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# The Brussels Times

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April / May 2024

What lies beneath: A descent  
into the Brussels sewers

Remembering Bastogne's  
Band of Brothers

Sonian symbiosis: What  
archaeology tells us about our  
forest friends

## Belgium's 2024 election extravaganza

Why they matter, how they work and what the  
parties and politicians are promising

Plus: exclusive interviews with Tom Van Grieken,  
Georges Gilkinet and Tinne Van der Straeten

Price: € 12







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# Art and events

Helen Lyons selects the best current and upcoming exhibitions and events



## BELLUM ET ARTES – EUROPE AND THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR THE HOUSE OF EUROPEAN HISTORY

From April 27 to January 12, 2025  
Mondays from 1pm to 6 pm, Tuesday to  
Friday from 9am to 6pm, weekends from  
10am to 6pm  
Rue Belliard 135, 1000 Brussels  
Free admission

This exhibition from the House of European History has at its heart “the multifaceted role of the arts in a brutal war encompassing almost the whole continent.” None on the continent are unfamiliar with how violence, hunger and disease shaped and devastated

entire regions, but this Europe-wide collaborative project involving twelve institutions from seven countries presents the bloody history not through textbooks and research papers but rather the arts. The exhibition contains approximately 150 objects depicting the people involved, the mechanics of warfare and the resulting horror, the flight of artists and displacement of treasured works of arts, and finally the road to peace and the aftermath that ties it to Europe today. The exhibition includes additional events including movie screenings, guided tours, lectures by experts, and storytelling pulled from the voices and correspondence of people at the time. “During the war, art production never stopped,” says co-curator Jitka Mlsova. “On the contrary, art documented battles on behalf of the victors, represented the rulers’ claims of power and wealth, worked as a widespread means of propaganda, or it called for peace.”



## UNIQUE - BEYOND PHOTOGRAPHY HANGAR

From April 19 to June 8  
Opening 18 from 5.30pm to 8.30pm,  
further dates and times to be announced  
Place du Châtelain 18, 1050 Brussels  
€9 admission

This exhibition about reappropriating photography includes Belgians Nicolas Andry, Laure Winants, Antoine De Winter, Audrey Guttman, Luc Praet, Stephan Vanfleteren

and Aiki Christoforou. Christoforou is already making a mark on the art scene while still a student in Brussels, winning the 2021 Libraryman Prize (along with publication) for her series Anamnesis. Her works have been displayed in numerous exhibitions including at the Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles in Paris. Christoforou’s Belgian-Greek heritage is imbued throughout her films, installations and photographs, which cross borders between fiction and reality, myth and the ‘indisputable’ history. The Mediterranean Sea is a central and recurring element in her work as she explores the watery landscape looking to forge connections between the different forms of violence that traverse it.



## POPCORN MIMA

Until June 26  
Wednesday to Friday from 10am to 6pm,  
weekends from 11am to 7pm  
Quai du Hainaut 39-41, 1080 Brussels  
€13.50 admission

MIMA’s Popcorn exhibition is a group show of 15 artists who are all noted for their colourful, offbeat, dreamlike and surreal imagery. Part-humorous, part-shocking, curator Raphaël Cruyt says they are a riposte to the prevailing “black mirror” view of the world in crisis. “There is a universal antidote to gloom: art. In all its forms and at all times, art has been an outlet for our anxieties,” he says.



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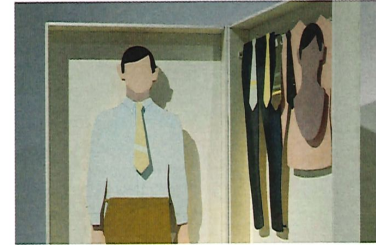
## JEF GEYS - YOU DON'T SEE WHAT YOU THINK YOU SEE

### WIELS

Until May 19  
Tuesday to Sunday from 11am to 6pm  
Avenue Van Volxemlaan 354, 1190 Brussels  
€10 admission

The Wiels spring exhibition of Jef Geys uses access to the artist's archive, close cooperation with Geys' next of kin, and art-histor-

ical research to offer visitors a rare insight into a Belgian artist who defied tradition. Geys (1934-2018) was born in Leopoldsborg and studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, before becoming a 'Positive Aesthetics' teacher at the State Secondary School in Balen.. From the late 1950s onwards, he steered towards artistic disruption, such as amateurish technical finishing and the depersonalisation of authorship, in contrast to the spontaneous subjectivity of previous generations. Art critics commonly describe Geys' work as "unruly, and impossible to categorise in conventional art-historical categories."



