

Published in James Goodwin, ed., *A Guide to International Art Markets*, Kogan Page, 2008

## BELGIUM

Henry Bounameaux and Victor Ginsburgh

### **A few historical landmarks**

Belgian art really started after 1830, a time at which Belgium became independent from its many successive occupiers (Spain, Austria, France, the Netherlands), though one can hardly forget that Belgium was part of the former Low Countries. During the 15th century, Brussels (with Hugo van der Goes, Rogier van der Weyden), Louvain (Dirk Bouts) and Bruges (Jan Van Eyck, Hans Memling, Gerard David) were burgeoning art centers, though later on, Bruges started to decline because merchants and artists who followed them, slowly moved to Antwerp in the late 15th and early 16th centuries (and because of that, the Zwyn which gave Bruges access to the North Sea, silted up). At that time, Antwerp became one of the largest art centers in Europe, and altars that were almost factory-built, were exported as far away as South America.<sup>1</sup>

The so-called Golden 17th century is associated with names such as Pieter-Paul Rubens, Anton Van Dyck and Jacob Jordaens, some of whom were simultaneously artists and dealers. This is also the century during which Pieter Brueghel the Young and David II Teniers excelled in rural landscapes and scenes.

Little happened during the next century, and the renewal came only with neo-classicism, introduced by François-Joseph Navez, a pupil of Jacques-Louis David who during the French Restoration, exiled himself to Brussels and died there.

A few artists from the Romantic period (Louis Gallait, Gustaaf Wappers, Nicaise De Keyser, Henri Leys) became internationally known, were bought by famous collectors in the mid 19th century, but are almost completely forgotten nowadays. The Antwerp Academy was renowned all over Europe, and contributed to spread historical genre paintings, and some artists (Eugene Verboeckhoven, in particular) were known for their animal scenes. With the exception of Alfred Stevens, celebrated in France during the Second Empire, Belgian realism did hardly make it internationally. This changed in 1883, the year during which James Ensor, Fernand Khnopff and Theo Van Rysselberghe founded the *Groupe des XX*, which attracted to Brussels the European avant-garde

---

<sup>1</sup> For details, see De Marchi and Van Miegroet (2006) for a recent short economic and historic survey.

(Georges Seurat, Vincent Van Gogh among others). This important movement influenced artistic life during a whole decade.

Though Belgium was influenced by international currents such as fauvism (with Ferdinand Schirren and Rik Wouters among others), expressionism (essentially in Flanders, with Gustave De Smet and Constant Permeke), it is clearly surrealism and René Magritte and to a lesser degree, Paul Delvaux who became essential during the 1950s. The late 1960s and the early 1970s were important years, with exhibitions at Wide White Space in Antwerp and MTL in Brussels showing conceptual avant-garde artists, led by Marcel Broodthaers and Panamarenko. More recently, Luc Tuymans became the most expensive living Belgian artist.

Decorative arts are represented by tapestries made in Tournai, Brussels and Oudenaerde, furniture from Liege, china from Tournai and Art Nouveau craftworks (Gustave Serrurier-Bovy, Henri Van de Velde) during the end of the 19th century.

## **The Belgian art market**

### *Contemporary art: galleries and fairs*

*Galleries.* Contemporary art galleries are essentially located in Brussels, and Antwerp, and to some extent, in Ghent. Very little activity exists in Wallonia. Among the best galleries in Brussels, let us cite Xavier Hufkens (with works by Louise Bourgeois, John Chamberlain, Anthony Gromley, Roni Horn, Robert Ryman, Erwin Wurm), Rodolphe Janssens (Balthasar Burkhard, Philip Lorca-diCorcia, Stephen Shore), Greta Meert (John Baldessari, Robert Barry, Sol Lewitt, Robert Mangold, Thomas Struth). These are all regular participants to ArtBasel. In 2006 the fair also invited two young galleries, Jan Mot and Catherine Bastide. In Antwerp, most galleries are located close to the museum of contemporary art (MuHKA). It is worth singling out Micheline Sz wajcer (with works by Stanley Brown, Angela Buloch, On Kawara, Tobias Rehberger, Lawrence Weiner) and Zeno X (Stan Douglas, Marlene Dumas, Luc Tuymans); they both participate to ArtBasel as well.

*Fairs.* The ArtBrussels fair takes place every year in April. It is, after Cologne, the second oldest contemporary art fair in the world. Though it was deeply reshaped after it was bought by an event-organizing company, the fair keeps inviting galleries that show younger artists than in other fairs. In 2006, 168 galleries from 20 countries attracted 26,000 visitors.

