



LOOKING FOR
**THE END
OF THE
WORLD!**

**A CLIMATE EXPEDITION
ABOARD THE 'BELGICA'**

#BelgicaForClimate

**FREE EXHIBITION
04.10.23 > 04.02.24
BELvue Museum, Brussels
www.belvue.be**

BELvue
m.u.s.e.u.m.
King Baudouin
Foundation
The Brussels Times
LaLibre.be
DFT



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INTRODUCTION

King Baudouin Foundation celebrates 125 years of Belgica and raises awareness among young people about climate change

Belgium was among the very first countries to explore the Antarctic continent. A new exhibition in Brussels to celebrate its pioneering first scientific expedition offers intriguing insights into how the global climate – and that of Antarctica in particular – has changed in the 125 years since the crew of the steamship Belgica became the first people ever to spend a winter on the southern polar ice.

“In search of... the end of the world!” runs from 4 October 2023 to 4 February 2024 at the King Baudouin Foundation’s BELvue museum. Visitors will embark on a voyage of their own, into the past, present and future of Antarctica, to a planet that is gradually reaching the limits of its resources, and discover how they can help steer us toward a sustainable new world.

The exhibition recalls the extraordinary human achievement of the two-year journey as well as its vast trove of data and observations – which are still being drawn on by today’s scientists. Commanded by Belgian naval officer Adrien de Gerlache, the small,

multinational crew, from six countries, undertook the first major international scientific expedition to Antarctica, eschewing the territorial and commercial ambitions typical of the age.

The Antarctica they left behind is not the same today: the ice cap is melting, species are under threat... Our Earth is reaching its limits. The extraction and consumption of natural resources is causing significant climate disruption. The exhibition takes the pulse of a planet that is running out of breath, challenging our own survival. Luckily, the exhibition gives visitors practical and concrete tools to offer both our planet and humankind new perspectives on the future.

It is time for us to become active citizens in this new world; for everyone, both as individuals and as members of the human community, to take action to create more sustainable ways of living for all of us. The audience, and youngsters in particular, will also be able to explore practical actions that offer new prospects for the future of humanity.

The exhibition, designed by Jill Peeters (geographer, specialist “Climate Awareness” and meteorologist at VTM) and in a scenography by Pièce Montée, is an initiative of the King Baudouin Foundation and was realised with the cooperation of the non-profit organisation de Gerlache Polar Memory, the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, the Royal Library of Belgium and the Botanic Garden of Meise.

The exhibition opens on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the departure of the Belgica to Antarctica.

SETTING SAIL FOR... THE END OF THE WORLD

A climate expedition aboard the Belgica

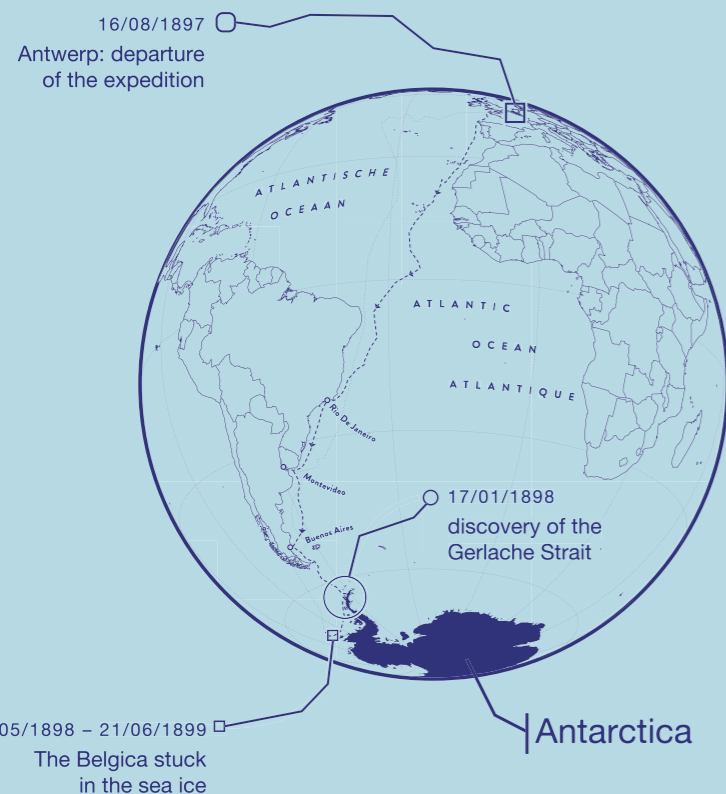
125 years ago, Belgian commander Adrien de Gerlache headed a team of young adventurers and scientists setting sail for Antarctica. None of them knew what awaited them on their journey to this terra incognita down south. Their months-long battle with the ice not only resulted in impressive tales of der-ring-do, but also a wealth of scientific data.

