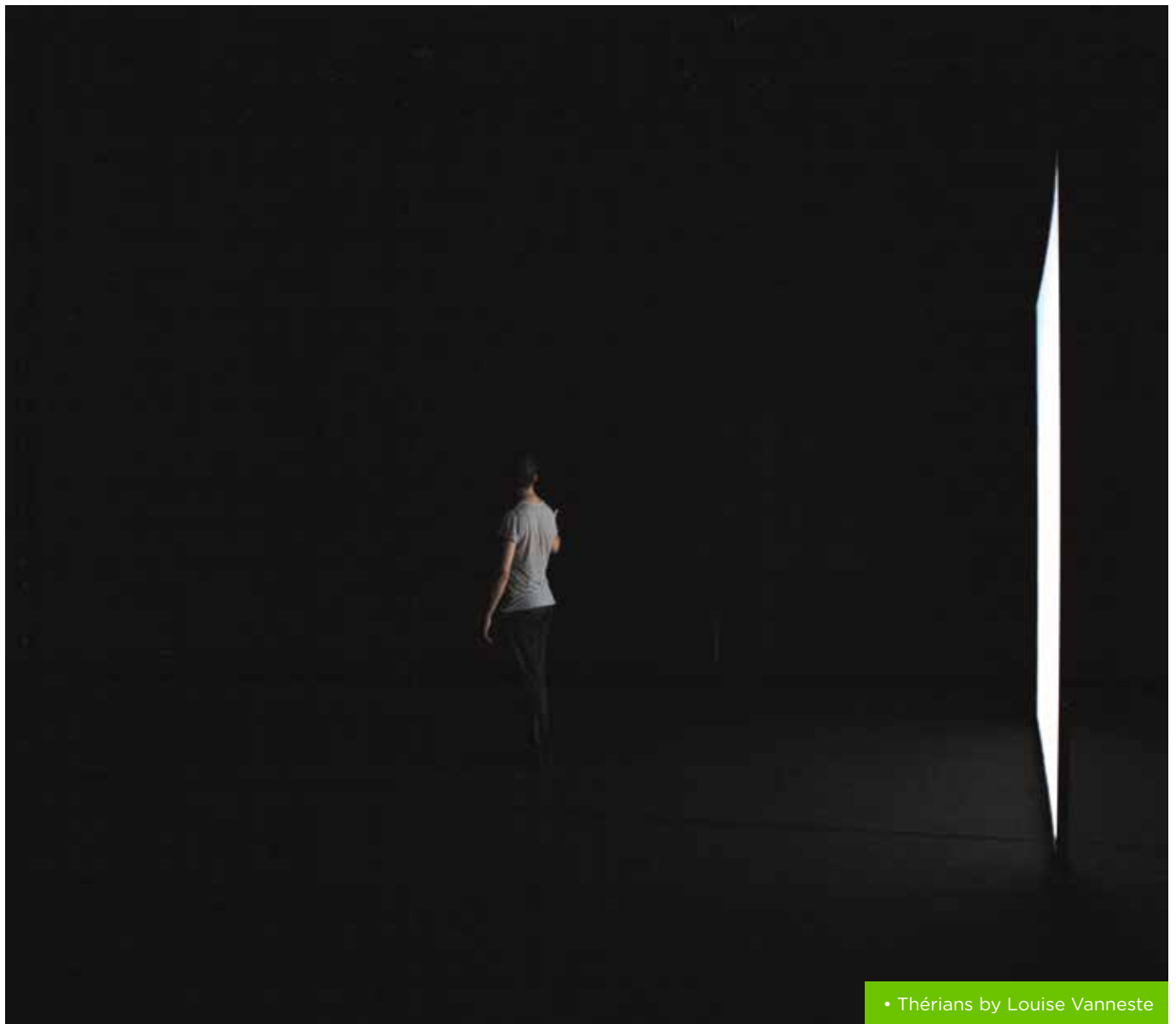
Other shows are planned to mark national holidays and cultural events, such as end-of-year festivities, the Belgian national holiday on 21 July, Namur in May street theatre festival and the international film festival Fiff.

