

Together

magazine

WINTER 2023/2024 #130

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RIZOM

Wine

FESTIVE BUBBLES

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Olivia

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Editor's LETTER

*Together:
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to reach your dreams...*



Olivia Colman: "My family is my everything and, of course, I'd sacrifice it all for them"

And so it begins... 2024

From the sublime to the ridiculous. In 2024, we move from the year of Art Nouveau, to the 100 anniversary of the surrealist movement, marked by the publication of the 'Manifesto of Surrealism' written by André Breton in 1924. But more of that in the next edition...

In this edition we celebrate the end of the year of Art Nouveau. Dorka Demeter brings her expertise, looking back over the year to see how you can still enjoy this celebration moving into the new year. We have an article on the Hoffmann exhibition in the Art and History museum, 'Falling for Beauty', since 13 December the museum also has a digital reproduction of the Stoclet Palace. To find out more about the giant of the Belgian Art Nouveau movement - Horta, there is an exhibition on his thinking at the Bozar, 'Victor Horta and the Grammar of Art Nouveau.'

There is a small celebration of everything to do in and around Mons, from the festival of light to the UNESCO protected Grand Hornu, which is also home to the Centre for Innovation and Design (CAD) and the Museum of Contemporary Arts of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (MACS), as well as the delightful Rizom restaurant.

In our personal development section you have everything you need to know to make 2024 happier, healthier and wealthier.

Enjoy!

Catherine Feore
Editor



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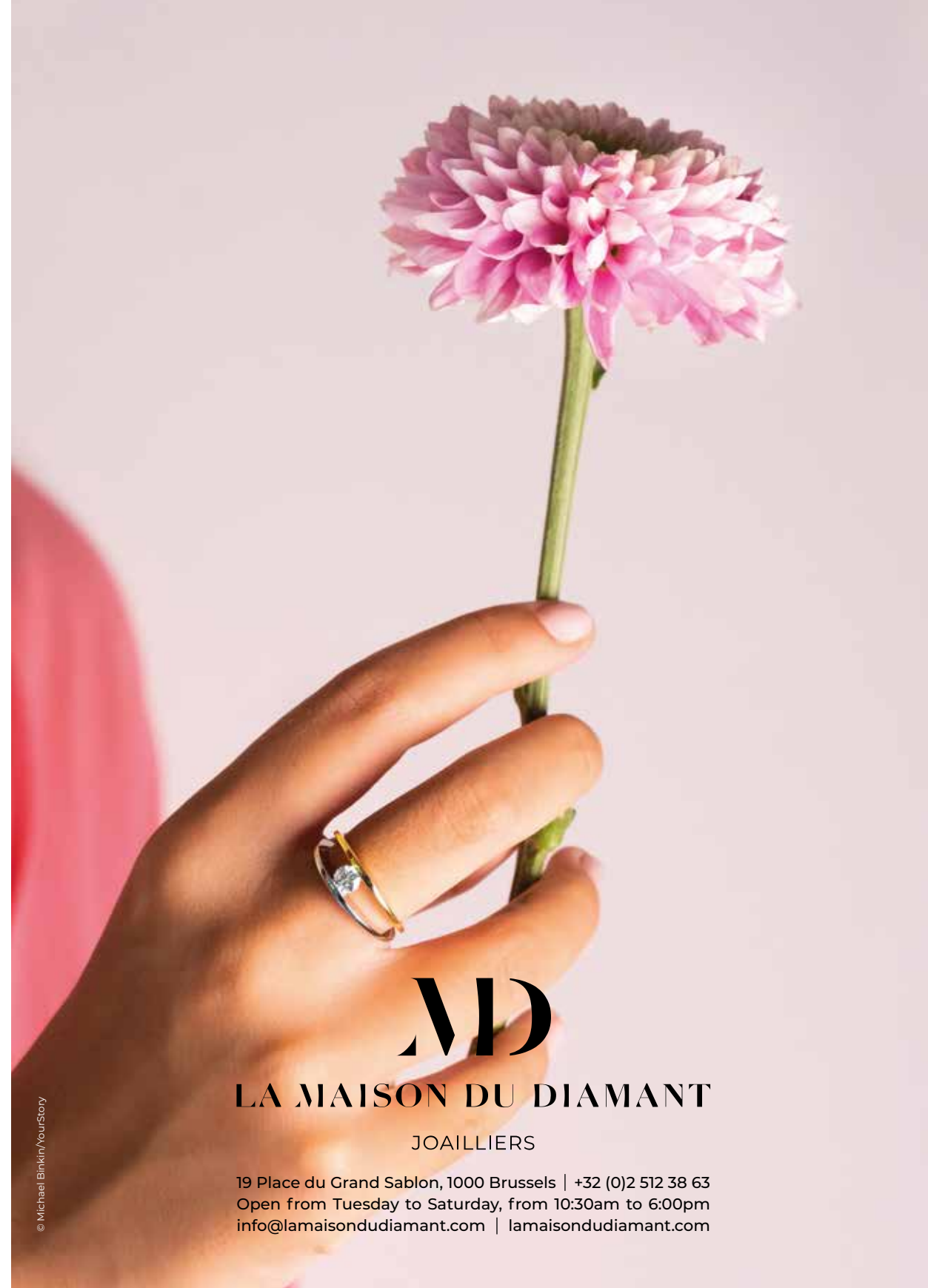
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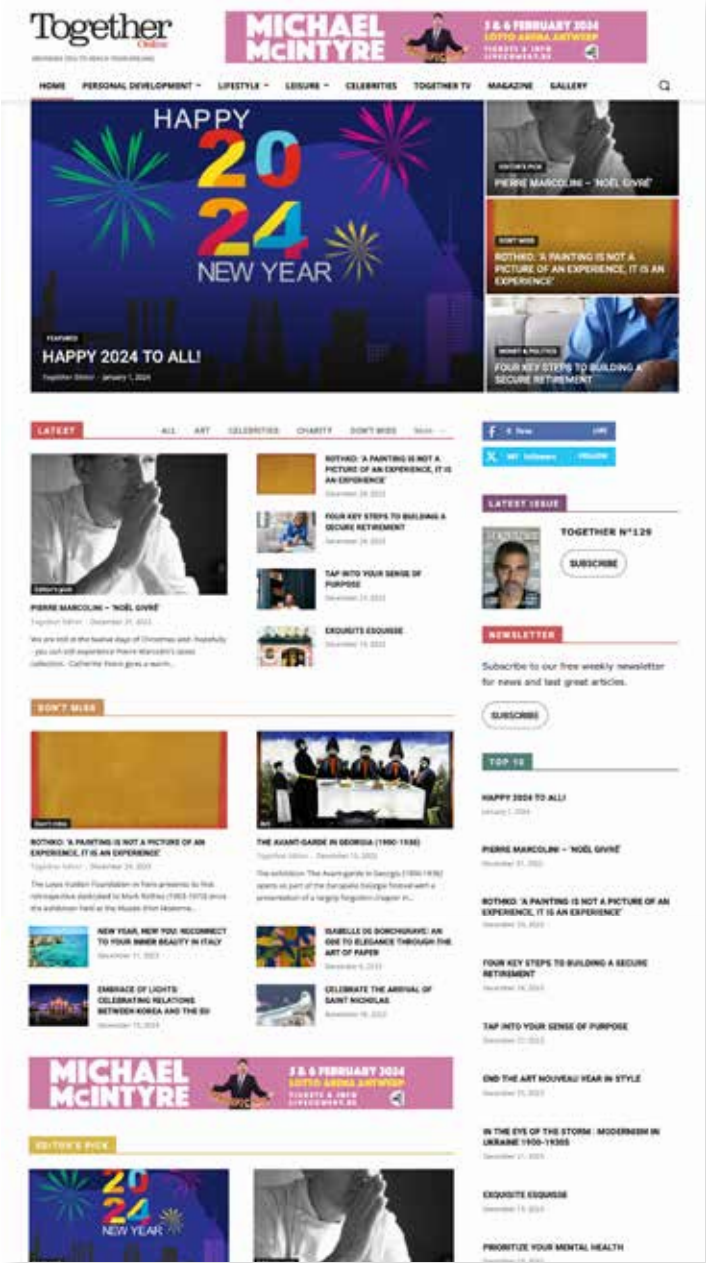
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Padel: Looking for something new? Interested in ball sports? Ever played either tennis or squash? If the answer is yes to any of these questions, then padel might be the sport for you.

Natan: Natan is the last house to create its collections in its own workshops, in Belgium. With a recent exhibition celebrating its 40 years of design, Natan is not about fleeting fashion, but timeless elegance. It is a world of lush fabrics, shimmering satins, feathers and bold design choices.

Vienna Secession: The Secession is the counterpart of the Art Nouveau movement in France and Belgium. We select a few places in Vienna to enjoy this particular part of Vienna's architectural, artistic and design history.

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Starring in Belgium

We look at three hot tickets



Stars of the Beijing Circus

2024 marks the return of the 'Stars of the Beijing Circus' to Belgium after ten years of absence. Don't miss this show for the whole family. The new show brings together 40 of the best circus artists of the moment in a performance of dizzying precision. There's a sporting theme with bicycles, ball juggling - a discipline in which Chinese artists excel - and breathtaking manoeuvres on the parallel and asymmetrical bars.

1 February

www.forest-national.be



Die Walküre

In 2023, La Monnaie commenced Wagner's ring cycle. Last year we had Das Rheingold, which is the prologue and scene setter for Die Walküre. At the end of Das Rheingold the gods ascend to Walhalla, the second part of The Ring of the Nibelungen begins with that of a solitary mortal braving a violent storm. It is about Siegmund, a hunted warrior. When he finally finds shelter and rest in a remote cabin, he meets Sieglinde, a beautiful young woman, just as unfortunate as himself. Brünnhilde will make her first appearance and lead the famous ride of the Valkyries.

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Masego

Masego, real name Micah Davis, developed a thirst for knowledge of music at a very young age and taught himself to play the cello, drums, piano and guitar, and later specialized in mastering the saxophone. Today a songwriter, producer and multi-instrumentalist, Masego mixes genres and creates his own style which he has called "TrapHouseJazz". Masego's concert at Ancienne Belgique on 12 February was immediately sold out. But don't panic, the American prodigy is adding a date in Brussels to his tour schedule. Its captivating melodies and captivating rhythms will also resonate within the walls of Ancienne Belgique on 13 February.

13 February

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Histoire de ne pas rire



Surrealism in Belgium 21 Feb. ➤➤➤ 16 June'24

Bozar, Centre For Fine Arts, Brussels

René Magritte, The Curious Glass, 1946, Private Collection © Photothèque R. Magritte, Adagp Images, Paris, 2019 © succession Magritte - Sabam België 2023

SOS Villages Enfants Belgique: No child should grow up alone

One child in 25 in Belgium is growing up without the care and security of their parents, a figure that is likely underestimated.

Nuala Morgan spoke with Michael De Leener, Communication Teamlead at SOS Villages d'Enfants about their mission to make sure no child grows up alone.



Photo © Olivier Anbergen

Tell me about the creation of SOS Villages d'Enfants

SOS Villages d'Enfants is a global charity established in around 130 countries. Each country is independent, and the Belgian chapter was established 60 years ago. It all started with one children's home project in the south of the country, with the objective - which is still the same one today - to give children that are unable to stay with their own families the possibility to grow up

in a family-like environment. Our goal in the first place is to prevent families from breaking down. And if they do, due to violence, poverty, illness or whatever, we want to make sure that children still have the human relationships needed to build their self-esteem and develop skills.

What kind of projects do you carry out?

We intervene at the different stages of need. Our priority is on prevention, so working

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“ WE ALWAYS TRY TO WORK WITH THE BIOLOGICAL FAMILY TO FACILITATE A RETURN HOME WHERE POSSIBLE ”

Have you an example to share of someone who not only survived, but thrived?

Sylvine, who's 20 now, initially had reservations about being placed in a children's village when she was 15 but ended up finding it to be a beneficial experience. She moved from the care home to the semi-autonomous accommodation called Maison l'Olivier where young people learn to live independently with the support of educators. Sylvine had to take care of herself by cooking and cleaning, but the educators were always there to help with shopping, bills, and any difficulties she faced. Sylvine developed a good relationship with the educators, appreciating their support and advice whenever she needed it. Recently, Sylvine achieved significant milestones by moving into her own flat and finding a job. She reflects on her achievements with pride, having obtained a shop assistant diploma and successfully managing her flat. Sylvine acknowledges the immense help she received from the Children's Village and the young people she met there. She hopes that all young people facing difficulties find the courage to ask for help and remain strong.

How do you work with the government departments and agencies responsible for social care?

We are fully part of the care system, well the two care systems - it's Belgium! We collaborate with the governments, and the many organisations that are involved in the care

with the families in their homes, to accompany them and avoid placing the child in external care. And if a placement becomes necessary, whether short or long-term, we always try to work with the biological family to facilitate a return home where possible.

A number of projects in Wallonia revolve around providing children with a safe and secure environment when it's no longer possible to stay at home. Young people who grow up in the care system have a weaker social support network so we work a lot with them to help them become independent and find their way after they leave the care system at 18.

In the north, around Leuven, our project focuses on young refugees, unaccompanied minors between 12 and 18 years old. We adapt to the needs in different parts of the country.

system. We follow government policy, like in the south, the policy is really focused on preventing family break-ups. But we also try to inspire and influence policy. We do a lot of advocacy work to try and improve the way we take care of vulnerable children.

What is your main advocacy campaign at the moment?

Our primary focus in advocacy is trauma-sensitive care. Nearly all the youth we work with have experienced severe trauma, which seeps into every relationship they form. Despite significant advancements in understanding trauma's impact over the last couple of decades, many professionals in the field - be it judges, police, or caregivers - are still largely unaware of its profound influence on these children.

As an organisation, we've taken the initial step of training our teams with the support of the EU. Our aim is for people to grasp how trauma significantly affects these children,



enabling us to better address their needs by adapting our actions and behaviour accordingly.

At the end of the day, we want these children to be at a stage where healing becomes possible. If they continue to carry this burden until adulthood without adequate support, the road ahead will be incredibly challenging for them.

It sounds like building trust is key for children to form secure attachments. How do you support that?

Around five years ago, we started lobbying for a new type of care in Flanders, which is professional foster care. It exists in the Netherlands, but not in Belgium. Families welcome children into their home, not as volunteers but as professional foster parents. This is such a transformation from children growing up in group homes, with a rotating series of caregivers. Over the space of a couple of years, these children may have had up to 20 different caregivers, which doesn't allow them to build a relationship of trust. With this system, they have one or two stable caregivers who are there 24/7, pretty much like other children. The pilot project we carried out was successful and we developed the blueprint for the Flemish government and other organisations to follow.

What inspired you personally to get involved with this organisation?

It's funny as when I was younger I earned a bit of money playing football, even at amateur level, and I always donated half of what I earned to SOS Villages d'Enfants. That's how I met Hilde Boeykens (the charity's director). After my studies in political science, I started volunteering while looking for a job. When one came up, I started working here and never left! I've always loved the values of this organisation, which is based on human relationships, making sure children grow up connected. It touched me



“WHAT’S IMPORTANT IS THAT WE HAVE A DIRECT IMPACT ON THE CHILDREN WE WORK WITH”

when I was a student without children, now I have two kids of my own and I realise even more how important these connections are growing up.

Do you feel you are making an impact?


There’s a saying ‘not everything that counts can be measured and not everything that can be measured counts’. What’s important is that we have a direct impact on the children we work with. It might be a small number, considering the scale of the problem in Belgium, but it’s real. And with our advocacy projects I feel that we can have an impact not just on one hundred children directly but on all children in this situation. So that combination of direct impact and working towards societal change is really motivating.

What opportunities are there to get involved with SOS Villages d’Enfants?

We’re a mid-sized organisation with around 100 employees, most of which are social workers, educators, psychologists and so on. We work with a lot of volunteers, which

can take different forms. We work with support families, which could be families from around the locality of our projects who could welcome a child for the weekend, for example. This is really hands-on support, and there are rigorous safeguarding procedures to make sure the child is going to be safe and secure. Then, there are the administrative volunteers helping at head office, and those gifted DIYers who can help fit out and repair our children’s homes. There is a broad range of activities to get involved in, but the main thing we ask for is commitment - that it’s not just a one-off activity.

We want to offer continuity for the children through our projects, and that requires continuity in our financing. We’d be delighted to help anyone set up a monthly donation to sponsor a child in need to find a family - it all helps!

To find out more about SOS Villages d’Enfants or to make a donation, visit:
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Five trends redefining wellbeing in 2024

Aspria looks at the main wellbeing
trends for the year ahead



Aspria, the international group of leading premium clubs, which brings together over 10,000 members in Brussels, is sharing the emerging trends that are transforming the way we experience fitness and wellbeing in a time of unparalleled change.

1. Holistic Wellness Shift:

Wellness in 2024 will become more holistic than ever, with equal emphasis on mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health. The approach we're encouraging is one that supports your health from every angle, and we are planning for even more integrated wellbeing and cultural programming across our clubs in 2024.

2. Bringing People Together:

Studies have long highlighted the link between maintaining social connections and overall wellbeing. Recently the World Health Organisation launched its first Commission for Social Connection, making loneliness a global health priority. Within every Aspria club, you can find a hub of communities around sports like tennis or group exercise, as well as regular social and networking events.

3. Mental Health Revolution:

The concept of 'Psychological Fitness' is becoming more relevant. We are seeing a growing success in disciplines such as mindfulness and meditation, as well as an increased awareness that physical activities help reduce anxiety and cope with stress. Our Aspria Works spaces also enable you to transform your remote working experience, avoiding the isolation that it usually implies. While the Aspria clubs themselves are designed to combine facilities for relaxation, fitness, childcare and work in one place to reduce stressful logistics.

“ THE CONCEPT OF ‘PSYCHOLOGICAL FITNESS’
IS BECOMING MORE RELEVANT ”



“ WE HAVE REIMAGINED
OUR WELLNESS SPACES
EXPLORING THE
THERAPEUTIC EFFECTS
OF WATER ”



4. Expert Guidance:

As technology continues to reshape our approach to wellbeing in 2024, from more wearable tech to AI-powered solutions, it becomes clear that, without informed interpretation, data generated by health apps and devices can be ineffective or, at worst, misleading. For some much-needed expert guidance and targeted recommendations based on physiological markers, movement analytics, lifestyle and goals, you can turn to our AspriaPro Health service – the most comprehensive assessment of its kind in Europe.

5. The Value of Recovery:

Recovery is becoming essential in order to prevent injury after training, with innovative tools such as massage guns and cryotherapy gaining popularity. However, the best solutions are always in the form of connected services, which we are developing further across our fitness areas and spas. For instance, at Aspria Royal La Rasante we have reimagined our wellness spaces exploring the therapeutic effects of water.

Depuis 37 ans, Katia NGUYEN et toute son équipe propose une fine cuisine vietnamienne, un accueil chaleureux et efficace.

Au rez-de-chaussée, un décor contemporain, suivi d'une charmante terrasse à l'arrière.

À l'étage, une reproduction d'un décor d'une maison authentique dans le Delta du Mekong.

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Anyone for Padel?

Julian Hale looks at the growing interest in padel, a cross between tennis and squash



© Phil MTX

Looking for something new? Interested in ball sports? Ever played either tennis or squash? If the answer is yes to any of these questions, then padel might be the sport for you. Here's a brief description of the game, its history and where you can watch the game and where you can play it.

The best and simplest description of the game of padel is as a cross between tennis and squash as it's played on a court that looks similar to a tennis court (only smaller) with walls around it, like squash. It's a doubles game (two players v two players) that's all about good hand-eye coordination and

“PADEL IS A CROSS BETWEEN TENNIS AND SQUASH”

game strategy. One player serves underarm into a box diagonally opposite him/her and the opponent has to return whilst ensuring that the ball bounces on the floor at least once before it hits a wall. If it hits a wall without bouncing, that team loses the point. Players can either hit the ball without

it bouncing (a volley) or wait for it to bounce before hitting it back. They can also hit the ball against the walls before it reaches the other side of the net. The scoring is the same as in tennis. And the balls used are similar to tennis (but with less pressure) and the rackets have no strings.

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Sport

Growing popularity in Europe in particular since the 1990s

I came across the sport in Uruguay when I was studying there in the 1990s. It was mainly played in South America and parts of Spain then, but has grown rapidly since. The first Belgian Padel Association was set up in 1992 and there are now two regional structures in Belgium, Padel Vlaanderen for Flanders (www.padelvlaanderen.be) and AFT Padel for Wallonia (www.aftpadel.be). According to padelvlaanderen, padel was brought from Mexico to Spain via the Spanish Prince Alfonso de Hohenlohe, a friend of Enrique Corcuera. In 1974, the first European Padel club was founded in Marbella. However, the sport surged in popularity due to its promotion by public figures such as Spain's King Juan Carlos and Manolo Santana, a former Wimbledon winner. There are now over 300 clubs in Flanders.

To give a sense of how much the game is growing, in Wallonia and Brussels, the number of clubs affiliated to AFT Padel has more than doubled since 2019 (53 in 2019 to 108 in 2023) as have the number of padel competition players (2,682 in 2019 to 7,532 in 2023). There are many more players too as AFT Padel has some 85,000 tennis members who are insured to play padel for fun and estimates that there are at least 25,000 who play the game recreationally. It's a similar story in Flanders. Since the first club was built (the Herentalse Tennis Club in 2003), the number of clubs has grown fast (more than tripling from 91 in 2019 to 312 in 2023). For competition players, there were 16,172 in 2021 and 27,794 in 2022.



© Phil MTX

Some interesting facts about padel

- The sport is thought to have been invented in Mexico, by Enrique Corcuera, in 1969.
- Padel remained a niche sport for decades but its popularity soared during Covid-19 as it could be played outdoors and didn't involve physical contact.
- Three padel courts can fit in one tennis court.
- The number of padel courts is expected to reach 84,000 by 2026, according to the accounting firm Deloitte.
- Padel is the second most popular participation sport in Spain behind football. As of 2022, there were five million players in Spain and more than 20,000 courts.