*The secondary market: auctioneers, dealers, and fairs*

*Auctioneers.* There exist many, but relatively small, salesrooms in Brussels and Flanders, and only a few in Wallonia. Most of them are affiliated with the *Chambre Royale Belgo-Luxembourgeoise des Salles de Ventes aux Enchères*, born in 1936. A large part of the activity takes place in Brussels, where the largest salesroom (*Salle des Ventes au Palais des Beaux-Arts*, later renamed *Servarts S.A.*) was acquired in June 2006 by *Pierre Bergé & Associés*, a Paris auctioneer, which one may hope, will create some synergies between Paris and Brussels. Other salesrooms are *Horta*, *Vanderkindere* and *Galerie Moderne*. But this does not exclude that there are some important salesrooms in Antwerp, such as *Bernaerts*, *Campo Vlaamse Kaai* as well as *Campo* and *Campo*. Auctioneers mainly trade Belgian art and regional furniture. In 2005, the three most expensive pieces sold were a work by *Paul Delvaux* (December 6, *Beaux-Arts* in Brussels, euro 570,000), a canvas by *Jean Le Mayeur* from his *Bali* period (November 28, *Amberes*, Antwerp, euro 320,000) and a pair of paintings by *Sébastien Vranckx* (November 29, *Beaux-Arts* in Brussels, euro 180,000). Works by important artists are almost always sold in London or New York. In a paper that may be outdated, but is the only available, *Ginsburgh and Mertens* (1995) analyze world sales of Belgian painters. They point out that in Belgium, *Campo* was the largest salesroom,<sup>2</sup> which also fetched the largest prices. Though during the period 1983-1992, the average price for a painting is 7 to 8 times smaller in Belgium than the price fetched by Belgian painters at *Christie's* or *Sotheby's*, not all painters are well-known enough to get sold there. *Christie's* and *Sotheby's* account for 71 percent of the turnover of Belgian painters, while Belgian salesrooms represent only 16 percent. *René Magritte*, *Paul Delvaux*, *James Ensor*, *Theo Van Rysselberghe* and *Alfred Stevens* are sold internationally. For example, only 8 of the 312 paintings by *Magritte* sold between 1963 and 1992 came under the hammer in Belgium.<sup>3</sup> Still, 68 percent of the number of paintings by Belgian artists are sold in Belgium, and these fetch in general higher prices in Belgium than elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, and though the price level in Belgium is much lower, prices follow the same path as world prices.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> This is not the case anymore since *Campo* was split into two salesrooms.

<sup>3</sup> See also *Ginsburgh and Mertens* (1994), Tables 6 to 8 for further details about individual painters.

<sup>4</sup> This is the case in other countries also: the percentages of paintings sold in their country of origin are as follows: Belgium: 68 percent; France: 73 percent; Germany: 51 percent; Italy: 64 percent. See *Ginsburgh and Mertens* (1994), Table 3.

<sup>5</sup> See *Ginsburgh and Mertens* (1994) and *Renneboog and Van Houtte* (2000).

Important Belgian collections have often to be disposed of to pay for inheritance taxes. As a consequence, international salesrooms have offices in Belgium. Both Christie's and Sotheby's have large representations in Brussels, from where works are sent to Amsterdam, as far as the middle market is concerned, or to more international markets such as London and New York. Luxemburg has also been used to avoid resale rights (*droit de suite*). In 1994, a painting by James Ensor is knocked down to a Belgian collector for euros 200,000. The painting was stored in Luxemburg (no resale rights at the time), but Belgian potential buyers could make offers in Belgium and the painting was shown on a TV screen in a Belgian salesroom.

*Antique dealers.* Antique dealers are scattered over Belgium, but again, the most renowned are located in Brussels and Antwerp. They are regrouped within the *Chambre Royale Belge des Antiquaires de Belgique*, born in 1919. This association organizes every year (in January) an important antique fair, the *Foire des Antiquaires de Belgique*. In 2006, it attracted 120 dealers from 8 countries. The organizers have the intention to open the fair to a larger number of foreign dealers.

*Fairs.* As a former colonial country, it comes as no surprise that Belgium (Brussels in particular) has a central role in dealing and collecting African, but also Oceanic and Pre-Columbian art. Since 1983, in June, some 50 dealers organize open days (the so-called Brussels Non European Art Fair, BRUNEAF). This fair is open to foreign dealers since 1996, and is organized at the same time as the Brussels Antique Fair (BAAF) and the Brussels Oriental Art Fair (BOAF), to each of which 20 dealers do participate. Under the common flag 3B, the three fairs play on their complementarities. Two other fairs are held in Brussels. The recent (2004) salon *Grands Antiquaires* gathers some 30 participants, both Belgian and foreigners. *Eurantica*, which is 25 years old, is addressing the middle market and mainly visited by amateurs, most of which are living in Belgium.

