



FLANDERS TODAY



Nic Balthazar, p.2

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Laura Verlinden and Greg Timmermans in *Ben X*

Flanders finds the X factor

A new generation of filmmakers is changing the face of Flemish cinema

Lisa Bradshaw

Flemish directors have worked overtime this year, and the world is taking notice. As more funding pours in and filmmakers take greater creative risks, the future looks brighter than ever. *Ben X*, the new film by Flem-

ish director Nic Balthazar, started making headlines weeks before its opening in Belgium – thanks to pulling down the three top prizes at the prestigious Montreal World Film Festival early last month. The awards and the four-minute-long standing ovation the film

received confirmed what Balthazar and others in the cast and crew already suspected – that they had made something very special. The rest of Belgium agrees: *Ben X* is the number one film in Belgium, and a special jury selected it as the country's entry for a foreign-language

Oscar nomination.

The young Flemish actor Greg Timmermans makes a remarkable film debut in this kinetic drama about a teenager with mild autism who is relentlessly bullied by his classmates and uses online video gaming as a way to feel powerful.

Critics are particularly impressed by the film's technique – Balthazar employs a fast-moving, hand-held camera and sharp fluctuations in sound to show what life feels like from Ben's point of view (see our interview with Balthazar on page 2).

Continued on page 3



Arts

Ghent's freshly restored Museum of Fine Arts is hosting a major exhibition of British Art. We look at the paintings and reveal the historical links between Ghent and Britain.

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Active

Flanders is awash in fantastic saunas – but how to choose the right one? Here are three saunas that have something special to offer.

12

Interview

Swedish management expert Anders Asplund recently moved to Ghent to take up a post as dean of Vlerick Business School. He tells us about his impression of the business climate in Flanders.

16

Out this week: Flanders gets English newsweekly

Derek Blyth

This week sees the launch of a new English weekly, Flanders Today. The aim is to provide English-speaking readers with a quality newspaper covering Flemish news, business, arts, leisure and lifestyle. As well as regular features, the newsweekly will contain special reports on themes like Flemish photography, business start-ups, talking Dutch, walks on Flemish trails and food from Flanders.

The news magazine is produced by the Flemish VUM group and edited in Brussels at the offices of Ackroyd Publications, publisher of *The Bulletin* and www.xpats.com. The initial print run will be 20,000

copies, and the print version will also be published online at www.flanderstoday.eu.

Flanders Today will be available free at selected points throughout Flanders, including international hotels, cultural venues and Flemish tourist offices. It will also be sent free of charge to subscribers in Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, France and the Netherlands (turn to page 8 for a subscription form).

Those living outside the catchment area can subscribe to a weekly e-newsletter using the online form at www.flanderstoday.eu. The news magazine can also be downloaded in pdf format from the website.

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

Kasteel van Horst

Every Flemish person knows the Kasteel van Horst. This is the castle of the Rode Ridder, they tell you. And if you still look dumb, they will explain that the Rode Ridder, or Red Knight, was one of the great heroes of Flemish comic books.

Keep probing and you'll find out that he was a courageous mediaeval knight in a hugely successful comic strip by Willy Vandersteen. He was called Johan, and he wandered the Flemish countryside rescuing beautiful young women from perilous situations.

It's easy to understand why Vandersteen, who came from Antwerp, chose Horst as the setting for his legends. This is a perfect mediaeval castle. The walls are overgrown with weeds, the window panes cracked, and the tower looks as if the slightest breeze will topple it into the moat.

So why go there? The main reason is the setting. Horst Castle stands in beautiful rolling Flemish countryside with narrow creeks, reed-lined ponds and

rows of poplar trees. Take a hike across the fields, and you come across a low hill planted with one of Flanders' only vineyards.

The interior has barely been touched since Maria Anna Van den Tympel lived there more than 300 years ago. The rooms are cold and bare, but one magnificent stucco ceiling has miraculously survived. It is decorated with scenes from Ovid based on a book owned by Maria Anna.

The tower now needs some urgent repair work, but visitors are still allowed to climb the old staircase to the top level and look across an unspoiled Flemish landscape.

The building was recently bought by the government department of Forests and Nature, and there are ambitious plans to restore it and inject life into the empty rooms. The first project is a series of readings from the Rode Ridder legends. So now you can find out what all the fuss is about.

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www.erfgoed-vlaanderen.be

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**FACE OF FLANDERS****Nic Balthazar**

A few years ago, a Flemish literacy organisation asked Nic Balthazar to write a book "for young people who don't read." The film journalist and TV personality thought, "well, most young people don't read, so that's a big market."

But they read this book. Soon after *Niets was alles wat hij zei* (*Nothing Was All He Said*) was published in 2002, it became a top seller in Flanders. When a survey asked 1,200 Flemish students to name their favourite book, Balthazar's came in second (after *Brigid Jones' Diary*). "We knew we were onto something," he smiles.

Indeed. After the success of a stage adaptation two years ago, Balthazar turned the story into the film *Ben X*, which won the three top prizes last month at the Montreal World Film Festival and has been chosen as Belgium's entry for an Oscar nomination. Balthazar, 43, has become an overnight sensation, gracing the covers of news media around the country. "This is more attention than any Belgian film has ever had, I think," says the first-time director. "I'm enjoying every minute of it."

What about this film is striking such a vein? "It's a basic story about injustice," says Balthazar, "and injustice makes everyone mad." Filmed mostly in Ghent, where Balthazar grew up, *Ben X* is the story of a teenager with Asperger's Syndrome (or high-functioning autism), who is capable of integrating into society but who is mercilessly bullied by fellow students. His absent father offers no help; his mother oscillates between anger and desperation. But every day after school, Ben finds joy and freedom in the world of online computer gaming, where he is a powerful adventurer – and has a special relationship with another gamer.

Much of the film's appeal is in its technique: Balthazar uses a shaky camera and a pounding soundtrack featuring Praga Khan and Arno to get across the way the world feels from Ben's point of view. He also brings aspects of the role-playing game onto the screen, mixing animation and live action, fantasy and reality. Sometimes, like Ben, you're not exactly sure which is which.

"I wanted the story to be from the main character not about him," Balthazar explains. "There are plenty of stories about people with autism, but not so many from their perspective. And their perspective is so intriguing. They are walking around in our world, dressed like us, looking like us, but they are totally different. They see the same things in a completely different way."

Balthazar's initial inspiration was the 2002 suicide of 17-year-old Tim Rombaut, who jumped from Ghent's Gravensteen castle to put an end to the constant cruelties injected by other young people. "It makes me sick to my stomach," Balthazar says. "Tim wrote in his last letter that he could not take it anymore – that he'd taken it for so many years, he could not go on any longer. That is never necessary. *Ben X* is a story that dares to talk about it."

After its opening weekend last month, the movie hit number one at the box office in Flanders and is now number one in Belgium. Balthazar calls that "a miracle" considering it's a tough film to market based on age group or genre. "The whole film was all or nothing, which is my style," he remarks. "If they ask me, 'do you want to make a popular film or a creative film?' I can't choose. I want to make both." According to the judges in Montreal and the Belgian public, he has done both.

Lisa Bradshaw

TALKING DUTCH**notes on language****Wielrennen**

I have made great efforts to adapt to life in Flanders. I quickly acquired a taste for unusual Flemish beers like De Koninck and Duvel. I even learned to lower my voice in public places and not to speak about the weather to strangers at bus stops. All in all, fairly easy, almost painless.

