

GLOSSARY

Blancs Moussis de Stavelot

The Fraternity of the “Blancs Moussis” is a notorious folklore group established in Stavelot, a small town in Eastern Belgium (Liège Province). In Walloon dialect, “blanc moussi” signifies “wearing white”. The “Blancs Moussis” wear a stunning uniform of radiant white and hide their face through masks with big red noses. They dance and run through the streets with pork bladders and shower the people with confetti. The figures of the “Blancs Moussis” are irreverent, satirical and entertaining. By dancing, jumping and imitating people they aim to provoke a reaction and incite the spectators to join the party. This provocation has been part of the tradition of the “Blancs Moussis” since its birth in 1502. The city of Stavelot, on the banks of the Amblève river, originated around an abbey founded by Saint Remacle in the seventh century. Under influence of this Benedictine abbey, Stavelot grew through the centuries into an important center of great spiritual and artistic appearance. However, in the late Middle Ages, the morality of the clergy slackened. Church servants would often participate in clear carnival entertainment. The reigning Prince-Abbott prohibited the clergy from joining in the popular carnival celebration through strict disciplinary sanctions. In response, the crowd recalled the jovial presence of the missing monks by donning a robe and hood similar to their outfits and the color of their clothing. The result was a mimicking of the monastic power. A new energetic intervention of the abbot also forbade this parody and costume. After new prohibitions, a white costume, still quite close to the monks’ habit, was selected. A suggestive long red nose and a laughing mask would complement the costume, creating the figures we still know today.

Hieronymus Bosch

Hieronymus Bosch was born around 1450 to a family of painters. Bosch developed a highly recognizable, idiosyncratic painting style. Bosch cannot be placed stylistically in line with the Primitives, in that he proceeded too self-styled with his work. His oeuvre, however, indeed falls within the established limits of time and place of the Flemish Primitives. Primarily, Bosch enjoys prestige for his fantastic and nearly diabolical works with all sorts of beings that overall have a moralizing meaning. It is generally accepted that Bosch's art was created to teach specific moral and spiritual truths, and that the images rendered have precise and premeditated significance. Bosch's paintings often represent visual translations of verbal metaphors and puns drawn from both biblical and folkloric sources. Among his most famous is *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. This painting depicts paradise with Adam and Eve and many wondrous animals on the left panel, the earthly delights with numerous nude figures and tremendous fruit and birds on the middle panel, and hell with depictions of fantastic punishments of the various types of sinners on the right panel. When the exterior panels are closed, the viewer can see, painted in grisaille, God creating the Earth. These paintings have a rough surface from the application of paint; this contrasts with the traditional Flemish style of paintings, where the smooth surface attempts to hide the fact that the painting is man-made.

Pieter Breugel the Elder

Pieter Bruegel the Elder, born in the 1520s, was a Renaissance painter and printmaker known for his landscapes and peasant scenes. He lived in the Southern Netherlands what compromised most of modern-day Belgium and Luxembourg. Pieter Bruegel specialized in genre paintings populated by peasants, often with a landscape element, though he also painted religious works. Making the life and manners of peasants the main focus of a work was rare in painting in Bruegel's time. He was a pioneer of the genre painting. His earthy, unsentimental but vivid depiction of the rituals of village life—including agriculture, hunts, meals, festivals, dances, and games—are unique windows on a vanished folk culture, though still characteristic of Belgian life and culture today, and a prime source of iconographic evidence about both physical and social aspects of 16th century life. For example, his famous painting *Netherlandish Proverbs*, originally *The Blue Cloak*, illustrates dozens of then-contemporary aphorisms, many of which still are in use in current Flemish, French, English and Dutch. The Flemish environment provided a large artistic audience for proverb-filled paintings because proverbs were well known and recognizable as well as entertaining. *Children's Games* shows the variety of amusements enjoyed by young people. In paintings like *Dulle Griet* or *Mad Meg*, Brueghel is making fun of noisy aggressive women. At the same time, he castigates the sin of covetousness: although already burdened down with possessions, Griet and her grotesque companions are prepared to storm the mouth of Hell itself in their search for more.

