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## INVESTMENT

Liege Airport flying high!

## FOCUS

Osaka Expo: Belgian healthcare innovations

## INNOVATION

Sunslice surges forward

# BEAUTY AS A SOURCE OF DIALOGUE

During sales meetings, we do a lot of listening, but we mostly talk about the added value of our services and/or products for the target market, with the goal of winning them over and turning them into new clients. What if we talked about values, experiences, or solutions? Storytelling, understanding and emotion: these are the things people remember about us. These are the things that create long-lasting relationships.

The recent mission to India highlighted the importance of having deep respect for others – but on top of that, this vast land of gods and temples also showed us the importance of respecting beauty. Certainly, the elements underlying this notion of beauty are different from what we are used to, but this in turn served as a starting point for rich and thought-provoking cross-cultural dialogue. Our entrepreneurs discussed these concepts, and also touched on what is good, what is true, and what is useful. All of this and more can be found in this issue of WAB.

Here, beauty is light, with Schröder’s progressive lighting on our highways, and the light installations in the Belgian Pavilion in Osaka. Beauty can be found in an optical illusion by Pierre-Yves Morel or a gastronomic dish from François-Xavier Simon. Beauty is also in unexpected sustainability, whether carpets by Composil, or textiles in a cultural festival. Beauty invites you to take a stroll around our centuries-old castles and our promising vineyards. And while Liege Airport is soaring to new heights in the fight against sound pollution, Hungry Minds has been capturing the varied and magical soundscapes of the Hautes Fagnes area.

Our companies have so much to offer. Both now and in the future.

Pascale Delcomminette



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www.wallonia.be



**PHOENIX AI SETS UP RATP CAMERAS WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

Phoenix AI, a Walloon start-up based in Hainaut, has signed a contract with the Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens (RATP), which operates the public transport system in Paris. They will test out an AI solution on several analogue cameras in order to improve their image flow: this technology improves security and performance, without needing to access the cloud. The company, which is already up and running in the port of Antwerp, now has its sights set on international markets.



**MYOCENE GETS FDA APPROVAL AND LANDS IN THE USA**

Myocene, a Liège-based start-up which specialises in measuring muscle fatigue, has been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration for its muscle fatigue assessment technology. A subsidiary has been opened in the USA, and the first shipments are due soon. This expansion is the result of a €3 million investment in June 2024.



**TRASIS ANNOUNCES A MAJOR INNOVATION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CANCER**

The Liège-based company Trasis, which works in nuclear medicine, has launched a new quality control device. This invention can do the work of 8 machines by itself, carrying out 14 different checks. This system promises to speed up cancer treatments. With a turnover of €72 million in 2024, Trasis is aiming to at least double this number within 2 to 3 years.



**ASTRAZENECA TO ACQUIRE BELGIAN BIOTECH ESOTBIOTEC FOR \$1 BILLION**

This Charleroi-based start-up, which specialises in cancer treatments, is to be bought by AstraZeneca. Founded in 2020, the company has enjoyed support from Wallonia, via an investment from Wallonie Entreprendre. The acquisition is scheduled to be finalised over the second quarter of 2025.







## PHILIPPE FELTEN, AN ENLIGHTENED VISION

**Philippe Felten took the helm of Schröder in September 2024, and since then, he and his new management team have been driving change in this century-old company, which has always been at the cutting edge of the public lighting industry. Voted Entrepreneur of the Year 2024®, the Liège-based company, which operates in over 70 countries, is continuing to expand and pursue its commitment innovation and sustainability.**

An electromechanical engineer with a degree in economic and business sciences, Philippe Felten was quick to move into roles related to strategy and business. After working at Schneider Electric, he joined BEA, where he worked to expand their international market over 14 years. Then, he joined the executive committee for British group Halma, before joining Schröder's board of directors in 2017. He became chairman of the board in 2024, thus embodying values he has held for his whole career: "an international yet family-run business, strong Belgian roots, industry know-how combined with digitalisation, and a commitment to sustainability."

Founded in Liège in 1907, Schröder is famous worldwide for their street and urban lighting. The company devises smart solutions to optimise energy consumption in cities. "Urban lighting should now be seen as a strategic tool in making cities more efficient. Thanks to smart sensors and AI, we integrate data into the light fixtures about traffic, sunlight, pollution and noise, while ensuring lighting performance in real time." "We are becoming a trusted partner for cities."

Schröder continues to grow internationally, with acquisitions in Australia, New Zealand and the USA, as well as a joint venture in Saudi Arabia. Though 92% of their revenue comes from exports, their R&D

department remains firmly based in Liège. "Our greatest innovations come from right here," says Philippe Felten.

