

He builds and dismantles
Crystal Mirror 70 times a
year but still gets emotional

I'm sad each time I take a tent down



Picture: KUA CHEE SIONG

By Syahirah Anwar

sanwar@sph.com.sg

TENTS, by nature, are temporary set-ups. But master tent-builder Rik Klessens (above), who set up the 22m tent for The Crystal Mirror at the Padang recently, just hates to see them go.

Despite having been around tents since he was 15 years old, taking down a tent after each show still makes him sad.

"Putting up the tent is the most beautiful thing because it signifies the start of a carnival," said the 44-year-old Belgian.

"When we have to take it down, it is quite sad because the carnival is over.

"But we always think positive because when the tent is taken down, it means that there is another location for us to head to."

Like his beloved tents, Mr Klessens too lives a nomadic life. He has slept more times in hotels than in his own home.

Travelling with his wife of 25 years, Madam Lilian van Gorp, 42, the tent-meister has had to make some sacrifices.

The couple had to give up time with their three children when they were younger.

"It was hard for us not to see them any time we wanted to," said Madam van Gorp.

"They would always ask us when we are coming back. But that was in the past. Now that they're older, they are independent."

Their eldest son is now 22 years old and manages the tent business back in Belgium.

They also have a pair of twins – a boy and a girl – who are 18.

Mr Klessens told The New Paper that he erects and dismantles The Crystal Mirror about 70 times a year.

Singapore is the show's first Asian stop. It features the Klessens' largest tent, with a capacity of 400.

Tent-building has been in Mr Klessens' family since 1912 when his grandfather bought the first tent. They now have nine, said Mr Klessens, who took over the business from his father in 1984.

The tents are built in their workshop in Belgium, fitted neatly into a container and shipped out. Like the Klessens, travelling is not a problem at all.

SHOW INFO

WHAT: The Crystal Mirror

WHERE: Padang

WHEN: Till 15 Apr

TICKETS: \$159, \$210 and \$249 on Sun, Tue, Wed and Thu; \$179, \$239 and \$279 on Fri and Sat. VIP tickets at \$320 upwards. All tickets available from Sistic at 6348 5555 or www.sistic.com.sg.