Source: Wikipedia



© Imagellan by Philippe Buissin

Padel in Brussels

There are more and more padel courts being built in Brussels. To give you an idea of costs, hiring a court might come to around 25 to 50 euro for an hour and a half

(plus around 5 euro to hire a racket) but prices vary and it's best to check with each padel club. The best approach is probably to try it out either with three friends or by joining one of the open sessions organized by some clubs. And then, if you like it, it might be worth buying a racket and joining a club/paying a monthly membership fee.

Some padel terminology

- Bandedja: An overhand shot hit with spin rather than power, taken out of the air without letting the ball bounce.
- Víbora: Similar to the bandedja but hit with more power and spin, typically diagonally down.
- Bajada: When a ball takes a high bounce off the wall and is brought down with an overhand hit.
- Chiquita: Similar to a drop shot.
- Salida ('exit'): A player running off the court to save a ball that has bounced off the wall and out of the 20 by 10 court.
- Cadete: A behind-the-back shot.

Source: Wikipedia

“ THE BEST APPROACH IS PROBABLY TO TRY IT OUT EITHER WITH THREE FRIENDS OR BY JOINING ONE OF THE OPEN SESSIONS ”

For Wallonia and Brussels, AFT Padel organises 'journées découvertes', days when you can try the game out. Keep an eye out on its website - www.aftpadel.be - for more information about those in 2024. For Flanders, beginners who want to try out padel can easily reserve a court in their neighborhood through www.mijnterrein.be or they can go to www.prooivandekooi.be and find out all the beginner activities / lessons in clubs around where they live.

If you're interested in having a look first to get a feel for what's involved, why not attend the Belgian Premier Padel circuit at Tour&-Taxis (international event), 20 - 28 April. ❶



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Boost your health and vitality with superfoods

Superfoods are those thought to have exceptional nutritional value. Here are ten that you should definitely be adding to your shopping bag.



In recent years, there has been a surge in the popularity of 'superfoods'. These powerhouse ingredients offer a bounty of benefits for overall health and vitality. As we look towards 2024, a new wave of superfoods is emerging. These foods offer a diverse range of health benefits. While some of the properties can be found in supplements, it is usually easier for your body to absorb nutrients from food.

Turmeric - Reducing inflammation

Turmeric, a vibrant yellow spice, is gaining recognition for its potent anti-inflammatory properties. Its active compound, curcumin, helps to reduce inflammation in the body, thereby alleviating chronic conditions such as arthritis. Incorporating turmeric into your diet can be as simple as adding it to curries, smoothies, or even adding some turmeric powder to your hot chocolate.

Nutrition

Avocado - Nourishing hair and nails

Known for its healthy fats and rich nutrients, avocado is an excellent choice for promoting hair and nail health. Packed with biotin and vitamin E, avocados can strengthen hair and nails, reducing brittleness and promoting growth. Enjoy avocados in salads, as a spread, or in delicious guacamole.



Aloe Vera - Revitalizing the skin

Aloe vera, often used in skincare products, is a powerful superfood for nourishing and revitalizing the skin. It is rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that help to soothe and hydrate the skin. Applying aloe vera topically or consuming it in juice form can promote a healthy, radiant complexion.



Cherries - Supporting sleep

For those struggling with sleep, cherries might hold the key. Cherries are a natural source of melatonin, a hormone that regulates sleep-wake cycles. Incorporating cherries into your evening routine, whether in the form of a juice or a handful of fresh cherries, may help improve the quality of your sleep. When they're out of season, dried versions can also help.



Matcha Green Tea - Fitness booster

Matcha green tea, derived from finely ground green tea leaves, is a powerhouse of antioxidants and nutrients. This superfood is hailed for its ability to enhance physical performance and aid in weight loss. Matcha can be consumed as a hot or iced tea, or added to smoothies for an energizing pre or post-workout boost.



Quinoa - Protein source

Quinoa is a versatile grain-like seed that packs a punch in terms of protein content. It is a complete protein source containing all nine essential amino acids required by the body. Incorporating quinoa into your diet can support muscle recovery, regulate blood sugar levels, and promote overall satiety.



Beets - Blood pressure

Beets, with their vibrant colour and earthy flavor, are an excellent addition to your diet for maintaining healthy blood pressure levels. High in nitrates, beets can dilate blood vessels, improving blood flow and supporting cardiovascular health. Enjoy beets raw in salads or roasted as a side dish.

Spinach - Enhancing eyesight

Spinach is wonderfully rich in antioxidants, vitamins A, C, and E, as well as lutein and zeaxanthin. These nutrients have been known to support and protect eye health, reducing the risk of age-related macular degeneration and cataracts. Include spinach in salads, smoothies, or sautéed as a side dish. This is a staple you can keep in your freezer, throw it into a bowl of noodles, to ensure you have leafy greens throughout the year.



Maca - Boosting libido

Maca, a root native to Peru, is gaining popularity for its alleged libido-enhancing properties. This adaptogenic superfood helps balance hormones and increase energy levels, potentially boosting libido and sexual stamina. Add powdered maca to smoothies or incorporate it into baked goods for a natural libido boost.



Camu Camu - Immune support

Camu Camu is a small fruit native to the Amazon rainforest, it is renowned for its immune-boosting properties. It is incredibly rich in vitamin C, providing up to sixty times more vitamin C than an orange. Consuming camu camu helps strengthen the immune system.

The secret to healthy eating is planning and good shopping. Many of these foods can be found in either dried, powdered or frozen form, meaning that you have them easily at hand and ready to use. These are just a few foods, but a good variety of fruits and vegetables consumed on a daily basis will help you to have a happier and healthier 2024. 🍎

Ten types of meditation

At this busy time of year it's time to look at the benefits of stepping back and benefitting from meditation. **Karen Northshield** looks at different approaches, so hopefully you can find one that works for you.



I believe we are all spiritual beings by nature and that we are all little buddhas in soul. Meditation has been around for centuries, more precisely since humans became conscious of their breath. First off, there is no good or bad way to meditate. It really depends on what works for you. Meditation practitioners from all walks of life would agree with the countless benefits on physical and mental health, such as stress

reduction, happiness, improved focus, mental clarity and much more. These benefits are also backed by science. With repetition, meditation can build into a good habit and a healthy lifestyle. Who wouldn't want a happier and healthier life?

Here is a list of ten different forms of meditation practices, their benefits and degree of difficulty, in no specific order.



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1 : Guided meditation

A narrator guides the practitioner through the meditation process. You simply follow the narrator's guidelines. The meditation sessions can vary greatly depending on the theme. This form of meditation is recognized as being one of the easiest due to the fact that you don't have to deal with complete silence which can create anxiety and worry to the beginner and the doubts that come when practicing meditation by yourself. For the beginner, this is the best way to start. However, with practice it is good to move on to different types of meditation for the other benefits.

2 : Mindfulness breathing meditation

The idea is to focus on the sensation of breathing – not just imaging but actually feeling the air going in and out of your nose. Should a thought appear, simply notice it and let it go; and then bring your attention back to your breathing.

The key here is to follow the breath and become aware and simply notice what happens with the mind and feelings which by nature tend to fluctuate. Other than calm breathing, mindfulness breathing medi-

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tation cultivates the ability to observe our thoughts without judgment. In any meditation, focusing on and staying with the breath is essential and central. This type of meditation is in theory simple, in practice it can be challenging.

3: Metta meditation also known as 'Loving Kindness Meditation'

When practicing Metta Meditation, the goal is to send out love without restraint. There are several steps to metta meditation:

Step 1 is to send love, warmth and light to oneself unconditionally.

Step 2 is to do the same thing to a friend or a loved one;

Step 3 is to repeat with a stranger;

Step 4 is to repeat with someone we may feel adversity;

Step 5 is to repeat the process with the universe as a whole.



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Loving Kindness meditation is known for increasing empathy towards other people and happiness for yourself. What you give is what you get in return. By sending out love and good vibes, the universe sends these back to you in one way or another. In theory, this kind of meditation, practiced with sincerity, could improve one's social skills. When practicing metta meditation, you are essentially training yourself to be more loving. This type of meditation can be amusing and different than the 'typical' kind of meditation practice.

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BY NATURE ”



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FOR YOURSELF ”

4: Focused attention meditation

Focused attention meditation involves any sort of meditation where you focus on a stimulus. It can be an object, a part of your body, or a mental image. Focused attention meditation activates and strengthens a part of the brain called the anterior cingulate cortex. This is the part of our brain used for detecting errors, overcoming impulses, and solving problems. This is a great form of meditation to enhance your focus, to channel your thoughts and for impulse control. Focused attention meditation is known to be an advanced form of meditation as it requires attention and concentration.

5: Candle meditation

Is a type of focused attention meditation and personally one of my favorites. The idea is to focus on the flame of a candle – real or LED – and watch the candle flame do its dance. This type of meditation is very appealing and calming to the mind.

The candle flame is thought to mirror our thoughts which by staring into the flame come to a halt. When our eyes divert away, the idea is to recenter our gaze into the flame. Just like our thoughts which are passing and our mind which is wandering, we are reminded to re-center ourselves time and time again. With candle meditation, we are reminded of our gentleness by nature, just like the candle flame.

6 : Body scan meditation

Is a type of focused attention meditation with movement going up or down the body. The idea is to remain present within one part of the body usually starting from the head to toe, or inversely from toe to head. Each time we center our attention to a body part, that part of the body becomes present and appeased. By the end of this meditation practice, the whole body should be at rest. This type of meditation best works with a guided narrator and is recommended before sleep.

7: Mantra Meditation

Mantra meditation requires one to repeat a phrase or a series of words over and over again. Choose a positively phrased mantra and repeat with positive emotions. When repeating a phrase to yourself and focus on it with such intensity you reinforce the neurons associated with the thought until it manifests. This can be a positive or a negative pattern or mental reinforcement. In life, we often repeat negative mantras or beliefs that we currently have about ourselves and life in general which become our reality. Mantra meditation can reprogramme the way you think and view yourself.

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For example if you use a mantra like «My life is full of joy» you will actually start to become more grateful for the little things throughout the day. If you use a mantra like «I can achieve anything I put my mind to» you will start feeling more confident in your abilities which can cause you to take more action. This is a great type of meditation if you are seeking to change your thought habits and beliefs.

Just like mindfulness breathing meditation, mantra meditation is in theory simple, in practice can be a challenge but very beneficial to reinforce a positive thought pattern.

8 : Pranayama Meditation. Also known as breath control meditation.

This technique is very similar to breathing meditation with adding a timer to your breathing. Often the form of the 4-4-4-4 box method is utilized. The idea is to breathe in through the nose for 4 seconds. Hold the breath for 4 seconds. Exhale slowly for 4 seconds. And then hold for 4 seconds and then repeat the process over again. This form of meditation is most widely known for its calming benefits. Studies have shown that it lowers your blood pressure, reduces stress, and even helps you fall asleep. It is also acknowledged as one of the easier forms of meditation to practice. There are great apps out there for box breathing. When using a guided app, this practice is easy and comforting to follow.

9 : Moving Meditation

Whether it's walking, doing the dishes, yoga, tai chi, chi gong or even dancing, the idea is to incorporate mindfulness into the movement of your body. While you move you focus on the physical changes and sensations that occur. For example if you chose to practice moving meditation while walking your focus should be on feeling the ground beneath your feet. This form of meditation teaches you how to enter the flow state. For people who find it hard to sit still, this type of meditation is recommended. However this meditation can become a double edged sword because moving often makes it easier to forget that your goal is to meditate. This form of meditation is close to mindfulness meditation which requires one to become aware of what we are doing at each passing and present moment.



“ VISUALIZE A POSITIVE AND HEALTHY IMAGE OF YOURSELF ”

10: Visualization

By far my favorite meditation type. With this meditation, you create a mental image or a film of yourself, of the best version of yourself or of how you would like to be. In all cases, you visualize a positive and healthy image of yourself. This can be a past, present or future version of yourself. First you visualize the mental image of yourself then feel the sensations related to that image. The idea is to manifest your thoughts and to live them in the moment and duration of the meditation practice. This can be for example winning a race, winning a medal, feeling free and healthy, dancing and letting your hair loose, or whatever else suits your desire.

Some of the meditation types may carry different names depending on the custom or culture. More meditation techniques exist out there. Some can be combined such as the candle meditation with the focused attention meditation or body scan meditation and guided meditation and all can be set to a gentle background music. Try out each one and experiment for yourself which one(s) work the best for you. To give you a quickstart try out youtube channels and apps on the meditation type and start reaping the benefits today! ①

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Self-esteem: Why we subconsciously neglect it and how to reverse the damage

Anne-Marie Brennan suggests a book to help
you to improve and build your confidence



In the Netflix documentary Stutz, psychiatrist Phill Stutz noted that he believes there are three certainties in life – pain, uncertainty, and constant work. He explains that once you accept the hard parts of life – the things your instincts tell you to avoid – your life will become easier. When faced with a difficult situation, how you respond will dictate much of the potential hardship you encounter, beyond the initial issue.

Self-esteem is one characteristic we are all capable of improving and it is essential in times of adversity. Psychologist Virgil Ziegler-Hill, PhD, noted that self-esteem “offers a protective function that buffers individuals from negative experiences”.

High self-esteem is associated with a positive view of self, whereas those with low self-esteem will often focus on the aspects

Self help

of themselves which are negative or untrue. If you are confronted with a challenge in life, in particular one that is psychologically distressing, it is imperative to have a solid foundation of high self-esteem in order to confront, and hopefully resolve, said issue. However, the habits we form that are associated with low self-esteem are often difficult to break. This is due to the subconscious comfort we gain when utilizing negative self-talk.

In the book, *Self-Esteem: A Proven Program of Cognitive Techniques for Assessing, Improving, and Maintaining Your Self-Esteem* by Matthew McKay PhD, and Patrick Fanning, they discuss how cognitive distortions can be misused to ease momentary discomfort.

One example of these distortions is comparisons. Comparing ourselves to someone else will always result in a feeling of superiority or inferiority. It's the potential for a brief feeling of worth that chains us to this behaviour, regardless of the fact we ultimately end up feeling worse.

Mind-reading is another cognitive distortion, however the way in which we use it to

our benefit differs from the former. Say, for example, you have prepared a presentation for work. While presenting to your colleagues, you tell yourself that they think your ideas are useless, ill-prepared and you're stupid. You say these things before they've even given you feedback so you can protect yourself. If you're right in your assumptions then the hurt you feel has been expected and affirms the negative self-talk, or if you're wrong and the feedback is positive, you'll feel a great relief.

Instead of always expecting the worst as a way to protect our egos, we must learn that criticism doesn't change our worth. It's a fundamental part of life and learning to deal with it is crucial to maintain good self-esteem.

There are many practices which are recommended when looking to improve self-esteem. The most common of these is positive affirmation. While it seems simple – repeating short phrases to yourself. It can be hard to do so on a consistent basis. When your self-esteem is low, speaking positively to yourself may feel frustrating, foolish or pointless. However, repeating phrases to yourself, whether they be positive or ne-

gative, allows these thoughts to enter your subconscious, according to writer Remez Sasson. This in turn changes how you speak to and view yourself over time.

These conversations you have with yourself are known as the 'inner dialogue.' The moments when your affirmations feel false are the most crucial times for improving this dialogue. Even if you believe something to not be true, it will eventually become a subconscious belief after prolonged repetition.

At the core of self-improvement is an internal desire for change, growth, and contentment. Wanting to change because you think you're not good enough as you are, is not the path to begin this journey on. McKay and Fanning discuss the idea that our worth as humans stems from our willingness to survive, and nothing can diminish it. Believing in your worth is what will catapult you towards achieving your goals and a higher self-esteem.

Self-improvement and acknowledgement of your flaws are not exclusive to each other. Our desire to improve should arise from compassion for ourselves. Remember that we can control our own circumstances and deserve the power and opportunity to do so.

As Stutz said, pain, uncertainty and constant work are the certainties of life. But there is one more – our worth. No matter what you will go through in life, whether that be a breakup, issues at work, or financial difficulties, a high self-esteem and awareness of your worth can help to lessen the pain these tribulations will bring.

High self-esteem serves as a reminder that you have survived this far, and you are capable of persevering. Strengthening it takes time, dedication and a commitment to ourselves. Affirmations are just one example of many practices available to achieve this.



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AND CONTENTMENT ”**

If you are interested in learning more about the psychology of self-esteem and how to improve it, I would highly recommend, *Self-Esteem: A Proven Program of Cognitive Techniques for Assessing, Improving, and Maintaining Your Self-Esteem* by Matthew McKay PhD, and Patrick Fanning.

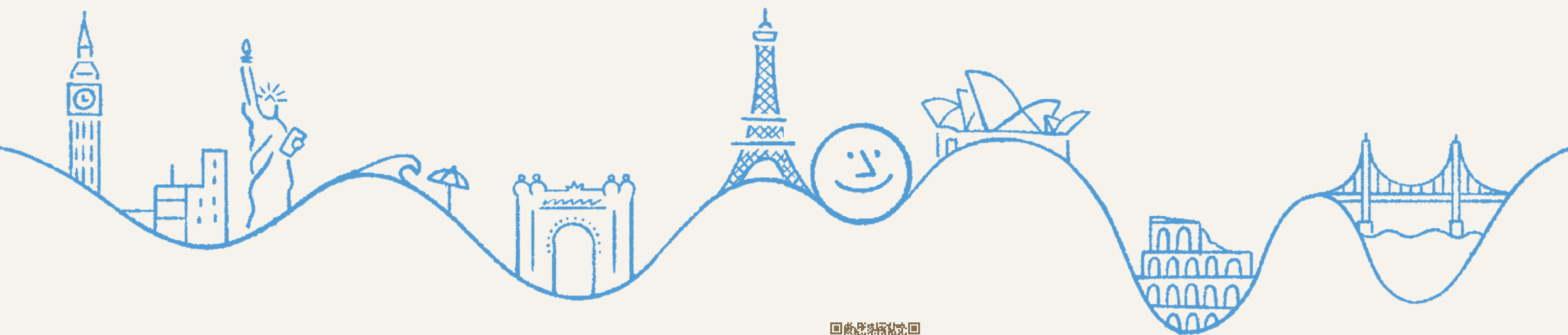
Despite being published in the late eighties, its relevance still stands, along with the abundance of information it holds. I would consider it a worthwhile read at the least. ❶

**“ WE MUST
LEARN THAT
CRITICISM
DOESN'T
CHANGE OUR
WORTH ”**



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Finding fulfillment: A guide

Sometimes it's hard to put your finger on what's not right in your world. The inimitable **Robbie Stakelum** looks at some of the possible issues and suggests solutions.



A lot of self-help books preach about finding your 'purpose' or 'mission' but if you're feeling lost this advice or direction can feel unhelpful and frustrating. Life is meant to be enjoyed, and as work plays such a dominant role in our waking hours, I think it is helpful to look at where you find joy.

**“ LIFE IS MEANT TO
BE ENJOYED ”**

The tool I talk you through in this article is helpful to map out fulfillment at work but you can also apply it to other areas of your life if you wish. For example, some clients know work isn't the problem but using this tool they can understand what is missing in your relationships, hobbies and other areas outside of work.

Consider the following fulfillment drivers, or dimensions of your work life. Examining each of these areas can help give you a sense of what is missing. Different drivers may hold varying levels of importance for different people, this tool can be helpful in identifying where you lack fulfillment and point you towards helpful changes.

Competence

Do you feel confident in the work you do? It's important to feel good at what you are doing. When you are competent at your work it leads to greater confidence, and leads to a sense of fulfillment and joy.

What to do if this is missing: If you don't feel competent at work, consider where you don't feel competent. Perhaps there is a simple fix in upskilling or doing a course?

Alternatively, consider why you don't feel competent. Perhaps you need feedback from your manager or clients. You may be excellent at your job, but need some additional validation to know you're doing a good job. Constructive feedback from your manager can be helpful to identify areas for improvement or help you build confidence by recognizing areas of work where you are competent.

Freedom

Do you have independence or autonomy at work? Being micro-managed or dictated to at work can be a pleasant experience for some, but for others it feels oppressive where you lose a sense of ownership or pride in your work.

**“ TAKE THE INITIATIVE
AND CONSIDER WHERE
YOU CAN CHANGE ”**

**“ WHEN YOU ARE
COMPETENT AT YOUR
WORK IT LEADS
TO GREATER
CONFIDENCE ”**



What to do if this is missing: Is it your line of work or workplace culture? Some sectors and offices create workplaces where you don't have autonomy as an individual at work. In this instance it may be important to change your job, searching for a more flexible working environment.

Alternatively, you can take initiative and consider areas of your job where you can change or take additional responsibilities, and pitch to your manager how you'd like to bring a new direction to your work. If you didn't realize freedom was something you valued at work, it's likely your manager isn't aware either.

Self help

Money

This may seem fairly straight forward, but do you have the money to make ends meet? We all need financial security, otherwise the resulting stress, no matter how much you enjoy the job, will turn it toxic.

What to do if this is missing: A starting point can be to discuss your salary with your employer. But if there isn't space to increase your salary with your standard of living, it may be time to change jobs.

Another alternative can be looking at side hustles. This is absolutely not for everyone,

but in the past when I was unhappy with my salary I moved into coaching, training, consultancy work and teaching yoga, which not only addressed money issues, but further helped cultivate impact, competence and connection in my world of work.

Connection

What kind of relationships do you have with your colleagues, team or clients? Humans are sociable creatures, we need positive and healthy relationships in our lives. We live on a spectrum of introvert to extrovert and so the type, number and quality of relationships differs from person to person.

What to do if this is missing: Consider if you're lacking connection in general. Perhaps you're in a line of work that is solitary, where you sit at a computer, work remotely and have little to no contact with your team, if you even have a team. In this situation it may be time to change jobs or sectors, looking for a line of work that meets your needs for connection. Alternatively you could organize more social events at work to bridge that connection.