The award of Entrepreneur of the Year 2024® goes first and foremost to the various teams. "It was a wonderful surprise, a collective point of pride, a reward for what we've accomplished, and a definite plus in terms of recruitment. Our efforts in sustainable development have been recognised."

These values will continue to be at the heart of Schröder's ambitions, driven by Philippe Felten's enlightened vision, by shareholders and company management.

## “ PHILIPPE FELTEN'S VISION

"In these times of geopolitical tension, and therefore lack of stability, we need to stay focused on the seamless implementation of our strategy. The key to our success lies in teamwork and in empowering our employees. Our world is changing, and Schröder must change with it."



“ MORE ABOUT PHILIPPE FELTEN

“Since taking up my post, I’ve been going out to meet our teams and our clients. They’re the ones who make the company successful. These long trips allow me to take a step back and think strategically. I like being based in Wallonia, and I love unwinding in the natural setting of the Fagnes region. I have a fascination for trains, fostered during my travels in Switzerland. I’m very much drawn to this modern, sustainable technology, and how it connects people.”



© Schröder



© Schröder



© Schröder



© Lamelec

- Operating in over 70 countries
- 2,600 employees
- Produces 2.4 million light fixtures per year
- 2023 turnover: €564 million.





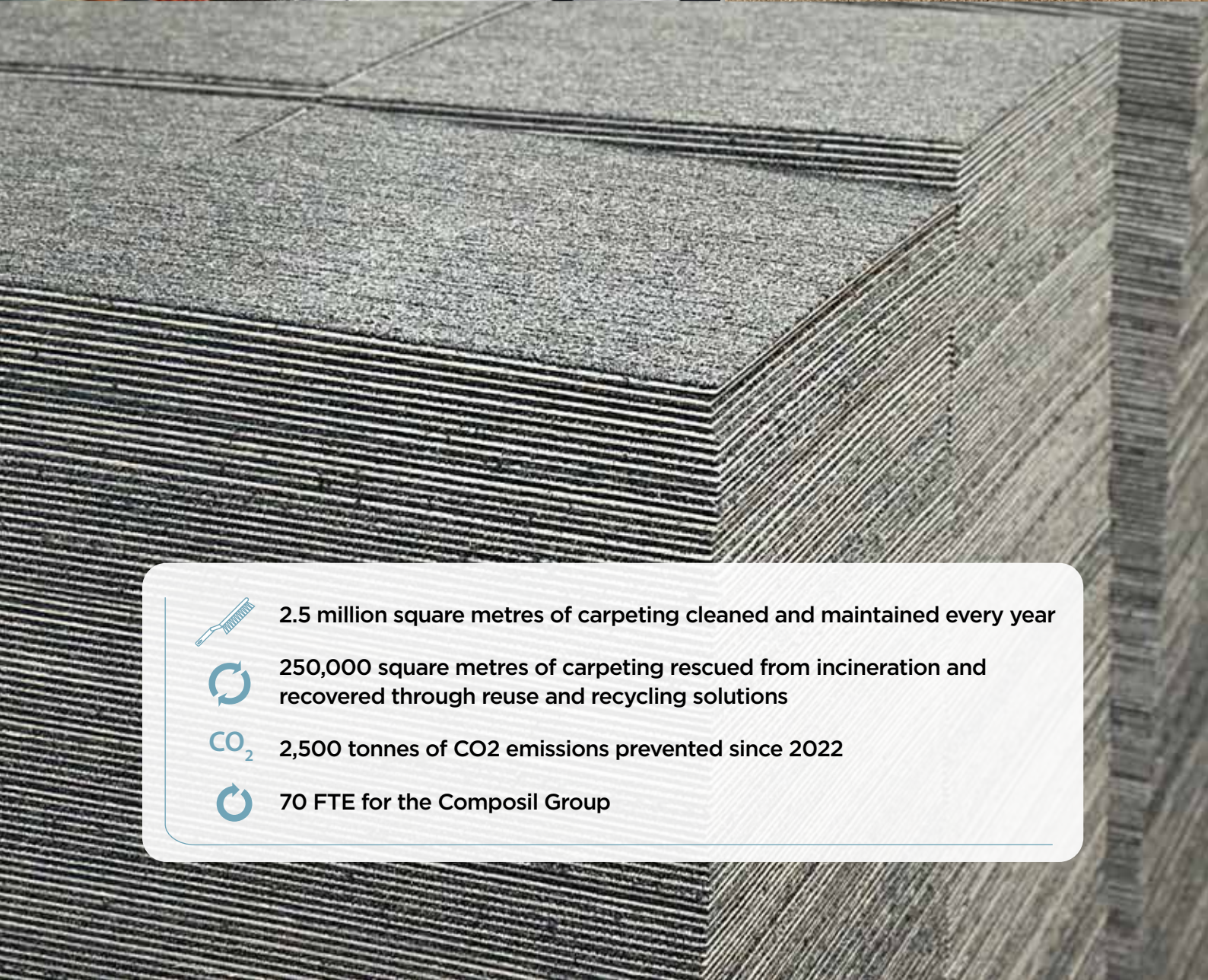
## CARPETS PAVING THE WAY FOR A BETTER AND CLEANER FUTURE

**For over 30 years, Composil, a Wavre-based company, has successfully established its expertise in the maintenance, reuse and recycling of carpet tiles. Under the impetus of CEO Jean Minne and his two partners, Pierrick Martin and Geoffroy Uyttenhove, the company managed to bounce back after the pandemic by adopting its current business model and by expanding into neighbouring countries, in particular Luxembourg, France and Switzerland.**

Despite the challenges of the pandemic and with the sector at a virtual standstill, Composil soldiered through and bounced back! From carpet cleaning and maintenance, the Composil team banked on an innovative concept: extending the lifespan of floor coverings by proposing reuse and recycling solutions. “We were already focusing on sustainability, but we then decided to go a step further and become an impact company,” says Jean Minne, who seized an opportunity in 2013 to take over Composil, where he was already working with regards to the expansion in Luxembourg. So, what are Composil’s secrets?

Its Walloon identity, for starters! “Our products are all developed in a local laboratory, and our headquarters in Wavre is now an innovation hub in the circular economy,” says Minne. Another secret is their team’s expertise. “If we want to be known as experts, we must rely on people with expertise,” Minne says, while citing the absence of subcontractors for the USE component, and even a “Composil Academy” as one of the future projects. An academy that will be put to very good use. “As part of our international expansion, we are going to focus on the franchise model,” with the aim of training