Congo

The Belgian Congo was a Belgian colony in Central Africa between 1908 and 1960 in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Leopold II, the second King of the Belgians, became the founder and sole owner of the Congo Free State, a private project undertaken on his own behalf. Leopold extracted a fortune from the Congo, initially by the collection of ivory and, after a rise in the price of rubber, the harvest and procession of rubber through forced labor from the natives. Under his régime millions of the Congolese people died: modern estimates range from 1 to 15 million, with a consensus growing around 10 million. Human-rights abuses, amongst others punishment by cutting off of hands, under his régime contributed significantly to these deaths. Reports of deaths and abuse led to a major international scandal in the early 20th century, and the Belgian government ultimately forced Leopold to relinquish control of the colony to Belgian civil administration in 1908.

Paul Delvaux

Paul Delvaux (1897-1994) was a Belgian painter famous for his paintings of female nudes. He was influenced by the works of Giorgio de Chirico, and was also briefly associated with surrealism. Paul Delvaux's career developed in the shadow of Nazi Germany. It should not come as a surprise then, that his work is known for a distinct sense of anxiety and unease. Surprisingly, that anxiety is not expressed in overtly political subjects. Delvaux was instead interested in exploring humanity and the hidden recesses of the subconscious. The architectural settings of Delvaux's paintings were much more than background; they were some of his most engaging subjects. This is not surprising given that his earliest artistic training was in architecture. The Classical buildings, city squares, and train stations that staged his mysterious scenes were essential to achieving his distinct moods. Nude women are a hallmark of Delvaux's work. They exist somewhere between the realm of statuary and of sex

objects, and their very ambiguity is one of the most arresting and confounding features of Delvaux's paintings. Delvaux's paintings depict bizarre scenes that bring together elements that don't make sense. His highly naturalistic painting technique compounds the uneasy feeling of his scenes. That such peculiar things are depicted within such believable spaces without any abstraction of forms and with a bright light that leaves nothing in murky shadow is disquieting.

Duivenmelker

Pigeon fancying or “duivenmelken”, the breeding of pigeons for contest purposes, is considered a typical Belgian tradition. It is a sport in different Belgian cities that originated in the first half of the 19th century and is still practiced today. The key to success lies in the cultivation of the pigeons. Pigeon fanciers pay a lot of attention to the carefully grooming and training of their pigeons, so they can perform at their best at competitions. During these contests, the pigeons need to fly as quickly as possible from a detached place back to their pigeon cage. With a special pigeon clock in the pigeon cage, the correct flight is timed – as detailed as how many meters per minute the pigeon flies. The sport has become so popular, that some pigeons are sold for exuberant amounts of money. A typical Belgian pigeon fancier wears a grey overcoat and keeps his pigeons in a pigeon shack or “koterij”.

Marc Dutroux

Marc Dutroux (born in 1956) is a Belgian serial killer and child molester, convicted of having kidnapped, tortured and sexually abused six girls from 1995 to 1996, ranging in age from 8 to 19, four of whom he murdered. His wife, Michelle Martin, was convicted as an accomplice. Dutroux was also convicted of having killed a suspected former accomplice, Bernard Weinstein. He was arrested in 1996 and has been in prison ever since, though he briefly escaped in April 1998. Earlier, in 1989, Dutroux had been sentenced to 13 and a half years imprisonment, along with Martin, sentenced to 5 years, for the abduction and rape of five young girls, the youngest of whom was 11 years old. Dutroux was released after serving three years. Dutroux's widely publicised trial took place in 2004. A number of shortcomings in the Dutroux investigation caused widespread discontent in Belgium with the country's criminal justice system, and the ensuing scandal was one of the reasons for the reorganisation of Belgium's law enforcement agencies.

James Ensor

James Sidney Edouard Baron Ensor (1860-1949) was a Belgian painter and printmaker who lived in Ostend for almost his entire life. He was an important influence on expressionism and surrealism, and associated with the artistic group Les XX. While Ensor's early works depict realistic scenes in a somber style, his palette subsequently brightened and he favored increasingly bizarre subject matter. Ensor often features figures in grotesque masks in his works, inspired by the ones sold in his mother's gift shop for Ostend's annual Carnival. Subjects such as carnivals, masks, puppetry, skeletons, and fantastic allegories are dominant in Ensor's mature work. Ensor dressed skeletons up in his studio and arranged them in colorful, enigmatic tableaux on the canvas, and used masks as a theatrical aspect in his still lifes.