However it may be that you have ample connections at work, but they are negative or toxic, and in this situation the next steps may require changing jobs or addressing inappropriate workplace relationships or conversations with HR.

Growth

Is there room and space to grow in this job? Everyone is different, but for some people their professional and personal development is key, and without growth or new challenges they will grow bored and disengaged with work.

What to do if this is missing: If you have annual reviews or work appraisals, raise your growth in the organization as an issue, and flag to your manager that you are in need of additional responsibilities. You'll be sur-

prised, some workplaces will be happy to facilitate your growth, or cover the cost of a course to help you upskill into a new role.

Additionally you may choose to be more proactive in seizing opportunities and pushing yourself into roles or projects. A word of warning here, you also don't want to take on lots of additional work for no additional pay. It can be good to get the experience, and then look for a change of role and salary if it is something you like, or use the extra work in the short-term to bolster your CV if you're looking to move jobs.

Impact

Do you feel as though your work has a positive impact on society? It is important to feel as though we are important. A lot of middle-aged clients I work with who are well established in their career struggle with impact, as they feel their work doesn't matter. Again everyone is different and for some people impact isn't important.

What to do if this is missing: The easiest step is to re-assess how you evaluate the impact of your job or organization, sharing concerns about impact with your manager or team can start a wider organizational conversation. It may be that your specific role is one where you do not see nor feel the value of your work.

“ CLIENTS I WORK WITH WHO ARE WELL ESTABLISHED IN THEIR CAREER STRUGGLE WITH IMPACT ”

“ SOME WORKPLACES WILL BE HAPPY TO FACILITATE YOUR GROWTH ”

However if it is a deeper problem, such as the sector you work in does not align to your values, and you view it as having a negative impact, then there are few alternatives other than changing jobs or sectors.

All of these different domains provide a means to try and identify a problem you're encountering. Often we «feel» as though something is wrong, but struggle to recognise it, and as a result have difficulty fixing it. Clients find this tool helpful to better understand what is important and more importantly to find the areas they are struggling in that need change.

Give it a go, and see how you get on

You can always feel free to get in touch if you have any questions.

Robbie Stakelum is a Brussels-based coach, supporting clients feeling lost and disconnected to find a sense of purpose by capturing clarity and building balance. Want to work with Robbie? You can find out more about his coaching practice, set up a free discovery call or find out if coaching is for you by checking out www.robbiestakelum.com or get in touch direct with Robbie by email via robbie@robbiestakelum.com 📧



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Together recommends two books that will help you identify your priorities and help you to put yourself forward

'Life Worth Living: A Guide to What Matters Most' by by Miroslav Volf, Matthew Croasmun, and Ryan McAnnally-Linz

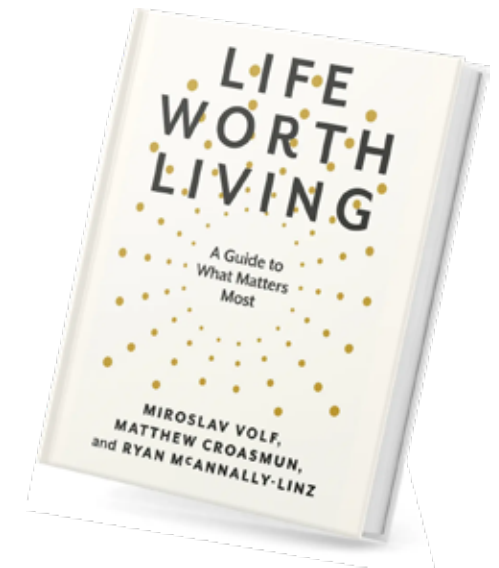
This book is a thought-provoking exploration on what makes a good life. The authors are from Yale College's Center for Faith and Culture who run their most in-demand humanities course: Life Worth Living. Students describe the course as life changing, and preliminary research has shown significant effects of the course on students' sense of meaning in life. Now we can all have these insights through this guide.

The search for meaning, as Yale faculty Miroslav Volf, Matthew Croasmun, and Ryan McAnnally-Linz argue, is at the centre of a crisis that is facing Western culture, a crisis that, they propose, can be ameliorated by searching in one's own life for the underlying truth. The book asks questions, providing readers with jumping-off points, road maps, and habits of reflection for figuring out where their lives hold meaning and where things need to change.

Drawing from the major world religions and secular figures, *A Life Worth Living* is a guide to one of the oldest questions asked by all the world's religions as well as by philosophers and thinkers throughout the ages. How are we to live? And what makes life worth living.

The book unfolds as a series of reflections, guiding readers through various aspects of human experience and offering reflections on the fundamental questions of purpose,

Be Successful

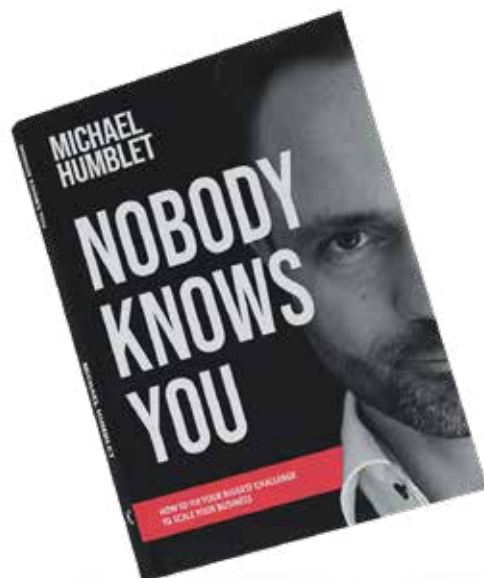


identity, relationships, and the pursuit of happiness. The authors encourage readers to reflect deeply, question assumptions, and contemplate their own values and priorities.

The book aims not only to inspire contemplation but also to provoke action. Readers are encouraged to translate their reflections into concrete steps towards living a life aligned with their values and aspirations. Whether it be fostering meaningful connections, pursuing passions, or contributing to the well-being of others, the authors empower readers to actively shape their own lives.

"We find ourselves running through life, searching for one thing after another, often in a kind of rat race, often chasing an elusive goal and never quite getting there," said Volf, one of the three authors. "It's really helpful sometimes to stop and ask, 'What truly matters?'"

www.lifeworthlivingbook.com



'Nobody Knows You: How to Fix Your Biggest Challenge to Scale Your Business' by Michael Humblet

What if you were told that the key to success in your business was staring at you in plain sight? What if the greatest obstacle in scaling your business is you? That is precisely the claim of Michael Humblet, a former sales manager for the Benelux region and founder of content machine Chaomatic.

In the book, Humblet argues that many businesses are suffering an identity crisis. They focus on developing the persona of the brand but neglect to empower staff to establish their own identity. Humblet claims this is an error because, at the most fundamental level, people trust people and people buy from people.

To achieve this goal, Humblet provides strategies for becoming known and trusted in an environment in which attention is a highly sought-after commodity. In particu-

lar, the book teaches the reader how to use professional expertise and knowledge to become a thought leader who stands out in a competitive marketplace.

In the realm of 'self-help', the concept of individual agency itself is not revolutionary. Yet for the world of sales and marketing, it goes against the grain of the common literature about the omnipotence of the company brand. Indeed, it is clear that this book aims to flip some of the accepted schools of thought on their head.

The potency of this book lies in the delivery. Humblet takes on the role of a personal trainer. Like a coach backing you in from your corner of the boxing ring, he delivers clear instructions for winning the bout and claiming the title. The tone of the discourse is positive but pointed.

Humblet makes the task seem achievable by using anecdotes from his own background in sales and marketing. His examples help the reader understand the practical steps required to fashion their own personal brand and create the business success they aspire to.

Potentially, the theme of the book that resonates most strongly is the need to be authentic. Humblet makes clear that in the digital era, integrity is key; truth must be at the core of what you do in order to build trust and communicate value in what you have to offer.

Overall, the book throws down the challenge to professionals to put themselves forward as protagonists in the business narrative, and to do it with intentionality and authenticity in order to generate a solid pipeline of leads and sales.

Review by Andrew Antenucci



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2024 vision of your entrepreneurial journey

Arnon Barnes suggests some key factors
to drive success in the new year



Every business owner knows that the path of being an entrepreneur is never the same and never boring. You can plan, but things happen. You can build, but things go wrong. You can prepare, but you better have a few emergency plans as well. The only thing that is certain is your heartfelt driving force and your fierce intent behind your vision.

**“ YOU CAN PLAN,
BUT THINGS HAPPEN ”**

To build a thriving business you need to be constantly analyzing all the different moving parts. There is no business out there with worthy accomplishments without a continuous improvement system in place.

To inspire your entrepreneurial juices for an astonishing 2024, here are some hot-seat pointers on how to keep your business relevant and profitable, no matter what happens.

“ PLANNING AND UPDATING YOUR TEAM DYNAMICS IS CRUCIAL FOR YOUR BUSINESS CONSISTENCY AND SUCCESS ”



Don't take it personally

When things don't go the way we planned, many of us tend to take the failures and mistakes personally. Especially if you are a solo entrepreneur. In business, it's rarely personal. Although you might find things to point your finger at yourself, it's usually a combination of many factors that results in sometimes unfortunate outcomes. When your emotions are under control and in check, sit with the situation and find all the moving parts that did not work well together.

The methods, the expectations, the timing, the reactions. Examine all and you will find that it's never personal but circumstantial at best.

Team dynamics

Every business needs a team. It might not be a direct team that you employ, but many people contribute to your business. You won't succeed without the knowledge and effort of others. The key to gathering the right team resources for your business is to know what you need at any certain moment while on your entrepreneurial journey. You need to constantly re-evaluate if your team is up to the task that you set for your business. Not operating with the right team can cost you dearly. Planning and updating your team dynamics is crucial for your business consistency and success. Make sure your team reflects the needs of your current journey and is aware and prepared for potential challenges ahead.

Money mastery

I talk a lot on the subject of money mastery, and I firmly believe that one of the key skills for any entrepreneur is to be able to master the flow of money flow. Both, money flowing in and out the business. We tend to freeze up when the flow is slow and we often go into overdrive when the money is in abundance. Money mastery is never a short-term thought. It needs to be present in your mindset continuously and always. Saving, investing, wisely spending, or simply accumulating and reinvesting are all important. The extent of your money mastery will directly reflect in your daily business strategy. Money is a powerful energy behind your business, but many tend to ignore this fact. It's not 'out there.' Money is the blood flow of your enterprise. So be smart about it. Take your time and make a plan so that money will be present and expanding within your business. It doesn't need to be huge, it needs to be effective.



Personality reflection

This is my favorite part of working with and coaching business owners and business leaders. The most crucial part of entrepreneurial growth is your understanding that your business is always a reflection of you. Big businesses cannot survive with small leaders. Never assume you are done learning and growing. There is always something out there that will boost you and has the capacity to expand your business. Knowledge accumulation and personal growth are a centerpiece of importance for every entrepreneurial journey. Look at where you are from a distance or find a coach who can see your journey and pinpoint what needs improvement. Having someone looking and identifying your blindspots can be life-changing and life-saving for you and your business.

Additionally, do not stop experimenting, it's the creative energy that will pull you into new ventures, amazing new products, and increasing adaptability to ever-changing markets. Make it a habit to constantly want to learn more efficient ways of how to invest your resources so your business will expand and flourish.

In conclusion...

The sum of the entrepreneurial journey is not just about setting goals. It's the consistent effort on your part to translate

“ NEVER ASSUME YOU ARE DONE LEARNING AND GROWING ”

your vision into the practicalities of your day-to-day business. Remember, building a successful business takes time, it is not a sprint, it's a marathon, but one that will be worthwhile. You being an entrepreneur is a present to the world, never forget that. Keep going, grow intelligently bigger, and expand to new prospects of amazing business success. Make 2024 a big year that you will be proud of!

Interested in learning more about business coaching and strategic mentoring with me, Arnon Barnes, so I can help you grow your business intelligently and live your desired lifestyle?

Contact us via info@arnonbarnes.com or check out our website www.arnonbarnes.com/coaching for more information about private coaching.

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How to create a true sense of purpose in life and business

Award winning speaker, trainer and #1 bestselling author **Doug Gordon** is a man on a mission - to help people connect with their true mission or purpose in life.



Have you ever struggled to get out of bed in the morning? You may have had eight hours of great sleep and yet when the alarm goes off, you may have pressed that snooze button again and again, until eventually, you sat up on the side of the bed and said, "Oh crap! Not again! Why do I do this every day? This is like groundhog day. God, please help me?" Then, you dragged yourself to the bathroom, still half-asleep, almost tripping over the bathroom

mat and into the bath on the way, dragged yourself out the door, dragged yourself into the office, and then sat there staring at a screen all day, wondering what on the earth are you doing there!

Yet, another day when you were going on holiday, and you may have only had three hours sleep because you were up late packing, this time the alarm goes off and you spring out of bed, spring into a taxi,

Entrepreneurship

spring into the airplane, and then spring into the swimming pool in the hotel at your destination with loads of energy. Why? Because you are aligned with something you love doing.

When you are aligned with a sense of LOVE for what you are doing you have LOTS OF VIBRANT ENERGY, and if you optimize your energy, you can optimize your life and your work.

Energy produces vitality, helps you focus better, perform better, be more productive, have better relationships, and get more done in

less time with less stress. People talk about how important time management is, but actually energy management is so much more important. If you are in the energetic zone of pure focus, you will optimize your time so much more. When you are in your highest state of energy, you tend to be your best self. You can deal with the stresses and strains of life more easily. With more energy, you will even be better in your personal life with your partner, as, one, you will be gleaming with positive energy, radiating love, and two, you will have a little bit extra power. You will have more endurance, more control, more vibrancy, and more enthusiasm for the job.

If you think about it, everything in life is energy. Thoughts are energy, words or speech are energy. Thoughts lead to words, words lead to actions, actions lead to habits, and habits lead to destiny. So, start with a positive thought, and you will end with a positive destiny.

The question is where do you start? What is the definition in terms of success in life? Success is different for everyone, and it is defined by you and what you want to achieve. It is so important to make sure that your life is designed around your personal

goals that are aligned to you and you alone. Too many people focus and compare themselves to other people—maybe a father, mother, brother, or sister, and they want to be like them and follow their dreams and their goals, rather than what's truly in their own heart. That's why it is so important to find out what you love doing the most and then follow your dream.

So, my question for you is: what do you truly love doing? What do you talk about the most? What activity do you find yourself springing out of bed for in the morning? What are you natural-

ly gifted at doing? If you can look at all these questions and decipher an answer and see if you can add value to people in some way or form so that you can make money out of it, then; hey presto! you are on a path of purpose.

For more insights and inspiration: Doug is speaking alongside Together Magazine's owner, David McGowan, Pat Falvey (north pole, south pole and peaked Everest twice, plus producer of The Summit Film), Jack Daly (#1 Sales speaker in America, and author of 10 bestsellers), Dr Celine Mullins (business performance psychologist and best-selling author), Karen Caplan (ex President and CEO of Frieda's Produce), Gosia Wojciulewicz (Wellness expert) and Hannah Hawkshaw (top 30 under 30 entrepreneur) at the 'Leadership and Life Mastery Summit' online and in person on the 25th January in Dublin. For tickets contact us or go to: www.LeadershipandLifeMasterySummit.com

Doug Gordon is the author of *Charge Yourself Up For Success: Energizing your life, work and relationships*, which is full of powerful transformational tools and techniques. ①

“ IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU LOVE DOING THE MOST ”

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UNE EXPÉRIENCE DE DIVERTISSEMENT UNIQUE



Financially fit in 2024

We suggest ten ways to improve your personal finances in 2024

In 2024, you have a unique opportunity to take control of your financial future and set yourself up for success. Managing personal finances effectively is not just important for financial security, it can be an important part of your mental well-being.

We outline ten practical steps you can take to improve your personal finances, focusing on making significant savings, good investments and some planning for the future. The art is in creating the perfect balance, allowing you to enjoy the present while ensuring you live within your means and can set a little aside for future dreams.

1. Start by creating a budget

Establishing a budget is the foundation of financial planning. Evaluate your income and expenses, and allocate a specific amount for different categories such as housing, transportation, groceries, entertainment, etc. By tracking your spending, you can identify areas where you can save more and allocate those savings towards future planning or investments.

2. Cut down on unnecessary expenses

Analyze your expenses and identify non-essential items or services on which you spent excessively. Ask yourself if there are cheaper providers of electricity, for example, or ways to reduce your bill by reducing consumption. Consider cutting back on luxury purchases, dining out less frequently, or finding cheaper alternatives. Maybe inviting friends for dinner once a month rather than dining out. Small changes in spending habits can accumulate significant savings over time.



3. Develop an emergency fund

One of the smartest financial moves is to establish an emergency fund. Aim to set aside three to six months' worth of living expenses in a separate savings account. By being able to buy tickets for trips in advance, for example, you can make serious savings, rather than leaving it to the last minute because you're waiting for your salary or an invoice to be paid.

4. Automate savings and investments

Make use of technology by automating monthly transfers to your savings and investment accounts. A fixed amount consistently directed towards savings and investments allows your money to grow over time. By automating this, if you're on a regular salary you don't even have to think much about putting money aside for *le fameux* rainy day. This helps in building wealth and securing a financially stable future.

5. Contribute to retirement plans

Take advantage of employer-matched or state matched contributions and tax benefits that pension plans offer. Start contributing as early as possible to benefit from compounding returns.

6. Explore sustainable ways to cut expenses

Look for eco-friendly alternatives that not only contribute to a greener planet, but also save you money. Consider investing in energy-efficient appliances, using public transportation, or growing your own vegetables. These initiatives can help reduce utility bills, ensure you do more walking or cycling and positively impact your finances in the long run.

7. Diversify your investments

While cutting expenses and saving is crucial, it's equally important to invest wisely. Diversify your investments across various asset classes such as stocks, bonds, real estate, or mutual funds. This diversification minimizes risks and maximizes potential returns. Seek the advice of financial advisors to determine the best investment strategy aligned with your goals and risk appetite. Have a look at tracker funds that have a good record.

8. Inform yourself

Take the time to educate yourself about personal finance concepts, such as budgeting, investing, and retirement planning. Read

“WHILE CUTTING EXPENSES AND SAVING IS CRUCIAL, IT'S EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO INVEST WISELY.”

books and stay updated with financial news and trends. By improving your financial literacy, you can make informed decisions and better navigate the complexities of the financial world.

9. Explore side hustles

Explore opportunities to generate additional income through additional freelance work. Leverage your skills and hobbies to generate supplemental funds that can accelerate your savings and investment goals. Consider digital platforms, such as freelancing websites or gig economy apps. Some of these aren't very well paid, but it all adds up. Save a cent, save a euro!

10. Prioritize experiences and the present

As the saying goes, shrouds don't have pockets, you also need to enjoy your earnings now. Set aside a budget for fun, whether it's to go to an exhibition, for dinner with your partner, or for a weekend break in the Ardennes. You can create memorable moments with loved ones without sacrificing your long-term financial goals, be creative.

We guarantee you that by implementing these ten steps in 2024, you will significantly improve your personal finances and dare we say it, even your happiness! 🍀

Belgian Presidency: Protect, strengthen, prepare

Catherine Feore casts a quick glance
at what's in store for the next six months



On 1 January 2024, Belgium assumes the Presidency of the European Union. It is the thirteenth time that Belgium has been in the hot seat. At a launch in the Residence Palace a video of the highlights of those previous presidencies was shown. It was meant to reassure, showing how Belgium had already steered the EU through some choppy waters and helped the EU reach important milestones. Watching it, I thought how much simpler

and idyllic Europe seemed then, but nostalgia often leads to a rose-tinted view of the past.

The launch on 8 December was also two months after the appalling events in Israel and the subsequent response which flattened large parts of Gaza and killed over 20,000 people, more than 40% of whom were children. The Gazan population is largely displaced, deprived of sanitation



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and the basic means of living. It has been shocking, but at the last European Council under the Spanish Presidency the conclusions on the "Middle East" consisted of one line: "The European Council held an in-depth debate on the Middle East." That was it.

At the very same meeting, the EU took the momentous decision to open accession ne-

gotiations with Ukraine and Moldova. The principled stance and support for Ukraine and Moldova stood out in sharp contrast to the failure to call for a ceasefire and return of hostages in the Gaza conflict.

Belgian Prime Minister Alexander de Croo's speech celebrated the EU's many achievements, but acknowledged that Russia's illegal aggression in Ukraine, the increase in extreme climate events and the renewed conflict in the Middle East, among other issues, meant that Europe was facing a crossroads.

De Croo said the priorities of the Belgian presidency could be summarized in three words: Protect, strengthen, prepare. "Protecting our people means protecting our borders, strengthening our social and health agenda and defending European unity in supporting Ukraine." On "strengthening" the prime minister said that this was aimed at improving Europe's competitiveness and at the same time "delivering on the green, digital and just transition." At a later briefing, the head of Belgium's Permanent Representation to the EU said that Belgium would be

particularly focused on improving the competitiveness in the pharmaceutical area – a sector in which Belgium excels.

On the third element, "prepare", de Croo referred to the need to review the EU's institutional framework for a further enlargement. There is already a growing consensus that the current workings of the EU institutions are not delivering – with a further enlargement there is a fear that there will be complete gridlock. The behaviour of Hungary, in particular, has underlined how the EU can be held to ransom by even one member state which flouts the EU's commitment to the rule of law and sincere cooperation. The Belgians will do the groundwork and are proposing further citizen assemblies similar to the Conference on the Future of Europe, to prepare a first draft of what is needed by the end of their presidency. This is the start of what is likely going to be a drawn out debate; no European leader looks forward to the trials and tribulations of fundamental treaty change and ratifying the result.

There are 150 legislative files awaiting the incoming presidency, but de Croo says that they won't lose sight of setting the longer term strategic direction of the EU. Since the Hungarian government will take charge in the second half of the year it might be all the more important to do forward thinking in the first half of 2024.