future franchisees in Wavre. By asserting itself as a key player in the sector’s green transition, Composil is setting out clear ambitions “of becoming a European industry leader in the next five years,” by exploring the Nordic and German markets specifically, “and in the future, once our position in Europe is consolidated, why not the USA, Asia and the Gulf countries too?” In fact, far from stopping at carpets, Jean Minne envisions something bigger. “Other products deserve to be treated with the same approach. Innovation will always be at the heart of our growth.” <https://composil.eu/en/>



2.5 million square metres of carpeting cleaned and maintained every year



250,000 square metres of carpeting rescued from incineration and recovered through reuse and recycling solutions



2,500 tonnes of CO2 emissions prevented since 2022



70 FTE for the Composil Group



# LIEGE AIRPORT, A CARGO AIRPORT THAT'S FLYING HIGH!

The figures for 2024 speak for themselves, and the outlook for 2040 is nothing short of breathtaking. Over 16% growth in tonnage and over 13% growth in flights. More airlines and more logistics providers operating there. One billion e-commerce packages handled, 11,000 direct and indirect jobs created, and connections with nearly 300 airports. Liege Airport can thank its teams and Laurent Jossart for the 2024 figures. Mr Jossart, who has been the CEO of Liege Airport for three years, is a builder and a visionary. A former CEO of Charleroi Airport with extensive experience as a CFO and a CEO in other international businesses, including airlines, he has expertly handled Liege Airport's finances and plotted a visionary course for the company.

Alongside working to increase turnover and EBITDA in order to fund the Master Plan for Liege Airport, he also follows and analyses the expectations of the markets in his catchment area, which are constantly evolving, and national legislation, which is also subject to change. Thanks to his insight, Liege Airport shifted to providing more than just cargo transit services by offering innovative, customised multimodal logistics solutions, with a focus on environmental concerns and profitability.

While Liege Airport is now the leading cargo airport in Belgium, the fifth largest in Europe and among the top 20 worldwide, Laurent Jossart wants to go further. "It is not our infrastructure that attracts the market, but our proactive and practical logistics solutions," he emphasises. LGG Connect will form the basis of these solutions going forward. This extensive logistics ecosystem is empowered by its interdependent, regional and Euregional nature. Mr Jossart believes it will be capable of winning new market share and making Liege Airport a major and reliable economic asset in the scope of the 2040 outlook. With the signature of LGG Connect's operating licence at the end of 2024 and the adoption of a roadmap by the Board of Directors, the way is clear for Liege Airport to reach its ambitious targets for decarbonisation and growth.