#### *Collectors and collections*

*Collectors.* Belgians are known as contemporary art collectors, who buy both in Belgium and in other countries, and do not miss any of the great international events. They are characterized by their very reserved attitude, and hardly show their (sometimes very important) collections, that are often sold after the death of the collector. The Vanthournhout heirs, for example, sold a large part of Roger Vanthournout's collection (which included works by Francis Bacon, Tom Wesselman, Carl Andre, Gerhard Richter)

at Sotheby's in November 2006. There also exist a few other collections: Belgian painters from the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, Tournai china, silverware, African and Pre-Columbian art (in 2006, the important Janssen collection of Pre-Columbian art was donated to the Flemish Community in lieu of inheritance taxes).

A few large firms also collect, but since fiscal rules do not allow writing off artworks, the collections depend on the goodwill of executive officers or owners. The Dexia Bank (former Crédit Communal) owns probably the largest collection of Belgian art, with a few incursions into Old Masters. The ING Bank (former Banque de Bruxelles-Lambert) has concentrated on contemporary art, following the tradition initiated by one of its former owners, Baron Leon Lambert. More recently, the Group Lhoist has assembled an impressive collection of contemporary art and photographs.

*Public collections and museums.* Collectors are also almost the only ones who buy art, since museums can afford very little and only from time to time. They merely concentrate on exhibitions. In Wallonia, the MAC'S (at the Grand Hornu mining site) shows well-known artists (Bernd and Hilla Becher, Anish Kapoor, among others) while B.P.S.22 (in Charleroi) is specialized in younger artists. Since Brussels hosts no real contemporary art museum, it is the newly born (December 2006) Wiels art center that concentrates all the hopes. In Flanders, three institutions are worth citing. In Ghent, the Smak museum hosts arts created after WW2, as well as very well attended exhibitions. Close to Ghent, in Deurle, the Dhont-Daenens museum invites contemporary artists to show their works. In Antwerp, the MuHKA is the other Flemish pole in contemporary art.

Culture and cultural policies are decentralized, and the federal government is responsible for a very small number of important institutions, in particular, the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique and the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, both in Brussels. Since financial means are very lean, additions to these collections are very rare. The situation is somewhat better in the Flemish Community, which recently could afford buying (in London!) a masterpiece by Panamarenko, the "Prova Car".

### **Belgian artists on international markets**

Celebrated Old Masters such as Brueghel and Rubens are of course sold on international markets, but quite surprisingly, this is also the case for more contemporary artists. Ginsburgh and Mertens (1994) show that among the 50 most expensive Belgian painters (selected on the basis of their average price between 1962 and 1992), 30 are sold more often on international markets than in Belgium. This is obviously so for René Magritte,

Paul Delvaux, James Ensor, Fernand Khnopff and Pierre Alechinsky, but also for Jules Schmalzigaug, Theo Van Rysselberghe, Edward and Gérard Portielje, Jean-Baptiste Madou, Georges Lemmen, Willy Finch, Félicien Rops, Alfred Stevens, Eugène Verboeckhoven and many others. It is hard to assess whether these are bought by Belgian or international collectors. One of the versions of “L'Empire des Lumières” by Magritte fetched \$11.5 millions at Christie's New York in 2002. Some contemporary painters such as Luc Tuymans are very successful.

### **Legal issues and taxation<sup>6</sup>**

A reduced 6% *value added tax* (VAT) is levied on imports. No VAT is due on sales between individuals. The normal 21% rate on the total price is applicable to transactions by professionals though they may opt to apply the rate on their margin only, in which case the professional buyer cannot recoup the VAT. Artists are allowed to charge a reduced 6 % VAT when they sell directly to a gallery or to a private collector.

There exists no *wealth tax* in Belgium, and *capital gains* by individuals on occasional sales are not taxed. *Donations* to recognized cultural institutions are tax deductible, though they cannot exceed 10% of the donor's income, and are subject to an upper limit of euros 320,000; donations by firms cannot exceed 5% of profits, and subject to an upper limit of euros 500,000. Donations between individuals under authentic deeds are taxed (3 to 7%, according to the family ties). Donations without deed (“don manuel”) are subject to the condition that the donor is still alive three years after his gift. *Inheritance taxes*: The cultural property of the deceased person is valued, and taxes are due. The rates are different in the three Belgian regions (Brussels, Flanders, Wallonia), depend on the family ties between survivors and the deceased and the scale increase with total value. Though the *acceptance in lieu* law was drafted ten years ago, it took some time to get it working.<sup>7</sup> *Transfers* to cultural institutions by the deceased are subject to taxes.