Attracted by masks' plastic forms, bright colors, and potential for psychological impact, he created a format in which he could paint with complete freedom.

F.N.

Fabrique Nationale d'Herstal, often referred to as Fabrique Nationale or simply FN, is a leading firearms manufacturer located in Herstal, Belgium. It is currently the largest exporter of military small arms in Europe. They have the most top notch handguns, submachine guns, rifles, machine guns and shotguns in the world. They export to the army and the police, but mostly to gun enthusiasts and hunters.

Fermette

A "fermette" is a term that, in Belgium, refers to a rural house or an imitation of a traditional farm. In some cases, it is a historic farmhouse, refurbished with original building material. But most fermettes were created with new materials and in a non-rural environment, creating an anachronism. They are not inhabited by farmers but by urban residents. A typical fermette has only a single level. The walls consist of bare bricks or are plastered and painted yellow. There are a limited number of small, square windows, divided by wooden slats. The windows have green-white painted shutters. The roof is covered with red roof tiles or straw. More typical elements for the fermette are the fireplace and the oak beams on the ceiling. The fermette reflects the social idealization of the countryside after the Second World War, with a tending to nostalgia. It goes hand in hand with the phenomenon of the urban exodus.

Flandrien

A "Flandrien" is a cyclist who makes a cycling game difficult by continually choosing the attack. A Flandrien actively keeps on moving forward until he reaches the finish line, without ever giving up. The term originated during the Flemish cycling of the interbellum when cyclists had to provide a constant fight against the poorly constructed Flemish roads consisting of "kasseien" or cobble stones. Flanders has a rich cycling career. A lot of foreigners come to ride the stubborn, fierce hills of Flanders, such as the Kemmel Hill or past the wall of Geraardsbergen. The typical Flandrien has tires around his neck and has mud on his pain-stricken face. He rides to the end of pain.

Foefelen/Foefelare

"Foefelen" is a typical Flemish word, meaning moving under, next to and above the law. It represents the individualistic relationship of Belgians with rules, which is also an important theme in the performance. Belgians do not trust the law and order, the rule, the word. Due to their long history of foreign occupation, they are naturally critical of the government and skeptical of regulations. This is also one of the reasons why they love carnival celebrations so much: putting everything upside-down and mocking the command. Foefelen can be seen as a peaceful form of anarchy. Examples are tax evasion (considered a national sport in Belgium) and architectural idiosyncrasy (no house is the same in Belgium), but also their preoccupation with irony and surrealism (through humor and playfulness undermining authority and rethinking reality).

Frietkot/Frieten

“Frieten” or “pommes frites”, fine bars of fried potato, form the national dish in Belgium. This eatable gold was invented in Belgium. Belgian journalist Jo Gérard writes that a 1781 family manuscript recounts that potatoes were deep-fried prior to 1680 in the Meuse valley, in what was then the Spanish Netherlands (present-day Belgium): “The inhabitants of Namur, Andenne, and Dinant had the custom of fishing in the Meuse for small fish and frying, especially among the poor, but when the river was frozen and fishing became hazardous, they cut potatoes in the form of small fish and put them in a fryer”. Up to this day, Belgian fries are made in a certain way, including the cutting up of potatoes following a certain pattern, and frying the fries two times. Belgium has now about 5000 “frietkoten”, which means that you can find a “frietkot” in almost every city or village. Belgians carefully choose their “stam frituur”, based on the taste, location, service and atmosphere. A quarter of Belgians go weekly to a Chip shop to take their fries home. Unfortunately, internationally the word “frieten” or “frites” is translated as “French fries”, wrongfully implying that this tasty food was invented by the French. This misconception might be explained by a lack of understanding, a shared language and a geographic proximity between Belgium and France.