Yet, one facet of life here escapes me: the fascination with cycling. Ask Flemings what historic event occurred on 21 July 1969 and they will chorus: Eddy Merckx won the Tour de France for the first time. A few might recall that the Americans were taking a great step for mankind on the moon that day, but the cycle victory remains uppermost in their minds.

Eddy has been in the papers a lot recently. One headline ran: *Waarom Eddy Merckx niet welkom is in Stuttgart*. Do I really want to know why Eddy was not welcome at the cycling world championships in Germany?

Well, apparently, he took some banned substance during his career, and the cycling authorities want to clean up cycling's image. Even the words *fietsen* for cycling and *wielrennen* for cycle racing leave me cold with their suggestions of feet and wheels running. At times I have thought of entering for a quiz on Flemish television: I think – rather smugly – that I could hold my own on most subjects. Then I remember how easily a contestant answered the question: *Wie won Luik-Bastenaken-Luik dit jaar?* I would not have a chance and, what is worse, no one would understand that I was ignorant of the fact that the winner of the race this year was Alejandro Valverde Belmonte.

I have done my best. I have sat through hours of *de Ronde van Frankrijk* in July and still cannot grasp why the one at the front never seems to win and some at the back never even try. I have tried to catch some of my friends' excitement as we watch *wielrenners* pedalling up impossible hills on cobbled lanes preserved especially for such races. One hill in Geraardsbergen is called *de Muur*, (the Wall!) 475 metres long with an incline of up to 20%. And if you do reach the top, you can revive yourself in the aptly named café, 't Hemelrijck – the kingdom of heaven. Yes, I can understand such feats being performed by the heroes of this country, lads like Sven Nys and Tom Boonen. But then I read somewhere that the local postman pedals up *de Muur* every day!

No, if I have the choice, I prefer to walk than get on my bike; for one thing even in a *fiets*-fixated country such as Flanders, separate cycle lanes are rare. However, once a year in September I do jump on my *fiets* for that great Flemish girding event around Brussels, *de Gordel*. So perhaps I am a bit more Flemish than I realise.

Alistair MacLean

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FEATURE



The X factor

Continued from page 1

He also mixes fiction, imagination and documentary to create a prevailing sense of tension.

Ben X is one in a growing number of impressive Flemish movies this year. A new crop of young directors has made the film scene much more interesting over the last few years – and much more marketable, both locally and internationally. The comedy *Man zkt vrouw* recently hit 120,000 ticket sales in Belgium – a big success for a Belgian release. “We’ve increased the output of Flemish film, which has led to a more positive attitude

among people in Belgium,” says Pierre Drouot, head of the Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds (Flanders Audio-visual Fund), which helps finance and promote home grown talent. “A few years ago, going to a Flemish film was kind of an obligation to support our culture. Now it’s more a pleasure.”

The audio-visual fund is largely to thank for the surge in the number of films, as well as the quality. The industry has also been helped by a film investment tax shelter, in place since 2004. The audio-visual fund, a programme of the Flemish government, has led to increased financing, which

has encouraged more filmmakers to pitch their scripts. Two-thirds of the funds go to arthouse projects that are more likely to appeal to the outside world. The number of Flemish films appearing in competition at international festivals has increased proportionately. “At the festivals, they see these new kinds of films being made here like *Ben X* or *Ex-Drummer*. Those movies create the feeling that something is bubbling in Flanders,” says Drouot.

Sometimes a reaction can still surprise them. *Ben X*, for example was expected to be a ‘local project’ without widespread appeal

outside of Belgium. After its showing in Montreal, the film has been picked up by a French distributor and will be released across Europe, Canada and Australia. “*Ben X* is a very good example of a personal movie that can attract a big audience,” says Drouot. “It tells a story that interests a lot of people, and it tells it in a way that people feel connected to.”

online

www.flanders-image.be
www.benx.be

The best of 2007

Aside from *Ben X*, there are several other films this year by Flemish directors you would do well to see – either in the cinema or on DVD.

Dagen zonder lief This second feature by Felix Van Groenin-

gen finds a 20-something returning to Sint-Niklaas from New York to reunite with her old school friends. It’s full of insightful melancholy and wonderful performances by several young Flemish actors.

Surya, from Eloquence to Dawn This beautifully shot docu-

mentary by Laurent Van Lancker starts with a storyteller in Belgium, then travels across Eastern Europe and into Asia, allowing the story to be continued by others, each injecting his or her own personal and cultural viewpoint on what happens next.

Man zkt vrouw The top-grossing Flemish film so far this year, Miel Van Hoogenbemt’s charming comedy stars Jan Decleir as Leopold, a Ghent widower whose lonely retirement leads him to seek a new wife. This is the perfect film to see if you’re learning the language, as it’s low on dialect, and the young Romanian who arrives to help Leopold keep house speaks a wonderfully broken Dutch we can all relate to. *Currently playing across Flanders*

Ex-Drummer Repellent, sinister, pornographic and (gasp!) ‘un-Belgian’ are all words that have



Ex-Drummer

appeared in the press to describe Flanders’ most infamous film of the year – yet no one gave it a bad review. That’s because first-time director Koen Mortier’s graphically violent adaptation of the Herman Brusselmans novel about a makeshift Flemish rock band is also daring, technically inventive and, well, unforgettable.

A joke has been bandied about the offices of *Flanders Today* that it’s illegal to make a Flemish film without Jan Decleir. A bit of an exaggeration, maybe, but he is easily the region’s most prolific actor and has starred in its most celebrated films since the late 1960s: *Het Sacrament*, *Daens*, *De Zaak Alzheimer* and now *Man zkt vrouw* (left). “He is a very, very good actor, and he’s easy to direct because he has a lot of his own ideas,” says Miel Van Hoogenbemt, who made *Man zkt vrouw*. “Sometimes his expressions make me think of Robert De Niro. If he’d been born in America, he’d have the status of De Niro or Al Pacino. But he’s our Jan Decleir.”

Coming soon...

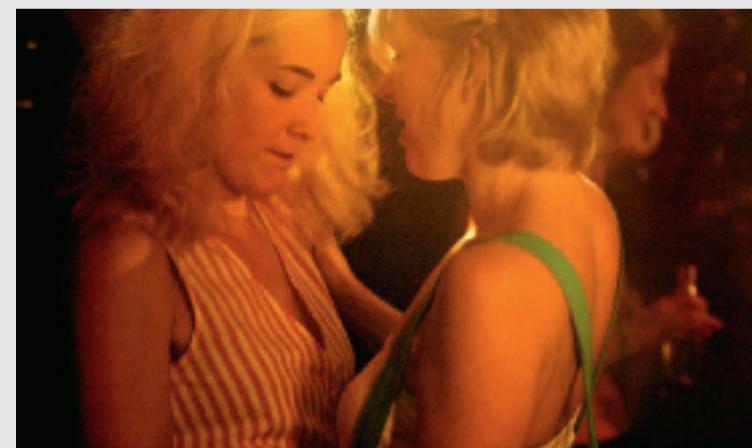
Vermist is the latest from *Team Spirit* and *Buitenspel* director Jan Verheyen, who has focused his attention on darker subjects. When a teenage girl disappears, a team of investigators uncover a secret, sordid past and begin to suspect her father of foul play. This film, which releases on October 31, is in fact the pilot episode of a new VT4 television series of the same name, which will begin airing next year.