Since their expedition, our Earth has been reaching its limits. Once again, we are exposing ourselves to an experiment into the unknown: the climate crisis. Around the world, scientists are joining forces to chart climate challenges and ways in which we might solve them.



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Are you prepared for the unpredictable? Join us on a voyage of discovery through the past, the present, and the future. Find out why the whale is our most important ally in the battle against climate breakdown, and explore what role you can play in the most crucial mission of our age.



The exhibition spans three rooms, each with their own theme:

- past* • **Voyage into the unknown**
The Belgica's scientific expedition and discoveries
- today* • **Dive into the deep**
The vital importance of Antarctica, the whale, and climate research
- future* • **Change course**
Climate actions to turn the tide

VOYAGE INTO THE UNKNOWN

The Belgica's scientific expedition and discoveries



© de Gerlache Polar Memory asbl/vzw

How do you make your way out of a seemingly hopeless situation? 125 years ago, the Belgica found itself frozen stuck in pack ice on its voyage of discovery to the mysterious southern continent. Cut off from civilisation, Adrien de Gerlache and his crew drifted into the polar night. Unplanned, these eighteen young men – from sailors to astronomers, biologists and meteorologists, each with their own dreams and ambitions – were forced to spend the winter in the Antarctic, *'adrift aboard a ghost ship'*.

But their physical tribulations and the months spent battling the ice and themselves proved that desperation is the mother of all invention. The crew's unplanned winter in Antarctica resulted in a wealth of scientific observations and dis-

coveries. From their *'floating laboratory'*, the men made pioneering advances in the fields of biology, meteorology, glaciology and geology. The unique data they gathered is still used by scientists to this day.

In the end, determination and teamwork allowed the Belgica's crew to hack their way out of the ice. The men narrowly avoided a second, potentially fatal winter in the Antarctic. After their return home, it took more than forty years for all the Belgica's scientific discoveries to be published.

Find out what makes the historic Belgian Antarctic expedition so special and let yourself be inspired by these climate pioneers.



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1897 1898 1899



DIVE INTO THE DEEP

The vital importance of Antarctica, the whale, and climate research

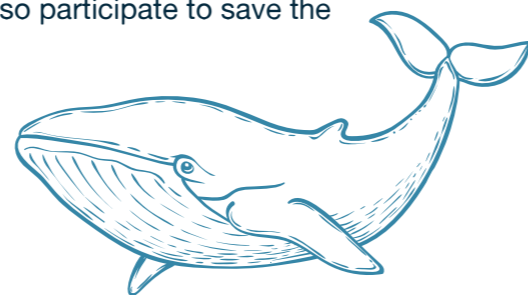
Are we too headed for *'the end of the world'*? Which avenues are scientists and climate researchers exploring today? Since that journey of the first Antarctic explorers, much has changed. More than 600 satellites circle our planet these days, and not a single stretch of terra incognita seems to remain uncharted.

But there is no need to travel to distant planets to make new discoveries. Every single day, scientists continue to learn things we didn't know before about life on earth. They dig and dive ever deeper to try and understand how our terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems work, and what role we as humans play in this complex whole. Scientists are once again looking beyond their own fields of knowledge to cooperate with other specialists, much like the versatile crew aboard the Belgica once did.

And it is high time for this. Because humankind has disrupted nature in worrying ways, and we are starting to face the consequences. In a place like Antarctica, which is so sensitive to the slightest climate shifts, these changes have already become disconcertingly clear.

