

Belgium Today

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PRIME MINISTER LETERME AT NUCLEAR SECURITY SUMMIT

Belgium was one of forty-four countries to participate together with representatives of the United Nations, the European Union and the International Atomic Energy Agency in the global Nuclear Security Summit held on April 12 and 13 in Washington, DC. This Summit defined its key goals as securing vulnerable stockpiles of nuclear materials from theft and boosting global cooperation to combat the trafficking of atomic materials and know-how.

President Obama hosted the gathering because he "believes nuclear terrorism is the most immediate and extreme threat to global security," according to Mark Lippert, chief of staff of the U.S. National Security Council.

Belgium was specifically invited by the White House to the conference. Prime Minister Yves Leterme, who represented our country, was personally welcomed by President Obama, took part in the various work sessions of the conference and attended a dinner and a lunch hosted by the U.S. President.

Belgium's national statement at the Summit highlighted the country's long tradition and vast experience in nuclear energy and nuclear applications. Belgium regards nuclear safety and security as key components of a responsible nuclear policy. That is why, from the very outset, it developed a nationwide culture of constant vigilance with regard to securing nuclear materials. Belgium's policy of sharing its know-how with other nuclear states, especially European countries, has resulted in an extremely valuable cross-fertilization of ideas and experience and this in turn has been conducive to the international debate in the IAEA forum.

While in Washington, PM Leterme also had meetings with other high-ranking U.S. officials, including National Security Advisor General Jim Jones, to discuss a range of bilateral matters of interest for both Belgium and the U.S.

PRINCESS ASTRID IN U.S. TO AID GLOBAL FIGHT AGAINST MALARIA

In late April, Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid of Belgium will travel to the United States and Canada to raise awareness about malaria and call for increased action in the fight against this preventable, treatable disease that continues to take the lives of nearly one million people a year. In her capacity as Special Representative for the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Partnership, Princess Astrid will meet with United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and other key partners to highlight World Malaria Day, April 25, 2010.



Princess Astrid

On April 20 and 21 Princess Astrid will be in Washington, DC, where she will meet with Admiral Tim Ziemer, Head of the Presidential Malaria Initiative, with officials of the United Nations Foundation and the Pan American Health Organization, and with Mr. Robert Zoellick, President of the World Bank.



Chef Jan Van Haute
Photo courtesy of Ronald Baker

EMBASSY CHEF WINS CULINARY CHALLENGE

On March 18th, Jan Van Haute, Chef of the Belgian Embassy, won the Embassy Chef Challenge 2010. The Challenge was organized for the second time by Cultural Tourism DC in cooperation with the Swedish Embassy. A professional jury, headed by the editor of the travel and food section of the *Washington Post*, Joe Yonan, examined the creations of ten of Washington's finest embassy chefs. The people's award went to the Israeli chef, and then the jury awarded the top prize to Jan Van Haute.

"The chefs and the guests together proved again how marvelous Washington is when we take a moment to get to know each other's cultures and stories. What better way than through food? We are grateful to the embassies and their chefs for their participation. Everyone was a winner at this event," said Linda Harper, executive director of Cultural Tourism DC.

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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT FOR OUR READERS: WE'RE GOING GREEN!

Starting this summer, *Belgium Today* will be sent by e-mail. To subscribe, please visit the Embassy's Web site, www.diplobel.us, click on "Subscribe to electronic newsletter *Belgium Today*" and enter your name and e-mail address in the spaces provided.

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BRAINSTORMING AT THE BRUSSELS FORUM

The German Marshall Fund of the United States' *Brussels Forum* has, over the course of five years, become the single largest transatlantic assembly for strategic political and economic brainstorming, with the crème-de-la-crème of Washington's government, business, media and academic worlds flocking to Brussels every March. And the 2010 "wood-anniversary" edition has again seen an unlikely migration of deciders and insiders between the two capital cities: U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk, Deputy Commerce Secretary Dennis Hightower, Senators Robert Casey and George Voinovich, journalists David Ignatius (*Washington Post*) and Bruce Stokes (*National Journal*), etc.