[www.liegeairport.com](http://www.liegeairport.com)





# SUNSLICE

## SURGES FORWARD

Sunslice has once again proved the effectiveness of its solar chargers, this time in Greenland. Since its creation in Louvain-la-Neuve in 2017, the startup has enjoyed a string of successes, including a recent partnership with IMAQA, a specialised provider of scientific field services in extreme environments.

“Our ambition,” the founders of Sunslice, Geoffroy Ghion and Henri Gernaey, told us, “was to create an ultra-compact and extremely powerful solar charger that is easy-to-use and could be useful to a wide range of customers, including sports enthusiasts, families, businesses and distributors. The reason we are now globally recognised is because we rely on cutting-edge technology.”

In 2024, Sunslice partnered with IMAQA and set out on an expedition to Greenland. This adventure had two objectives, they explained: “We wanted to prove

how reliable and effective our technology would be at charging various electronic devices, and at keeping them charged, which is vital in this isolated region where energy is rare and invaluable. We also wanted to be involved, alongside a consortium of international researchers, in more than five experiments which aimed to improve our understanding of climate change.”

“Sunslice has proved that its technology can be a real driver of progress in some of the planet’s most inaccessible regions.”



“ Our adventure as entrepreneurs began at university with a prototype made of cardboard.”



© Sunslice

Sunslice is the amazing story of two friends, Geoffroy Ghion and Henri Gernaey. As students, they dreamt “of creating chargers that were unbreakable, small and lightweight thanks to cutting-edge technology.” This led to their first mini solar charger, the Photon, which is the same size as a credit card.

With support from investment fund W.IN.G. by Digital Wallonia, they began producing Photon chargers and developed other ranges of energy solutions for travellers, households and businesses.





# BELGIAN HEALTHCARE INNOVATIONS IN THE SPOTLIGHT AT OSAKA EXPO

From 13 April to 13 October 2025, the World Expo will bring 160 countries together in Osaka, with events centred around the theme of “Designing Future Society for Our Lives”. Belgium’s Pavilion, titled “Human Regeneration”, is focused on the sub-theme of “Saving Lives”. It will offer an immersive experience that showcases the country’s advances in healthcare. Designed by architects at Carré7 and developed by a multidisciplinary team of talented Belgians, the Pavilion is the product of a fruitful partnership of cultural, economic and tech stakeholders. The consortium, which includes Tempora, Profirst, Dirty Monitor, ShowTex and Barco, has created an immersive exhibition and an outstanding layout for the public spaces.

## A WEEK IN THE SPOTLIGHT FOR WALLONIA-BRUSSELS

From 25 to 30 May, Wallonia-Brussels will be the centre of attention in the Belgian Pavilion. A high point of the Expo, it will give the region an opportunity to display its creativity, its expertise in artificial intelligence and its innovations in healthcare. The Digital Twins developed by TRAIL and MedReSyst will be the focus of the exhibition. “These are very innovative technologies that can save lives,” BelExpo Communication Manager Justine Theunissen told us.

“ THIS IS A LONG-TERM PROJECT THAT HAS ENABLED ALL THE FEDERAL BODIES TO UNITE AROUND A COMMON GOAL,

Aboubacar Charkaoui, Head of Desk - Asia & Pacific, Wallonie-Bruxelles International (WBI).





BELEXPO: MASTERMINDING THE PROJECT

As the Commission General for International Exhibitions, BelExpo is responsible for coordinating the project, from managing the Pavilion to presenting the displays of the regions. “We work together with all the partners,” lion director Myriam Cops explains, “we are very proud of our fries, our chocolate and our beer — they are what we’re famous for! We wanted to go further this time, and show that Belgium is innovative, creative and compassionate. People will see solutions — and hope.”



CARRÉ7: ARCHITECTURE WITH A MESSAGE

The Pavilion was designed by Cyril Rousseaux’s team: Carré7, an architecture firm from La Louvière, Belgium. The theme of water in its three states is gracefully explored “as a symbol of life... the floor is the mirror-like surface of water, with melting ice alongside floating balloons of fabric: everything combines to create an immersive and poetic experience.”

Through its symbolic, innovative architecture that is accessible to all thanks to a rising path that spans all three storeys, the Pavilion embodies the values of continuation and working together, for Carré7 and the whole partnership. “Architecture is universal. Despite all our differences, we have succeeded in creating a beautiful structure together, one that is full of meaning and technology, in sync with the issues of tomorrow.”