GAS-boetes

A GAS-boete, an abbreviation for “Gemeentelijke Administratieve Sanctie” (“Municipal Administrative Sanction”), is a sanction handed out by the city or town, mostly a fine, if someone breaks a rule created by the justice department of that town. Mostly it handles petty crimes or laws that sometimes appear trivial. It is very unpopular amongst Belgian citizens because most GAS-boetes are confusing and small. Every town has its own amount of small laws their citizens need to follow “in order to keep peace on the streets”, if they do not want to be fined by this sanction. Some examples are littering, urinating in public, keeping dogs at a leash, the time allowed to mow your lawn, making a fire, etc. There are famously absurd sanctions too, such as: protesting against the GAS-boetes (Antwerp), playing (badly) music in public (Antwerp), eating in front of the church porch (Mechelen), wearing a mask in public unless you are Santa Claus or the Easter bunny (Hasselt), playing outside when pigeon fanciers are training their pigeons (Merchtem), ringing a doorbell and running away (many districts), knocking on windows when it is “not urgent” (Dendermonde), throwing cherry pits (Brussels) or sunflower seeds (Antwerp) on the floor (this sanction was given in Brussels to one woman by four police officers dressed with bulletproof vests), discontinuing your slide downwards on a waterslide (Dendermonde), throwing confetti in the air that was already on the floor from a previous throw (Deinze), scaring people of a carnival parade (Hasselt), scaring people in general (Lokeren), and - last but not least - picking up trash and throwing it in a trashcan (Ostend).

Gilles de Binche

The Carnival of Binche is a well-known carnival celebration in the Walloon city of Binche. On Mardi Gras thousands of Gilles flock to the streets of Binche. These Gilles are characterized by a unique costume that is subject to some strict rules. Only

men from Binche families or citizens living in Binche for at least 5 years can wear the costume. The Gilles can only wear the costume on Shrove Tuesday and may never leave the city while wearing it. As the saying goes: “a Gille never leaves”. The Gille costume exists out of tunic and trousers made of jute decorated with 150 patterns (stars, lions and crowns) in fine black felt fabric. When the Gille dresses up, the tunic is filled up with straw at the front and the back with a small bell. At the belt, he wears a woolen red and yellow belt mounted with a cloth called “apertintaille” and composed of copper bells. On his head, the Gille wears a “barrette”, a white cotton hat that covers all his hair. During Shrove Tuesday’s afternoon procession, the Gille wears his ostrich feathers hat. From dawn on the morning of the carnival's final day, Gilles appear in the centre of Binche, to dance to the sound of drums. They ward off evil spirits with sticks, carrying baskets filled with oranges. Once a broom, the “ramon” is composed of sticks of dry sallow put together with sinew rattan. The oranges are thrown to the spectators of the splendid procession. The vigor and longevity of the orange-throwing event has in the past caused damage to property – some residents choose to seal windows to prevent this. The oranges are considered good luck because they are a gift from the Gilles. It is considered an insult to throw them back. There is no consensus on the origin of this figure and his remarkable costume, though many agree that both the feather hat and the throwing of oranges are inspired by South-American cultures, such as the Incas.

Haguètes de Malmedy

The “Haguète” is the protagonist of the *Cwarmê*, the carnival of the Walloon city of Malmedy. The Haguète’s costume is made of velvet and decorated with satin and gold edgings. The mask has a hanging fringe with more fringes hanging from the sleeves and pants. Large multi-colored ostrich feathers decorate the hat. The Haguète is armed with a so-called “hape-tchâr” or flesh-snatcher, a pair of wooden articulated tongs in zigzag form. This instrument is used to grab the arms and legs of the onlookers. The Haguètes don’t let their victims go until they kneel and say they’re sorry in Walloon: “Pardon, Haguète, à l’cawe du ramon, dju nu l’f’rès jamês pus!” (“Forgive me, Haguète, I swear on the broomstick, I will never do it again!”). The origin of this mysterious figure is difficult to find. There is no documentary proof to confirm the existence of the Haguète before the middle of the 19th century, but legend already talks about this mysterious figure much earlier. There are different hypotheses of how the Haguètes came into existence. One describes them as rebellious figures that defied a ban on carnival celebrations issued during the reign of the prince abbots in the 17th and 18th century. Another hypothesis describes how the costumes are Roman and German inspired. The Haguètes represent prominent figures of society that harass young women, called “Marie-Françoise” or “Mâssîe-Droûsse”.