Small Gods shows Flanders at its most delightfully surreal. A mysterious young man kidnaps a woman recovering in hospital following a tragic accident. He proceeds to take her on a road trip across Flanders in an old camper. Dimitri Karakatsanis’ feature debut represented Flemish film at the Venice International Film Festival and makes its Belgian premiere this week at the Flanders International Film Festival in Ghent. It opens in Belgium early next year.

In Bruges may not be exactly Flemish – it’s a Hollywood production, and the director and lead actors are Irish – but it does take place in the Flemish city well known as one of the most beautiful in Europe. Shot on location in Brugge early this year, playwright Martin McDonagh’s directorial debut stars Colin Farrell and Brendan Gleeson as two hitmen hiding out in the city and makes the most of its picture-postcard beauty. *In Bruges* will open in Belgium sometime next year.

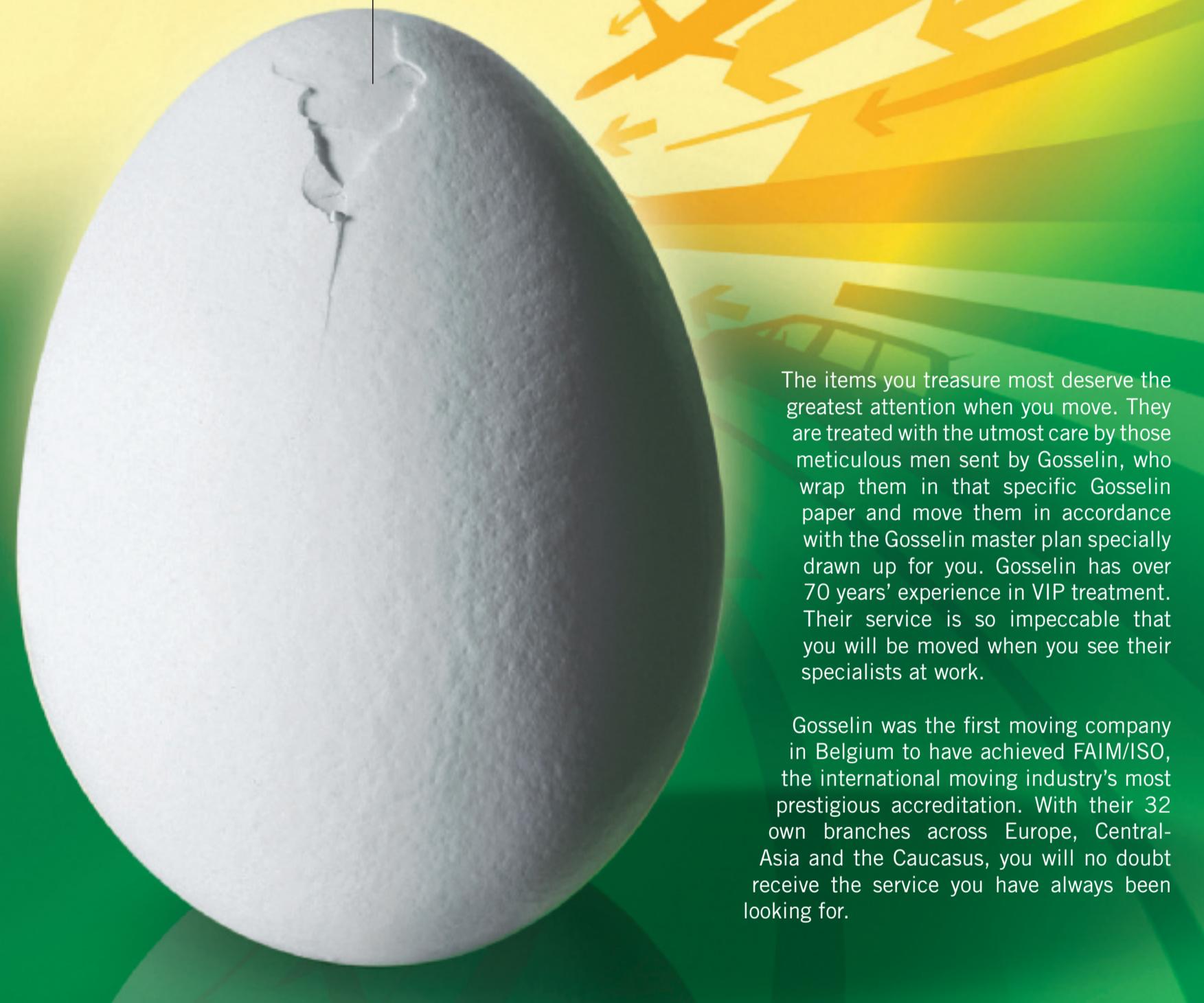


Vermist



Dagen zonder lief

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Life sentence for racist killer

In Antwerp court sentenced Hans Van Themsche, 19, to life imprisonment last Thursday following a trial that attracted huge public attention. Van Themsche went on a killing spree in central Antwerp last year, shooting dead Oulematou Niangadou from Mali and two-year-old Luna Drowart. Van Themsche was also convicted of the attempted murder of Songul Koç, a Turkish woman living in Antwerp.

The sentence came one day after a jury rejected a plea of insanity lodged by the defence lawyer and said that Van Themsche was responsible for his acts. The jury added that the killings were clearly motivated by racist ideas.

A relative of Oulematou Niangadou said that the family was pleased that justice had been done. "If the jury had declared the defendant not accountable for his acts, this would have been unacceptable".

Van Themsche now faces 30 years in prison, but the judge said that the youngster could qualify for an early release despite his horrific crime. Under Belgian law, this means that he can be released at the earliest after serving one-third of his sentence.

The trial is the first case in Belgium in which a defendant has been found guilty of murder motivated by racism. Tom De Meester of the Belgian anti-racism centre said that the verdict had enormous importance for Belgian society. "The jury has made it clear that racism cannot be tolerated."

Belga



Family members leave the Antwerp court

NEWS FLASH



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Energy diplomacy

The Flemish Energy Agency, which promotes the Flemish government's energy policy, has appointed "energy ambassadors" for each of the provinces on the basis of an energy-efficiency survey. The top energy savers are De Panne in West Flanders, Ghent in East Flanders, Boom in Antwerp and Zoutleeuw in Vlaams-Brabant. "The number of residents played no role in the findings," said public works minister Hilde Crevits. "It is the mentality of each city or of each city administration that counts."

Karel Hemmerechts dies

Flemish journalist Karel Hemmerechts, 81, died on Sunday 14 October at his home in Strombeek, near Brussels. Hemmerechts initially wrote for *De Standaard* and later moved to radio broadcasting and television. He is the father of the Flemish novelist Kristien Hemmerechts.

That sinking feeling

Brussels dropped one place this year in the annual European Cities Monitor, compiled by property agents Cushman & Wakefield. The city fell from fourth to fifth place in the ranking, which is based on interviews with 15,000 leading company directors across Europe. The report gave Brussels high marks for its multilingual workforce but criticised it for excessive wage costs.