“I wanted there to be a discernible logic to this Pavilion, for each material to be meaningfully symbolic. Nothing was chosen by accident.” A 100% Belgian project! “It is an object that echoes us, that was imagined, designed and built in Belgium.”

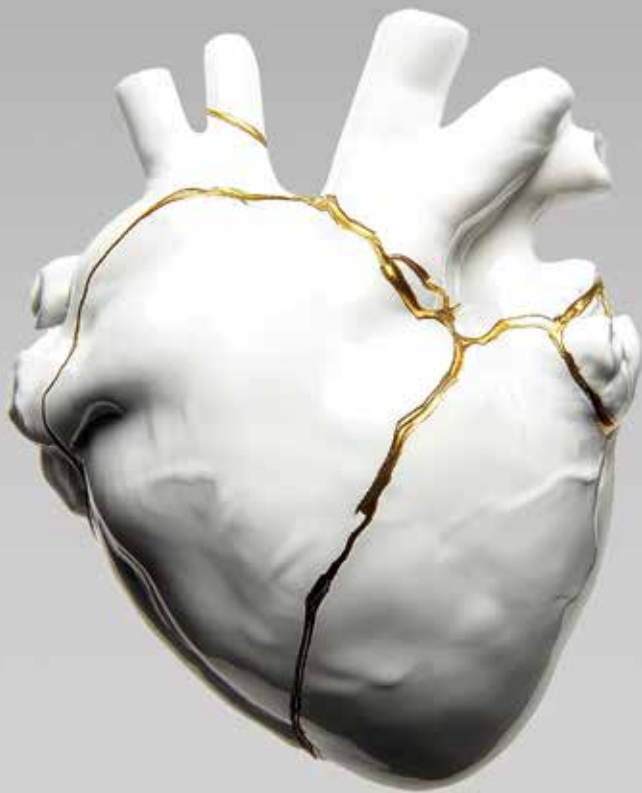


**BeluBelu, the mascot of the Belgian Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka,** is a playful creature that was inspired by cells, those essential building blocks of life itself.



PROFIRST: EXHIBITION  
DESIGN WITH HEART

Profirst, a creative event agency based in Rixensart, Belgium, working alongside Dirty Monitor, Tempora, Showtex and Barco, developed the Pavilion's narrative. Profirst Project & Artist Director Charles Louis de Lovinfosse explained their thought-process: "We were inspired by the ancient Japanese art of *kintsugi*, which is a method of repairing broken pottery by highlighting the breaks to create a new piece of art." A powerful metaphor for medicine and healing: "repairing makes it stronger, more beautiful." The goal was to create a fully immersive, symbolic journey through the Pavilion, "to surround visitors in an unforgettable environment. We wanted each person to leave with a feeling and a modern image of Belgium."



© Created with AI by @Profirst



DIRTY MONITOR:  
IMMERSIVE IMAGES

A world-famous pioneer in immersive video mapping, Charleroi-based Dirty Monitor has worked alongside leading Belgian artistic directors Luc Petit and Franco Dragone, and has even projected onto the Burj Khalifa. The company is sure to impress visitors to the Belgian Pavilion, with a strong artistic vision from the creative section of the show to the designs, the music and the special effects. Co-founder Orphée Cataldo described their sensitive and ambitious approach: "It was crucial to offer a powerful, poetic and beautiful experience, even for a subject like health." The visitor journey covers eight different scenes scored by music inspired by Japan. The intention is to educate as well as move: "Every scene must be a journey, each detail must have meaning. The visitor will be intrigued."

© Dirty Monitor

DID YOU KNOW?

- Belgium itself hosted six universal exhibitions between 1897 and 1958.
- Art-déco sculptures complement the Art-nouveau style of legendary Belgian designer Victor Horta in bringing Brussels' intelligent prostheses to life.
- This is the first time a Belgian Pavilion was developed by a consortium of Belgian designers.

**Surface area of the Belgian Pavilion:**  
1.000 square metres across three floors

**Belgian budget:**  
€9.8m (incl. sponsors: €13m)

**Attendance:**  
28 million visitors expected in Osaka

**Wallonia-Brussels week:**  
25 to 30 May 2025

**Human Regeneration:**  
this idea will be explored in three ways: preventing illness, repair, and pushing back the limits of human life.