Hedgehog

According to Croatian performer Ivana Jozic, Belgians are like hedgehogs. As a child, Ivana grew up with the story of a hedgehog, which goes as follows: the hedgehog has a little, dark home in the woods. He is often invited by the other forest animals to visit their beautiful houses. However, he always refuses because he prefers his own house. All the animals imagine that the hedgehog must have an amazing home, making that he always rejects their offer. Eventually, they are surprised to find an unattractive, small, dark place. The point of the story is that by staying loyal to your choice, you

will stay out of danger. When Ivana Jozic was asked during the creative process, to which animal she would compare a Belgian person, the hedgehog came to her mind. Like the small forest animal, Belgians can be very protective of their feelings, thoughts, privacy and belongings. Belgians work hard. They also blow, sigh often, resembling the sound the little animal makes. They hide in their work and their (often small and ugly) home, that nevertheless means the world to them. Belgians might seem difficult to approach, as if they would have needles on their back. However, when you get closer, they do show a softer side, like the soft belly of the hedgehog.

Kasseistampers van Aarschot

The “Kasseistampers”, literally “cobblestone stampers”, is a tradition in the Belgian city of Aarschot. Its origin lays in the 18th century when Empress Maria-Theresia came to power. The city was at that moment characterized by robberies and vandalism. To counteract this unrest, it was decided to set up a civil guard. Armed with a lance, this civil guard walked the streets of the city by night. As a result, robbery and vandalism disappeared after a few months. Unfortunately, the guard would wither afterwards. When the city seemed safe again, the men preferred to walk to a bar rather than safe-guard the streets. Coming home early in the morning, they didn't think anyone would notice the difference. As a counterfeit, the city council demanded that two men should walk every half hour through the main streets of the city. But the cunning men of Aarschot also found a solution there: while one did the rounds, the other one went to the bar. When finished, they would switch: the first would go to the bar, and the second would do the rounds – making sure that both could drink and socialize. The people of Aarschot were again not satisfied. They demanded that the guards wore clogs at their feet (called “blokken” or “blocks”) during their nightly patrols, so everybody could hear them working (instead of drinking at the bar). Again the inventive guards found a solution. The one doing the rounds, would stamp his clogs as loud as possible on the cobblestones of the streets of Aarschot, in the hope of creating the illusion of two men guarding. The people of Aarschot, haunted by the loud sound of the wooden clogs on the cobblestones through the dark, would not know a nightly rest again. The mocking nickname of “Kasseistampers” saw the light.

Kattenstoet van Ieper

The Kattenstoet (literally "Festival of the Cats") is a parade in Ypres, Belgium, devoted to the cat. It has been held regularly on the second Sunday of May since 1955. The parade commemorates an Ypres tradition from the Middle Ages in which cats were thrown from the belfry tower of the Cloth Hall to the town square below. There are various legends about how the throwing of cats originated. One possibility is that cats were connected to witchcraft, and the throwing of the cats symbolised the killing of evil spirits. The last recorded event of this kind was in 1817. Another story suggests that the cats were brought into the Cloth Hall (Lakenhallen) to control vermin. Before modern heating and storage methods, when it got cold the wool was stored in the upper floors of the Cloth Hall. At the start of the spring warm-up, after the wool had been sold, the cats were tossed out of the bell tower. Symbolically reviving this practice for the parade festivities, a jester tosses plush children's-toy cats from the Cloth Hall belfry down to the crowd, which awaits with outstretched arms to catch one. The throwing of the cats from the belfry is followed by a mock witch

burning. Participants in the festivities often dress as cats, witches, mice, or townspeople from ages past.

Ferdinand Knopff

Ferdinand Knopff (1858 - 1921) was a Belgian symbolist painter, visual artist and designer. He was one of the founding members of the group XX. Knopff's most famous subjects are landscapes at Fosset, portraits of ladies from the Brussels bourgeoisie, cityscapes of Bruges and symbolic compositions. Most of the pieces speak a mysterious, enchanting atmosphere. His characters often display androgynous characters. One such an example is *Portrait of Marguerite Knopff* (1887), an enigmatic portrait of his sister, Marguerite. Dressing her in a long white dress, symbolizing innocence, Knopff turns his sister in an icon of the ideal, perfect woman. Her long corset and sleeves imply that she rejects every form of physical contact. In this image, the idea of woman as both innocent, unattainable angel and confusing, even dangerous seductress are combined. His masterpiece is *The Caress* from 1896, an image of Oedipus who attacks the sphinx. Another famous work is *I lock my door upon myself* (1891), in which a young woman dreamily stares into the distance surrounded by different symbols, including Hypno symbolizing the dream. The title refers to the poem "Who Shall Deliver Me?" from the pre-Raphaelite poet Christina Rossetti, including the strophe "I lock my door upon myself / And bar them out / But who shall wall / Self from myself, most loathed of all?".

