

## The Insomniac Sam Steverlynck



# Dancing to the modernists

The timing couldn't have been worse: just as Art Brussels began, with its many lavish banquets and wild after parties, my doctor prescribed me several weeks of rest. She also advised me to write about gardening instead of partying and to get a steady relationship, but that's another story. After spending five long days in bed, I decided to go and take in some fresh sea air at Ostend.

Ostend has always attracted sick people, trying to recover from pneumonia, tuberculosis or other 19th-century-sounding diseases. One of its most famous visitors was the late great Marvin Gaye, who didn't go there in search of a cure but more in a futile attempt to leave his sinful life of drugs and prostitutes behind. Yet he quickly returned to his old bad habits, falling in with the local hookers and pushers in no time. Despite his occasional slips, he enjoyed his year and a half in Ostend. The intro of *Sexual Healing* is even inspired by the tidal movement of the North Sea, which might sound far-fetched at first hand, but makes sense once you've entered the waters yourself.

As I passed the Royal Esplanade, the promenade designed by King Leopold II, I noticed a construction that drew my attention. It turned out to be a contemporary reinterpretation of the Aubette, a

multifunctional venue with walls in geometric compositions, designed by Theo Van Doesburg in collaboration with Hans Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp in Strasbourg in 1928. These modernists joined their talents together to break the gap between art and life by constructing a walk-through artwork where people could dance, play billiards or watch movies.

For the 2008 Ostend version baptised 'Odette', curator Christophe De Jaeger invited the young up-and-coming artists Nick Ervinck and Boy & Erik Stappaerts to create a multifunctional (dance) hall in the Koninklijke Gaanderijen, composed of coloured squares following the modernist prescriptions.

At the opening party of this temporary night club, I spotted several familiar faces from Brussels. Strangely enough, the oysters and champagne at the reception seemed to have a better effect on me than my prescribed medication. The smell of the fresh paint of the just finished art work left me feeling slightly queasy, however.

While sipping from my glass, I suddenly started realising I was not only suffering from overtiredness, but maybe also from a work injury. Checking out new night clubs wasn't maybe the cleverest thing to be doing during my sick leave. As I could already imagine my doctor's face, I left my unfinished glass and headed straight back to bed, in order to sleep for a few more weeks.

**'Odette', below:** upcoming events include a hip-hop competition, a card evening and a fashion show. Until May 18. Koninklijke Gaanderijen, Ostend. See: [www.vrijstaat-o.be](http://www.vrijstaat-o.be)