**Theme of the Belgian Pavilion:** Saving Lives, as presented by the regions:

- Belgium: Belgian excellence in vaccines
- Wallonia: Digital Twin
- Brussels: AI prosthetics, robotics
- Flanders: Body of the future



© Carré7

By incorporating all these elements, the Pavilion demonstrates the innovation, humanitarianism and creativity of Belgium. "We wanted to build something that was bigger than us, something with soul," says Orphée Cataldo. Justine Theunissen told us that "if visitors leave the Pavilion having felt something, and with a positive view of Belgium, then we've succeeded." "We will see the success of our work in the coming years, with the continuing strong links between Japan and Belgium," Myriam Cops concluded.



## TAKING IT SLOW

### EXPERIENCE WALLONIA'S CHÂTEAUX AND WINERIES AT A RELAXING PACE

Now spring is here, discover Wallonia's most beautiful châteaux and wineries thanks to VISITWallonia. A unique opportunity to enjoy the slow tourism approach, which blends relaxation, tradition, history, terroirs and craftsmanship.



"These slow experiences were inspired by the trend of taking the time to enjoy life." VISITWallonia has just put together five luxury experiences that, over a weekend or a tasteful getaway, will see you enjoying some of our most beautiful castles as well as exclusive tours of wineries.

These experiences are a wonderful chance to immerse yourself in a culture steeped in history, traditional local crafts, high-end regional dining, and all-inclusive accommodation in either a château or somewhere more offbeat. Escape the hustle, unwind and recharge.

**VISITWallonia.be**

[VISITWallonia.be/gourmandise](https://www.visitwallonia.be/gourmandise)







# FRANÇOIS-XAVIER SIMON:

## CULINARY EXCELLENCE IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Behind Bistrot Blaise lies a story of passion, tradition and high standards, spearheaded by François-Xavier Simon, who has been honoured with the *Jeune Chef de l'Année 2025* (Young Chef of the Year 2025) award by Gault&Millau.

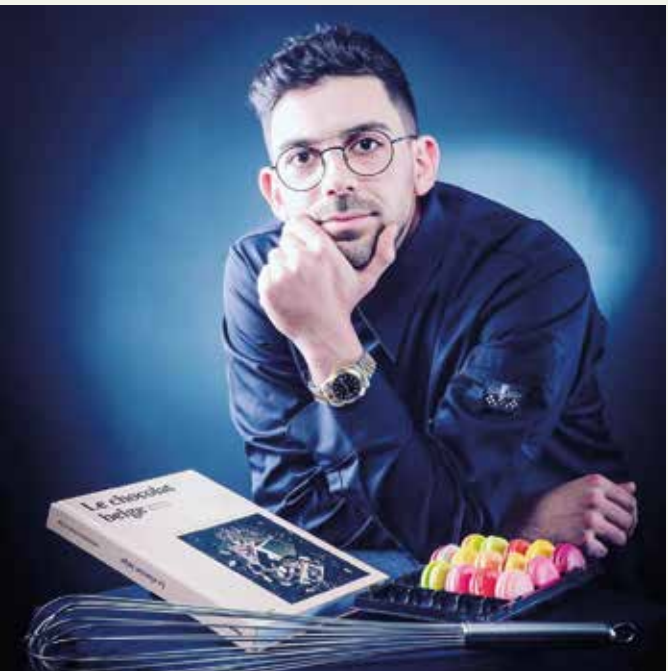
Having trained at the École Hôtelière de Namur, Simon honed his culinary skills under the mentorship of such giants as Joël Robuchon and Pierre Gagnaire, and his own experiences working abroad. "I learnt the importance of taste, attention to detail and precision", says Simon.

His Walloon roots called him home once more, and in 2022, together with his wife, he opened Bistrot Blaise in Marche-en-Famenne. It is a welcoming and down-to-earth place, where each dish is a moment to savour. The importance of local produce to the team is reflected in every dish, while incorporating the influences inspired by Simon's many travels. "We must respect the seasons, while always being innovative," says Simon.

"I want to go on offering a unique experience that moves people, that puts a smile on their faces," he continues, emphasising the importance of involvement and knowledge-sharing within his team. With creativity, authenticity and perfection, François-Xavier Simon embodies a new generation of chefs who have put Wallonia on the culinary map.