It is as if we are exposing our entire world to a massive experiment. We have embarked on an unknown course. This makes some people angry, anxious, or despondent. Others remain hopeful. The good news is that we know that even the most desperate situations can still lead to successful actions and results.

Look nature's strength straight in the eye and exit this museum as a passionate whale ambassador! The whale plays an important role: it is a metaphor for the depletion of the planet's resources and the threats it poses, but also for the real hope for a new, liveable world. Because - as the exhibition makes clear - if we save the whale, we also participate to save the planet.



2023

CHANGE COURSE

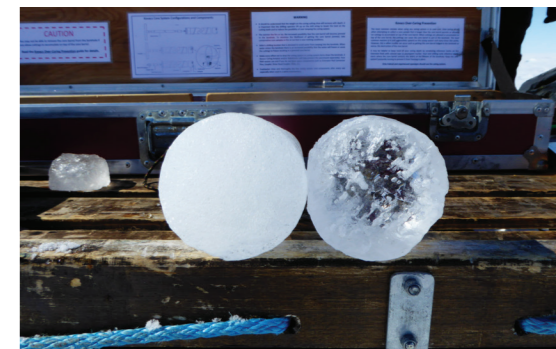
Climate actions to turn the tide

How can we avoid the end of the world as we know it? How can we remain hopeful in the face of the unknown? What role can you play in this major societal mission? And who else has already boarded the ship?

Our actions (and lack thereof) these next few years will determine the future of all life on earth. Scientists already have sufficient knowledge to steer us towards a potential new, flourishing world. But the clock is ticking and the voyage will not be easy.

This expedition will not take us to an unknown land. But it will safely guide us through an uncertain future. Just like the polar explorers of yore, we are preparing for the unpredictable and plucking up the courage to do what has to be done. From terra to futerra incognita, so to say.

Everything starts with impactful steps taken by an ever-growing number of people who want to turn the tide. A crew of citizens, major companies and governments that take responsibility. Students, grandparents, teachers, CEOs, workers, farmers, scientists, politicians, activists, economists, designers, artists, lawyers: we need everyone on board. Together, we can change course.



Explore what role your fellow citizens are already playing today, and what you can do to help. *The future begins today!*



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THE FACES BEHIND THE EXPO



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HENRI DE GERLACHE



Since 1998, **Henri de Gerlache** has been writing and directing documentaries that have been broadcast around the world.

He started his career by producing a series of seven films on the highest peaks of the world's different continents, ending with Mt. Everest in 2003 (*Les Regards de Sagarmatha*). While continuing to produce adventure and discovery films, de Gerlache also began directing music films (*Fauré un Requiem*, 2001; *Les Larmes de Saint Pierre*, 2010) and artist portraits that blended fiction and documentary (*Magritte, le Jour et la Nuit*, 2008, and *Le Choix de Peindre, Vincent Van Gogh* for TV channel Arte).

In 2007, he directed *L'Antarctique en Héritage*, a semi-fictional documentary based on exceptional eyewitness accounts and archi-

JILL PEETERS



Jill Peeters is best known in Belgium as *'the weather lady'* on TV channel VTM. For nearly two decades, Peeters was DPG Media's very own ray of sunshine, with a passion for clear communication. (Best Weather Presentation, EMS 2018; Wablieft! Award 2017)

During her years reporting the weather, Peeters transformed into a climate ambassador and started pioneering impactful climate communication. (Climate Change Communication Award CBN-E 2009) She has authored multiple books on weather and climate and produced TV programmes for a broad audience. (Press Prize for Sustainable Development FRDO-CFDD 2016)

Peeters is frequently invited to participate in media broadcasts, meetings and debates on climate-awareness and sustainability. In 2021, she hosted a successful, five-part series for TV channel Canvas, *'Wat houdt ons tegen?' (What's Stopping Us?)*, VRT NU). Policymakers regularly consult Peeters and appreciate her dedicated work to make the public more climate-aware. (Badge of Honour of the Flemish Community, 2018)

Jill Peeters is the founder of and brains behind Climate Without Borders, an international network of and for meteorologists. (Best Climate Solution, CMCC 2018) Her involvement in international climate projects has also caught the attention of the UN, WMO, IPCC and UNFCCC. UN Secretary-General Guterres asked her to co-found the Climate Leadership Network, which was officially launched during the 2017 Climate Week in New York.