With sessions ranging from Global Governance/G20, to Euro-Atlantic relations, Afghanistan or the Balkans, the event also attracted the Who's-Who of global politics to the uptown Conrad Hotel, with EU President Herman Van Rompuy, NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, EC Chief José Manuel Barroso, the World Bank's Robert Zoellick, OECD Secretary General Ángel Gurría and Pascal Lamy of the World Trade Organization, not forgetting EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht and his external relations colleague Baroness Ashton.

And Belgian officials were equally well represented, with Prime Minister Yves Leterme and Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Steven Vanackere joining their predecessors, and HRH Prince Philippe and Minister De Crem also addressing the meeting. Quoting George Washington in his speech, Mr. Leterme described European-American friendship as an "appellation controlée of an excellent vintage," while Mr. Vanackere reminded the audience that the American immigration wall of honor on Ellis Island bore the names of 63,141 Belgians who entered the United States between 1892 and the 50s. He also noted that "like all families we share a common history" and that "Europe cannot forget that the United States came two times with its army to help us in the battle against tyranny, and twice with a relief program to help the population of our battered country."

BELGO-AMERICAN PHYSICIST WINS U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AWARD

Wim Leemans, a physicist at the U.S. Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (Berkeley, California), was one of six winners of the 2009 Ernest Orlando Lawrence Award, the highest distinction conferred by the U.S. Department of Energy in Washington, DC.

The award—a gold medal and a monetary prize of \$50,000—was awarded to Dr. Leemans for his ground-breaking work with laser plasma particle accelerators. His research is important not only for the future of particle accelerators, but also for medical and other applications.

Dr. Leemans graduated as an electronic engineer from the *Vrije Universiteit Brussel* and also earned a Master's Degree in 1987 and a PhD in 1991 in electronics from the University of California, Los Angeles. In 1991 he joined the U.S. Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. He then proceeded to set up the Lab's Accelerator and Fusion Research Division, which he still heads.

The Awards were created by President Eisenhower in 1959, in honor of Ernest Lawrence, Nobel laureate and inventor of the cyclotron, the precursor of today's particle accelerators.

SUCCESSFUL FLEMISH TRADE MISSION TO CALIFORNIA

Minister-President Kris Peeters and Vice-Minister-President Ingrid Lieten of the Flemish Government in Belgium led an investment, innovation and trade mission to California from February 14-19, 2010. The mission was organized by Flanders Investment and Trade (FIT), the Flemish trade and investment agency, in Los Angeles. The Ministers were accompanied by a delegation representing knowledge centers, industry federations and individual companies from Flanders. Ambassador Jan Matthysen and our Consul-General in Los Angeles, Geert Criel, joined the mission as well.

The objectives of the mission were: (a) the promotion of technological cooperation between knowledge centers in California and Flanders in the sectors of ICT, energy, transportation and biotechnology; (b) the discussion of a number of concrete investment opportunities for Californian companies in Flanders, and (c) the strengthening of trade and environmental cooperation between Flanders and California.

The mission started in San Francisco with a visit to the prestigious Luc Tuymans Retrospective at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, followed by a dinner with a group of Flemish entrepreneurs in the Bay Area. Afterwards the mission took off at a fast and intense pace in Silicon Valley. Discussions took place at the Electric Power Research Institute, the Plug&Play Tech Center, the San Jose Biocenter, Intel, Better Place, and Complete Genomics. Contacts with representatives of companies and institutions, such as Cisco, Microsoft, and the Lawrence Berkeley National lab, were included in the schedule as well.

In Los Angeles meetings were held at Roll International, Paramount Pictures Digital Entertainment and Southern California Edison (including its Electric Vehicle Technical Center).

