

Brussels, 18 September 2015

Official inauguration of the new Belfius Art Gallery, attended by the Michel I federal government

A panorama of five centuries of Belgian art Open to the public on two Saturdays per month from 17 October 2015

18 September saw the official inauguration of the new Belfius Art Gallery, located on the 32nd floor of the Belfius Tower in the heart of Brussels. The occasion was attended by Prime Minister Charles Michel and the members of the Belgian federal government. During a tour of the gallery, they became the first to view a selection of the unique Belfius art collection on display in the bank's new exhibition space. With more than 4,300 items, the Belfius Art Collection is not only the largest collection of Belgian art in the country, but with its unusual location 118 metres above the ground, the new Belfius Art Gallery is also the highest private art gallery in Belgium and possibly also in Europe. As part of the bank's social commitment to bring culture closer to the people, Belfius is also launching a series of initiatives to share its art collection even more with the general public.

“Belfius Open Art”

Following the move of all Belfius staff from the Pachéco building, which initially housed the collection of artworks, to the Belfius Tower on the Place Rogier in Brussels, the decision was taken to create a new exhibition space for the collection.

As part of its aim to bring culture closer to people, Belfius also considers a duty to share this art collection with the largest number, through numerous initiatives.

So, under the motto of “Belfius Open Art”, on 17 October 2015 Belfius will open the doors of the **Belfius Art Gallery** on two Saturdays per month. Just as in the past, visually handicapped visitors will also be able to acquaint themselves with the collection on specially adapted tours of the exhibition.

At the present time, some sixty exhibits are on display. Undoubtedly, the stars of the current show are the two extremely rare oil sketches *'The Rape of the Sabines'* and *'The Reconciliation of the Romans and Sabines'*, by Peter Paul Rubens, which can be viewed again for a limited time by the public for the first time in years. There are many other masterpieces to admire, too, from artists such as René Magritte, Rik Wouters, Constant Permeke, Paul Delvaux, Jan Fabre and Ann Veronica Janssens. The selection of works on display will be rotated on a regular basis so that as much as possible of the entire Belfius collection can be exhibited.

To supplement to these 'live' visits to the gallery, art-lovers can now also embark on a 'virtual' discovery of the works on display via the **new website** at **www.belfius.be/art**.

In addition to the exhibitions at the Belfius Art Gallery itself, the bank also regularly **lends works** and stages exhibitions elsewhere in the country in conjunction with Belgian museums (such as the Musée d'Ixelles, the Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art (S.M.A.K.) in Ghent and the Rops Museum in Namur). At the present time, there are around ninety pieces from the collection on loan across the whole country.

Belfius invests in young Belgian talent

Belfius has always considered the conservation and management of its collection to be its social responsibility. The opening of the new Belfius Art Gallery is the ultimate confirmation that Belfius will continue to bear that responsibility in the future. It is also its express desire and intention, as a locally based bank-insurer, to retain the core of the collection as a single unit in Belgium and to manage it actively, professionally and in a true museum spirit.

Belfius continues to underline its role in the community by investing in young Belgian artists. The aim of this programme is to assist up-and-coming talents whose work makes a great addition to the collection.

For example, the Belfius Art Collection was recently expanded to include work by the young Belgian talents, Meggy Rustamova, Thomas Lerooy and Rinus Van de Velde, which will also be on display in the Belfius Art Gallery shortly. The focus in selecting new talent is mainly on painting, sculpture and video, but other disciplines such as photography and graphic art are also included.

Practical matters

You can obtain more information and register for a visit to the Belfius Art Gallery via the website at **www.belfius.be/art**. Please bear in mind that places are limited.

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