

Ambassador Gutman Visits The Leie Region

De Streekkrant, Wednesday 31 October 2012.

Deinze/Sint-Martens-Latem – Lat week, Ambassador Howard Gutman was a guest in Deinze and Latem. The theme of the visit was art and gastronomy, two of the strong points of the Leie region.

Howard Gutman, or ‘the first tourist’ as he likes to describe himself, has 12 communes to go. The US ambassador is visiting all Belgian communes, last week it was the turn of the communes on the Leie Sint-Martens-Latem and Deinze. In Deinze Gutman traveled to the museum of Deinze and the Leie region by bike. Here he felt at home immediately through the photo exposition of Deinze native Titus Simoens. Simoens immersed himself in the world of cowboys. The ambassador and his wife were also touched by the museum’s masterpiece the ‘Beet Harvest’ of Emile Claus. After the museum visit the Ambassador and his company went to the grain distillery Filiers. There were strong security measures during the visit. The visit was kept a strict secret and was guided by state security. Six agents have been used. Says police chief Benny Van Wabeke. “Two soldiers as escort, the rest on the public roads. For a visit such as this, there is a certain level of security that needs to be held.” At Filliers – ‘Filjers’ in Gutman’s word – the CEO Bernard Filiers gave the tour of the distillery. “What? A company of 5 generations and you don’t have a shirt? Cone on, you should have your own T-shirt!”, said an enthusiastic Gutman. The Ambassador also gave some free Marketing advice. “If you are going to export something, put ‘Belgian’ in front of it: ‘Belgian gin,’ ‘Belgian whiskey’. Believe me, it sells. Americans love products from the old world.” A tip that Bernard Filiers and his team gladly accepted.