Last but not least, the representatives of the Flemish Government had talks with representatives of the City of Los Angeles and, on the final day of the mission, with Governor Schwarzenegger. Discussions with the Governor focused on the California project for high-speed rail, and cooperation on environmental protection and climate change, among other things. Governor Schwarzenegger expressed the hope that the Flemish Government will be able to actively participate in the Third Global Climate Conference which he plans to organize in 2010.

The mission produced some very concrete results. FIT signed a cooperation agreement with Plug&Play to host companies from Flanders in their technology center and IMEC, a world leading research institute in nanoelectronics based in Leuven, finalized the terms of the cooperation between Intel and the five Flemish universities on the development of High Performance Computing research.

BELGIAN ART WHERE YOU DON'T EXPECT IT

Just outside of Rhyolite, Nevada, once a booming mining town and now a spectacular ghost town off the road leading to Death Valley, California, a group of prominent Belgian artists, led by the late Albert Szukalski, created seven outdoor sculptures that are colossal not only in their scale, but in their placement within the vast upper Mojave desert. The Belgian works are now part of the Goldwell Open Air Museum, which also exhibits pieces by contemporary American artists.

Albert Szukalski (born 1945 in Poland, died 2000 in Antwerp, Belgium) was known for many years in Europe as the sculptor of “ghosts.” In 1984 he came to the Nevada desert to create what is perhaps the most unique piece of his career. Originally designed to endure a mere two years, *The Last Supper* sculpture has not only stood the test of time, but has lived on to become the “genesis” piece of the Goldwell Museum.



Albert Szukalski, *The Last Supper*
© Dina Petridis

World. Albert Szukalski followed up *The Last Supper* with two other pieces at the site, *Ghost Rider* in 1984 and *Desert Flower* in 1989.

Dr. Hugo Heyrman (born 1942, Antwerp, Belgium) is the creator of *Lady Desert: The Venus of Nevada*, a sculpture which refers back to classical Greek sculpture while maintaining a firm presence in the highly technological world of the 21st century. *Lady Desert: The Venus of Nevada* becomes then an example of a modern sculpture that helps us re-experience and re-interpret a subject firmly rooted in the Western Fine Art tradition. The human figure, especially the female, is as fresh today in Hugo Heyrman's sculpture, with its computer-generated beginning, as it was millennia ago in Greece.

Among the artists who have contributed work to the museum, probably the one who felt most out of place in the desert was Belgian artist Fred Bervoets (born 1942 in Burcht, near Antwerp). His “portrait” sculpture of Shorty Harris (an early miner in Death Valley and its environs) and a penguin has elicited countless questions. The miner makes sense, but why the Antarctic bird? Word has it that Bervoets wanted to include in his sculpture an indication of how “alien” he felt in the Nevada desert. The penguin was the most out-of-place entity the artist could think of to represent his own feelings of displacement under the Mojave sun, a self-portrait then as a penguin in the desert.



Fred Bervoets, *Shorty Harris and the Penguin*
© Dina Petridis

HANS OP DE BEECK IN NEW YORK



Hans Op de Beeck, *Plane Trees*, 2010
Aquarelle on Arches paper in wooden frame
Courtesy of Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York

The first solo show of Belgian multi-disciplinary artist Hans Op de Beeck at the Marianne Boesky Gallery in New York consists of a new body of works, including an installation-like adaptation of the gallery space, a sculptural piece, and a series of large black-and-white watercolor paintings.

The artist has given the title *Silent Movie* to this exhibition which focuses on depopulated spaces at night, and the melancholic and alienating mood that staged, composed or constructed surroundings often convey. Contrary to what the title suggests, the show does not include a film, but offers the viewer a collection of static images that might evoke film-like moods or narratives.

Hans Op de Beeck lives and works in Brussels. His work covers a wide spectrum of media, including sculptural installation, sculptures, video works, animated films, text (short stories), paintings and drawings, photography, new media and stage design. He has recently had solo exhibitions in Rome, Beijing, Amsterdam and Basel as well as in Brussels.