A geographer and analytical scientist at heart, Peeters has been exploring social sciences in recent years.

val data never before shown to the public, in which he told the story of his ancestors' adventure as they set out to explore Antarctica in service to science.

Next, de Gerlache directed *Les Ailes du Soleil*, on Bertrand Piccard's solar aircraft, which was shown on TV channels like Arte, RTBF and Discovery. He also produced two films on his native land, *Belle Belgique*, in which he explored Belgium from an aerial viewpoint and interviewed unique individuals.

All of de Gerlache's films seek to gain a better understanding of the world, through

carefully composed stories, imagery and directing. De Gerlache regularly works for France Télévision, Arte and RTBF. In 2017, his film *La Belge Histoire du Festival de Cannes* was part of the official competition (Cannes Classics) at the 70th Cannes Film Festival.

When he founded Belgica Films in 2020, de Gerlache set up his own production structure in Brussels (Alizé Production) and Paris (Arctic Productions). He is also a screenwriter, author, and president of the company SA Galeries, which manages an exhibition space and arthouse cinema in the centre of Brussels (Cinema Galeries).



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THE BELVUE MUSEUM

The BELvue is both a museum and a centre for democracy. Through a permanent exhibition on Belgium and the country's history, temporary exhibitions, and workshops on political and economic citizenship, justice, colonial history, and social coexistence, the BELvue helps visitors understand and interpret modern-day Belgium.

Themes are presented through stories of present-day individuals, which are then

contextualised historically. A modern and original way to gain an understanding of Belgium's past and present.

The BELvue is managed by the King Baudouin Foundation, whose mission is to build a better society. Both in Belgium, Europe and elsewhere in the world, the Foundation is an actor for change and innovation, serving the public interest and increasing social cohesion.

THE KING BAUDOUIIN FOUNDATION

The King Baudouin Foundation's mission is to contribute to building a better society in Belgium, Europe and elsewhere in the world.

It is an actor for change and innovation, serving the public interest and increasing social cohesion. The Foundation endeavours to maximise its impact through capacity-building among organisations and people. It encourages effective philanthropy among individuals and businesses.

The Foundation's key values are integrity and transparency, the promotion of solidarity, respect for diversity, and pluralism and independence. Its vision for the future is to anchor its activities at every level in Belgium (local, regional and federal); keep positioning itself on the European stage; and, through the Myriad network, promote cross-border and international philanthropy elsewhere the world.

The King Baudouin Foundation was created in 1976, to mark the 25th anniversary of Belgium's King Baudouin's reign.

Climate, Environment and Biodiversity programme of the King Baudouin Foundation

This exhibition is part of a KBF programme that focuses on responding to climate and environmental challenges.

Protecting natural resources to fight climate change and developing sustainable responses to the needs of society.

Fighting global warming, preserving biodiversity, managing waste, ... Today's environmental challenges are many. Solving them lies at the heart of development in our societies. The King Baudouin Foundation has been mindful of these questions for many years, which is why it acts to protect and promote the world's natural resources, in response to social and economic challenges.

The Foundation's activities encourage policymakers to take decisions that benefit the climate. It supports the transition to a circular economy, invests in environmental protection and biodiversity, and contributes to improving animal wellbeing.

www.kbs-frb.be



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Practical info on “*Setting sail for...
The end of the world: A climate expedition
aboard the ‘Belgica’*”



EXHIBITION

When

4 October 2023 up to and including 4 February 2024

Where

BELvue museum
place des Palais 7 1000 Brussels

Opening hours

Monday (only pre-booked groups)
09:30 to 17:00

Tuesday to Friday
09:30 to 17:00

Saturday and Sunday
11:00 to 19:00

School holidays, bank holidays
09:30 to 17:00

Languages

Exhibition in Dutch, French and English.

FREE ENTRY

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Download hi-res photos

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