There are two additional complications to the incoming presidency. Firstly, Belgium will have national and regional elections during its presidency. Secondly, there will also be European Parliamentary elections and preparations for a new Commission. MEPs can become more polarized in the run up to elections and less consensual in order to put clearer choices before voters; on the other hand, it can have a sobering effect knowing that a file will be delayed for months, even years, if it is not done and dusted ahead of European elections – after all, voters also



want to know what their MEPs achieved during their mandate. Commissioners who are coming to the end of their terms are also looking towards life after the Commission and some have already jumped ship, returning to political life in their home countries.

When MEPs and Commissioners took office nearly five years ago they couldn't have anticipated the trials and tribulations they would face – a pandemic, Russia's further invasion of Ukraine as well as all the other ordinary challenges of change from AI to meeting numerous climate-crisis related crises. 2024 will be a pivotal year for Europe – to cover what's happening, *Together* will provide more political content online.

www.belgium24.eu 



NATAN: Elegant, timeless, refined, Belgian

Edouard Vermeulen, otherwise known as Mr Natan, was fascinated by design from an early age. After graduating as an interior designer from Sint-Lukas in Brussels, he presented his first designs in the early 1980s, on the premises of Belgian couturier Paul Natan. It was here that Vermeulen cultivated his growing passion for fashion. Building on the establishment's artisanal heritage, he in turn began creating couture pieces and took over the house under the name NATAN.

If you don't think you know NATAN you are probably mistaken. If you've admired the elegance and beauty of different outfits worn by Belgian royalty or Queen Måxima of the Netherlands, you may well have been admiring the vision and work of Edouard Vermeulen.

His collaborations with the Belgian royal family precede the current incumbent,



LIFESTYLE

Opening the curtain on a new year

Luxury

but there seems to be a particularly close rapport with Queen Mathilde. In an interview with Nieuwsblad Vermeulen estimates that over the course of her 24 years as a member of the royal family as princess then queen there have been nearly 500 outfits: "We have been working together since 1999. That is 24 years."

Vermeulen says that the Queen comes to view the new collection at the start of each season. The choice of outfit is aligned to the type of activities planned in the months ahead, ranging from working visits to a hospital to a state visit abroad. He is particularly busy in the approach to Belgium's national day on 21 July.



"NATAN IS THE LAST HOUSE TO CREATE ITS COLLECTIONS IN ITS OWN WORKSHOPS"



Natan is the last house to create its collections in its own workshops, in Belgium. Atelier II, located on Place Brugmann, is dear to Edouard Vermeulen because of its "Parisian" character. It is a place completely dedicated to craftsmanship and unique couture creations. This cultivates a couture tradition in a "living room atmosphere", allowing the clientele to discover the know-how, admire

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Meanwhile, those planning corporate retreats or business seminars can simply let the charm and tranquility of these inspirational locations work their own magic.

And if you are seeking the perfect place for that unforgettable holiday or memorable family reunion, all the verdant splendour of the Ardennes landscape lies right on your doorstep.



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Luxury

the precision and connect the collections with their design.

Natan's signature style has continued to evolve. However, 'Mr. Natan' does not consider himself a typical creator or designer. Natan is not about fleeting fashion, but timeless elegance. It is a world of lush fabrics, shimmering satins, feathers and bold design choices. At the same time there is nothing staid or dull about the fashion house, it is constantly innovating.

Edouard Vermeulen is also a passionate supporter of up and coming talent. In 2017, he launched the «NATAN Collective», which supports emerging and artisanal Belgian

**“ VERMEULEN IS
ALSO A PASSIONATE
SUPPORTER OF
UP AND COMING
TALENT ”**



Edouard Vermeulen



brands. He has made the first floor of his boutique on rue de Namur available, offering visibility to the next generation. Three Belgian editions have already made it possible to discover initiatives that subsequently came to fruition. Vermeulen is sponsor of the Brussels College of Art and Design (CAD) fashion section. CAD brings a real and hands-on approach to developing the talent of the future. CAD has a unique ethic, which brings teachers with real world experience from the top of their field in contact in a system that is more like an apprenticeship than a standard educational approach.

**“ ORIGINALITY AND
ETHICS ARE EQUALLY
PART OF THEIR DNA ”**



Circular Fashion

Natan creates beautiful garments without compromising on integrity. Originality and ethics are equally part of their DNA. “We are continuously working to make our company sustainable. In 2020 we introduced a new organic, plant-based and environmentally friendly leather made from cactus in



our couture collection. We have made it our responsibility to contribute to reversing fast-fashion and evolving into a fully sustainable brand.”

The outlook on sustainability includes caring deeply about the lives of the people involved in the production of their collections. “We apply our small-scale and intimate philosophy at all levels of the company and beyond. We regard the Belgian Natan workshops as the heart of our company and we invest daily in maintaining in-house knowledge.”

As part of its fortieth anniversary celebrations there is an exceptional exhibition of 30 unique dresses on the ground and first floors of the Espace Vanderborcht. The exhibition is organized in collaboration with the Fashion Museum of the City of Brussels and can be seen until 5 January, it even includes the very first dress he designed in 1983 for his mother, for the marriage of his brother. ❶

FASHION ME LO DY



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Sunglasses: Louis Vuitton
Jewelry: Dinh Van



Suit & shirt: Fracomina
Jewelry: Ole Lynggaard



Handbag & sunglasses: Louis Vuitton
Eau de Parfum: Spell on you Louis Vuitton



Trousers: Fracomina Gold Shoes: Zara



Suit: Marciano by Guess Shirt: Christian Wijnants Jewelry: Ole Lynggaard





*Suit: Fracomina
Shirt: The Kooples
Jewelry: Ole Lynggaard*



Vest & Top: Balmain Earring on left: Messika Earring on right: Ole Lynggaard



Handbags & sunglasses: Dior Eye Palette Backstage; Dior N°011 Precious body Mist; J'adore Dior Couture color gel effect shine & wear: Dior vernis N°209 Lipstick Forever Liquid; Rouge Dior N°999



Dress: Isabelle Bajart Vintage

Claude Wesel: The goldsmith who redefined jewellery

Nicholas Sirot examines the importance of one of Belgium's most innovative craftsmen

Trained at the École des Métiers d'Art de l'Abbaye de Maredsous, Claude Wesel entered the world of jewellery in 1963 when he joined the Atelier Fernand Demaret in Brussels. This fertile environment became the crucible for his innovative ideas, fuelled by the creative energy he shared with other young talents, such as Michel Toussaint and Michel Louwette. It was here that he began his initial research, passionately committed to innovating and redefining the traditional language of jewellery.

A virtuoso of ancient technique of lost-wax casting, Wesel has always sought to transcend the limits of the craft. While remaining faithful to classic jewellery materials such as noble metals, diamonds, tortoiseshell and amber, he also added other materials, such as precious wood, and delicate use of colored acrylic. His technical skills and use of diverse materials provided him with a rich vocabulary for his 'biomechanical language' where organic elements engage in dialogue.



Claude Wesel





Abstract tube ringmodel Inca (1966)

The names of his collections demonstrated his range and imagination: Hublot, Samourai, Les bolos, Les protozoaires. His style was constantly evolving, oscillating between experimental and more traditional forms, but always marked by his distinctive originality.

"I fell in love with beautifully made 1960s Belgian jewels signed by Demaret and produced by master jeweller Claude Wesel," says Betty de Stefano of the Collectors Gallery. "The more I learned about the works of Claude Wesel and the Groupe Atelier Demaret, the more I fell under their spell. I no longer had any choice; I had to put together a collection of these incredible pieces of jewellery, which were actually genuine works of art."

The 1970s marked a major turning point in his career when Wesel decided to become an independent goldsmith artist. This gave rise to two decades of daring exhibitions, in which his creativity flourished in a land of total freedom. In the 90s, under the banner of 'Bijoux Sauvages' (Wild Jewellery), he incorporated organic materials such as bone, hair and shells.



Biomechanical Style (1690)



'Bijoux Sauvages' Lame necklace steel plexiglas (1985)

**" IF MY JEWELS DON'T
SPEAK, IT'S BECAUSE
THEY THINK "**



'Bijoux Sauvages' Necklace steel plexiglas (2005)

**" ART IS IN
EVERYTHING, BUT NOT
IN EVERYTHING "**

A trailblazer, Wesel combined sumptuous jewels with bold shapes that come to life as miniature sculptures. When using precious or semi-precious stones, he makes them the focal point of his construction; all the shapes, lines and colours are arranged in relation to the stone so as to enhance its sparkle. He said that a diamond's exceptional decorative value stems from its great power of refraction, "it should be used for its beauty, not as a symbol of wealth."

Founder of the Wesel Art Gallery in Waterloo in 1989, Claude Wesel was not just a designer, but also a pillar of the Belgian goldsmith's trade. This exhibition space hosts contemporary artists, underlining his commitment to the artistic community. His contribution to the evolution of contemporary jewellery in Belgium and beyond has been immeasurable.

Until his death in 2014 his evocative collections, from 'Hublot' to 'Samourai', took art lovers on a spellbinding journey to the heart of Claude Wesel's imagination. His original and varied artistic vocabulary made him stand out in the world of contemporary goldsmithing.

Wesel's artistry is widely recognized and his pieces can be found in prestigious institutions such as Pforzheim's Schmuckmuseum, the Communauté française des arts plastiques, Antwerp's Diamond Museum, and Houston's Museum of Fine Arts (MFAH).

Claude Wesel's pieces will be presented at Collector's Gallery during the Brafa Art Fair from 28 January to 4 February 2024 at Brussels Expo.

For sale at Collector's Gallery, 12 rue des Minimes, 1000 Brussels, info@collectors-gallery.com or betty@collectors-gallery.com 📍

Shopping

Seasonal Splendour

by Nicholas Sirot

With the streets still lit up with seasonal lights and a joyful atmosphere, *Together* suggests some season

shopping for the start of a prosperous and happy new year.



Veuve Clicquot
Giftbox Yellow Label
Antwerpen Arrow
Brut. 75cl.
Price: **€63.**

Louis Vuitton
Parfum Fleur Du
Désert. 100 ml.
Price: **€360.**

Burberry
Goddess Eau de
Parfum. 100ml.
Price: **€129,90.**

Oliver People
Sunglasses.
Price: **€375.**

Acqua Di Parma
Room Diffuser
Neve Fresca.
Price: **€100.**

Acqua Di Parma
Scented Candle
Neve Fresca.
Price: **€80.**

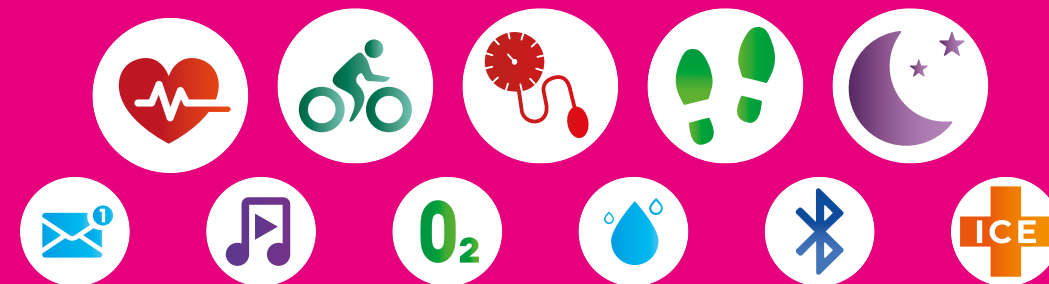
Gilles Dewavrin
@ Thierry Boutemy.
Candle Volutes.
Price: **€59.**

Paco Rabanne
Phantom Parfum.
100ml. Price: **€123.**

Le Tanneur Little
Handbag Gisèle.
Price: **€339.**



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Ruinart Champagne Rosé Second Skin. 75cl. Price: **€87**. **Montblanc** Pen Meisterstück Platiné. Price: **€440**. **Annayake** Anti-wrinkle care for men @ APRIL. Price: **€63,50**. **Montblanc** Watch 858 Iced Sea Automatic date. Price: **€3.360**. **Montblanc** Xtreme 3.0 Large Model 3 Compartment backpack. Price: **€1.370**. **Montblanc** Bag Reporter mini format Sartorial. Price: **€765**. **Montblanc** Eau de Toilette Legend. 100 ml. Price: **€93**. **Montblanc** Eau de parfum Signature Absolue. 50 ml. Price: **€85**.



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KNOKKE  HEIST

Luminous allure

by Nicholas Sirot



Gucci Flora Gorgeous
Magnolia Eau de parfum.
100ml. Price: **€157.**

Courrège Candle
L'Empreinte. Price: **€60.**

Marc Jacobs Perfect
Eau de parfum. 50 ml.
Price: **€72,50.**

Kylie Skin Detox face
mask. Price: **€26,99.**

Kylie Skin Matte liquid
lipstick & Lip liner.
Price: **€22,19.**

Jimmy Choo I want Choo
Eau de parfum. 60 ml.
Price: **€88.**

Annayake Kagari for him
Eau de toilette. 100 ml.
@ APRIL. Price: **€81,50.**

April 12 Eyeshadow
Palette. @ APRIL.
Price: **€10,90.**

Maison du Monde
Magnifying mirror.
Price: **€17,60.**

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M.A.C cosmetics Box 5x Lustreglass Kiss Lipstick. Price: **€75**. Sparkler eye shadow Zero chill. Price: **€30**. Extra dimension skinfinish gleamscape. Price: **€50,50**. **Acqua Colonia** Majestic Leather Eau de parfum. 100 ml. Price: **€120**. **La Prairie** Pure gold radiance eye cream. Price upon request. **DARK OIL by Sebastien Professional** Hair oil. Price: **€21,90**. Dry conditioner. Price: **€24,40**. **Acqua di Parma** OUD Eau de parfum 100 ml. Price: **€232**.



THE HOTEL & APARTHOTEL CASTEAU RESORT MONS SOIGNIES

The HOTEL & APARTHOTEL CASTEAU RESORT MONS SOIGNIES is ideally located whether traveling for business or leisure while in Belgium. Near the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), the central command of NATO military forces. Hotel guests are also near several business locations including Avery Denison, Holcim and Akzo Nobel.

Hotel & Aparthotel Casteau is the hotel with the closest proximity to the SHAPE offices.

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The Hotel & Aparthotel Casteau Resort Mons Soignies is 15 kilometers from the animal park Paira Daiza, the golf courses du Hainaut & "Mont Garni", the "Hippodrome de Wallonie" and 50 kilometers from attractions in Brussels, Belgium. Each well-appointed room (59 rooms and 32 apart-hotels) comes equipped with

satellite television, free WIFI, safe, fridge and bathroom with shower or bath.

Guests enjoy a daily full breakfast and a multilingual staff (English, French, German, Dutch and Italian). This hotel also features a fitness room, a sauna and a jacuzzi, and 3 large meeting rooms for conference and family events (up to 250 persons). A friendly staff is ready to ensure a comfortable and memorable stay.



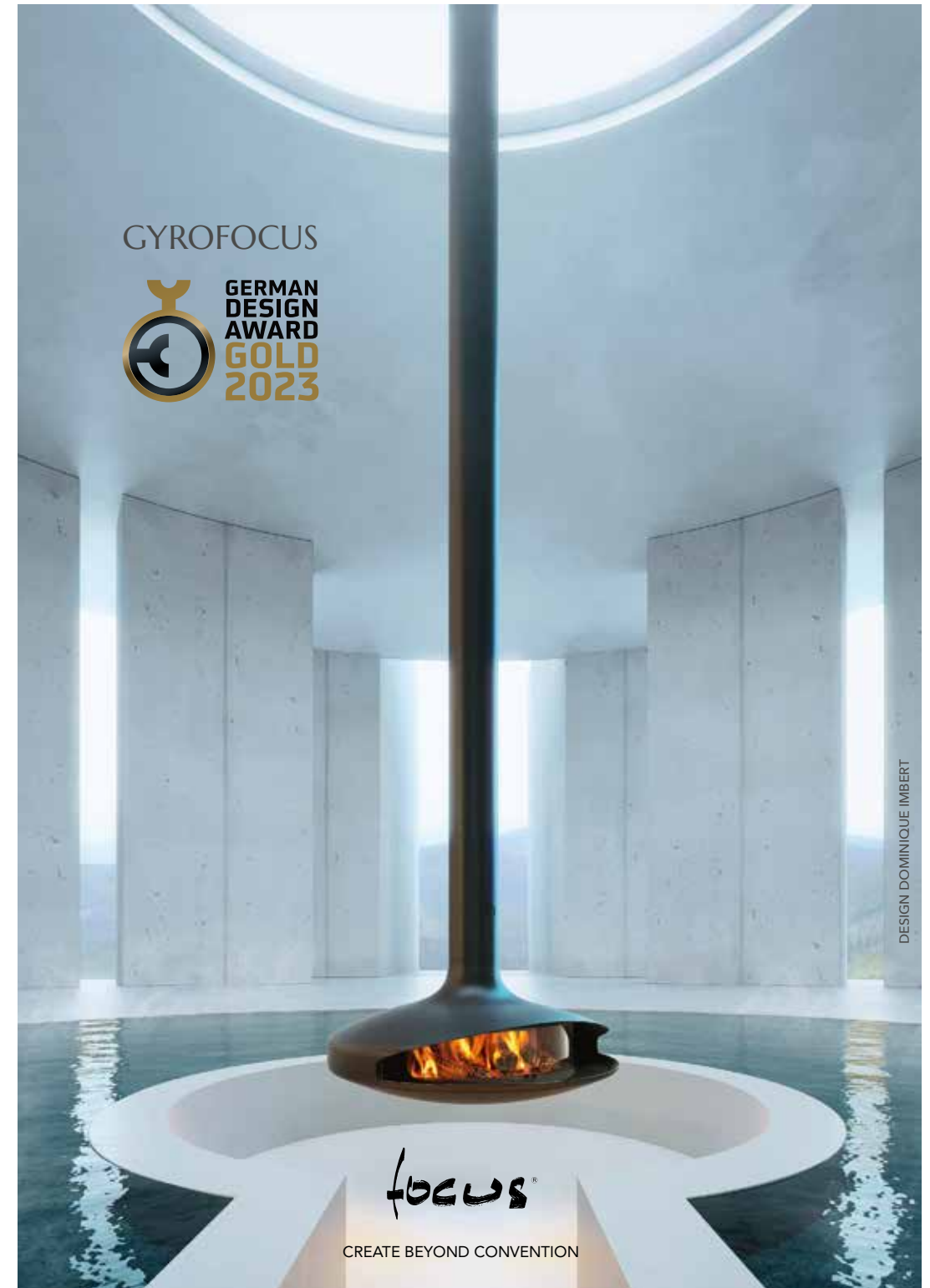
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Volume and light

In a mixed neighbourhood of Brussels, **Joséphine Solheid** meets a Belgian-Italian couple who have completely transformed an early 20th century townhouse to give it the feel of a New York loft.



Andréa Latini & Carole Debae - Photos © Yvan Moreau



Interiors

Belgian artistic director Carole Debae and her husband Andréa Latini, born in Rome, former competitive skier and architect, discovered - somewhat by chance - this house located in a peaceful street in the Place Flagey district.

Parents of two children, the couple immediately understood the potential of this two-story terraced house, sandwiched between a pair of taller houses. With some creative thinking they found a way to reassemble it by creating two brand new platforms to accommodate more living spaces.

The idea of reversing the ordinary order of rooms is also one of the particularities of this 300 square meter project, carried out in close collaboration with the architect Sébastien Cruyt (Synergy International), which focuses on maximum light provision on the upper floors.



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“ THE FACADE IS
ADORNED WITH A
BREATHTAKING
SEVEN-METER-HIGH
BAY WINDOW ”



At the rear, the facade is adorned with a breathtaking seven-meter-high bay window. The window is softened by numerous shrubs and potted plants placed on the terrace, “a true urban oasis where birds and insects are also happy,” says Carole.

If luxurious finishes are not the priority of the project, the attention and the effort of the renovation were mainly focused on the creation of larger spaces by breaking the walls. They also took a sustainable approach by recycling the materials from the site. The wood from the demolition of the old roof was diverted into kitchen worktops

Stanhope Hotel Brussels will become the new home of “Dans le Noir ? – dining in the dark”

The Stanhope Hotel Brussels by Thon Hotels is excited to introduce its latest collaboration with the renowned international dining experience, ‘Dans le Noir ? - dining in the dark.’ From 11 January 2024, we will proudly host the all new ‘Dans le Noir ?’ at our hotel nestled in the heart of the European quarter. This addition further enhances our range of exclusive services, complementing the exceptional experiences our guests have come to expect. Additionally, the Brighton restaurant will remain open from Monday to Saturday.

“I express my sincere gratitude for this exciting partnership and look forward to creating unforgettable moments together at ‘Dans le Noir ?’ at the Stanhope Hotel Brussels by Thon Hotels. I can’t wait to welcome you to this new chapter of our sensory adventure.” said Frederic Hill, General Manager, Stanhope Hotel Brussels by Thon Hotels.

With more than 2.5 millions visitors around the world since 2004, Dans le Noir ? offers a unique experience: dining in total darkness. Guests will enjoy a 100% surprise menu, with starter, main course, and dessert with or without wine pairing and will be served



À la file indienne © Dans le Noir

and guided by a team of visually impaired waiter-guides. The menu will be created by Chef Laurent Gauze, proud member of the Académie Culinaire de France, with his cuisine inspired by local and organic produce. Each seasonal menu will challenge the taste buds.

Since its first opening in June 2021 in Brussels, Dans le Noir ? welcomed more than 12.000 guests. In addition to regularly fully booked dinners, the restaurant has also organised many events: dating in the dark, blind tastings, corporate events or even product reveals for brands.

- **Information:** Dinners on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 3 course meal from 64€.
- **Booking is now open here:** <https://brussels.dansle Noir.com/en/>
- **Gift vouchers:** Available online. ⓘ



**“ NO PAINT OR
WALLPAPER COVERS
THE WALLS, ONLY
PLASTER MIXED WITH
NATURAL PIGMENTS ”**



or bathroom furniture. The bricks were used to raise adjacent walls. The decision to leave exposed beams still offers a raw and industrial aspect reminiscent of Soho. No paint or wallpaper covers the walls, only plaster mixed with natural pigments was used to give them a concrete effect.