## VIOLINS

### BOZAR Centre for Fine Arts

Until June 16  
Tuesday to Sunday, 10am to 6pm  
Rue Ravenstein 23, 1000 Brussels  
Free admission

Leuven-born Jelena Vanoverbeek has been invited by BOZAR to present a work in dialogue with the surrealist exhibition, Histoire de ne pas rire. The installation reflects Vanoverbeek's interest in "the subversive and performative potential of words, in the ambiguity of language and its pretence at direct communication." The young surrealist displays how cultural ideals, social structures, aesthetic types, poetical strategies and sexual symbols determine the Western, collective 'I'. Vanoverbeek herself considers her artistic practice and works to be anatomical studies.



## HELL'O ICONS

### Galerie La Patinoire Royale Bach

From March 23 to May 18  
Tuesday to Friday from 11am to 7pm,  
Saturday from 11am-6pm  
Rue Veydt 15, 1060 Brussels  
Free admission

Galerie La Patinoire Royale Bach's latest monographic exhibition features Brussels-based artists Jérôme Meynen (1982) and Antoine Detaille (1980). Their multidisciplinary collective works with painting, drawing, frescoes and graphic design, among other media, creating the artistic universe of Hell'O's, where the boundaries between man and nature are explored in a manner that highlights the complex and sometimes ambiguous interactions between human beings and their environment. "In a landscape where our gaze wanders, enigmatic figures emerge, icons that captivate and question," the collective explains.



## SIMONE GULLISSEN-HOA CIVA

From April 24 to September 22  
Tuesday to Sunday from 10.30am to 6pm  
Rue de l'Ermitage 55, 1050 Brussels  
€10 standard admission, discounts available

This exhibition honours the life, work and legacy of Chinese-born Belgian architect Simone Guillissen-Hoa (1916-1996): one of the first women to establish an architecture firm in Belgium, she is remembered

as a proponent of modernist architecture whose career and personal life upended societal conventions around gender, race and religious norms. From La Maison de la Culture in Tournai, the Sports Centre of Jambes, the jewellery shop of Maison De Greef in Brussels (with Jacques Dupuis) and numerous private dwellings, she has left her unique mark on Belgium. CIVA records her architectural projects and, through a wide array of archival materials, presents her reflections on architecture and battles as a rare - often lone - woman in a male-dominated field.







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## TONDOS GALERIE LE FELL

From April 6 to May 4  
Tuesday to Saturday from 10:30am to 6:30pm  
Rue de l'Hôpital 15, 1000 Brussels  
Free admission

Galerie Le Fell presents three artists with three unique approaches beneath one common theme: the tondo. A circular work of art without beginning or end, the tondo embodies perfection and infinity, the circle being a symbol of fertility and life itself. Corine Van Voorbergen's works are marked by minimalism, master of glass Véronique Locci captures light in sparkles, while Sonia Ros examines the inner beauty of the human body.



## TITANIC: THE ARTEFACT EXHIBITION IN BRUSSELS TOUR & TAXIS

From March 15  
Time slots available every day except Monday. Open every day during school and public holidays.  
Havenlaan 86C, 1000 Brussels  
Admission starts at €21 for adults, discounts available

The Titanic's tragedy becomes much more tangible in this exhibition of artefacts recovered from the famous wreck. Over 200 authentic objects salvaged from the depths fill more than 1,500 square metres of exhibition space. A reconstruction of the ship's interior (including a first-class suite and a modest third-class cabin) is the setting for moving stories from passengers who were onboard the 'unsinkable' ship now resting more than 3,800 metres under the sea. Visitors – or boarding pass holders – can discover an impeccably detailed reconstruction and an emotional journey that will change what they know about the Titanic.