Antwerp Synagogue bomber "identified"

French police believe that they have identified the man who planted a bomb in 1981 outside a Synagogue in Antwerp, according to a report in the French daily *Le Figaro*. The bomb, which was concealed in a van outside a Synagogue in the diamond district, killed three women and injured 106, as well as causing widespread damage to buildings. Another bomb, planted outside a Synagogue in Paris in 1980, is believed to be the work of the same man. French investigators now want to question the suspect, 55, who has dual Canadian and Lebanese nationality. He now lives in Canada, according to *Le Figaro*.

Slipping Away

Tourism Flanders



Flemish Ardennes: careful where you build

Hundreds of home owners in the Flemish Ardennes have been warned that their houses are in danger from landslides. The warning was issued by a team of geologists based at Leuven University. The danger zone extends around the villages of Kluisbergen, Maarkedal and Horebeke in the picturesque East Flanders hills. The scientists said that many houses were built on unsuitable land and that the risk of landslides increased as more houses were constructed. The Flemish planning minister Dirk Van Mechelen responded to the report by saying that he planned new legislation making it illegal to build on land at risk from landslides. He added that people should stop building in danger zones.

Terror trial begins

Six people went on trial in Brussels on Monday morning accused of helping a Belgian Muslim woman who became a suicide bomber in Iraq. The six are accused of recruiting and training Muriel Degauque for a terrorist mission. Degauque blew herself up in Iraq on 9 November 2005 in a botched attack aimed at US troops. She was the only person killed. The six defendants, who have all pleaded not guilty, face up to 10 years in prison.

Flanders opens Warsaw office

Flemish minister for international relations Geert Bourgeois travelled to Warsaw earlier this week to open a new diplomatic office. The office will serve as the headquarters of the Flemish representation in the Polish capital. Bourgeois explained that the aim was to improve contacts with political authorities and business interests in Central and Eastern Europe. "The enlargement of the European Union has shifted the balance of power to the east," he said. "Flanders wants to put more emphasis on the new and future member states."

Flanders already has diplomatic missions – in the Netherlands, Germany, the UK, France, Austria, the US, South Africa and the EU. Two more Flanders offices are planned to open one in New York next year and one in Madrid in 2009.



A WEEK IN THE CRISIS

Still no government in sight, but some hopeful signs

Monday 8 October

Belgian ambassadors across the world started the week with a memo from foreign minister Karel De Gucht instructing them on what to tell foreign reporters about the political crisis at home. De Gucht was angry about a spate of articles in the foreign press suggesting that Belgium was on the brink of collapse. He said that these reports were damaging to Belgian business interests and could deter foreign investment. So De Gucht has given ambassadors a list of answers to use when

grilled by journalists. He wants them to stress that the current situation is not unusual, and that it often takes protracted negotiations to form a government under the Belgian system. He added that the Belgian model had ensured a peaceful union for 177 years.

Tuesday 9 October

With the crisis entering its 121st day, the official opening of the federal parliament was a muted affair. Veteran politician Herman De Croo, a former speaker in the federal parliament, gave an interview in *De Morgen* to mark the

opening. De Croo noted that the current crisis was not particularly unusual, and that coalitions in the 1980s had been even more fragile. He was confident that talks would eventually be successful and predicted a new government would be formed on Armistice Day or possibly Halloween. "People normally put on masks for Halloween," he said. "But this time they could be taking them off."

Wednesday 10 October

A group of French-speaking politicians stormed out of a

parliamentary committee room where politicians were meeting to discuss the thorny problem of splitting the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde constituency.

Monday 15 October

A new week began with Bart De Wever, chairman of the Flemish nationalist N-VA party, offering French-speaking parties "a large spoonful of sugar" in return for the split up of the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde constituency. De Wever said that he wanted to "give the negotiations a chance to succeed."

Patricia Ceysens becomes new economy minister



E-Mama: Patricia Ceysens

Patricia Ceysens, 42, a member of the Flemish Liberal party, was appointed last Wednesday as the new Flemish economy minister following the resignation of Fientje Moerman. Moerman resigned from the Flemish government on Tuesday following a damning report by the Flemish ombudsman which accused her

of bad governance in connection with a consultancy contract.

Moerman initially came under fire after Rudy Aernoudt, one of her department's senior civil servants, was dismissed. He had criticised Moerman for awarding a contract to a consultancy firm that produced an allegedly worthless report. Following her resignation, Moerman stressed she did not believe she had done anything wrong.

Ceysens, also a Flemish liberal, was appointed by her party to succeed the disgraced minister. Flemish liberal leader Bart Somers praised Moerman for making Flanders "economically stronger, more powerful and more innovative".

Ceysens, who lives in Leuven, will also be in charge of the energy, foreign trade and science portfolios in the Flemish government. She is known as the "E-Mama" after she published a book in 2004 advocating teleworking for parents.

Antwerp Law Courts win architecture award



Just praise: Antwerp's Palace of Justice

The Antwerp Law Courts have won the 2007 RIBA European Award. The award aims to highlight the best building designed in Europe by a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects. The law courts were built in Antwerp's Zuid district by Richard Rogers.

Andrée De Jongh dies

Countess Andrée de Jongh died in Brussels last week aged 90. Born in Brussels in 1916, De Jongh became one of the key figures in the Belgian Resistance during World War Two. Modelling herself on Edith Cavell (the British nurse executed for helping Allied soldiers escape from Belgium during World War One), she organised a secret escape network called the Comet Line, which smuggled Allied soldiers from Occupied Europe.

The famous escape route, which ran from Brussels to Spain via the Pyrenees, helped some 700 Allied soldiers to evade the Nazis. Andrée De Jongh risked torture and imprisonment by personally accompanying 118 soldiers across Europe.

She was finally arrested in 1943 while escorting a soldier on foot across the Pyrenees, and tortured by the Gestapo in various French prisons. She was later transferred to Ravensbrück concentration camp, but released along with 800 other women following a deal between Heinrich Himmler and Count Folke Bernadotte, cousin of the Swedish King. Her father, Frédéric De Jongh, who helped run the network, was arrested in 1943 and executed by the Gestapo. A further 23 members of the Comet Line met the same fate.

De Jongh received numerous awards after the war, including the US Medal of Freedom and the UK's George Medal. She was also given the honorary rank of lieutenant-colonel in the Belgian army and made a Belgian countess. She spent several years in the Belgian Congo and later worked in a leper hospital in Ethiopia.



Andrée De Jongh in Ethiopia in 1972

New weekly from Flanders

Continued from page 1

The weekly is an initiative of Geert Bourgeois, Flemish minister for foreign policy, media and tourism. The idea came to him during a visit to Barcelona when he picked up a copy of the English weekly *Catalonia Today*. The Flemish department of international affairs then organised a tender won by Corelio/Ackroyd.

The new weekly replaces two existing titles published by the Flemish government: the glossy magazine *Flanders* and the news digest *Focus on Flanders*. Bourgeois said he wanted a new publication that would reach a wider audience. "There are thousands of foreign people in Flanders for short stays or longer periods," he explains. "They include business executives, students, tourists, scientists, diplomats, expats and

NGO workers."

Flanders has a history of newspaper publishing that goes back to the 16th century. Abraham Verhoeven is widely credited with publishing the world's first newspaper at Lombardenvest 6 in Antwerp.

He was instructed by Archduke Albert and Archduchess Isabella to produce a newsletter called *Nieuwe Tijdingen*, or *New Tidings*.