The simple lines, the exclusively wooden floors and the creation of a skylight on the top floor illuminating the stairwell give this single-family space stripped of superfluities a feeling of freedom dear to the owners. ①

stuv

The essential fire

An ideal combination of simplicity and performance, the Stuv P-20s pellet stove combines visual pleasure with efficiency. In addition to a wide view of its calm flame, its ingenious design offers you a high level of user comfort. With CO and fine particle emissions nearing zero*, it is one of the most innovative and sustainable Stuv stoves.



Model shown: Stuv P-20s pellet stove

*Power range: 3,7-8,1kW - Efficiency: 90,3% - CO emissions: 0,001% - Fine particle emissions: 5 mg/Nm³
Energy efficiency class: A+ - Ecodesign 2022

Electricity in the air

Driving into 2024 **Anja Van Der Borgh** takes a look at the latest in luxury cars



In a world where green car taxation and the fight for the preservation of our planet set new standards, electric luxury cars are sprouting up like mushrooms. They embody a future where innovation, refinement, and sustainability embrace each other. But even cars with combustion engines are still making their debut.

Volvo EX30

Globally, there is a growing demand for small, fully electric premium SUVs. Many city dwellers are looking for a car that of-

fers the convenience of commuting to work while reflecting their personality, or carrying the necessities for their hobbies. The Volvo EX30 perfectly meets this demand. Although it may be the smallest SUV ever from the Swedish car manufacturer, it still offers ample space. Additionally, it is as safe as you would expect from a Volvo and is designed to protect you and others in a busy urban environment. For example, the EX30 features a special safety function that helps prevent so-called 'door' accidents by warning of approaching cyclists, scooters, or runners when you are about to open the

door. Production of the Volvo EX30 started in autumn 2023 in Zhangjiakou (China), but Volvo Cars has also decided to build the fully electric SUV in its factory in Ghent in 2025, making it a bit Belgian too. Starting price €38,990.

www.volvocars.com

BMW i5

The eighth generation of the world's most successful business sedan, the BMW 5 Series, which will be available from spring, also marks the introduction of the fully electric BMW i5. At launch, you will have a choice of two variants. The BMW i5 eDrive40 Sedan with a combined energy consumption of 18.9 - 15.9 kWh/100 km. This variant delivers a power output of up to 250 kW/340 hp and has a range of 498 to 582 kilometers. The top model of the series is the BMW i5 M60 xDrive Sedan, with an impressive power output of up to 442 kW/601hp (combined energy consumption: 20.6 - 18.2 kWh/100 km). Not much is known yet, but it is known that a unique torque control optimizes the traction, dynamics, and driving stability of the very first fully electric BMW 5 Series Sedan. Prices not yet known.

www.bmw.be



DS 9 E-Tense

As DS Automobiles holds the spirit of the art of travel in high esteem, the French car manufacturer places great importance on the atmosphere inside its vehicles. The introduction of the new Opéra pack for the DS 9 E-Tense, alongside the existing Performance Line+ and Rivoli+, represents the latest achievement in this regard. The new top-level equipment includes many standard features. Consider technology such as camera-controlled damping, the Extended Safety Pack with DS Drive Assist level 2 semi-autonomous driving, and comfort-oriented features like the Focal Electra® sound system, the DS Lounge Pack for rear passengers, including lounge headrests for the outer seats, the button to slide the front passenger seat forward from the back seat, extensive dual-zone automatic air conditioning, and heated, massaging, and cooled outer rear seats, as well as the sunroof, electrically operated tailgate, etc. The new Opéra version is offered with nappa leather upholstery with watch strap structure in two different colors: ruby red or art basalt black for the front and rear seats, the center console, and the extended dashboard. Also new for the DS 9 model year 23 is the Alcantara® headliner in Pebble Grey, which brightens the interior. Starting at €75,650 for the DS9 Opéra Première E-Tense 250 plug-in hybrid.

www.dsautomobiles.be

Cars

Audi Q6 e-tron

While the technical details are still pending, the new Audi Q6 e-tron offers an ideal balance between impressive driving and charging performance and technical innovation. The electric SUV is the first model developed based on the new PPE platform (Premium Platform Electric) and the new E3 electronic architecture. Both served as the basis to reinterpret the interior design and functionality. Technology, aesthetics, and sustainability are thus perfectly balanced. The three-dimensional applications

create a generous sense of space, lightness, comfort, and coziness. The so-called Softrwrap extends from the doors, through the entire cockpit to the center console, creating a homogeneous and welcoming sense of space. The colors and high-quality materials, some of which are made from recycled materials, are also reflected in the seats. This brings all interior components together as if they were designed as a single space, giving the occupants the feeling of sitting in a cozy cocoon. Price not yet known.

www.audi.com

“ THE NEW AUDI Q6 E-TRON OFFERS AN IDEAL BALANCE BETWEEN IMPRESSIVE DRIVING AND CHARGING PERFORMANCE AND TECHNICAL INNOVATION ”

**Mercedes EQG**

If you think the G-Class by Mercedes-Benz hasn't achieved enough iconic status yet, then the fully electric version, the EQG, will certainly meet those expectations. The EQG will feature four electric motors and four gearboxes. With these, it can perform what Mercedes has dubbed a 'G-turn', i.e., a U-turn on the spot by turning the left wheels in the opposite direction of the right wheels. All four motors are also connected to two-stage gearboxes, with both a low and high gearing. You will be able to choose from different power variants, with the strongest one carrying an AMG label. The latter will be able to match the performance of the Mercedes-AMG G63. More details are still to come. The car will make its world premiere at CES in Las Vegas. Price not yet known.

www.mercedes-benz.be

Fully Electric Mini Cooper

The driving experience of an electrified go-kart combined with an impressive user experience, that's the purely electric Mini Cooper in a nutshell. This fifth generation of the three-door model comes with a completely new drivetrain and is available as the Cooper E version or, with higher power and a larger range, as the Cooper SE. The 135 kW/184 hp electric motor of the Mini Cooper E generates a torque of 290 Nm, allowing the car to sprint from 0 to 100 km/h in 7.3 seconds. The Mini Cooper SE, with its power of 160 kW/218 hp and maximum torque of 330 Nm, takes just 6.7 seconds for the same sprint. The driving range according to the WLTP test cycle is up to 305 kilometers for the Mini Cooper E based on the high-voltage battery with a capacity of 40.7 kWh. In the Mini Cooper SE, the driving range increases to 402 kilometers thanks to a battery capacity of 54.2 kWh. At a fast-charging station, the battery can be charged from ten to eighty percent in just under thirty minutes. Price €34,500.

www.mini.be



Cars

**Jaguar F-Type ZP Edition**

After 75 years of producing sports cars, Jaguar is celebrating the end of its combustion engine sports car line in 2024 with an exclusive, limited edition F-Type, inspired by two iconic E-types from the 1960s. The new F-Type ZP Editions are equipped with a 423 kW/575 hp supercharged V8 petrol engine and special interior and exterior details designed by the personalization experts at SV Bespoke. The F-Type ZP Edition is available in two color combinations reminiscent of the first race-winning 'Project ZP' E-types, which competed shortly after the model's introduction in 1961: Oulton Blue Gloss paint with two-tone leather interior in Mars Red and Ebony, or Crystal Grey Gloss paint with two-tone leather interior in Navy Blue and Ebony. Neither of these paint colors has been offered on the F-Type before. These colors correspond to the two specially formulated paints for seven pairs of E-type Project ZP Collection cars that Jaguar Classic announced earlier this year. Both feature hand-painted Porcelain White Gloss roundels in racing style on the doors and Porcelain White Gloss edges around the radiator grille. Available in only 150 units. Starting from €236,252 for the coupé and €241,312 for the convertible.

www.jaguar.be

Range Rover Sport SV

The new Range Rover Sport SV is not only the most powerful Range Rover ever, but it also brings several firsts. It offers a perfect balance thanks to the hydraulic, interconnected 6D Dynamics suspension (a world first) with dive and roll control that ensures an almost flat position during extreme acceleration, braking, and cornering. The streamlined body has a new front and bottom profile, a carbon fiber bonnet, and four exhaust pipes. The optional 23" carbon fiber wheels contribute to a total weight saving of 76 kg and minimize the weight to enhance handling, acceleration, and ride comfort. The 635 hp 'mild hybrid' Twin Turbo V8 engine propels this Range Rover from 0 to 100 km/h in just 3.8 seconds. For the first time in Range Rover, lightweight and powerful carbon-ceramic Brembo brakes are available as an option, with exclusive SV brake calipers with eight pistons for outstanding braking performance. The new 'Body & Soul Seat' introduces the latest sensory audio technology for cars, allowing not only to feel the sound but also to experience wellness benefits. The top model SV, which will be introduced in 2024, is equipped with the new 550 hp plug-in hybrid. Price not yet known.

www.landrover.be

**Peugeot E-3008**

Peugeot aims to offer a complete EV range by 2025 and to market exclusively 100% electric cars in Europe by 2030. The new Peugeot E-3008 plays a crucial role in these future plans. This next-level electric fastback SUV is the first model to use the brand new STLA Medium platform from Stellantis, which will also serve as the basis for the group's future electric vehicles. The innovative platform is designed for the best possible performance, reflected in a wide range of up to 700 km, short charging times (30 minutes), maximum driving pleasure, top performance, efficiency, and various connected services and functions (trip planner, smart charging, remote functions, and over-the-air updates). The new Peugeot Panoramic i-Cockpit® adds to the driving pleasure, with a curved 'floating' panoramic 21-inch high-definition panel that brings together the head-up display and the large central touchscreen. With the new E-3008, Peugeot clearly elevates the qualities of the 3008 to a whole new level. €49,500.

www.peugeot.be



After the ATTO 3 in 2023, the BYD Dolphin has been chosen as the family car of 2024.

It runs in the family.



Range, comfort, space... undoubtedly the best arguments for being elected **"FAMILY CAR OF 2024"** by VAB

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16,6 – 18,2 kWh /100 KM - 0 G/KM CO2 (WLTP)
Environmental information (K.B. 19.03.2024): bydauto.be



Bentley Flying Spur Speed Edition 12

The Bentley Flying Spur Speed Edition 12 is one of the final vehicles to be fitted with the luxury British automotive brand's legendary 6.0-litre W12 unit. This powerful engine ensures the Flying Spur Speed 12 is one of the fastest, four-door sedans in the world. Capable of 0-100 km/h in 3.6 seconds and a top speed of 333 km/h, the phenomenal W12 also produces 659 PS and 900 Nm of torque. First introduced in the original Continental GT in 2003, the engine has since become an icon of Bentley's DNA. A genuine collector's car, the Flying Spur Speed 12 Edition is also afforded a range of unique commemorative features. The dashboard fascia displays a visual representation of the W12's firing sequence, while every owner will receive a scale model of the engine, handcrafted from a genuine recycled W12 block and housed in a special presentation case. The supremely powerful sedan is due to end production in 2024. Limited to only 120 examples. Price on request. www.bentleymotors.com



Porsche Panamera

The third generation of the Porsche Panamera stands out with a wider range of digital features, a fresh and expressive design, and an expanded balance between dynamic performance and driving comfort. More powerful E-Hybrid powertrains and a new high-quality suspension system emphasize its claim to be the most dynamic sedan in the segment. Porsche offers a total of four efficient E-Hybrid powertrains for the sporty luxury sedan, in response to high demand for this type of drive. All E-Hybrid variants boast improved performance, greater driving range, and increased efficiency. The heart of the Panamera Turbo E-Hybrid's powertrain is a thoroughly revised 4.0-liter V8 turbo engine. The power of the newly developed electric motor is 140 kW (190 hp). Combined, they deliver a system power of



500 kW (680 hp) and impressive torque of 930 Nm, enabling it to sprint to 100 km/h in 3.2 seconds. Its top speed is 315 km/h. With a battery capacity of 25.9 kWh, it has an electric driving range of 91 kilometers (WLTP). A new 11 kW AC onboard charger reduces the charging time at suitable charging points to 2 hours and 39 minutes. Prices start at 199,620 euros for this model and from 112,120 euros for the other variants. www.porsche.com



Tesla Cybertruck

Elon Musk has long imagined what it would be like to drive around on Mars. With the new Tesla Cybertruck, we get a good idea of how he plans to do it. The production version of the 2019 sci-fi pickup concept (in an almost unchanged form) is indeed made to drive on any planet. Its ultra-hard stainless steel exoskeleton helps reduce long-term damage and corrosion, making repairs easy and quick. The armored glass can withstand the impact of a baseball traveling at 112 km/h or class 4 hail. Moreover, you can count on a payload of 1,134 kg, a towing capacity of 4,990 kg, a ride height of 432 mm, and a range of 547 km. Up to 235 km can be recharged via a supercharger in just 15

minutes. Furthermore, the Cybertruck supports bidirectional charging, so you can use the vehicle to charge tools, another electric vehicle, or provide power to your home during a blackout. In Beast mode, this four-wheel-drive truck sprints from 0 to 100 km/h in just 2.7 seconds while maintaining stability at high speeds. With steer-by-wire and rear-wheel drive, it behaves like a sports car and has a tighter turning circle than most sedans. It remains to be seen if it will be a popular choice in Europe, but given its weight under European regulations it will require the owner to have a category C driving licence for trucks - most people don't have this. Expected price for the U.S. is \$49,890 for the rear-wheel-drive version. www.tesla.com



Smart #3

The Smart #3 - the largest Smart ever - not only surpasses its smaller sibling, the Smart #1, by 13 centimeters in length but also the Volvo EX30 by a significant 16.7 centimeters, measuring 4.40 meters. It also boasts the largest wheelbase at 2.785 meters, 13.5 centimeters more than the Volvo EX30, with whom it shares the platform. In other words, the Smart #3 could pose a serious challenge to its competitors. This SUV coupe evokes strong emotions with its looks and can further boast excellent performance and a dynamic design. It stands out with its athletic curves and powerful 'shark nose', overturning the premium EV segment as a sporty SUV coupe. The large 19-inch wheels contribute to its sporty appearance. In the Brabus version, the #3 even has 20-inch wheels. Naturally, its sporty exterior creates expectations regarding performance, but these are neatly fulfilled. Acceleration varies from 5.8 seconds to 3.7 seconds, and with power ranging from 200 kW in four models to 315 kW in the Brabus, it sets a benchmark in the market segment. The electric Smart #3 charges from ten to eighty percent in less than 30 minutes. Starting at €37,495. www.be.smart.com

BAIC X55

The Chinese state-owned company BAIC, which since 2019 also holds nearly ten percent of Daimler, is today one of the most progressive automotive companies with a visionary idea about the electrification of cars. This seems to be increasingly appreciated in Europe as well. For instance, the BAIC X55 recently won the VAB family car election in the category of family cars up to €38,000. The BAIC X55 convinced - us too - especially with its comfort, interior space, and the modern 'bi-fuel' engine on petrol and LPG. This combination allows you to drive on both petrol and LPG, a versatility made possible by two separate tanks, one for petrol and one for LPG. This combination not only scored the BAIC X55 high in terms of performance and responsive acceleration but also in terms of cost per kilometer. Refueling is easy as petrol is available at all gas stations, and LPG at about one in four stations in Europe. And for those who didn't know: you can also enter underground garages with this type of car. Its good price-quality ratio completes the picture: a complete standard version and a net price of €31,990. At BAIC, there are no extra costs for packs, metallic colors,... www.oneautomotive.be/baic



Cars

BYD Dolphin

BYD - short for Build Your Dreams - the world's largest manufacturer of new energy vehicles (NEVs) and power batteries, has just introduced the fully electric BYD Dolphin to the European market. This brand-new hatchback in the C-segment combines a striking 'playful' design aesthetic - as known from the Chinese car brand - with versatility, agility, rich standard equipment, and BYD's pioneering EV technology. The BYD Dolphin epitomizes safe, efficient, and practical environmentally friendly driving and is attractively priced starting from €29,990. It's no wonder this car won first prize at the VAB Family Car Election in the 'electric' category. «Price/quality/range unbeatable,» summarized the opinion of many jury members. Moreover, many praised it for offering plenty of space inside despite its compact exterior dimensions and for being pleasant to drive. The BYD Dolphin with a 60.4 kWh battery has a range of 427 km.

www.bydauto.be

**MG Cyberster**

MG just announced the production of the MG Cyberster, a spectacular electric sports car with a revolutionary design that combines the iconic roadster heritage of the originally British car brand with MG's modern design language. The high-performance Cyberster's design pays homage to the cherished roadsters in MG's rich heritage, with its distinctive long hood, low nose, and curved surfaces, but it also introduces striking new features such as the signature wing doors and the Kammback design at the rear. In addition to the powerful, all-electric drivetrain, it boasts a contemporary cockpit and advanced driver technology. The Cyberster is expected to be available for sale in the summer of 2024. A fantastic way for the brand to highlight its hundredth anniversary that year! Price currently unknown.

www.mgmotor.eu

**Citroën ë-C3**

With the electric version - and fourth generation - of the popular Citroën ë-C3, the first affordable electric vehicle 'made in Europe' is now a reality. For a starting price of €23,300, you get quite a lot. For instance, the ë-C3 offers for the first time the acclaimed Citroën Advanced Comfort® suspension in combination with the new Advanced Comfort® seats, boasting a 'flying carpet feeling' and the best comfort in its class. Additionally, it provides a higher driving position (ten centimeters more than the average city car in this segment) to ease getting in and out, more space on board with handy and smart storage compartments, increased maneuverability, greater ground clearance, as well as protective elements on the exterior for a heightened sense of comfort and safety. The 83 kW/113 hp electric motor delivers the power and torque needed for daily commuting and long journeys, while the 44 kWh LFP battery offers a range of about 320 km. Furthermore, it only takes 26 minutes



at a fast charger to recharge from 20 to 80 percent capacity. Citroën already promises an even more affordable ë-C3 with a range of 200 km by 2025, starting at €19,990.

www.citroen.be

Porsche: Driven by dreams

Autoworld celebrates a brand driven by excellence



For 75 years Porsche has built some of the most coveted cars in the world. Porsche cars are renowned for their performance, they are also a totemic symbol of luxury. They have maintained pole position through innovation and exceptional engineering. From the iconic 911 to the legendary Carrera GT, Porsche models have consistently pushed boundaries and led in the field of design. Film stars like Steve McQueen and James Dean have been captivated by the sheer thrill of driving a Porsche, adding to the brand's allure and rebel spirit.

Its unique design features, such as the sloping rooflines, muscular haunches, and distinctive headlight design, showcase Porsche's commitment to elegant and timeless aesthetics. With a rich heritage and progressive mindset, Porsche continues to captivate automobile enthusiasts worldwide. To celebrate its heritage Autoworld - where else - is marking its 75 years in the driving seat of automotive design.

Autoworld's end-of-year exhibition "Porsche - Driven by dreams," from December 8, 2023 to February 25, 2024 has been de-

PORSCHE

DRIVEN BY DREAMS

08.12.23 - 25.02.24

EXPO AUTOWORLD MUSEUM BRUSSELS

AUTOWORLD.BE



veloped in a collaboration with Porsche Belgium and the Porsche Museum in Stuttgart. The exhibition has an unprecedented collection of 50 exclusive Porsches.

Unseen: From concept to model

Every Porsche begins with a concept. Autoworld has collected nine Porsche concept cars never before exhibited in Belgium and presents them alongside the corresponding series production model, from the 984 to the Mission E prototype dreaming of an alternative future.

60th Anniversary of the 911 Range

The 911 is celebrating its 60th anniversary. Naturally, the 911 forms a theme in its own right with a unique collection covering the eight generations of the famous nine hundred and eleven.

Art

The famous Belgian street artist, Vexx, known for his Porsche Vision Gran Turismo is on site exclusively for Autoworld with a Porsche-themed animation. Another artist, renowned photographer Bart Kuykens, will exhibit his work, in which the Porsche 911 invariably plays an important role.

Legacy

75 years ago, Ferdinand Porsche made his

absolute dream come true by building his own dream car. Since then, this dream has been part of history. From the very first 356 'Gmund', built in a barn in the village of the same name in Austria, to other classics, all these cars helped make Ferdinand Porsche's dream come true.

Sports car

The exhibition highlights some of Porsche's greatest moments of success in motorsport. The 991 RSR, 991 GT1, 919 Hybrid and Formula E Gen 3 are just some of the racing cars on display that have made Porsche the most successful racing car brand. Of course, the Belgian contribution is not forgotten with racing legends like Jacky Ickx, Thierry Boutsen and Laurens Vanthoor.

Born2Drive competition

The Born2Drive competition is based on the Assetto Corsa Competizione simulator game. You will take the wheel of a Porsche 992 GT3 Cup on the track of Spa-Francorchamps. After a first lap of warm-up and getting to grips with the car, you'll have 2 laps to try and set your best time!

The Born2Drive stand is open from Saturday 23 December to Sunday 7 January. It will be possible to book a qualifying session before visiting the stand. All the details and the booking form are available on the <https://born2drive.be/> website. It is also possible to register directly on site, subject to availability. Participation in the competition is entirely free of charge but requires access to the Porsche Driven by Dreams exhibition.

The Born2Drive final will take place on Saturday, 17 February, also at Autoworld. The 8 best candidates will be invited to compete in a 45-minute race, again on the legendary Spa-Francorchamps circuit. The race will be commented live by 2 professional sports journalists, who also commentate on the Spa Grand Prix and the 24h of Spa-Francorchamps. 📺



Need some help to clean your house ?