[citadelle.namur.be](http://citadelle.namur.be)

# Better together

A cross-border, cross-disciplinary project brings performing arts and creative technologies together in Liège

By Georgio Valentino



© Arnaud Gerniers

• Thérians by Louise Vanneste

Choreographer Louise Vanneste's latest production embodies the transversal spirit of Impact, a recent regional initiative led by the Théâtre de Liège. *Thérians* was one of dozens of performances, exhibitions, workshops, conferences and other events all celebrating the intersection of research, application and artistic practice.

Contemporary art, fashion and technology have, of course, long enjoyed a symbiotic relationship. Innovation in one sphere invariably spurs experimentation in the others. It was in this spirit that partner institutions from five Meuse-Rhine cities – Liège, Eupen, Hasselt, Maastricht and Aachen – joined forces in June 2016 to launch Impact: the International Meeting in Performing Arts and Creative Technologies. The goal was to facilitate collaboration across borders and industrial sectors. Artists, academic researchers and captains of industry joined forces for a slew of projects that were presented during the Impact forum in November 2017.

Liège – and in particular its celebrated theatre – took the lead. In addition to hosting the lion's share of Impact events, the Théâtre de Liège also recruited Vanneste and co-produced *Thérians*. The choreographer was hesitant when first approached by theatre management to develop a new production incorporating cutting-edge technology. "I wasn't sure," she says. "I didn't want

a gimmick. Nothing flashy. I wanted something that could complement the performance in a more subtle way. So I thought about it for a while and suggested we might be able to do something interesting with the wardrobe."

Vanneste and her new partners at the Théâtre de Liège duly began a lengthy, often surreal dialogue with Belgian textile laboratory Centexbel. "I arrived at our first meetings with a very definite concept," she says. "I wanted a synthetic fabric that would emulate the iridescence and complexity of duck feathers."

She didn't just arrive with a concept; Vanneste brought with her a thoroughly researched portfolio of wildlife photographs and documents. Her interlocutors rose to the challenge. "The folks at Centexbel listened very intently," she says. "Obviously they come from an entirely different world but they wanted to follow this vision wherever it led. They had a great deal of empathy."

Thus began the prototype process. Vanneste reckons they went through 20 models, testing each under the intense glare of real theatre spotlights. "There was a lot of running around," she says, laughing. "But we had to make sure the fabric worked in context."

In the event, nothing quite delivered the organic subtlety that Vanneste required. So Centexbel reached out across the border to

German pigment manufacturer Eckart, a frequent partner on industrial projects. Together they forged the fabric of Vanneste's dreams.

"It's the perfect black surface with a translucent green lining," she says. "The colours absolutely flow with the dancers' movements. At certain angles the costume is flat black. At others the lining catches the light to create a fluid sheen. It's exactly what we wanted."

Next, Vanneste set about creating a choreography with the new fabric – and all its luminous possibilities – in mind. The final product, *Thérians*, is a 'solo' performance for two, set to an electro-organic soundtrack by Brussels-based performer and composer Cédric Dambrain. Brussels-based dancer Youness Khoukhou kicks off the performance. Vanneste joins him midway, at which point Khoukhou withdraws and leaves the choreographer to finish the performance in solitude.