It was published irregularly, sometimes in Dutch, sometimes in French. Verhoeven did most of the writing himself and had to accept heavy censorship.

Bourgeois has already stressed that *Flanders Today* will be an independent publication free of government interference. When questioned on the proposal in the Flemish parliament last spring, he stressed: "This will not be a Flemish *Pravda*."

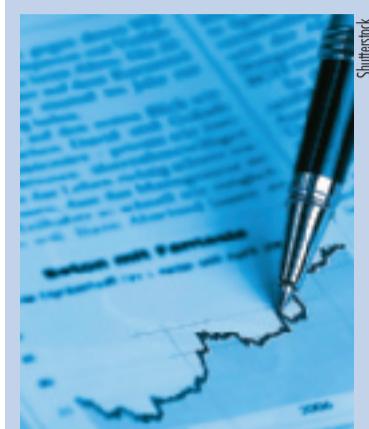
Lights could go out next year

The country could be plunged into darkness as a result of electricity shortages, warns a report by the CREG, the Belgian energy regulator. The report says that the country does not have enough electricity power stations to meet future demand, and that the problem is likely to be most acute in the period between 2008-2011.

CREG adds that it is too late to build new power stations to meet demand, and that the shortfall cannot be plugged by buying electricity from foreign producers, because the cross-border grid systems cannot cope. The answer, says CREG, is to delay the closure of old power stations. The company warned that electricity prices were set to rise as a result of the supply crisis.



THE WEEK IN FIGURES



82.5

The average life expectancy of a woman living in Flanders, as against 77.4 years for men, according to figures released by health minister Steven Vanackere.

1.9 million

New cars shipped through the Port of Zeebrugge in 2006. The port is now world leader in handling new cars.

2.2 billion

Mini bottles of Actimel produced annually by the Danone plant in Rotselaar. The French-owned company plans to invest a further €15 million in the plant, which is the company's only facility producing Actimel, a drinking yoghurt containing cultures that boost the body's natural defences.

50,000

Car drivers surrendering their number plate in exchange for a three-year season ticket on De Lijn trams and buses, according to the latest figures published by Flemish mobility minister Kathleen Van Brempt. The scheme, known as Dienst Inruilen Nummerplaat voor Abonnement (DINA), was introduced in Flanders in 2002 to cut down the number of cars on the road.

44

Flemish municipalities that have appointed an alderman for administrative simplification this year. The aim is to cut red tape and make visits to the local town hall easier, explains Flemish minister for home affairs Marino Keulen.

5

Number of candidate priests in Flanders in 2007, according to the Christian weekly *Tertio*. This represents a surge on 2006, when just four candidates applied for the priesthood.

Kinepolis plans second Ghent complex

The Kinepolis Group plans to build a new eight-screen multiplex in western Ghent on wasteland next to Flanders Expo. The group also wants to renovate its existing multiplex at Ter Platen, southern Ghent, cutting the number of seats by 1,600 (equal to the number of new seats created at Flanders Expo). The group's plans for Flanders Expo include new offices, shops and apartments.

The group says that it will move its head office to Flanders Expo if the new multiplex is built. The

main reason is traffic congestion in Brussels, where the company is currently based. "The traffic jams have become impossible," Kinepolis CEO Joost Bert told De Gentenaar.

But the city administration is being cautious about granting planning permission to the cinema giant. It wants to safeguard the city's small arts cinemas such as Studio Skoop and Sphinx. "We have not yet reached any decision about the new cinema," says Mathias De Clercq, alderman for the economy.



Kinepolis Ostend

Giant container ship docks at Zeebrugge

The world's largest container ship, Elly Maersk, recently moored in Zeebrugge port. The 397-metre ship, which can carry 11,000 containers, was invited to the Flemish port to mark the opening of a new dock equipped to handle the world's largest container ships. "The arrival of the Elly Maersk shows the importance of the Flemish harbours, in particular Zeebrugge," said Flemish prime minister Kris Peeters.

The Albert II Dock, named after the Belgian monarch, is large enough to take ships carrying up to 13,000 containers. The new facility is expected to boost the port's share of container traffic significantly, from the current

1.64 million standard containers (or teus) to 5 million by 2011. "The Port of Zeebrugge is extremely ambitious," explained Zeebrugge port authority president Joachim Coens.



Zeebrugge

Fifth in Europe for inward investment

Belgium is the fifth best country in Europe for foreign investment, according to the 2006 survey by Ernst & Young. With a 5.2% market share, the country is the top performer among smaller European countries. The only countries with a higher share are Britain, France, Germany and Spain. Almost a quarter of foreign investment comes from the United States, followed by France, the UK and Germany, while Japanese companies also have a strong presence in the country. More than half of foreign investment goes to Flanders (57%), while Wallonia gets 25% and Brussels obtains 18%.

Wonder drug research flops

The Ghent-based biotech company Innogenetics has called a halt to its research programme on developing a hepatitis C vaccine. The company recently announced

the decision following "disappointing results." Innogenetics had invested heavily in the project over recent years, hoping that it would produce a wonder drug.

"Despite this setback, we intend to pursue the development of our next generation of immune therapeutics," said CEO Frank Morich.

Flanders is right location, says Swedish truck giant

The Swedish truck manufacturer Scania is to invest €12 million in its worldwide distribution centre in Opglabbeek. The centre, which is the company's largest, employs 400 people to process 40,000 orders for parts every day. The company stressed that it had no plans to move its distribution centre to Eastern Europe. "Our centre in Opglabbeek is close to Brussels Airport and other international airports," explains Scania CEO Anders Grundström. "We can deliver our goods to any destination worldwide within 24 hours. There is absolutely no need to move our operations to central or Eastern Europe. To our mind, quality still comes first, and teaching people about quality takes a very long time."

A bigger bang



Fireworks on the Scheldt

Hendrickx & Lefever, Belgium's oldest fireworks company, has been bought by a Chinese businessman. The company was founded in Antwerp in 1834, just four years after independence, and has been lighting up the Belgian sky ever since. In recent years,

the company has provided fireworks for special events, including the annual New Year's Eve fireworks display over the Scheldt in Antwerp. Company director Marc Lefever says that the takeover will strengthen the company's market position abroad.

BUSINESS FLASH



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Nike

The US-based footwear and sport equipment manufacturer has inaugurated a new 33,000 square-metre distribution centre in Laakdal near Hasselt. The €74 million investment, located close to an existing Nike distribution facility, will handle accessories and other equipment for subsidiaries in Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

Devgen

The Ghent-based biotechnology company Devgen is setting up an affiliate in Delaware in the US to develop a range of products for the agricultural sector. The aim is to sell biotech products in the local market.

Ackermans & Van Haaren

The Antwerp-based holding company Ackermans & Van Haaren has acquired a stake in the Netherlands-based Euro Media Group (EMG), one of Europe's leading technical suppliers for the audiovisual and film industries.

Colt Telecom

The British telecommunications company Colt Telecom wants to develop its activities in Flanders. The company, headquartered in Nossegem and with offices in Antwerp and Anderlecht, has set aside €75 million to set up a new data management facility.

Palm Breweries

Palm, the largest family-owned brewer in Belgium, has signed a distribution agreement with Latis to distribute across the US. Palm operates breweries in Steenhuffel, Roeselaere and Lembeek. Latis was founded by two former Inbev employees. It aims to make the Palm range available in New York, San Diego, Portland and Seattle.