<https://www.instagram.com/bistrotblaise/>

Photos: © eating.be



# SALIM MAHLOUL BRINGS WALLOON FLAVOURS TO THE UAE

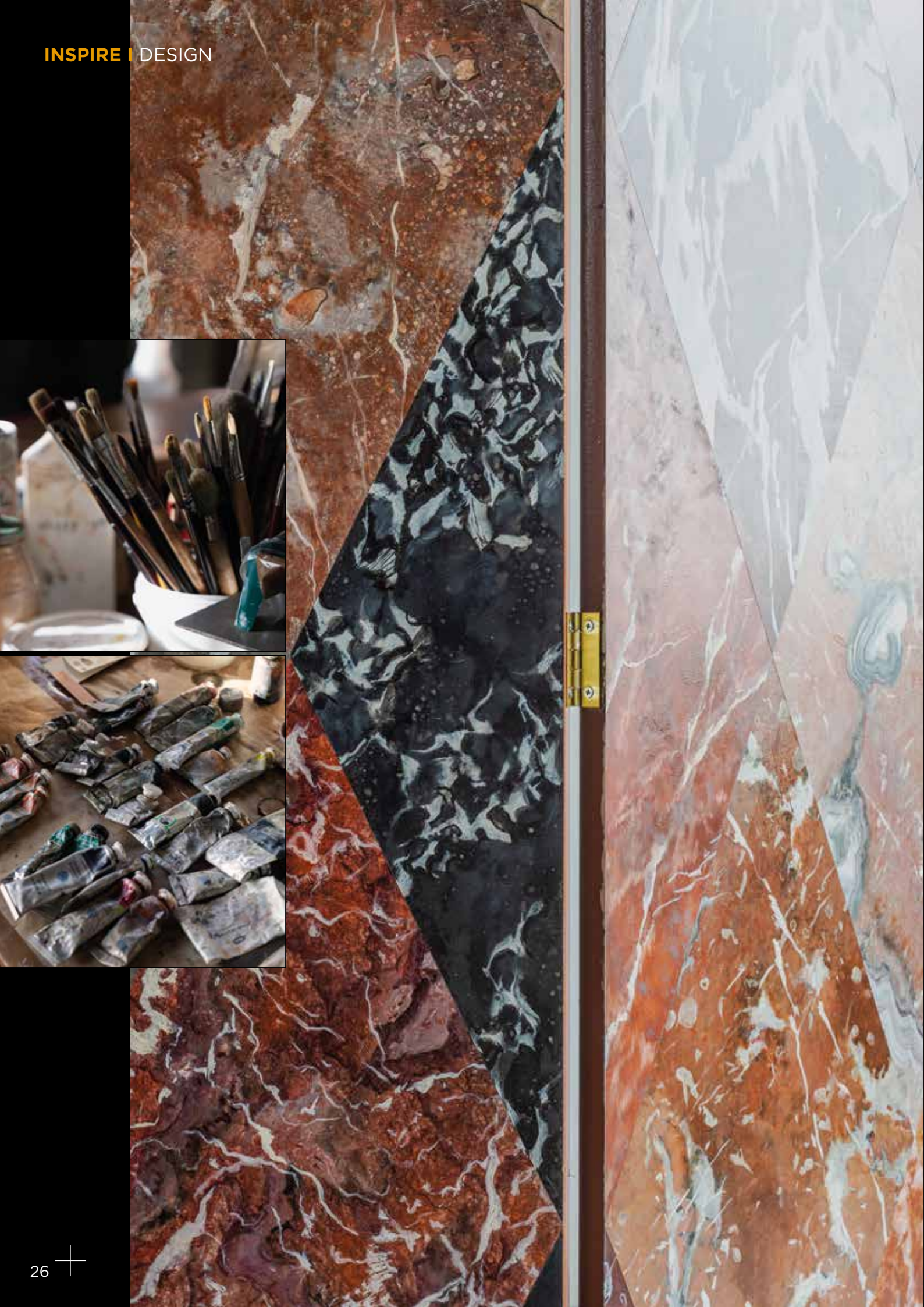
Raised in Verviers, in the province of Liège, Salim Mahloul is at the forefront of Belgian pâtisserie on the international stage. After learning the craft from his mentor Jean-Philippe Darcis, Salim became a chef, a mentor in his own right, and worked in Darcis' R&D department, before seizing an opportunity to work in the United Arab Emirates.

He is now the Head Chef at Golden Ribbon Chocolate in Sharjah, where he blends tradition and innovation with Walloon classics, such as rice tart and Manon praline. "I share what Wallonia gave me, that way of enjoying chocolate," while also favouring Belgian products, "like butter from Corman and chocolate from Callebaut."

The official supplier of the Belgian embassy, he shines a light on the culinary depth and greatness of his region. "I want to show that, beyond chocolate, Wallonia is brimming with talent and professional expertise. It's a source of pride!" With upcoming plans to expand and provide training courses, Salim continues to shine a spotlight on Wallonia from half a world away.