Koterij

"Koterijen" are sheds, huts and pigeon houses that are built at the backside of houses. These unstructured structures are a concept in Flanders. This phenomenon is the result of a meanwhile somewhat outdated vision of living. Several decades ago, the construction plan for a terraced house, which typifies the Belgian ribbon building, had mostly a very tight façade with only one window next to the front door. Because everything was so tight, an additional koterij was built at the backside of the house: a scullery or a laundry room where the laundry was done by hand, a kind of bathroom, an outdoor toilet... All koterijen were built according to each individual needs and budget, thus representing the typical Belgian individuality and self-reliability.

Last Post

The Last Post refers to a trumpet signal, used by different armies. Since 1928, the Last Post has been played every evening at 8 p.m. by buglers of the local Last Post association at the war memorial at the Belgian city of Ypres, known as the Menin Gate. The signal commemorates the British Empire dead at the Battle of Ypres during the First World War. The association prides itself on always performing the Last Post, even in times of high need. For example, on the evening that Polish forces liberated Ypres, the ceremony was resumed though there was still heavy fighting going on in other parts of the town. Except for the four years of the German occupation of Ypres from 20 May 1940 to 6 September 1944, the ceremony has been held at the Menin Gate every evening, attracting large crowds.

René Magritte

Rene Magritte (1898-1967) is one of the most internationally acclaimed surrealist artists of all time. Yet, this was not until his 50s, when he was finally able to reach some form of fame and recognition for his work. Rene Magritte described his painting as follows: “My painting is visible images which conceal nothing; they evoke mystery and, indeed, when one sees one of my pictures, one asks oneself this simple question, ‘What does that mean?’ It does not mean anything, because mystery means nothing, it is unknowable.” René Magritte had a playful and provocative sense of humor, which worked in many of his pieces – some of them became his most well-known pieces throughout the course of his career. One such example is the series of pipe paintings he created, depicting a realistic image of a pipe in combination with the words “Ceci n’est pas une pipe” (“This is not a pipe”). The bowler hat was a common feature within much of his work, and appears in paintings like *Golconda*. This painting depicts a scene of nearly identical men dressed in dark overcoats and bowler hats, who seem to be drops of heavy rain (or to be floating like helium balloons, though there is no actual indication of motion), against a backdrop of buildings and blue sky. The men are spaced in hexagonal grids facing the viewpoint and receding back in grid layers. Magritte himself lived in a suburban environment, and dressed in a similar fashion.

Majorettes

“Majorettes” are female dancers (male dancers are called “major”) that do a certain type of dance, often consisting of baton twirling, and are associated with marching bands during parades. The drum major is carrying a large baton, which is also known as a “mace”, and is used to give signals and commands, indicating the beat and tempo of the music, and, sometimes, to indicate other impressive gestures or movements. Majorettes originally performed a typical carnival dance originating in the Rhineland, where the young women who perform this dance are called “Tanzmariechen” in German or “Dansmarietjes” in Dutch (Dance Mary's). During carnival the government, the army and the defense forces were traditionally parodied as a way of protesting. “Majorettes” originated as a parody on the “camp followers”, women who were married to a corporal or private, and responsible for the “washing of lines” as well as the “entertainment” of the soldiers. She was not considered to be a typical army prostitute, nor a proper married woman. In the carnival mockery both the officers and the camp followers are depicted. The officer is portrayed as an effeminate, wig-wearing, conceited fool. The camp follower as a woman who is military but provocatively costumed, but also clearly recognizable as a man: the Tanzmarie.