Helvoet Pharma

Pharmaceutical company Helvoet Pharma has started work on a new €22 million production plant in Alken. The new plant will produce innovative rubber packaging components designed to meet the industry's increasingly high standards. The company currently employs 450 people in Alken out of a global workforce of 1,200.

Honda

Honda plans to build a new €14.5 million logistics centre at Aalst in East Flanders. The centre, which will be fully automated, will serve as a distribution point for all car parts destined for the European market.

iNEWiT

iNEWiT, a technology startup based in Mechelen, has signed a major contract with Korean electronics giant LG to deliver mobile audio and video streaming devices. The devices, known as ViO, are designed to deliver wireless video images to a mobile phone, PC or laptop anywhere in the world.

Yohji Yamamoto

The Japanese fashion designer Yohji Yamamoto is opening a boutique in the ModeNatie building in Antwerp. The shop, which will measure 960 square metres, is expected to be his largest outlet in the world.

Lernout & Hauspie

Jo Lernout and Paul Hauspie, who founded the Ypres-based voice recognition and translation technology company Lernout & Hauspie, are facing up to five years in jail for fraud. Other defendants include auditors KPMG and the Artesia and Dexia banks. The company went bankrupt in 2000.

Port of Brussels

Three transport and distribution companies are setting up logistics and container handling activities in the Port of Brussels. The companies – Reibel, DD Shipping and Mory Europa – will occupy a total space of some 45,000 square metres. They are expected to generate about 220 new jobs.

MINDING MY OWN BUSINESS

The turtle dreams of wind and wings

Julie Anne Verbeelen

Julie Anne Verbeelen is an American from Iowa who runs a children's design studio with her husband in Brussels called "The turtle dreams of wind and wings." Their aim is to provide stimulating environments and experiences, which provoke young children's natural ability for creative thinking. "We believe children have the right to shape their own spaces and learning," she explains.



After studying graphic design in the United States, Verbeelen moved to Helsinki to study art and design. Here she met Pieter Verbeelen, a Flemish interior architect from Brussels. In 2000 they moved to Brussels

and stayed with Pieter's parents in their attic while looking around for jobs. "I searched and searched for my dream job of designing for children, but I never found it, so I would just sit with my sketchbook at a cafe down the street from my house thinking, observing and dreaming."

The cafe was called La Vache Qui Regarde Passer Les Trains (The Cow that Watches the Trains Pass By). "I called it the cow-café," she says. "I loved this idea of a nonsense sentence as a company name. So I came up with the name "The turtle dreams of wind and wings."

After their first child was born, they began renovating the stables behind the family house in Elsene. Verbeelen, who was freelancing at the time, designed an exhibition for the International School of Brussels. Encouraged by the results, she set up the company in November 2006. "After this project everything



Julie Anne Verbeelen

seemed possible. We then pushed ourselves to make all our dreams and sketches real."

Verbeelen had some initial problems with the bureaucracy. "Setting up a company is much more of a risk and an investment than in the States and it is quite scary in the beginning. They definitely do not favour the small business here. But this was our dream and we knew it wouldn't exist unless we made it happen."

Turtlewings recently worked at De Wimpel Flemish nursery school in Brussels with a group of 18 three-year-olds. "The children wanted to decorate the puppet corner. So we encouraged them to

draw their own stories and sketch out ideas for the walls of their favourite corner of the classroom."

Verbeelen says that Brussels has changed a lot in the six-and-a-half years since she moved here. "I like it more and more each day. I like the fact that Brussels is finally acting like a serious capital city and encouraging a broader range of cultural events and initiatives. But the thing I like most is the diverse and international population here."

Her main complaint is about the weather. "I think the thing I miss most from Iowa is the predictable hot sunny summer days. I can and will never get used to the fact that

June can be as cold as February and then July might be even colder."

After 18 months in business, Verbeelen remains positive about the decision to start a company. "Seriously, I wouldn't have my company anywhere else. It's nice to be in a large city with so many cultural opportunities and events that allow you to network and meet new people from all over the world. I love the diversity of Brussels."

online
www.turtlewings.be

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Paul Nash's "The Menin Road"

Derek Blyth

Robert Hoozee, director of Ghent's Museum of Fine Arts, has put together a remarkable exhibition to mark the reopening of the 19th-century picture gallery in southern Ghent. Several years in the making, it brings together more than 300 works of British art, ranging from John Constable landscapes to Victorian sepia photographs.

Hoozee decided on an exhibition of foreign art, rather than Flemish masters, to demonstrate that Flanders was an outward-looking region. "We are always

looking at our own artists in Flanders," he told the press. The Flemish government approved the decision and provided a subsidy of €1.5 million out of a total budget of €2.3 million.

The generous funding has allowed Hoozee to stage one of the landmark exhibitions of the year and the first major show in this museum since Paris-Brussels a decade ago. The list of donors fills an entire page of the exhibition catalogue and transport costs alone swallowed up €600,000.

The works have come from 78 museums in Europe and the United States. Some have been lent by major institutions like the

British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum, while others have been sent by provincial museums, country castles and private owners. The result is a thrilling presentation that covers virtually every aspect of British art from 1850 to 1950. There's everything here from Hogarth engravings illustrating "British humour" to rare books printed by William Morris.

In making his selection, Hoozee decided to steer clear of familiar paintings and concentrate instead on works that illustrate the quirkiness of British art. The choice betrays a fondness for eccentric painters such as William Blake,

John Martin and Lucian Freud, rather than comfortable drawing room artists like Gainsborough and Stubbs (though both are represented).

Hoozee's choices introduce the visitor to the key role played by science in the history of British art. He has made some remarkable finds, such as Alexander Cozens' pencil studies of cloud formations, and Paul Sandby's precisely titled watercolour "The Meteor of 18 August 1783 from the East Angle of the North Terrace of Windsor Castle".

The freshly painted and well-lit rooms allow visitors to see works in perfect viewing conditions. It is

worth visiting the museum simply to stand in front of Paul Nash's huge 1919 canvas *The Menin Road*. This normally hangs almost forgotten among the Imperial War Museum's weapons and uniforms, but can now be examined in the pure daylight of the neoclassical rotunda.

There are revelations in every room, including some astonishing studies of tree trunks by Constable. Towards the end of the exhibition, the eccentric vision becomes more pronounced, with Stanley Spencer providing some of the most memorable images of pure British battiness.

The British in Ghent

The British have been present in Ghent since the Middle Ages. The links date back to at least the 12th century when the local cloth industry imported English wool. The city's cross-Channel ties were reinforced by Jacob Van Artevelde, a wealthy merchant who tried to persuade the English kings to join forces with Flanders in the wars against the French. But the cosy relationship came to a sudden end in 1336 when one of the Flemish counts decided to side with the French. The English immediately stopped exporting wool and food to Flanders, causing widespread poverty and hunger.

Van Artevelde saved the day by entering into an alliance with England. The English fleet defeated the French, and the wool shipments soon began arriving again on Ghent quays. After the victory, Edward III stayed briefly in Ghent along with his wife Philippa of Hainault, who gave birth to a son, named John of Gaunt after his birthplace. Five centuries later, the people of Ghent put a statue of Van Artevelde on Vrijdagmarkt, his right arm stretched out in the direction of Britain.