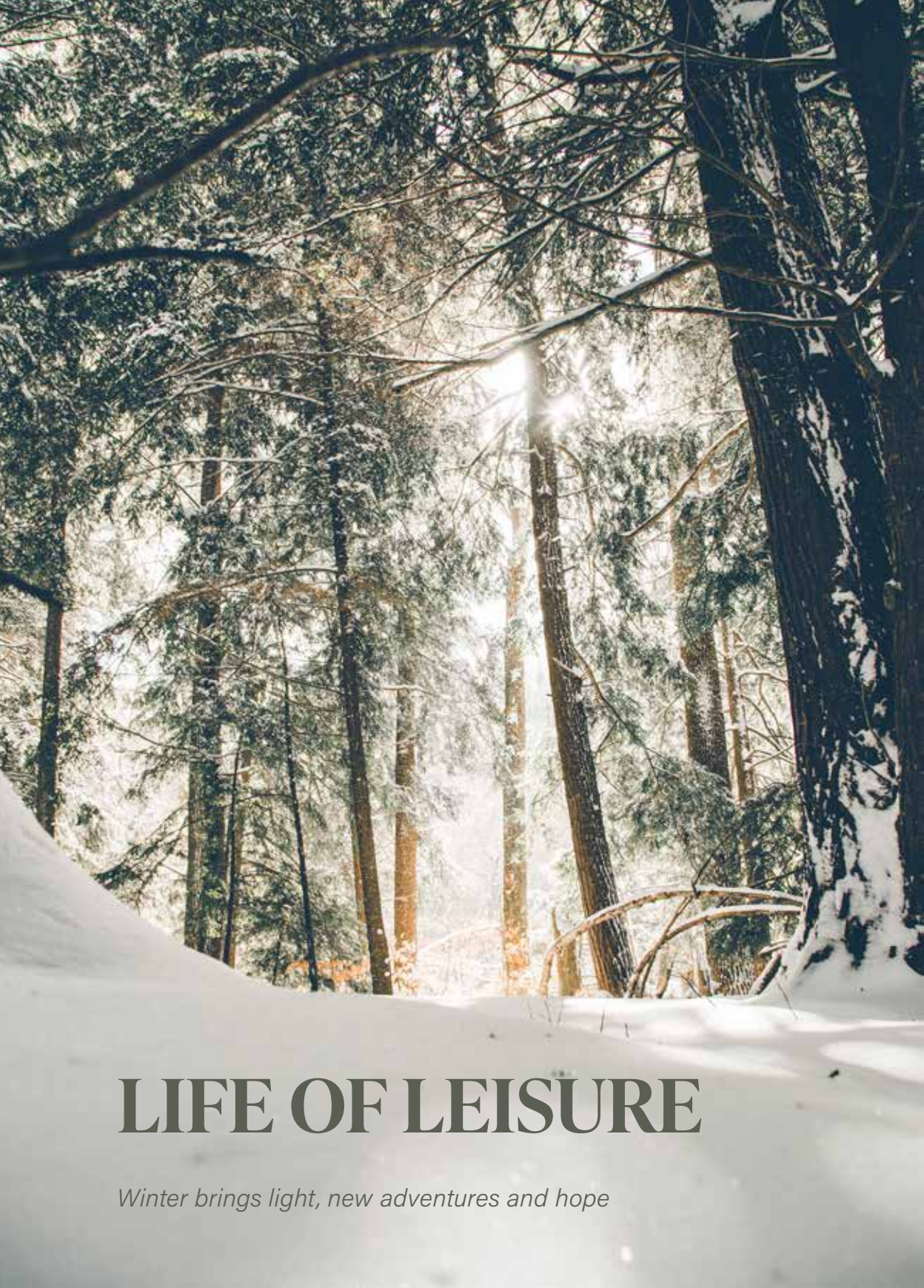
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LIFE OF LEISURE

Winter brings light, new adventures and hope

LIFE OF LEISURE

Interview

From royal to Wonka villain

Together meets Olivia Colman
an actress with incredible range



Once the quirky face of British television, Olivia Colman has metamorphosed from humble beginnings to the dazzling lights of Hollywood.

The transition seems almost dreamlike, yet in the space of a few years, this chameleon of an actress went from the small screen to clinching an Oscar nomination for her stellar performance in *The Lost Daughter*.

From her rural roots in the east of England to the city skyscrapers of New York, the 49-year-old's journey has come about via a

heady mix of talent, dedication and the sort of self-belief that sometimes only emerges with vast experience on the screen and treading the boards.

Having showcased her versatile prowess in the dark corners and regal hallways of *The Crown*, plus the idiosyncratic dominions of *The Favourite*, the actress has become a beacon of excellence in contemporary cinema and television.

This year, her step into the Marvel universe via the *Secret Invasion* mini-series has been

Interview

spectacular, her role in *Wonka*, starring Timothée Chalamet, Matt Lucas and Sally Hawkins shows an ascending talent continuing to climb.

Beyond the screen, she leads a simple life with her husband Ed, their three children and their idyllic life in the English countryside, proving that Colman remains the perfect enigma to so many.

“ [SHE] HAS BECOME A
BEACON OF
EXCELLENCE IN
CONTEMPORARY
CINEMA AND
TELEVISION ”



So, tell us about the wonderful world of Willy Wonka?

Yes, it's very wonderful, as is Timothée Chalamet who plays Willy. It was so exciting and amazing to work on this as it is of course an iconic story and a wonderful one at that. It was funny, when I accepted the part, someone asked me what I was going to be singing and where would I be going to practice. To say that I nearly passed out is no exaggeration! I did have to double-check I wasn't singing – it's not something I've done for a long time and not something I want to go back to!

Thankfully, my singing voice wasn't needed but Timothée's is brilliant and far better than I could ever do. I was too busy having a laugh and having an incredible time on set to be doing that – nobody needs to hear my singing voice!



This is going to be another one that your teenage children can perhaps relate to in a way they might not have been able to with some of the other things you've been in...

Awww, yes. I think more so because I reckon this will be one of those films that families will want to watch over and over again – especially at Christmas time. It was such a joy and a privilege to be involved in and I hope my kids enjoy watching it with me!

Although *Wonka* is a musical and a feel-good film, let's go back to the beginning of your career – how was the transition from the comedy sketches and TV series which built your name and reputation in the first place, to the recent intense dramatic roles for you?

It was certainly a challenging venture. While comedy has its own rhythm and timing, drama demands depth and nuanced expression. Initially, it felt like venturing into unknown waters, a mix of excitement and apprehension.

“ I RECKON THIS WILL
BE ONE OF THOSE FILMS
THAT FAMILIES WILL
WANT TO WATCH OVER
AND OVER AGAIN ”

However, as an actor, you constantly push your boundaries, explore diverse characters and inhabit different worlds. This journey from light-hearted comedy to profound drama has been not only rewarding but also instrumental in my growth as an artist.

Is there added pressure when it comes to doing justice to such an iconic story that's been around for so long?

It's over half a century. That's incredible to think of. I think we can all relate to the original and the magic it gave to us as children.



In a strange way I don't think you can ever hope to replicate the simple magic and enchantment of the original, so you have to look for different ways to add to that potion.

Of course, special effects and incredible sets will do a lot of that for you nowadays, but I think a modern take on characterization can do similar things. The scripts for this were incredible – so intricate and, I feel, very brave in places too. So in all those respects, I think we have created a retelling of the story that stands up by itself without wanting to better or alter the original.

I actually wish a lot of remakes would consider that approach.

How has your upbringing influenced your approach to acting?

Growing up in what many would consider to be a rural part of England provided me with a unique perspective and a genuine grounding. My home city, Norwich, with its history, diverse populace and culture, instilled in me a sense of authenticity.

It taught me the art of observation, the nuances of human behaviour, and the beauty of storytelling. It's where I began to understand the complexities of human emotions. This upbringing became my foundation, shaping my approach to understanding characters and delivering performances that resonate.

Which role, so far, do you think has been the most transformative for your career?

Without a doubt, my role in *The Lost Daughter* stands out as a turning point. It wasn't merely an on-screen character's journey, but also a profound personal exploration.

Delving into the intricacies of the character, experiencing her dilemmas and portraying her evolution demanded a deep introspection. It allowed me to push my limits and redefine my capabilities as an actress, resulting in a transformative experience for both my career and my understanding of the craft.

The reviews of that were astounding and it seemed destined you would receive an Oscar nomination...

Thank you. It was heartening to hear from numerous women who've appreciated its openness. I intentionally avoided reviews due to my apprehensions, but the immediate reactions post-film festival screenings were deeply touching – they truly felt like a blessing.

I think at the heart of the movie is the idea that you don't have to think you're the only one feeling a certain way, and that is really important.

“ MY FAMILY IS MY EVERYTHING AND, OF COURSE, I'D SACRIFICE IT ALL FOR THEM ”

“ WITHOUT A DOUBT, MY ROLE IN THE LOST DAUGHTER STANDS OUT AS A TURNING POINT ”

My family is my everything and, of course, I'd sacrifice it all for them. Yet, when my kids were younger and fatigue overwhelmed me, there were times I yearned for solitude or resorted to switching on the TV – a decision I wasn't fond of, but sometimes you just need a break.

It was accompanied by guilt, especially when I found myself desperately trying to catch some rest anywhere possible.

On that note, how do you manage work-life balance, especially being a mother of three?

Balancing professional commitments with the responsibilities of motherhood is a delicate dance. It requires meticulous planning, flexibility and unwavering support from my family. My husband has been an incredible pillar of strength, ensuring we maintain a nurturing environment for our children.

While acting is my passion, my family remains my anchor. The key lies in prioritizing, cherishing the small moments, and ensuring that despite the demands of the industry, home remains a sanctuary of love and warmth.

Interview

Are there any roles you've turned down and regretted?

Over the years, there have been roles that I chose to pass on for various reasons. Some of those films went on to become significant. But I firmly believe in the adage that every choice, whether it leads to an opportunity or a missed chance, shapes our journey.

I don't necessarily have regrets as I don't personally think it's a healthy thing to do. Rather, I see these decisions as lessons, guiding my instincts and reinforcing my belief in the paths I've chosen.

Having worked on both TV and films, do you have a preference?

Both mediums offer distinct experiences and challenges.

Television provides the opportunity to delve deep into characters, evolve with them over time and connect intimately with audiences.

Films, on the other hand, are a grand canvas, offering expansive narratives and wider reaches. I've been fortunate to work in both arenas and each has enriched me in its own way. I don't have a strict preference; it's the story and character that captivate me.

“TELEVISION PROVIDES THE OPPORTUNITY TO DELVE DEEP INTO CHARACTERS”

**How do your children perceive your fame and success?**

My children have a refreshingly grounded perspective on my profession. To them, I'm primarily their Mum – the one who helps with homework, cooks meals and for the youngest, shares bedtime stories.

They are aware of my work, but their reactions are often endearingly nonchalant. It's a stark, beautiful contrast to the industry's glamour, reminding me of the simple joys and what truly matters at the end of the day.

“I THINK AN OLD STORY DONE WELL IS, IN MANY WAYS, A NEW STORY”

You do have two confirmed projects on the way - a leading role in Thea Sharrock's film - written by Jonny Sweet - *Wicked Little Letters*, and *Paddington In Peru*. What can you tell us about those?

So, for *Wicked Little Letters* I play Edith Swan and it's centered around a true story in the 1920s in a coastal town in England, where someone begins targeting neighbours with nasty letters.

Edith's neighbour Rose Gooding – played by the amazing Jessie Buckley – is suspected in the mystifying case and she runs the risk of losing custody of her daughter. The wonderful Anjana Vasan plays the policewoman Gladys Moss who is trying to solve the mystery of who is doing it and why.

As for *Paddington In Peru*, I think people may be more familiar with that one! Most of the cast from the previous films are in it and I play a character called The Reverend Mother.

I think the Paddington movies have breathed incredible life into an old character, much like I hope is the case with Willy Wonka. I know people are always craving new stories, but I think an old story done well is, in many ways, a new story anyway. ❶

Bonnard, Pierre et Marthe

Together contributor **Federico Grandesso** sat down at the Cannes Film Festival with Belgian actress Cécile De France, who plays the leading role of Marthe Bonnard, wife of the famous French painter, in a film by director Martin Provost.



© Carole Bethuel

After winning the César Award for Best Film in 2009 with *Séraphine*, Provost examines another artist's life in *Bonnard, Pierre et Marthe*. Starring Cécile de France and Vincent Macaigne this dual biopic screened at Cannes Première explores the passionate and tumultuous artistic relationship between Pierre Bonnard and his wife Marthe, who appears in most of his artworks.

What is your relationship with nature? Which is an important element in this film.

I know that for director Martin Provost, and perhaps in the choices of my films, there is always an ode or homage to nature, not in all my roles, but there are some. I know I see that as an image too, but I don't think I'm too locked into that image either to be able to play characters who are not at all connec-



© Renaud Konopnicki

“THIS WELL-BEING THAT SHE HAS IN NATURE IS THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR ALL OF PIERRE BONNARD’S WORK”

ted with nature. But in any case, I know that Martin told me when we started preparing for the role that it was essential for Marthe to be almost mystically connected with nature, that I had to be different. For example, when I'm with people when I'm in nature, he immediately told me that Marthe's element is water, whether in the bay, the river, etc. She's also connected to her body, because this vitality, this body in movement, this well-being that she has in nature is the primary source of inspiration for all of Pierre Bonnard's work. Yes, I love being in nature.

Did you understand why there was this immediate “chemistry” between you and Martin, and how did you approach the work?

I never make the connection between who I am and my character. For me, it's a creation, it's like sewing something, it's like making something. That's what I enjoy, creating a character. If there's something that comes naturally to me, so much the better, but for me, it was rather an interesting character to create because it was the opposite of me,

in its wildness, in its complexity, in its singularity, in its weirdness, in its strangeness. For me, that was interesting to build. Her illness too, even though she's full of vitality, she's also very sick. She's suffocating in her past with the ghosts of her damaged childhood. There's something dark about her, something threatening, something dangerous when she's jealous, in particular. When we see her face-to-face with her social and female rivals, René and Amicia. There's something very strong, very dignified about her because she's a strong woman, perhaps, and at the same time, I'm much taller than the real Marthe, for example, who was very small and always tried to make herself look bigger and more imposing.

You have discovered the work of Bonnard. Which painting or paintings do you like best?

There are two paintings by Pierre Bonnard that I really like, called *The Open Window* and *The Dining Room in the Country*. In *The Dining Room in the Country*, we see Marthe, who is once again locked away in her se-

Cinema

cret, inaccessible world, in her thoughts. At one point, you say to yourself: «But where is she?» and I think that helped me a great deal to find the mental confinement she was in, which later made her psychotic. So yes, in this painting, there is this Martha. And above all, it's the clash between the intimacy, the softness of the home, because we're inside the room, and the power of nature, the heat, the vibrations, and the exterior colours of this interior. It's the confrontation between the intimacy of the inside of the house and the wonderful outside, always with this iridescence of colour that is unique in the world. It's the same with *The Open Window*. You get the impression that it's hot outside. It's the power of summer being unleashed inside the house.

What have you learned from this film?

I've been lucky enough to be able to play a really wide range of roles. Lately, I've been leaning more towards characters who have a darker side too. It intrigues me, it attracts me. What have I learnt? As with every shoot, and every adventure, I always feel like I'm learning my trade. And here, there was something that I wanted to do with my body, which was to go even further. Coming from a theatre background, as you said, I like the relationship with the theatre, which allowed me to further develop the ability that we actors have to focus not just on facial expression, but on bodily expression. That's always a way of making progress.

After all these films, I'm a bit curious to know at this point what roles or roles you like that make you more comfortable in your work.

Comfort is not a good ally. I think you have to get out of your comfort zone. As an actress, I like to try new things, areas that I don't do just for fun, because it's quite a playful profession after all. I'm not interested in comfort. On the contrary, I'm more inte-



© Memento Distribution

“ I'M NOT INTERESTED IN COMFORT. ON THE CONTRARY, I'M MORE INTERESTED IN PUTTING MYSELF IN DANGER ”

rested in putting myself in danger, by trying more challenging things.

Have you ever tried painting or drawing?

Yes, when I was a little girl I was enrolled at the Beaux-Arts and then I discovered theatre. So I focused my energy and passion on the theatre, but I really liked drawing. When I drew again for the film, I really enjoyed it. I rediscovered that pleasure, that passion.

Bonnard, Pierre et Marthe opens in Belgium on 10 January ❶

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CreaStudio N°2311063

The best of the big screen

James Drew makes his pick of films to watch in the coming weeks



Maestro

Maestro is a biographical drama film that centres on the relationship between American composer Leonard Bernstein and his wife Felicia Montealegre (Carey Mulligan). It was directed by Bradley Cooper, who also stars as Bernstein, from a screenplay he wrote with Josh Singer. There are many famous names involved in the production of the film, including Martin Scorsese and Steven Spielberg. Advance word is very good: As an examination of the toll that the kind of success Bernstein enjoyed can bring, Cooper's exploration brings deep sympathy, amazing music and great narrative drive. *Running time: 129 minutes.*

Wonka

Now, this really could be a wonderful idea – a musical fantasy film from Brit director Paul King (*Paddington* (2014)), who also came up with the story, it's all about the origins of one Willy Wonka, who was first given to the world in the 1964 novel *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl, featuring his early days as an eccentric chocolatier. One wonders how relative newcomer Timothée Chalamet will fare in the title role – for me, there can never be any better than Gene Wilder in *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* (1971), with Wilder bringing just the right combination of fun as well as macabre menace to the role. It is, to be fair, an ensemble cast including Keegan-Michael Key, Paterson Joseph, Matt Lucas, Mathew Baynton, Sally Hawkins, Rowan Atkinson, Jim Carter, Tom Davis, Olivia Colman, and Hugh Grant, remember him? With any luck, it will be a terrific romp for the festive season. *Running time: 116 minutes.*

Silent Night

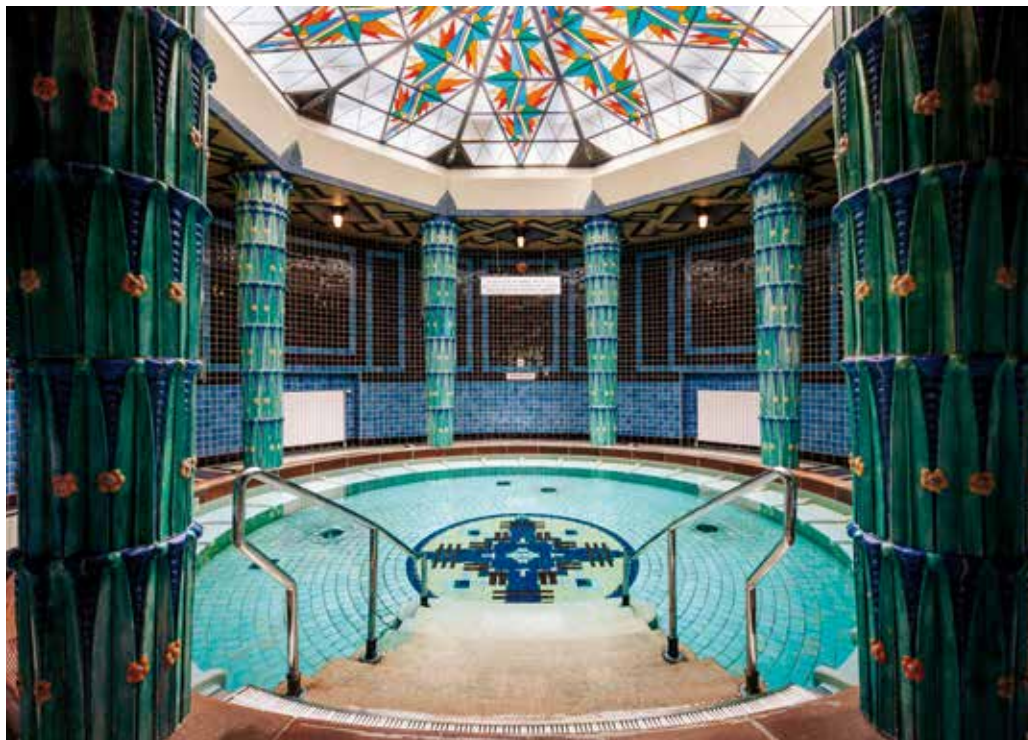
John Woo, renowned for such action extravaganzas as *Face/Off* (1997), returns to the US for the first time since *Paycheck* (2003 - which people say is what most of the cast turned up for) with *Silent Night*. Featuring almost no dialogue, the film stars Joel Kinnaman, Scott Mescudi, Harold Torres and Catalina Sandino Moreno. Brian Godluck (Kinnaman) is a family man who goes into the underworld to avenge his young son's death on Christmas Eve, hence the festive title. Hong Kong auteur Woo lets the guns do the talking, and word is that this is tight, menacing, and damn exciting. *Running time: 104 minutes.*

Priscilla

Along with *Oppenheimer* (2023), this is another one that is surprising for how long it has taken to make. Written, directed, and produced by Sofia Coppola, based on the 1985 memoir *Elvis and Me* by Priscilla Presley (who also serves as an executive producer), it follows the life of Presley (played by Cailee Spaeny) and her relationship with Elvis Presley (Jacob Elordi). With Elvis enrolled in the military at the peak of his fame, Priscilla meets the 24-year-old on an army base, and is immediately wooed by him. After casually dating, the pair fall out of touch, but in 1962, Elvis reconnects with Priscilla, proclaiming his love for her, and asks that she come to the US to live with him at Graceland, his estate in Memphis. And where it goes from there, like so much of Elvis's life, ain't a happy story. *Running time: 113 minutes.* ①

Oh Vienna!

In search of the Viennese Secession



Amalienbad Pool © Wien Tourismus/Paul Bauer

Vienna is primarily associated with its exceptionally rich musical history. Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Schönberg, Schubert, Strauss and Mahler all lived, or spent long periods, in the capital of Austria and the Austro-Hungarian empire. It is the home of the Musikverein, the Vienna Philharmonic, the famous boys choir and the Vienna State opera. Its famous New Year's Day celebrations, with the strains of Strauss's Blue Danube mark the start of the year. If you would prefer something a little more relaxed there's "The Last Enjoyable Opera Company" (The L.E.O.) (www.thea-

terleo.at) which offers pure opera, where the audience is allowed to drink a glass of wine and hum along during the performance. The repertoire includes the most popular operas, and the singing is accompanied by a pianist.