La Muette de Portici

During the performance of the opera *La Muette de Portici* (*The Mute Girl of Portici*) on 25 August 1830 the Belgian revolution was born. The audience started revolting and rioting, inspired by the words “Amour sacré de la patrie, rends nous l'audace et la fierté. À mon pays je dois la vie. Il me devra sa liberté.” (“Sacred love of the fatherland, fill us with courage and pride. I owe my country my life. It will owe me its freedom.”), written by August Eygène Scribe on music composed by Daniel François Esprit Auber. The spectators stormed outside and started the revolution on the square just outside the opera house *La Monnaie* in the center of Brussels. Since the Dutch army, the rulers of the Zuidelijke Nederlanden (Southern Netherlands), was elsewhere

occupied, the Belgians succeeded in taking the power. Belgium became an independent country, namely a constitutional monarchy, in 1830. It was nonetheless consciously put together by European powers after the defeat of Napoleon. It needed to serve as a buffer between the different countries. Still today Belgians are experts in Belgian compromises.

Noirauds des Bruxelles

The Noirauds are a part of a tradition back in the 19th century in the neighborhood of Zavel. The bourgeoisie went to expensive restaurants to collect money for children in need. They painted themselves black and wore a white collar, colorful pants and a black shirt. The association was founded in the period when Africa was explored. The black faces were supposedly there to preserve anonymity of members: they didn't want to be recognized by the people they usually work with. Others claim that their costume was inspired by how they thought the rich people of the African continent dressed. The association is still today supported by a lot of famous politicians. However, they receive more and more critique as the controversial association is not (solely) seen as folklore and charity, but as a remnant and even preservation of colonialism.

Rode Duivels

The Belgian national football team, the “Rode Duivels” or “Red Devils”, has officially represented Belgium in association football since their maiden match in 1904. Belgium was co-founder of the World Cup Football and, although it participated in the first three World Cups, all matches were lost. In home matches, the team's outfield players traditionally wear the colors of the Belgian flag: black, yellow and red. Red dominates the strip and is often the sole jersey color. A notable moment in the history of the Red Devils was the summer of 2014. In a world where racism, discrimination and right-wing politics seem to be ever more prevailing, a much-divided country came together in the support of their national football-team. Belgium, as many other countries, is characterized by a multicultural and hyper-diverse population. A forth of its population is of non-Belgian origin, and the small country has three official languages and linguistic areas. The national football-team represents this multiculturalism. Football players with different ethnical backgrounds, of different colors and religions, speaking different languages, form one team. When these Red Devils were selected for the World Championship Football, their supporters came together as well. Regardless of race, color, background, heritage and language, these supporters stood behind their team – as one nation and nationality. For the duration of the World Championship, the country colored black, yellow and red. Though the potential of the Red Devils was highly estimated, they had to leave the competition much too early.

Félicien Rops

Félicien Rops (1833-1898) was a Belgian painter and graphic artist remembered primarily for his prints. Many of Rops's etchings are erotic or pornographic in tone and depict an imaginary underworld or subjects of social decadence. Despite his peculiarities, Rops was a printmaker of brilliant technique and original content whose handling of dry point (etching directly on the plate) marks him as one of the masters

of the medium. He was also one of the first modern etchers to revive the neglected medium of soft-ground etching, in which the etching ground is melted into and mixed with tallow, producing the effect of lines drawn with a soft pencil or chalk.

Roze Balletten

The Roze Balletten or “Pink Ballets” is the name given to a series of secretive drug and sex parties at the end of the 1970s in Belgium, of which the participants were rich people and politicians who had their ways with minors. These parties were meant as a form of bribery to the people of power. Although many allegations were made with various pieces of evidence, the official announcements have never seen the light of day. The Pink Ballets were made public by Brussels psychiatrist André Pinon who recorded a secret conversation of Christine Doret, a 31- year old woman who know more about the secret orgies. She mentions many popular names as participants. She also claimed that they took children from orphanages to sexually abuse during the parties. Two of the orphans supposedly committed suicide shortly after. When Doret found out she was secretly recorded, she was furious and denied everything. No evidence was found proving these allegations. Neither about the alleged suicides.