The British crossed the sea to Ghent again in 1814 – this time to negotiate a peace treaty with

the United States. The American delegation included some of the country's greatest political leaders, such as John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay, while the British government sent some minor diplomats who had to wait for orders from London.

The Americans had wanted to meet in Gothenburg, but the British preferred Ghent because it was closer to London and a more pleasant city. The first American delegates arrived in the summer of 1814 and settled into a mansion on the Veldstraat, while the British turned up later and found more austere accommodation in a former Carthusian monastery outside the city.

The British remained aloof and isolated in their monastic retreat, but the Americans mingled with the locals and enjoyed the cultural life to the full. The treaty was finally signed on Christmas Eve, but the news took several weeks to cross the Atlantic. "I hope that the doors of Janus, closed here at Ghent, shall not be opened for the next century," Adams said during one of the many parties held in Ghent to celebrate the peace.



John Constable's "Rainstorm over the sea"

Original Alice comes to Ghent

Lewis Carroll's original handwritten manuscript of *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* is one of the most precious works lent to Ghent for the three-month exhibition. Lewis Carroll originally told the story to three young girls in 1862 during a boating trip in Oxford and later, to please them, wrote it down in a notebook.

This notebook, which contained Carroll's own drawings, was given to Alice Liddell, who treasured it for the rest of her life. It was eventually sold to an American collector and taken to the United States, but came back to Britain in 1948 after several American benefactors decided to present the book in recognition of Britain's war efforts.

The bound notebook became one of the most precious manuscripts in the British Library and rarely leaves the building, according to Helen Simpson, one of the exhibition organisers. "This is the first time it has travelled to continental Europe," she says.

Sally Brown, keeper of rare manuscripts in the British Library, travelled to Ghent with Carroll's little notebook in a black box. "I was initially surprised when the museum asked if they could display the manuscript, since Carroll was not really a great artist," she says. "But the organisers were extremely persuasive."



"Alice Grows Up in the White Rabbit's House", from Lewis Carroll's autograph manuscript

online

www.britishvision.be
www.mskgent.be
www.gent.be

We are not alone

All 27 countries come to Brussels for the most ambitious Europaia yet

Lisa Bradshaw

Europaia is a grand scheme. This year's festival brings together artists from each of the 27 member states (can you name them all?) for four months of music, dance, theatre, exhibition, film and literature. Not only does this provide a wealth of entertainment, it highlights the sometimes glorious, sometimes tumultuous diversity of Europe – culturally, artistically and, occasionally, politically.

The festival has been staged roughly every two years in Brussels (with a smattering of events in other cities) since 1969 by the non-profit Europaia International together with Brussels' Museums of Fine Arts. With support from Belgium's national and regional governments, the idea was to highlight the culture of the member states of the European Community, and it welcomed Italy, the Netherlands, Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Greece and Spain in turn. Spain joined the community officially during Europaia and the following year Austria, a candidate member, was in the spotlight.

Since then, the event has occasionally looked further afield, hosting Japan in 1989 and Mexico in 1993. Once, in an odd turn, it dedicated the entire festival to the Belgian architect Victor Horta. "The aim of the festival is to promote exchange between people and offer countries the opportunity to present themselves in the centre of Europe," says Dirk Vermaelen, Europaia's exhibition co-ordinator. "We want to show the diversity of the cultures of Europe, of course, but also its dialogue with other cultures in the world."



Perpetual folly: Italian architect Antonio Pio Saracino in Putterijstraat – one of 27 young artists to transform Brussels' public squares

3 (and some beyond): most notably *The Grand Atelier* at the Museums of Fine Arts - a glorious look at 14 artistic phenomena that blew across Europe from the fifth to the 18th centuries, influencing everything in their paths, from metal-work to oil painting to cathedral building. "Europe is always about the politics, and often in a negative way," notes Vermaelen. "We wanted to show that Europe was a cultural entity long before it was a political entity."

Europaia couples that look at the past with a look to the future through Agorafolly – some of

ing of "stranger" in an expanding union with his "Welcome Strangers" sculpture in the Oude Graanmarkt.

The young Flemish photographer Ine Van Coillie, meanwhile, visited every square with each artist, and the resulting black-and-white portraits are on display in each square. At the end of your tour, don't miss the Agorafolly Inside exhibition at La Centrale Electrique, which presented yet another challenge to these artists: to display one of their works they feel best represents the culture of their own country.

"We wanted to show that Europe was a cultural entity long before it was a political entity"

- Dirk Vermaelen

Still it seems right on this 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, that the event lives up to its name (a combination of "Europe" and "Opalia", the Roman harvest festival) and returns its focus to Europe – and all of Europe at that. "The 50th birthday of the EU is a wonderful occasion to go back to our roots," says Vermaelen.

Europaia has always been multi-disciplinary to its core - inviting 27 countries certainly hasn't changed that. Part of the fun of Europaia this year, in fact, is deciding how to enjoy it: Pick a country (or two or three), for instance, or pick a discipline and discover the difference between the folk music of Cyprus, Hungary and Bulgaria. There's film from Denmark, dance from Germany, circus acts from France. Classical music and theatre abound from across the continent.

Several exhibitions run right up to the festival's end on February

which you may have already seen by chance. This inventive community project brought one young artist (under 35 years) from every country to make his or her own statement in one of Brussels' public spaces. Each was assigned a square within the centre of town and told to create "a European art piece of the future". Follow the map in the Europaia programme to see a pan-European view of what the future holds for the arts.

Melita Couts from Cyprus, for instance, laments the end of craftsmanship. She's transformed the Minerva Fountain in the Grote Zavelmarkt into a display counter for little mass-produced sculptures. Latvia's Agnese Stabina livens up the Arduin & Hooikai with a very unique "communication game" that, she says, "lets the residents of the EU get to know each other better." Germany's Sebastian Walther questions the mean-

FILM FREAK

The Wrong House: Alfred Hitchcock and Pauhof

Alfred Hitchcock was a filmmaker with the soul of an architect. Not content to allow an art director to design his sets and frame his shots, he did much of that work himself – and discovered that architecture, with its tall stairways, large doorframes and long halls, contributed much in the way of suspense. What would *Psycho* have been, after all, without that oppressive house on the hill?

The experimental Viennese architectural firm Pauhof has collaborated with Antwerp's deSingel arts centre on *The Wrong House*, an exhibition exploring this subject. Most of Hitchcock's infamous houses and apartments were largely fragmented studio creations, rather than entire structures. Pauhof, as much known for its prodigious art installations and avant-garde architectural models as for its actual buildings, has created at deSingel one of these "wrong houses": a monumental, multi-storey installation that evokes all the claustrophobia and vertigo of a Hitchcock movie – pure architectural suspense.

You'll also find large-scale models by Pauhof of some of their controversial (and as yet unbuilt) projects, which they consider in the context of Hitchcockian tension. The Film Cafe, meanwhile, offers a study of eight of the British-born director's best known homes, including those from *The Birds*, *Rebecca* and the 1929 silent film *The Lodger*, with film clips and floor plans. These blueprints for houses that never actually existed were painstakingly created through repeated viewing of the films by Steven Jacobs, a member of the Ghent



Hitchcock's *The Lodger*: suffocating architecture

Urban Studies Team, in cooperation with several other architects. Taken as a whole, one gets the feeling that the master of suspense saw his houses not just as sets but as protagonists.

deSingel also hosts the symposium *The Wrong Artist: Hitchcock and the Other Arts*, which begins with a video programme on November 16 featuring short films either about or inspired by Hitchcock. The next day, a full day of lectures and video programmes in English focus on the director's use of other artistic disciplines (like paintings and costumes) and his influence on contemporary art. In collaboration with deSingel, Antwerp's Museum of Modern Art, MuHKA, will show Hitchcock films throughout November that showcase his use of architecture.