<https://www.goldenribbonuae.com/>





# PIERRE-YVES MOREL: ELEGANCE IN ILLUSION



Originally from France but based for the last decade in Brussels, Pierre-Yves Morel has been bringing a contemporary touch to ancient decorative techniques. He specialises in marbling and wood-graining, and in particular *trompe-l'œil*, a technique for creating an illusion of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface.

Morel's work combines tradition and modernity, and his prestigious career includes collaborations with private clients and luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton, Saint Laurent, Chaumet, and even the Parisian architecture school Camondo. "I developed a deep interest in experimenting with materials, techniques and media." Regarding his work with architects, designers and decorators, Morel noted that "this collaborative aspect is very important."

After graduating from the École supérieure des arts décoratifs de Strasbourg and training at the Institut Van Der Kelen-Logelain, his innovative talent, which blends design, art and craftsmanship, was recognised in 2024 when he won the Empreinte de l'année award of the Centre du Luxe et de la Création.

His approach is inspired by Wallonia and Brussels' history of craftsmanship. "I feel real potential here," he said, while still emphasizing his international outlook. "I want to make a name for myself as a creator, offering unique, personal pieces and perspectives, by making pieces of furniture and decorative panels."

<https://www.pierreyvesmorel.com/>





© Édith Frebutte

# CREATIVE YOUNG DESIGNER PUTS HIS OWN TWIST ON ICONIC **BINCHE COSTUME**

The talented Julien Houdremont draws his inspiration from the traditions of his home town, which include the famous Binche Carnival, known for its elaborately costumed performers called "Gilles". The 21-year-old designer's final-year project takes a new look at the traditional Gilles costumes, and incorporates "aspects of sustainability and inclusivity." After winning the 2024 MAD Graduation Prize and with an exhibition in Brussels behind him, the rising star then impressed Lady Gaga's fashion director. A graduate of the Haute École Francisco Ferrer, Julien specialises in leather and lace. With his new collection, he intends to remain true to his identity: "putting sustainability at the heart of his creations and showing the world what Walloons are capable of in terms of their creative craftsmanship."





# BELGIAN FUNFAIR CULTURE RECOGNISED AS PART OF UNESCO'S INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HUMANITY



This was the first multinational submission on intangible cultural heritage carried out by the Brussels-Capital Region, which acted on behalf of all of Belgium's federal entities.

The initiative was started by the Paris-based *Musée des Arts Forains*, and was supported by the funfair communities of both Belgium and France, and the *Défense des forains belges*, a professional organisation. It took urban.brussels, a public body responsible for cultural heritage, over ten years to fully prepare and coordinate the submission. Four years ago, the Brussels-Capital Region, with the support of urban.brussels, took on the task of getting the living culture of funfairs recognised as part of the regional intangible cultural heritage of humanity.

Since December 2024, Belgian and French funfair culture has been inscribed on UNESCO's list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The funfair community in Belgium consists of nearly 850 family businesses, or about 7,000 people, who are all part of a culture that has passed down its traditions from generation to generation.

# EXPLORING THE HAUTES FAGNES: A SYMPHONY OF SOUNDSCAPES

Does nature have one sound – or many? Last summer, creative lead agency Hungry Minds went on a journey to the Hautes Fagnes, one of Wallonia's most beautiful landscapes, to find out. With microphones and cameras in hand, the team set off in search of silence. What they captured — the babbling of the streams and waterfalls, the tuneful birdsong, the wind blowing through the trees — left them spellbound. Belgian composer Olvo used the recordings to create four tracks for four lesser-known hiking trails. A soundscape worth revisiting season after season, just like the Hautes Fagnes themselves.



© Jérémy Paul



© Jérémy Paul



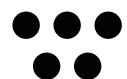
# Wallonia, the land of **SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION**



- ✓ **Circular materials** eco-design, industrial symbiosis, encouraging the reuse and repair of these materials within the economy, recycling innovation, etc.
- ✓ Innovations for **enhanced health** biotechnologies, medical equipment, eHealth, mHealth, silver economy, prevention, etc.
- ✓ Innovations for agile and safe **design** and **production methods** (IoT, 3D printing)
- ✓ Sustainable **energy** systems and **housing**
- ✓ **Agri-food** chains of the future and innovative management of the **environment**

CONTACT US TO EXPLORE GREEN  
OPPORTUNITIES IN WALLONIA

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