*Droit de suite* applies to all acts of resale involving professionals (and not only to auctions). It is levied on the price of all works resold, up to 70 years after the artist's death. The rate is declining with the value of the work (4% for works under euro 50,000, 3% on the part between euros 50,001 and 200,000, etc.). In general, the rules follow the EU Directive, which is not yet fully integrated into Belgian law.

---

<sup>6</sup> More details can be found in Lambrechts (2006).

<sup>7</sup> Note that the Flemish government did recently (October 2006) accept in lieu the Pre-Columbian Janssen collection.

## References

- Bounameaux, H. and De Baere, B. (2006), *Contemporary Art in Belgium 2007*, Brussels: Best of Publishing.
- De Marchi, N. and J. Van Miegroet (2006), The history of art markets, in V. Ginsburgh and D. Throsby, eds., *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture*, Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Ginsburgh, V. and S. Mertens (1994), Le peinture belge moderne et contemporaine. Evolution des prix dans les salles de ventes internationales, 1962-1992, *Bulletin du Crédit Communal* 190, 57-80.
- Ginsburgh, V. and S. Mertens (1995), La peinture belge et la situation des salles de ventes belges face à la concurrence internationale, *Reflets et Perspectives de la Vie Economique* 34, 187-208.
- Lambrecht, L. (2006), Tax and Art: Belgium, *The Art Newspaper* 172, September 2006, 7-8.
- Renneboog, L. and T. Van Houtte (2000), From realism to surrealism: Investing in Belgian art, *Cahiers Economiques de Bruxelles* 165, 69-106.

## Authors

Bounameaux is CEO of a Brussels art expertise company. He is also President of the Chambre Belge des Experts en Oeuvres d'Art and lecturer at Université Libre de Bruxelles.

Ginsburgh is honorary professor of economics at Université Libre de Bruxelles. He has published or edited some 15 books and over 150 articles in scientific journals. He is coeditor (with David Throsby) of the *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006).

Share. Tweet. Share. Share. Email. Comments. Are you ready for a wonderful virtual trip around the world? Today I've combined 100 most famous landmarks all over the world in a simple list for you. They are the most recognizable images of the modern world and the most photographed. That's why taking a superior point and shoot camera can be a great idea! Enjoy the photos below and tell us how many of these you have already visited and where you will go next. Remote Working Hack : Doesn't matter whether you're in US or France you can still be a productive professional by remotely access A few historical (and pre-historical) landmarks in AI. Isabelle Bloch. LTCI, Télécom Paris. A few references. Pierre Marquis, Odile Papini, Henri Prade: Some Elements for a Prehistory of Artificial Intelligence in the Last Four Centuries - ECAI 2014. Pierre Marquis, Odile Papini, Henri Prade: Eléments pour une histoire de l'Intelligence artificielle, in Panorama de l'Intelligence Artificielle. Ses Bases Méthodologiques, ses Développements, Vol. I, 1-39, Cepadues, 2014. Jamal Atif: Intelligence Artificielle : enjeux et perspectives pour l'enseignement supérieur et la recherche - Présentation à la CPU, 2018. I. Bloch (Telecom Paris). Symbolic AI. See more ideas about Historical landmarks, Wonders of the world, Places to go. Few parts of the world can claim so rich a store of art, architecture, music, and food or so intense a range of natural beauty, from craggy mountains to verdant hills to coasts of shattering beauty. No list of "bests" or "tops" from among the thousands of possibilities could be definitive. So consider. Edinburgh Castle. Historical Landmark, Architectural Landmark. Facebook. Email. The National Monument on top of Calton Hill is known by many monikers: Edinburgh's Disgrace, Edinburgh's Folly and The Pride and Poverty of Scotland, to name a few. The monument was funded by public subscription, intended to be Scotland's tribute to the Scottish soldiers and sailors who fought and perished in the Napoleonic Wars. If you think the best National Historic Landmarks are located out east, think again! Are you yearning for a trip out east to explore a few of the National Historic Landmarks that make this country so unique? Don't spend your money on expensive plane tickets, hotels and other travel costs; just visit one of these 13 Historic Landmarks located right here in Colorado: Please note, Shenandoah-Dives Mill is temporarily closed. We're aware that these uncertain times are limiting many aspects of life.