The city is also rich in the visual arts and if you're feeling a little homesick the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna houses the world's largest collection of works by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, including 'The Tower of Babel' and 'The Peasant Wedding'. However, the cultural connection has also worked in the other direction, the most emblematic

work of the Vienna Secession, Stoclet House, is in Brussels (See 'What's on' section, Josef Hoffmann). The Secession is the counterpart of the Art Nouveau movement in France and Belgium. In some ways it is more angular in style and redolent of the work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the British arts and crafts movement. We select a few places in Vienna to enjoy this particular part of Vienna's architectural, artistic and design history.

Secession Building (Secession Gebäude)

The Secession Building is the pinnacle of Viennese Secession architecture. Designed by Joseph Maria Olbrich in 1897, this iconic structure features a highly ornamental exterior adorned with intricate plant-like motifs. The building houses the famous Beethoven Frieze by Gustav Klimt, a masterpiece that embodies the movement's ideals of individuality and artistic independence. It was burned down by the anti-modern Nazis during World War II, but it was rebuilt in the aftermath of the conflict.

www.secession.at



Secession Building © WienTourismus/Christian Stemper



Otto Wagner Pavillon © WienTourismus/Christian Stemper

Karlsplatz Stadtbahn Station

Designed by Otto Wagner, the Karlsplatz Stadtbahn Station showcases Wagner's vision of integrating art into everyday life. This striking metro station combines functionality with ornamental design, featuring elaborate ironwork, elegant glass canopies, and distinctive geometric patterns.

The Otto Wagner Pavillon, situated within the Karlsplatz metro station complex, is another remarkable symbol of the Viennese Secession movement. The Pavilion is an ideal spot to appreciate Wagner's architectural vision and his contribution to the Viennese Secession movement.

**“THE SECESSION IS
THE COUNTERPART
OF THE ART NOUVEAU
MOVEMENT IN FRANCE
AND BELGIUM”**



Beethoven Frieze © WienTourismus/Paul Bauer

“ THERE’S A FREE DIGITAL
CITY GUIDE FOR VIENNA ‘IVIE’
TO EXPLORE THE CITY
AND ITS MANY ASPECTS ”



Facade Majolica House © WienTourismus/Paul Bauer

Klimt Villa

Located in Vienna's Hietzing district, the Klimt Villa was once the residence of Gustav Klimt, one of the movement's most celebrated artists. The villa serves as a tribute to Klimt's life and work, offering a glimpse into his artistic process and personal life.

www.klimtvilla.at

Leopold Museum

The Leopold Museum houses one of the most extensive collections of Viennese Secession artwork in the world. It features iconic pieces by artists such as Klimt and 42 paintings, 187 original graphics of Egon Schiele. If you're visiting from April onwards visit the MQ Libelle roof terrace, the perfect place to enjoy a Spritzer and look down at the city.

www.leopoldmuseum.org

MAK - Museum of Applied Arts

The museum shows furniture, glass, china, silverware, and textiles from the Middle Ages to the present day. Precious crafts from the Wiener Werkstätte founded in 1903 by Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser, bentwood furniture by Thonet - synonymous with Viennese coffee houses and art nouveau highlights, such as the gilded design of Gustav Klimt for the frieze of the Stoclet Palace in Brussels.

www.mak.at

There's a free digital city guide for Vienna 'ivie' to explore the city and its many aspects, curated by topics. With 'Walks & Guides' there are many practical suggestions for tours of Vienna. The 'Vienna Modernism Guide' is the perfect tour to see enjoy the Viennese Secession.

Where to stay

The Imperial Hotel in Vienna is from another era. Established in 1873, it celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2023, it is a favorite haunt for aristocrats, artists, and diplomats from around the world. The hotel's opulent interiors, meticulously curated art collection, and sumptuous amenities have attracted everyone from Sigmund Freud, Charlie Chaplin, Zubin Mehta and Queen Elizabeth II.

Designed by architect Heinrich Adam, the building exudes neo-Renaissance splendor, it has an ornate façade, intricate stonework, and grand proportions. Inside, guests are greeted by palatial interiors, vibrant marble, and exquisite chandeliers that embody the opulence and elegance of the time. The hotel also hosts world-class restaurants serving gourmet Austrian cuisine and has a luxurious spa. Even if it might be beyond your budget to stay, it's an excellent location to enjoy an aperitif or afternoon tea. ❶

“ THE IMPERIAL HOTEL
HOSTS WORLD-CLASS
RESTAURANTS SERVING
GOURMET AUSTRIAN CUISINE
AND HAS A LUXURIOUS SPA ”



Ischgl from A to Z

Mark Browne kicks off the ski season with a look at the Austrian snow sports resort of Ischgl. The area is described as A to Z: A as in active holidays to Z as in zero boredom



The village of Ischgl in the Tyrolean Alps of Austria, not far from the Swiss border, has a firmly established reputation as a premier European ski destination. Its allure is primarily based on its combination of an expansive ski area, high altitude (2,872 metres of elevation) guaranteeing snow from November to April and a lively après-ski scene. Together with the Swiss town of Samnaun, in the Canton of Grisons, it forms the Silvretta Arena and is the third largest ski resort in Austrian Tyrol.

Ischgl is situated in the Paznaun Valley and is the central element of the Silvretta Arena, the groomed slopes cover an area of 515 hectares; by way of comparison, that is the equivalent of 730 football fields! This meant that there is a diverse range of options suitable for all skill levels. There's also some very impressive modern lift infrastructure featuring high-speed gondolas and chairlifts which have been consistently upgraded ensuring minimal wait times. Similarly, the resort has 1,100 snow-making machines to

add to the reliability and quality of the skiing throughout the season, regardless of natural local weather conditions.

In addition to skiing opportunities, the entire spectrum of winter activities are catered for and the surrounding Paznaun Valley affords great facilities for other outdoor activities such as snowshoeing and winter hiking. These are facilitated though published guides and trail maps posing great ways to experience and enjoy the surrounding landscape with its Christmas-Card beauty.

The other key element of Ischgl's attraction is its vibrant nightlife and legendary après-ski culture. There is a great choice of restaurants, bars, and clubs for unwinding after a day on the mountains leading to the resort's motto- "Relax – if you can!". Visitors can savour traditional Austrian cuisine or international delicacies in the comfort of the village which blends conventional alpine and modern architectural styles. The après ski bar and music options of the village are amongst the most lively anywhere.



**“VISITORS CAN
SAVOUR TRADITIONAL
AUSTRIAN CUISINE
OR INTERNATIONAL
DELICACIES”**



When to go

Given its high altitude and snow security, Ischgl offers a relatively long season for winter sports, especially compared to some other Austrian resorts. This commences in November and extends all the way until April. The annual "Top of the Mountain" concerts, featuring renowned international artists, make a great way to officially kick off the season as well as bringing it to a close and they attract capacity crowds.



**“WHAT REALLY
SETS THIS HOTEL
APART IS ITS
INCREDIBLE SPA
AND WELLNESS
AREA”**



Where to stay

Naturally, a resort with so many attractions has a great range of accommodation choices. The Trofana Royal Resort is a standout choice for ultimate luxury hotel accommodation in Ischgl. Located in the centre of the village in less than 100 metres from the main cable car to the hotel, this 5 Star Superior Hotel, designed with traditional alpine style in mind but with an added cosmopolitan elegance, all the comforts, facilities and luxuries that one would expect of such a quality resort as well as easy access to those of the village generally. It's also in close proximity to the famous après-ski venues of the Trofana Alm and the ChampagneHutte.

What really sets this hotel apart is its incredible spa and wellness area. Extending to a huge area of 2,500 square meters, the Royal Spa and wellness area with expansive swimming pools, both indoor and outdoor, as well as a heated hot tub whirlpool affording mountain views from the seclusion of the resort's central courtyard. The beauty section provides a full range of treatments, including assorted baths, massages and manicures. Little wonder it has been recognised as one of the very top spas in the Alps! There is also a fitness centre offering personal training and even a golf simulator. This might be needed given that the hotel has two award winning restaurants, Heimatbühne and Paznaunerstube. In summary, the Trofana Royal Resort represents an accommodation experience designed to make guests feel like royalty!

Mark Browne was a guest of the Trofana Royal Resort Hotel. ①

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Festive bubbles for the holiday season

Together chooses four bottles of bubbly that will brighten your celebrations

What better way to add a touch of elegance and celebration to your gatherings than with sparkling wine? Bubbles bring an element of magic and joy to festivities, making them an indispensable companion for raising a toast and starting the year as you mean to continue.

Dom Pérignon Rosé Vintage 2009

The hot, dry and sunny summer of 2009 is reflected in this radiant vintage where the grapes appear in all their majesty, maturity and richness. Dom Pérignon Rosé Vintage 2009 is an intimate and caressing incarnation of the fruit.

It also expresses the power of Pinot Noir in this radiant blend. Following several years of slow and controlled transformation in the cellar, a mature and complex masterpiece has emerged. Despite a year with contrasting weather, the quality and maturity of the grapes proved superlative. There are rose, orange essence and saffron notes. The bouquet then becomes warmer, red fruit dominates, raspberry and cherry, then becomes dark, blackcurrant and fig. The sweetness ends up winning out over notes of gingerbread and licorice.



Dom Pérignon's Cellar Master Vincent Chaperon describes it as: "A wine that is intensely alive, a true incarnation of the fruit of the harvest."

From December 1 to January 6, Henry's Bar at the Botanic Sanctuary Antwerp offers the opportunity to taste the Dom Pérignon Rosé 2009 by the glass, accompanied by a "bite" designed to enhance the aromas of this exceptional wine.



Ruinart gives carte blanche to artis Eva Jospin

Like many Champagne houses Ruinart has a long tradition of collaboration with artists. In the Art Nouveau period Alphonse Mucha, a Czech painter, illustrator, and graphic artist who lived in Paris during the Art Nouveau period designed one of their posters - as this is the edition where we have a focus on this period.

Today, Maison Ruinart has chosen Eva Jospin to create a collection case around a Jeroboam of Blanc de Blancs. The artist has transformed the wooden box containing the bottle adding strong leather straps, and opening into sculpted layers of cardboard. For other Ruinart offerings: www.millesima.be

Chant d'Eole

In the Best Belgian Wine Award for the year 2023, Domaine du Chant d'Eole Cuvée Réserve Brut 2018 was chosen as the winner in the field of sparkling wine. This wine is the winery's flagship wine. Fine bubbles create a soft and unctuous foam. Four years of maturation have produced complex aromas of pear, brioche and frangipane - a perfect accompaniment to the Gateaux des Rois. www.chantdeole.be

Bernard-Massard, Cuvée de l'Écusson Rosé

The "Écusson" vintage is (one) of the jewels of Bernard-Massard. Exclusively made from Pinot Noir, which gives it elegance and finesse. It is aged in cellars for two years in Grevenmacher. The redcurrant nose and de-

licate aromas of red fruits on the palate make this a perfect choice as an aperitif. A beautiful balance for an elegant vintage. Together also recommends the Bernard-Massard Crémant du Luxembourg cuvée 1921; Bernard-Massard "Organic"; and, Bernard-Massard "Artisan".

Available at www.e-wines.be ①



Bier Circus celebrates its 30th anniversary

Together visited this legendary institute that paved the way for so many others

For more than 30 years, Patrick D'hane has been one of Belgium's greatest authorities on beer. He opened the Bier Circus in 1993, on rue de l'Enseignement when there weren't so many bars specializing in Belgian artisanal beer. It's hard to believe now, but at the time it was very rare to open a bar uniquely dedicated to Belgian beers; nevertheless, he decided to stick his neck out and work with small breweries and celebrate their craft.

Belgium has more than 1,500 types of beer produced using different fermentation methods. "There are ever more breweries and more beers and they aren't always 'great', I've tested lots of new beers, they're often light in alcohol and easy to drink, but in comparison with the 'good' breweries they aren't on the same level," says Patrick.

Together asked Patrick to select five of the 100 beers he has on offer. This is a little like asking a parent to pick their favourite child, but he managed to choose five that reflected the spectrum of Belgian beers. Needless to say, he started with the beer that he commissioned to celebrate the bar's 30th anniversary.

Bier Circus 30 year, (7.5%), Brasserie den Hopperd

The beer is from Antwerp province and is an organic beer. Patrick started working with Bart Desaeger of den Hopperd over 20 years ago with a special beer for the 10th, then 15th, 20th and 25th anniversaries. It is



available on draught and in the bottle, and he says that this is the best one yet: "It's very well balanced with a malty fruity side and with a refreshing bitter aftertaste." Patrick designed the label, he's also a very accomplished artist. You can enjoy his art work when you're in the bar. The drawings are beautifully detailed images from the natural world, from owls to foxes.

Taras Boulba, Noble Hop Session Beer (4.5%), Brasserie de la Senne

"I have Taras Boulba, on draught all year around; it is very, very local and 100% organic. I don't have lager or pilsner but Taras Boulba is a good alternative as it is light in alcohol, very refreshing, while also hoppy and bitter."

Cantillon, Gueuze (5.5%), Brasserie Cantillon

Gueuze is the Champagne of the beer world. It is a blend of several Lambics. Cantillon is the Dom Pérignon of Brussels Gueuze. Brasserie Cantillon Lambics are called "young" after one year of aging and reach full maturity after three years. The young beers contain the natural sugars necessary for second fermentation in the bottle. The three-year-old beers are known for their bouquet and finesse. "The process is made with natural yeast in the air and it is truly unique to the Belgian air, it's a free fermentation beer. They blend the different lambics, then it's fermented again in the bottle." How special is this? Brussels has its very own yeast, that can't be found elsewhere *Brettanomyces bruxellensis*, a yeast associated with the Senne valley.

Charbon, smoked beer (7%), Brouwerij De Dochter van de Korenaar

"And now for something totally different," says Patrick, "a very good stout from a very good brewery. It has added vanilla from Madagascar and l'île de La Réunion. This makes it quite smooth, it's a Belgian brewery, but geographically it's a Belgian enclave in the Netherlands. We've got a lot of great stouts in Belgium, this is one of the lighter ones in alcohol." The unusual name for the brewery comes from a quote from Emperor Charles (1500 - 1558): "I can stand the juice of the daughter of the ear of corn better than the blood of the cluster of grapes."

And here, we cheated a little, Patrick chose a beer family with four examples as his last choice.



Oud Bruin Infusions - Old Oak, Cherry, Vineyard, Raspberry (7%), Brouwerij 't Verzet

Oud bruin is a style of beer originating from the Flemish region. This style of beer is medium bodied, reddish-brown, and has a gentle malty flavor and no hop bitterness. This particular series of beers only comes onto the market once a year, by adding an extra ingredient to Oud Bruin that is at least one year old Verzet sets its beer apart. The added ingredient soaks into the beer for several months and releases its flavours. When the brewers judge that the flavours harmonize perfectly, it is time to bottle! Patrick says: "The taste is a little sour, a sort of sweet/sour. One of the flavours is oak leaf, they also use grape and even strawberry! This works very well with food in particular, it's a really interesting family of beers."

The Bier Circus has a truly unique atmosphere and it is very much in the image of its creator, from the music that's played - everything from Peter Gabriel to Iron Maiden - to the cartoons, drawings and beer paraphernalia around the bar.

www.bier-circus.be 1



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More gastronomic inspiration on   

Da Mimmo - La Dolce Vita

Catherine Feore visits the award winning Italian restaurant which has recently been revitalized

The residents of Woluwe-Saint-Lambert will not be strangers to Da Mimmo, for many years it has been a discreet presence on the corner of Avenue du Roi Chevalier and Avenue de Couronnement. It was swept up by the Litvine family in 2018 when its future looked uncertain. Chef Gerardo Metta took the helm in the kitchen, maintaining its illustrious Michelin star. Since September 2022, chef Louis Verstrepén has become the owner and he is already making his mark and raising the bar; Gault & Millau recently designated Da Mimmo as the best Italian restaurant in Belgium, describing the cooking as "refined and creative".



**“VERSTREPEN HAS
HONED HIS SKILLS
IN SOME VERY
PRESTIGIOUS
KITCHENS”**

Louis Verstrepén is not the most Italian of names, but he explains that though he is 100% Belgian - but with a German Swiss grand parent - he has developed his craft in the south: "My influences and cooking have been formed by Mediterranean produce and traditions. We sometimes see a very clichéd view of Italian cooking, pasta and pizza, but it's so much richer and it isn't very well known." He is particularly passionate about sharing his love for Italian produce with a menu that is diverse and seasonal.

Verstrepen has honed his skills in some very prestigious kitchens including that of three-starred chef Anne-Sophie Pic. He also worked with Joël Robuchon helping him to establish his restaurants in Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy. The menu has the refinement that you expect from a Michelin star restaurant, but maybe a selection of ingredients that you might not always associate with Italian gastronomy, for example there's Saint-Jacques, Colombo (a spice mix from the Antilles), white truffle, quince, mango, coconut and coriander. Verstrepen says that Italian cuisine has moved with the times and been influenced by other cooking styles.

I enjoyed an aperitif of Franciacorta, recommended by Da Mimmo's sommelier Alesandro Brullo, who brings an encyclopedic knowledge of Italian wine from the top (Lombardy) to the toe (Calabria). The Arcari & Danesi Dosaggio Zero Franciacorta has no added sugars and uses the second fermentation method, it has a light and minerally ripeness.



I chose a carpaccio of Saint-Jacques with caviar as an antipasti, delicately flavoured and matched with a wine from Puglia produced from the Fiano grape, which is only cultivated in Puglia and Campania. For the primi piatti, we had tagliolini with black truffle - a signature dish - which was served with medium-bodied Barbera d'Alba (Paolo Scavino), a veritable Piemontese feast. There was so much to celebrate in this menu, but the cheese plate deserves a standing ovation: a Piemontese goats cheese with a chestnut cream; a Gorgonzola from Lombardy infused with saffron; a pecorino from Sardinia with black truffles; a fontina and a cheese from the Venice region with lavender.

Verstrepen is a chef with vision and ambition. I ask him if he is seeking a further star, given his training he knows what it takes: "It's never the chef who decides, but we have the team and the level of cooking. I wouldn't say that this is not something we want, but we won't change how we work. We will continue to do things the way we want to do them, we take pleasure in the way we work. What is most important is that our clients are happy."

www.da-mimmo.be ⓘ



Rizom - a restaurant with strong roots

Catherine Feore visited this unique restaurant in a unique location



When Olivier De Vreindt originally moved to Rizom, it was at the request of Sang Hoon Degeimbre - the renowned chef and owner behind the two-Michelin starred L'air du temps, near Namur. De Vreindt had worked with Degeimbre for five years and accepted the offer. He tells me that once he arrived, "it was love at first sight". In the last two years he has become the owner and made it his own.

Originally from Brussels he was won over by the warmth of the "amazing" people of Mons. Just as rhizomes become embedded in the ground sending out a complex labyrinth of roots and upward shoots, Rizom is very much embedded in the Grand Hornu, a monumental Neoclassical complex built

"IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT"

in the 19th century. The building is among a handful of industrial sites recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. It is one of the earliest examples of a 'company town'. Built between 1810 and 1830 by French industrialist Henri de Gorge, it fell into disrepair, until architect Henri Guchez came to its rescue in 1971. Since then it has gradually been revived, today the building houses the Wallonia-Brussels museum of contemporary art - MAC - Musée des Arts Contemporains, and the Centre for Innovation and Design - CID.



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The restaurant - and cafeteria - located in the heart of Grand-Hornu, offers local cuisine inspired by local producers, seasonal produce, and zero waste techniques. De Vriendt is a strong advocate of responsible gastronomy: "Maybe 85% of the products we use are produced locally." I notice that there are large jars of fermenting vegetables and fermented ingredients feature on the menu, De Vriendt explains this helps them with their commitment to seasonal local ingredients, by doing a lot of fermenting and conservation they can maintain a wide range of flavours: "For example, I love the combination of raspberries and scallops, but they are from different seasons. I don't want to buy fresh raspberries in winter so I ferment them, these are some I fermented two years ago."

An unusual feature of the restaurant is that it is only open on two evenings, on Thursday and Friday. This seems like a very humane way to run a restaurant. I sometimes wonder how people who work in restaurants maintain their work/life balance, De Vriendt

says: "Maybe I will make a little less money in my lifetime, but I will have a real life and be able to spend time with my family and my friends. Most of all it is for my workers, I want to give them a life too."

For the evening meal you can choose four, five or seven plates from an eclectic field: Saint Jacques, with fermented raspberries and beetroot; Fenouil and coconut; Gravlax, parsley and cereales; Butternut squash, salad leaves and bacon; Radish, charcuterie of veal and rose
Volaille, romanesco, broccoli and miso; Citrus fruits, fromage frais and honey. For lunch there is a three plate option.

If you're visiting Grand Hornu and haven't got the time for lunch - which would be very regrettable! - you can visit the Riz-Home boutique (located to the left wing of the restaurant), here you can find a selection of Belgian products to take away.

www.rizom-restaurant.be ⓘ

What's on

Mons: Cultural capital of Wallonia



Mons en Lumières

At the start of 2024, Mons will celebrate its very first festival of lights. For eight evenings, from 25 to 28 January and 1 to 4 February, the historic and medieval center of Mons will be transformed by art and light, thanks to a 3 km route dotted with 25 installations. For this first edition, and to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the manifesto of the Surrealist movement, the route will focus on Surrealism and poetry. Scottish artist Robert Montgomery known for his light and text installations has been invited to participate in this first edition. Accessible to all and entirely free of charge, the route highlights local, national and international talent.

“ FOR THE FIRST EDITION, THE ROUTE WILL FOCUS ON SURREALISM AND POETRY ”

CID - Centre for innovation and design at Grand-Hornu, Boussu

In addition to the conservation and maintenance of the industrial heritage site of Grand-Hornu, the CID schedules 3 exhibitions per year. These thematic exhibitions cover current topics reflecting the cultural and social phenomena that can be observed in the work and research of national and international designers or architects.