Peter Paul Rubens

Peter Paul Rubens, born in 1640, was a Flemish artist. He is considered the most influential artist of Flemish Baroque tradition. Rubens's highly charged compositions reference erudite aspects of classical and Christian history. His unique and immensely popular Baroque style emphasized movement, color, and sensuality, which followed the immediate, dramatic artistic style promoted in the Counter-Reformation. Rubens specialized in making altarpieces, portraits, landscapes, and history paintings of mythological and allegorical subjects. His commissioned works were mostly “history paintings”, which included religious and mythological subjects, and hunt scenes. He painted portraits, especially of friends, and self-portraits, and in later life painted several landscapes. Rubens designed tapestries and prints, as well as his own house. His nudes of various biblical and mythological women are especially well-known. Painted in the Baroque tradition of depicting women as soft-bodied, passive, and highly sexualized beings, his nudes emphasize the concepts of fertility, desire, physical beauty, temptation, and virtue. Skillfully rendered, these paintings of nude women were undoubtedly created to appeal to his largely male audience of patrons. Additionally, Rubens was quite fond of painting full-figured women, giving rise to terms like “Rubensian” or “Rubenesque”. And while the male gaze features heavily in Rubens's paintings of females generally, he brings multi-layered allegory and symbolism to his portraits.

Jan Van Eyck

Jan van Eyck brought on a revolution in the history of painting in the Low Countries between circa 1420 and 1441. Jan van Eyck's work makes an abrupt end to the refined “international style” that dominated the art at the time. With his precise observation and naturalistic rendering of reality, his brilliant coloring and perfectly mastered oil technique, Van Eyck generates a virtuosity that scarcely will ever be matched. This master technique can be easily witnessed in the painting *Arnolfini* were he painted a double portrait commissioned by Giovanni di Nicolaio. As diplomat and court painter

of the Burgundian dukes, he moved within the highest circles throughout his entire life. *Arnolfini* is considered one of the most original and complex paintings in Western art, because of its beauty, complex iconography, geometric orthogonal perspective and expansion of the picture space with the use of a mirror. For the first time in history the artist became the perfect eye-witness in the truest sense of the term.

Voil Jeanetten van Aalst

The Carnival of Aalst or Aalst Carnival is a yearly three-day event in the Belgian city of Aalst. The *Stoet van de Voil Jeanetten* (Aalst dialect for "Parade of the Dirty Sissies") goes through the streets. In this parade, men strut around in women's clothes wearing a bird cage, a herring, fake breasts, corsets, a fur coat, a worn umbrella and a stroller. This tradition originates from the history of Aalst: the lower class was too poor to buy or make a beautiful carnival costume, and for that reason the men put on the old and worn clothes of their wives. They also put a herring in a cage. The herring was a product that didn't cost that much – similar to the price of an egg today. The Voil Jeanetten took the herring with them on their parade, so they had something to eat on the road. By hanging it in a cage nobody could steal it, and a surreal image was created.

Ypres/Yperiet

Ypres or Ieper is a Belgian municipality located in the Flemish province of West Flanders. Ypres was one of the first places where chemical warfare was employed. In the First Battle of Ypres (19 October to 22 November 1914), the Allies captured the town from the Germans. The Germans had used tear gas, namely chlorine, at the Battle of Bolimov in 1915. Mustard gas, also called Yperite from the name of this town, was used for the first-time near Ypres. When the gas comes to the skin or in the eyes, or when the vapor or mist is inhaled, it works strongly, stimulating and blazing. The skin becomes red and turns into blisters. It has a devastating effect on the lungs and eyes. It can cause blindness and deafness at higher doses. Today, Ypres works closely together with Hiroshima to campaign for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Zotten van Geel

The Flemish city of Geel is world-known for the early adoption of de-institutionalization in psychiatric care. Instead of isolating chronic psychiatric patients in a closed institution, they are placed in host families to guarantee a family life that otherwise would be denied. Originally, this practice was religiously motivated and organized by a chapter of canons, attached to the church of Saint Dymphna. The earliest Geel infirmary where patients go into town, interact with the community during the day, and return to the hospital at night, dates from the 13th century. The number of patients grew in proportion to the growing city's reputation abroad and the economic benefits flowing to the city provided further motivation to the inhabitants. The high point came in 1938, with a total of 3 736 placed patients. At the municipal boundaries of the village of Geel, triangular traffic signs are placed with the warning "family nursing". In earlier times when medications for psychiatric syndromes or illnesses didn't exist or weren't available, they warned for confused patients walking

over the streets. Though these relics of the past are no longer needed, Geel has kept its reputation of being inhabited by “zotten” or fools and crazy people.