## MAGRITTE - THE IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE THE HORTA GALLERY

Until May 26  
Rue du Marché Aux Herbes 116, 1000 Brussels  
Wednesday to Monday from 9am to 7pm  
Prices from €15.50 for adults and €10.85 for children

A multimedia experience dedicated to Belgium's surrealist icon René Magritte. Organisers offer visitors "a journey through his world and see the genius up close: from his abstract period to his most famous surrealist paintings." It includes some 300 works, both his famous paintings and little-known pieces, all revealed through interactive zones and virtual reality. Perfectly timed to coincide with the centenary of surrealism as an art form in which Magritte was a leading light.



## NICK CAVE: THE DEVIL — A LIFE XAVIER HUFKENS

Until May 11  
Rue Saint-Georges 6, 1050 Brussels  
Tuesday to Saturday from 11am to 6pm

Nick Cave is known as a singer-songwriter of mournful punk, and more recently as an author and screenwriter. His visual art is less known, but his new exhibition at Xavier

Hufkens could add a new feather to his cap. It is a series of 17 creepy, glazed ceramic figurines that tells the cradle-to-grave story of the Devil. Inspired by Staffordshire flatback ceramics from the Victorian era, they chronicle his mental and physical transition from innocence to experience. The young Devil inherits the world, grows up and falls in love. He is brave, fights a lion and rides off to war. He kills his firstborn son, is shunned for his transgressions and ultimately, suffers an abject death before achieving, in the final work, a child's posthumous forgiveness.



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## MUSEUM OF INFINITE REALITIES

Rue du Marché aux Poulets 32, 1000 Brussels

Set to open as we went to press, so some details are still unclear. The Museum of Infinite Realities promises “a completely new experience based on cutting-edge technology and backed by science,” and “the future of entertainment, a place where visitors are no longer spectators, but the heroes of their own journey.” This inaugural show, Explore The True You, is “a 60-minute journey in self-discovery through seven rooms that crescendo to a world-leading holographic show.”



## JAZZ WEEKEND VARIOUS LOCATIONS IN BRUSSELS

May 24 to 26  
Friday, Saturday and Sunday  
Free admission

Brussels has long been linked to jazz, and this year's Lotto Brussels Jazz Weekend, a free city festival, is expected to attract some 300,000 music lovers. A series of free, open-air concerts will be held around the city for

this sixth edition. Central squares will represent varied musical themes, from cosy Dixieland to more experimental genres. These plazas will host a varied outdoor programme and no fewer than 30 indoor concerts will take place. The thematic approach is intended to help festival goers find their bearings easily among the wide range of Belgian jazz, supplemented by a few international names. In contrast to last year's focus on the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of jazz icon Toots Thielemans, this year the attention will be on innovative talent that doesn't easily fit into musical categories, debunking the idea that jazz is only accessible to a select audience.



## THE TEMPEST SOCIETY KANAL CENTRE POMPIDOU

May 4  
Screening begins at 8.30 pm  
Avenue du Port 1, 1000 Brussels  
Free admission

KANAL is screening Bouchra Khalili's acclaimed film The Tempest Society and hosting a conversation with him. “The Tempest Society is neither documentary nor fiction, but rather a hypothesis,” Kanal explains. In it, three Athenians from different backgrounds form a group to examine the current state of Greece, Europe, and the Mediterranean. They call themselves The Tempest Society in tribute to Al Assifa (which means ‘the tempest’ in Arabic), a theatrical troupe consisting mainly of North African immigrant workers and French students with North African heritage that was active in 1970s Paris.



## THE TURN OF THE SCREW LA MONNAIE/DE MUNT

June 2 to 14  
Performances on Wednesday, Thursday and Fridays at 8pm and Sundays at 3pm  
Rue Léopold 23, 1000 Brussels  
Dynamic admission prices starting from €12

Opera lovers looking for an English-language performance will delight in The Turn of the Screw, sung in English with Dutch and French subtitles. Set in an old English country house in Bly, the opera follows a new governess who's told to never leave the children alone. Drawing on Henry James's intriguing ghost story, Benjamin Britten composed this psychological thriller in chamber opera format and director Andrea Breth and conductor Antonio Méndez keep the mystery intact, turning House Bly into a labyrinth in which the characters are not the only ones to lose themselves. Opera-goers under the age of 30 are invited to a special performance with a free reception and exclusive after-event.