JAN VAN HAUTE (continued from page 1)

The winning dish created by Chef Jan Van Haute was called ‘A walk through Belgium,’ and featured pork belly slow-cooked in brown Leffe beer with a cream of Brussels sprouts, an espuma of Belgian endive, and a mustard-panko crust.

Our almost speechless chef said he “didn’t expect to win this contest. The Embassy Chef Challenge is an exciting event. I love to meet and compete with other chefs. This is also a great moment for the Belgian Embassy, and for the Belgian culinary tradition. I am proud to serve as an ambassador for Belgian cuisine.”

Chef Van Haute has been Ambassador Matthysen's chef for the past year and has cooked for the Royal Family in Belgium and for top-rated restaurants in Belgium, Japan and Australia.

EVENTS OF INTEREST

Through May 6 — San Francisco, CA

The first U.S. retrospective exhibition of Belgian contemporary artist Luc Tuymans, a traveling exhibition with four U.S. venues before it goes to the Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels, is currently on view at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. www.sfmoma.org

Through May 9 — Gainesville, FL

The exhibition *Project Europa: Imagining the (Im)Possible* (with Francis Alys) considers the relationship of art to democracy in Europe, at the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida. 352 392-9826

Through June 6 — Yonkers, NY

The exhibition *Bakelite in Yonkers: Pioneering the Age of Plastics* features more than 300 objects made of Bakelite (invented by Belgian Leo Baekeland), at the Hudson River Museum. www.hrm.org

Through June 13 — New York, NY

On exhibit in *The Art of Illumination: The Limbourg brothers and the Belles Heures of Jean de France, duc de Berry* is the celebrated 15th century *Belles Heures* manuscript, temporarily unbound, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. www.metmuseum.org

Through October 24 — Seattle, WA

Exhibition *James Ensor and Georg Baselitz: Graphic Works*, at the Seattle Art Museum. www.seattleartmuseum.org

April 30 — Washington, DC

The Misfortunates (De helaasheid der dingen), directed by Felix van Groeningen, which was Belgium's 2009 Academy Awards entry, begins its run at the Avalon Theatre. In Dutch with English subtitles. www.theavalon.org

May 8 — Washington, DC

EU Open House Day (Please see article at right.) www.europe-in-dc.com

May 8-June 5 — New York, NY

Silent Movie, a solo exhibition by Hans Op de Beeck consisting of eight large scale black-and-white watercolors and a sculpture, will be presented at the Marianne Boesky Gallery (Please see page 3) www.marianneboeskygallery.com or 212 680-9889

SHORTCUT TO EUROPE

On Saturday, May 8 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the Embassies of the European Union Member States will once again open their doors to the public. EU Open House Day is becoming an annual tradition in Washington, providing a rare behind-the-scenes look at EU Embassies, many of which are among Washington's historic and architectural treasures.

The Washington-area public is invited to experience the diversity and richness of Europe through music, dance, film, art and fun activities for the whole family. The special theme of this year's EU Open House is Green Europe: good for the economy and the environment. Each Embassy will showcase its country's own experience with tackling climate change.

At the Belgian Embassy, we will be sampling Belgian beer and food specialties. Lacemakers from the Chesapeake Region Lace Guild will return again this year to demonstrate the art of Belgian bobbin lace and there will also be a film shown on Belgium's unique research station in Antarctica, where scientists are gaining understanding of the Earth's climate system.

Free shuttle buses, departing every 5 to 10 minutes from the Dupont Circle Metro Station, will drop visitors off at participating Embassies. The Embassy of Belgium is on the Northbound "Blue Route" and our stop, # 14, is on 34th Street, just before the intersection of 34th and Garfield Streets.

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PRIME MINISTER AT NUCLEAR SECURITY SUMMIT