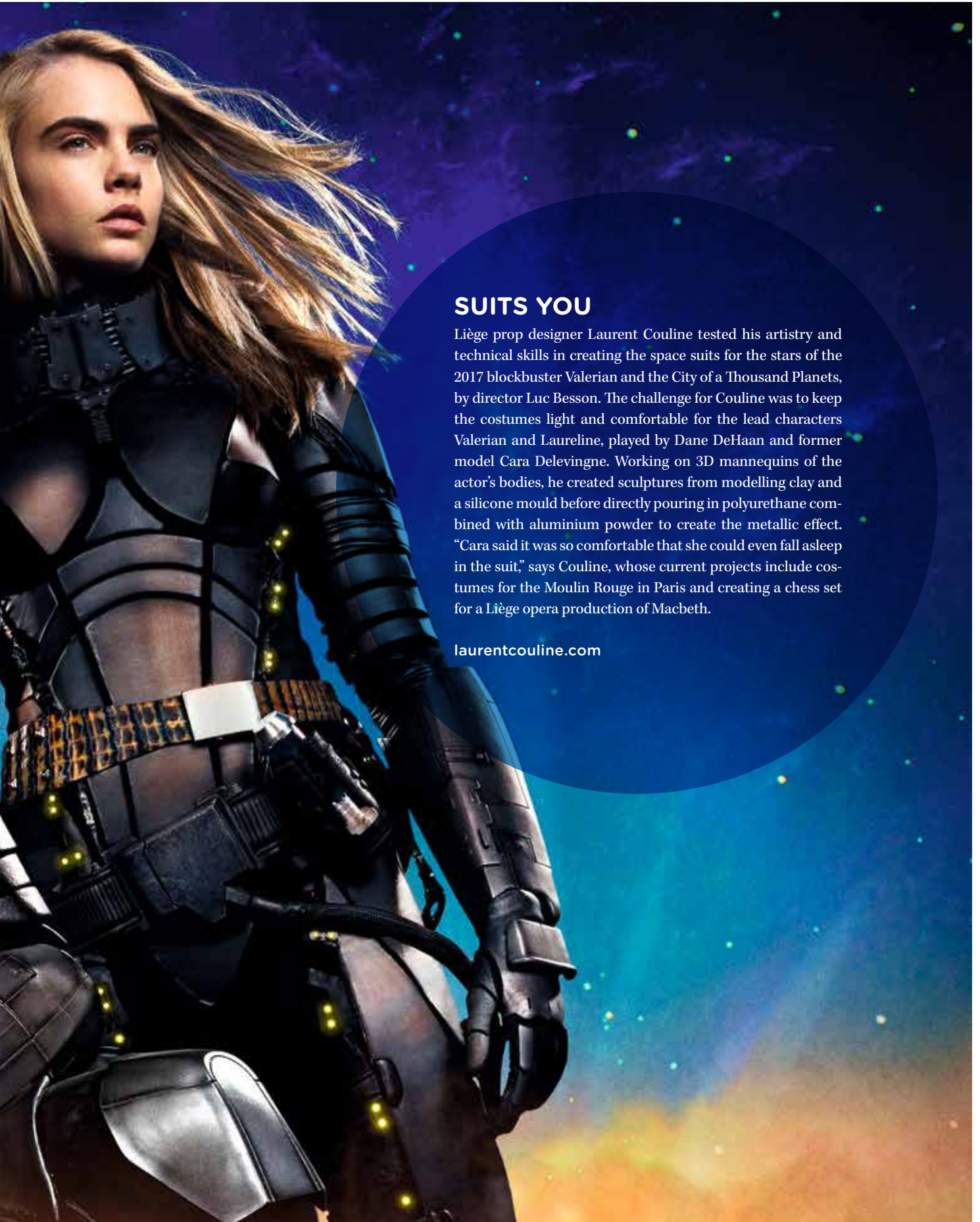
*Thérians* premiered in Paris this year before coming home to play in the context of the inaugural Impact forum. It was an edifying experience for Vanneste and her company. "Impact is a very interesting idea," she says. "These different worlds are always so separate. It's good to break those barriers and meet people who see the world differently. We have so much to teach each other."

[impact-regio.eu](http://impact-regio.eu)









## SUITS YOU

Liège prop designer Laurent Couline tested his artistry and technical skills in creating the space suits for the stars of the 2017 blockbuster *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets*, by director Luc Besson. The challenge for Couline was to keep the costumes light and comfortable for the lead characters Valerian and Laureline, played by Dane DeHaan and former model Cara Delevingne. Working on 3D mannequins of the actor's bodies, he created sculptures from modelling clay and a silicone mould before directly pouring in polyurethane combined with aluminium powder to create the metallic effect. "Cara said it was so comfortable that she could even fall asleep in the suit," says Couline, whose current projects include costumes for the *Moulin Rouge* in Paris and creating a chess set for a Liège opera production of *Macbeth*.