HOME MADE: Create, Produce, Live

In the era of open source technology, remote working and Covid-19 lockdowns, what links are being forged between the domestic space, work and objects? Will future production be marked by extreme individualism (making for oneself) or a form of collectivisation (contributing to a network)? How are cities and regions preparing to manage this new network of creators, small producers and engaged users? A selection of international designers and collective projects are presented alongside a collection of experiences, testimonies and objects to better understand the creativity at play in these new working environments.

Curators: Chloé Braunstein-Kriegel and Fabien Petiot
Scenography: Sam Baron and Sophie Albert

Until 11 February 2024

SUPERPOWER DESIGN

Faster, stronger, more beautiful, more intelligent; the cult of individual performance has taken hold in a technological society where the body seems increasingly to be seen as an improvable tool. As a species, humans have always adapted to their environment, but the demands on their performance are



increasingly sophisticated and rapidly changing. In the contemporary technological and digital world, design is a tool for thinking and creating about improving our physical, intellectual and emotional capabilities. But this involvement raises a series of medical, ethical, social and philosophical questions. Indeed, this desire to go beyond one's biological limits is part of a cultural and social context and reflects a way of making society that it is important to question.

Curator : Benjamin Stoz
24 March - 25 August 2024

What's on



AUTOFICTION - A biography of the automobile

Today, more than 1.2 billion cars are driving around the world. Autofiction is an awkward, often taboo, subjective biography of this object. The biography of the automobile unearths a number of stories and explores their ramifications, which sometimes need to be taken apart so that in the future, we might be able to totally rethink mobility.

Curator : Olivier Peyricot

Starts 6 October 2024



MAC - Musée des Arts Contemporains

Also located at Grand-Hornu, the Museum of Contemporary Arts of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (MACS) opened its doors in 2002. It is a cultural centre focused on multidisciplinary in the arts. In addition to building a rich collection of more than 450 works, the museum has developed an enticing programme of exhibitions of international scope, sometimes monographic (eg Anish Kapoor) sometimes thematic (Sisyphus, Rebel Rebel, Art + Rock).

Honeyguides and Milk Teeth - Jochen Lempert

German photographer Jochen Lempert takes over four rooms of the MACS with his delicate shots of nature. Jochen Lempert was born in 1958 in Moers (Germany). He lives and works in Hamburg. A biologist by training, Jochen Lempert turned to photography at the end of the 1980s, his meticulous observation of the animal, plant, but also human world, through this extreme sensitivity to tiny phenomena, such as the traces of tiny frogs, the luminous flight of fireflies, the breath of the wind in the dead leaves, a constellation of freckles on a shoulder. A poetic celebration of the details that surround us.

Until 17 March 2024



“ DISCOVER THE BIRTHPLACE OF VINCENT VAN GOGH IN THE BORINAGE ”

Seasons - Lionel Estève

Lionel Estève was born in 1967 in Lyon (France). He lives and works in Brussels. Meticulous and subtle in its practice, colourful and light in its form. Natural landscape is immediately evoked by the alternation of days, seasons or climates, his work evokes the mental and emotional dimension through an alchemical and formal language of materials. Estève collects objects during bucolic escapes or urban strolls: stones, plants, plastics and numerous odds and ends. These objects are treated in his studio, for example, by embroidering around stones or gilding dried plant leaves. The visitor experiences an immersive installation, specially designed by Estève for the MACS, where emotion joins perception and where we enjoy the poetic wandering of the artist.

To 17 March 2024

Vincent in the Borinage

Discover the birthplace of Vincent Van Gogh in the Borinage. This is not only the place where the artist was born, but also where he deepened his artistic thoughts. In his later works one can see the echo of the motifs which were inspired by the region: the everyday life of the miners, the workers, the peasants and the weavers, their modest homes, but also copies of the engravings of artists such as Jean-François Millet which were made at the start of his career and which Van Gogh revisited later, at Saint-Rémy-de-Provence and Auvers-sur-Oise. Visit the area with Filip Depuydt an experienced guide who has in depth knowledge of Van Gogh's time in this area.

Contact: filip.depuydt@netc.eu 📞

What's on

End the Art Nouveau year in style

Together invited **Dorka Demeter**, an expert on the Art Nouveau movement, to wrap up what has been an extraordinary year



Photos © Dorka Demeter

JANUARY IS BORING.



IN BRUSSELS ARE NOT.



Experience
January
differently
in Brussels.

What's on

We are finally reaching the end of a year dedicated to Art Nouveau in Brussels. The reason for celebrating in 2023 is that in 1893, exactly 130 years ago, architect Victor Horta finished Tassel House. This building is considered to be the founding work of the Art Nouveau movement. The impressive modernity of its façade, its custom-made structure and the sumptuous interiors mark a milestone in the history of architecture - earning Brussels the title of cradle of Art Nouveau.

Did you know that in Brussels there are over 1000 buildings that feature Art Nouveau style? The current thematic year celebrates this remarkable heritage and has done more to make it accessible to the larger public.



Maison Hannon © Dorka Demeter

With the coordination of Visit Brussels and Urban Brussels, Art Nouveau is celebrated in all its diversity.

A rich, accessible and inclusive programme ran throughout the year and the good news is that it is not too late to make the most of the celebrations as we move into 2024. The major thematic exhibitions are running until mid-January, while the newly opened museums are waiting for you with doors wide open. The year was also used as the moment to renovate, refresh and generally polish-up this rich heritage. Here are the must-see highlights.

Maison Hannon

Avenue de la Jonction 1, 1060 Brussels

A landmark of the year was the opening of Maison Hannon as the latest Art Nouveau museum in town. Designed by architect Jules Brunfaut at the request of the Hannon couple, Marie and Édouard in 1902, the Maison Hannon is a 'portrait-house' conceived as a dreamlike, symbolist enclosed universe. It is not only an exceptional and unique example of the Art Nouveau architectural heritage, but a synergy between craftsmanship, cooperation and sustainability. Unlike a traditional museum, it is a whole concept!

www.maisonhannon.be

Horta Museum

Rue Américaine 27, 1060 Brussels

Only 10 minutes' walk from Maison Hannon, one can find architect Victor Horta's iconic private house and studio, home to the Horta Museum. It is one of the four townhouses of architect Victor Horta that are part of UNESCO World Heritage: intricate forms and lines, incredible stained glass, the variety of materials and techniques are breathtaking. Maison Hannon and Horta Museum can be visited with a combined ticket at a reduced price. Making a reservation for the Horta Museum is obligatory.

www.hortamuseum.be

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What's on

Hôtel van Eetvelde

Avenue Palmerston 4, 1000 Brussels
Talking of UNESCO World Heritage townhouses of architect Victor Horta, Hôtel van Eetvelde is another one of them. This gem was hardly accessible these past years: any guided visit was instantly sold out. As part of the Art Nouveau Year, the house was restored and opened to the public. Furthermore, the adjoining building, former office of the owner, Edmond van Eetvelde, was acquired by the city last year. These buildings are now connected by an innovative project, the LAB-AN, founded on the occasion of the thematic year, and offers a contemporary look at Art Nouveau heritage. The buildings are open for visits on a permanent basis from Saturday to Monday. What better programme for a rainy weekend!
www.lab-an.be



Hôtel van Eetvelde © Dorka Demeter

**“ DID YOU KNOW
THAT IN BRUSSELS
THERE ARE OVER
1.000 BUILDINGS THAT
FEATURE ART NOUVEAU
STYLE ? ”**

Hôtel Solvay

Avenue Louise 224, 1000 Brussels
In 1894, the chemistry magnate, Armand Solvay, engaged Horta's services, granting him unlimited freedom of creation and unrestricted funding to bring to fruition the project of a home for his bride. The resulting UNESCO World Heritage townhouse was rescued by the Wittamer family who saved it from demolition in 1957. Although the facade is currently undergoing renovation, the house remains open for visits. It is imperative to book online.
www.hotelsolvay.be



Hôtel Solvay © Dorka Demeter

Josef Hoffmann - Falling for Beauty

Until 14 April, Art and History Museum
You must have passed by Palais Stoclet already on Avenue de Tervueren. It is a unique example of the Secessionist style, the architect was Josef Hoffmann. As part of the thematic year, a whole exhibition was dedicated to this Austrian designer and architect. The exhibition provides an exceptional opportunity to discover an artist who understood beauty as an absolute requirement for individual and social transformation. Unlike Horta's characteristic curves, here you can discover a more geometric form of Art Nouveau.
www.artandhistory.museum

Victor Horta and the Grammar of Art Nouveau

Until 14 January, BOZAR
What remains of Horta's style if we remove the typical vegetal curves? This exhibition goes deeper into understanding this architect master. Archive photos, original moulds and forms, deconstructed buildings visually recreated - you can discover all in a special gallery exhibit space of BOZAR, which is also a fine example of Horta's work. This exhibition nicely complements the exhibition 'Victor Horta versus Art Nouveau'.
www.bozar.be

ART NOUVEAU.

Unique objects with a tale to tell.

Until 7 January, Belvue Museum
This exhibition puts on display incredible Art Nouveau masterpieces from the collection of the King Baudouin Foundation. Unique pieces by Victor Horta, Philippe Wolfers and Henry Van de Velde that vary from jewelry to furniture and ceramics. Don't forget to pick up the booklet that guides you through the exhibition and tells a story about each object. Free entrance!
www.belvue.be

Privat Livemont - FLOWER POWER!

Until 10 March, Maison Autrique
Maison Autrique was the very first townhouse designed by architect Victor Horta. While the new Art Nouveau elements are clearly visible on the facade, the interior still keeps the traditional structure of the time. The museum-house hosts an exhibition about Art Nouveau poster maker, sgraffito artist and famous designer, Henri Privat Livemont, "the uncontested master of Belgian posterists."
www.autrique.be

Resonances - Encounter between Art Nouveau and Plastic Design

Until 14 January, Design Museum
Resonances proposes a series of dialogues between the Plastic Design Collection and a selection of Art Nouveau pieces from a Brussels private collection. The apparition of metal in the everyday interior of the 1890s has many parallels to that of plastic during the industrial boom of the 1950s. The exhibition juxtaposes the two periods and asks questions about the integration of ornament into structure, both in craftsmanship and in mass production; the search for organicity, movement and lightness; and much more.
www.designmuseum.brussels

The suggestions above provide a mere taste of this rich cultural offer that highlights the Art Nouveau architectural heritage in Brussels. The full programme can be found on artnouveau2023.brussels. For daily Art Nouveau inspiration follow @artnouveau.brussels on Instagram. The Art Nouveau Pass and the Museum Pass by Brussels Museums gives you free access to many of the places mentioned above. Enjoy your visit! 📍

What's on

Horta: The grammar of Art Nouveau

An insight into Victor Horta's world



The grammar of Art Nouveau exhibition is a deeper dive into Horta's work and in understanding his milieu. All architects need clients and many of Horta's came from his links with 'Les Amis Philanthropes', a masonic lodge, if a reasonably progressive one, that included Brussels mayor Jules Anspach - yes, he of the boulevard - and Émile Vinck, who was a leading light of the

“THE GRAMMAR OF ART NOUVEAU EXHIBITION IS A DEEPER DIVE INTO HORTA'S WORK”

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LIFE OF LEISURE

What's on

Belgian Labour Party and - of course - Solvay. The group were Horta's main backers, they gave him the orders to create the famous portrait houses (Autrique, Tassel, Lefébure, Solvay) and large public projects.



**“ IF YOU LIVE
IN BRUSSELS
YOU ARE
SURROUNDED
BY HIS WORK ”**



The exhibition includes many leading authorities on Horta's work, there are short video interviews with different international experts shedding light on his sources of inspiration, innovations in the use of structure, and even touches on the relationship between his work and the colonial enterprise of King Leopold II. Maps, plans, plaster models and unpublished photographic material present the man and give use a revealing insight into his world. If you live in Brussels you are surrounded by his work, visiting this exhibition will help you to understand the fabric of the city you live in.

Bozar, until 14 January. ❶

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What's on

Josef Hoffmann - Falling for Beauty



The Art & History Museum's Hoffman exhibition was developed in close association with the Applied Art Museum of Vienna (MAK) and features a variety of well-known works together with rare pieces from private collections. The small, but fascinating collection, is full of biographical details and new material on previously overlooked aspects of Hoffmann's work; it is an opportunity to acquaint yourself with a leading figure in the field of modern design - one whose magnum opus is found in Brussels.

Josef Hoffmann, born in 1870 in Brtnice, Moravia, then-part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was an architect and all-round designer. He was one of the founding members of the Vienna Secession movement and co-established the Wiener Werkstätte (1903-32). The Stoclet House on Avenue de Tervueren was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2009, is his masterpiece and is the most emblematic of the Vienna Secession. The work can be described as a Gesamtkunstwerk - a total work of art - that was led by Hoffmann's vision. The

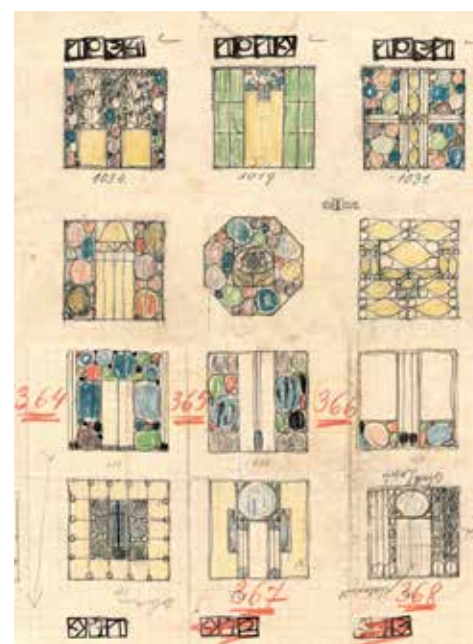


Josef Hoffmann (1954) © Yoichi R. Okamoto

artists behind the interiors read like a 'who's who' of the Vienna Secession: Koloman Moser, Gustav Klimt, Frantz Metzner, Richard Luksch, and Michael Powolny.

The fact that Stoclet House is not open to the public is a source of some controversy, despite being unoccupied since 2002. Financier and engineer Adolphe Stoclet commissioned the work from Hoffmann, who he met while in Vienna. Stoclet and his wife Suzanne Steven moved in the avant-garde circles of both Vienna and Paris.

As of 13 December it is now possible to visit a digital reproduction of the house, presented as a film. The virtual reproduction of this house (which reproduces the house as it was between 1911 and 1918 and does not represent the current situation) is based on precise archival sources and a detailed architectural analysis of its spaces. It has taken almost two years of collaboration between urban.brussels and the ULB (AllCe laboratory) to create this digital double. ①



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Believe in Your Dreams

This is something Léon has always done since childhood, dreaming of opening his own showroom. Now, it's a reality, and his success is skyrocketing. He has managed to create a space dedicated to men's ready-to-wear of over 140m2, where you can discover prestigious and refined collections along with their accessories: ties, shoes, scarves. Via Leone offers an experienced and exceptional personalized service in a private setting. Everything is designed to make you feel even better than at home: lounge/bar area, billiards corner, VIP lounge with exclusive collections and a welcome drink. Moreover, Léon welcomes you every day by appointment in a quiet neighbourhood near Rue Edith Cavell and avenue de Fré, which is very easy to access, with plenty of parking space; here you can benefit from his valuable advice and trained eye.

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What's on

Michael McIntyre takes his show on the road

Michael Beadling recommends a night to raise your spirits.

Michael McIntyre is a comedic virtuoso whose presence on stage has become synonymous with uproarious laughter and genuine warmth. His unique ability to transform the most mundane aspects of everyday life into side-splitting comedy has solidified his place as one of the most beloved comedians of our time.

McIntyre's comedic brilliance lies in his astute observations of the ordinary, infusing them with his trademark exuberance and impeccable timing. Whether recounting the trials of parenthood or dissecting the quirks of modern technology (why do people who go on holiday unplug everything except the fridge?), his comedic repertoire resonates universally, drawing audiences of diverse backgrounds together in laughter.


Beyond his innate talent for comedy, McIntyre possesses an infectious energy that effortlessly captivates audiences. His stage presence is magnetic, creating an atmosphere that invites everyone to join in the merriment. His relatable humour acts as a unifying force, transcending cultural boundaries and connecting people through shared experiences.

Furthermore, McIntyre's success extends beyond the stage. He has a knack for engaging with his audience on a personal level, forging a genuine connection that extends far beyond the spotlight. His affable nature both on and off stage has endeared him to fans worldwide, fostering a loyal following that eagerly anticipates each new performance.



In an entertainment landscape often characterized by cynicism, McIntyre stands out as a beacon of joy and positivity. His comedic genius not only entertains but also uplifts spirits, reminding us to find humor in life's simplest moments.

Michael McIntyre's impact on the world of comedy is immeasurable. He continues to leave an indelible mark, proving that laughter truly is a universal language that brings people together, one genuine chuckle at a time.

You can catch McIntyre live, 5 February at the Antwerp arena in Belgium. 

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What's on international

Cité Internationale de La Langue Française

Julian Hale seizes on the chance to immerse himself in the intricacies of the French language



The magic library © D. Plowy

A new tourist attraction close to Paris has just opened that's ideal for Francophiles and Francophones, whether native French speakers or not. If you enjoy words, the French language and want to know more about the history of the French language, the Cité Internationale de La Langue Française is the place to go.

The Cité Internationale de La Langue Française is about an hour's train ride north of Paris in a place called Villers-Cotterêts. It's a short train ride (about an hour) from Paris Gare du Nord to Villers-Cotterêts followed by a well signposted 15-minute walk to the castle. In the 16th century it was surrounded by a huge hunting area and called 'Mon plaisir' [my pleasure] by the French King François I (1515-1547).

Villers-Cotterêts was chosen as the location of the museum because this is where François I came up with an edict, in 1539, whereby French replaced Latin as the country's official language for law and administration. Today there are an estimated 300 million French speakers, making it the fifth most widely spoken language in the world, after Mandarin, English, Spanish and Arabic.

Throughout the exhibition, there is a plethora of interactive games and touch screen experiences involving the French language, including quizzes about famous French writers. Among the many highlights is a big screen at the start where excerpts of comedians and actors play with words, using plenty of French slang. That certainly gets you in the right mood! From there, you move into a room that talks about the dissemination of French via its colonies and all the different varieties of French (in terms of words and pronunciation) that

have emerged over time. Further on, there's a room where you can listen to a rendition of how famous people from long ago (e.g. François I and Jean d'Arc) probably sounded and the kind of French that they spoke.

For me, one of the best installations is a room where you can click on symbols or words and find out about loan words (words borrowed from French or that French has borrowed from other languages). For instance, déjà vu, which is also used in English and German. The room also has an interactive dial at the centre where you can click and find out facts about how languages rank in terms of numbers of speakers and their official status in international organizations. Another major highlight is a 360° installation showing how the meanings of words have evolved over time.



Château de Villers-Cotterêts © Pierre-Olivier Deschamps

What's on international

For those interested in etymology, there are fascinating and beautifully presented explanations about the evolution of Latin words such as *caballus* into 'cheval' (Italian has stayed closer to the Latin with 'cavallo' as has Spanish with 'caballo' and English has the related

word *cavalier*). There is also an explanation of how 'rem', Latin for a thing, evolved into 'rien', French for nothing, i.e. the opposite of its original meaning! And you can find out where 'oui' comes from, with 'oie' effectively winning the battle against the word 'oc', as in the region of France called the Languedoc (la langue d'oc, literally the language of yes). The explanations are short, clear and fun, using simple diagrammes.

Further on, particularly good for children - but maybe adults too - are interactive installations enabling you to test your spelling skills, to understand more about genders (le and la) and to try to guess where someone comes from on a world map from their accent - which is extremely difficult. In this section, you'll also find excerpts from films to test how well you understand modern day French colloquialisms like 'kiffer' - to like.

Towards the end of the exhibition, there's a very good short summary of the history of the French language, including a beautiful portrait of Cardinal Richelieu by Philippe de Champaigne (1602-1674), who created the Académie française in 1635, which published its first dictionary in 1694. Among other explanations, look out for the all important Serments de Strasbourg (Strasbourg oaths) in 842, the report by Abbé Gregoire in 1794 (following the French revolution) "on the necessity



Château de Villers-Cotterêts © Pierre-Olivier Deschamps

to crush dialects in favour of one standard French language" and Les lois Ferry (1881-82), introducing free, obligatory and secular primary school education only in French and banning the use of regional languages.

If I had to describe the exhibition in two French words, I would say that it is a good blend of 'pédagogique' (educational) and 'ludique' (from the Latin *ludere*, to play). Well worth a visit.

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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

Transforming Business and Life: Leadership and Life Mastery Summit

Michael Beadling highlights an upcoming leadership event to inspire

On 25 January 2024, an unparalleled opportunity awaits executives, entrepreneurs, business owners, and personal development enthusiasts: the "Leadership and Life Mastery Summit". This dynamic event in the Royal Marine Hotel, Dublin, available both online and in person, promises an immersive experience aimed at propelling both professional endeavours and personal growth.

What to expect?

Eight world-class speakers, revered in their respective fields, will converge to share invaluable insights and actionable steps. From strategies to multiply business growth in 2024 to conquering personal "Everest moments", the summit boasts a diverse array of topics designed to empower attendees.

Among the distinguished speakers is Jack Daly, recognized as the #1 sales speaker in America and honoured as the UK and Australian overseas speaker of the year. Karen Caplan, former President and CEO of a food produce corporation averaging \$70 million in annual revenue with just 50 staff.

Attendees can anticipate insights from Pat Falvey, an explorer who has conquered the world's seven summits, David McGowan, a seasoned media mogul behind eight successful international magazines, and Gosia Wojciulewicz, an international speaker and wellness coach, will share their strategic expertise, ensuring a holistic approach to success.



Ticket options:

The summit offers a range of ticket options, with early bird rates available until January 8th. Attendees can opt for online access or post-event recordings at €99, while in-person general admission is priced at €199. For a VIP experience, including platinum seating and an opportunity to engage with the speakers over drinks and food, the ticket is priced at €399.

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www.leadershipandlifemasterysummit.com



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