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





© Emmanuel Crooy



© Michael Deplaen



© Sabam 2017 / Photo: Studio Philippe de Formanoir



© David LaChapelle Studio Inc

## EXHIBITION THOMAS MAZZARELLA: QUE SERÀ

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Charleroi artist Thomas Mazzarella exhibits 10 years of creation at his hometown art museum. His colourful, geometric works have their roots in graffiti and nod to his background in computer science and graphics. The acrylic on wood and oils on canvas each conceal a dense and complex universe that springs from a place somewhere between naivety, irony and disenchantment.

• UNTIL 7 JANUARY, BPS22,  
CHARLEROI

[bps22.be](http://bps22.be)





## EVENT **BRAFA**

Since its inaugural edition as the Brussels Art Fair in 1956, Brafa has evolved from local affair to international highlight. Indeed, the annual meet has become one of Europe's leading art and antiques fair, gathering more than 100 dealers from around the world and spanning some 5,000 years of art history. This 63rd edition boasts nearly 15,000 art works for sale. All are vetted by an international committee of experts to ensure maximum confidence.

• 27 JANUARY-4 FEBRUARY, TOUR & TAXIS, BRUSSELS

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

## FINE ART **MAGRITTE, BROODTHAERS & CONTEMPORARY ART**

Quite possibly Belgium's most influential modern painter, René Magritte continues to inspire fellow artists even a half-century after his death. This exhibition examines his impact on the contemporary art world through 150 paintings, drawings, sculptures, installations, photographs and films. The works may have been created by other artists but they continue Magritte's own explorations into the nature of language, art and the objects that form the language of art.

• UNTIL 18 FEBRUARY, ROYAL MUSEUMS OF FINE ARTS, BRUSSELS

[fine-arts-museum.be](http://fine-arts-museum.be)

## PHOTOGRAPHY **DAVID LACHAPELLE: AFTER THE DELUGE**

This retrospective dedicated to American photographer David LaChapelle looks back over his entire artistic output from the 1990s to the present day. After years of photographing the biggest stars of his generation, LaChapelle began a new creative chapter with a series of more personal pieces highlighting ecological and ethical issues. The show contains 100 of his hyper-real, high-gloss images.

• UNTIL 25 FEBRUARY, BAM, MONS

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

## 2 **AUDACIOUS ART**

**Since 2011, Xavier Roland has managed Mons's museum hub, including the fine arts museum Bam. Current show David LaChapelle: After the Deluge was a daring choice that's already proving a crowd pleaser.**

"The impetus for putting on this exhibition was not only that LaChapelle is a popular artist, but that behind his images there is a pertinent debate which questions today's society. It was a risk staging this show, but it's personally reassuring to see how the public have reacted. On leaving the museum, visitors have been thanking staff, telling them how impressed are. While LaChapelle's images are familiar, it's completely different when you see them in large format and in such high resolution.

"LaChapelle is particularly interesting, because he was an artist who was at home in the commercial world of magazines and popular culture. Then he underwent a revelation and converted to putting all his energy into the good of the planet. This was remarkable because it was at the time of the economic crisis, so his work mirrors a change in our society.

"His religious and mythological references are relevant to daily life. His capacity to create a scenography makes his images instantly recognisable and represent a universal language. It's impossible not to react to one of his works. When he photographs celebrities, there is always an allegorical message, such as in the image of Michael Jackson as an angel pictured with the devil (see photo left), or the Kardashian family showing off their narcissism. It's sometimes strange how celebrities have let themselves be manipulated in such a way."

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



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Highly skilled  
AVAILABLE  
**WORKFORCE**



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



Wallonia.be