The Hitchcock classic *Rear Window* was defined by its act of voyeurism – Jimmy Stewart peers into row after row of symmetrical windows across the street trying to unravel the mysteries of life inside. Hitchcock, the 'master of suspense', would probably be delighted with deSingel for allowing us to do the same to him.

Lisa Bradshaw

Until December 16 at deSingel, Desguinlei 25, Antwerp. 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be

FLANDERS EYE



Wim Vandekeybus

Gallop, an exhibition of photographs by Flemish choreographer Wim Vandekeybus, is currently on show at the De Buuren centre, next to the Munt theatre in Brussels, until 9 November. Vandekeybus heads the renowned dance company Ultima Vez, which recently celebrated 20 years on the stage. He took the photographs while travelling through Chile and Morocco during work on a new film. The 40 or so large-format photographs

are accompanied by a soundscape composed by Charo Calvo. Vandekeybus describes the works as "a visual experience that works like a shared emotion or dream."

online

www.deburen.eu
www.ultimavez.com

FLANDERS PAST

Station on the rails

Derek Blyth

One hundred years ago this month, Dam Station in northern Antwerp was on the move. It wasn't moving fast, but it was definitely not standing still. The 19th century neogothic building was travelling in a northerly direction at the speed of 1.83 metres per day.

The station stood in the way of a new railway viaduct that was being built around the old town. The authorities initially talked about demolishing the station and rebuilding it elsewhere. But then two engineers offered to save the company time and money by moving the building 36 metres.

The engineers were Albert Morgilia, an Italian from Brussels, and Henry Weiss, an American with German origins. They came up with a sophisticated system to move the 3,000 ton building out of the way. The project began in the summer of 1907 when workers excavated the building and put 320 mechanical jacks under the foundations. When the signal was given, the men began to turn the handles and the building rose off the ground at a speed of 3 cm per hour.

After a week, the building was 1.60 metres off the ground and ready to move. The engineers then started to roll the structure slowly along an iron railway track until it



Rising to the challenge: Antwerp residents display old postcards showing Dam station on the move

reached the new site. It took three weeks to shift the building.

The project began to attract enormous local interest as it progressed. People were charged one franc to visit the site and an inquisitive Crown Prince Albert (the future King Albert I) travelled up from Brussels to take a look

for himself. The glass windows survived the move without a crack and the wallpaper in the station master's living room was apparently as good as new at the end of the operation.

Ten years ago, Dam Station faced a new threat when Belgian railways filed a plan to demol-

ish the building, which stood in the way of the new high-speed train tunnel. But local residents protested and forced the city to add the station to the protected monuments list. The building was restored and converted into a local information centre, café and meeting hall.

Hotel Normandie saved from ruin



Normandie restored

The Hotel Normandie is one of the strangest sights on the Flemish coast. It looks like an Atlantic liner that has run aground

in the dunes. On the opposite side of the road stands a building called La Péniche that resembles a river barge. People driving along the

coast road sometimes stop and stare in wonder.

La Péniche was built first. It was a fashionable restaurant on the coast. Then the owner fired the manager, who decided to build a rival hotel ship as an act of revenge. The architects Willy and Laurent Bruggeman drew up plans in 1936 for a modest building with a few maritime touches, following the fashion of the time for nautical architecture. But the client wasn't impressed. He wanted a building modelled exactly on the French Atlantic liner Le Normandie, complete with three funnels. He even asked for lifeboats.

The big ship in the dunes near Koksijde was built. It was popular with the tourists but hurt the sensibilities of modern architects. Even Willy Bruggeman wasn't too proud of the building, which he wryly called the "monster of the

Belgian coast." It was eventually abandoned and became a sad shipwreck. The interior was stripped by vandals and damaged by rainwater. Meanwhile, the more modest La Péniche on the other side of the road continued life as a busy restaurant, popular with Westhoek fashion models and minor celebrities.

A local restaurant owner finally came up with a business plan to save the ship hotel. He gutted the hulk and turned it into a fashionable restaurant and bar. The Flemish minister for public planning Dirk Van Mechelen awarded it the 2007 prize for restoration. In his speech he pointed out that the Normandie was a shining example of how a building can be reused or even returned to its former destination. The only complaint you hear is that it doesn't have any hotel rooms.

Blooming lovely

Mechelen has won the prestigious gold medal at this year's Entente Florale competition held in Britain. The Flemish city was awarded the prize for its abundant flowers and well-kept parks.

At the award ceremony in Harrogate, northern England, the jury said that Mechelen was

"a beautifully renovated city, with lovely trees and flowers, which boasts attractive buildings and a perfect combination between modern architecture and national heritage."

The jury also noted the clean public spaces and the ecological awareness of the city authorities in maintaining green spaces and

parks.

The city has a total of 1,119 flower boxes, 330 plant boxes and 236 floral structures. In addition, the town encourages residents to grow flowers in their front gardens, or even plant them in spaces between cobblestones.

The Entente Florale was originally set up in 1977 as a compe-

tion between British and French towns and villages. It has grown since then into a major award with entries from across Europe. Mechelen was up against 11 other European competitors for this year's award.

online
www.mechelen.be

FOOTPRINT



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Roodklooster

On a Saturday morning, you can walk through the woods at Roodklooster, east of Brussels, without meeting another person. Admittedly it gets more crowded on a Sunday, but you can still find quiet trails through ancient woods that lie just 10 minutes walk from Herrmann-Debrux metro station.

The Roodklooster is an ancient Cistercian priory founded in the Brabant countryside. The Flemish painter Hugo van der Goes became a lay member in 1475, according to a weathered stone plaque attached to the wall of a surviving building. He began his greatest work, the Portinari Altarpiece, the same year. But he was plagued by depression and suffered a breakdown in 1481. A jealous monk at Roodklooster wrote a cruel portrait of Hugo which was described by the art historian Panofsky as "a masterpiece of clinical accuracy and sanctimonious malice."

The abbey church was demolished in the 18th century, leaving just a scattering of whitewashed buildings surrounded by a crumbling perimeter wall. But Brussels Region recently launched an ambitious plan to restore the site and give it back a sense of monastic enclosure.

The results are already impressive. The large messy car park has been tidied up, and a new café has opened in one of the outhouses. The walls have also been repaired, the ponds cleared of weed and the old wall repaired.

The ponds are a favourite spot for local fishermen, while the nearby woods have various trails to follow. You can go for a short ramble along the water's edge, or head off up steep paths that lead through the ancient Zoniënwoud. Within 10 minutes, the city seems a long way away.

Derek Blyth

online
www.natuurpunt-rode.be



Blooming Mechelen

SAUNAS

Hot spots for cold days

There's no shortage of saunas in Flanders, but some of them blow the rest right out of the water

Lisa Bradshaw

As an expat, I'm often asked what I like best about living in Belgium. I always give my list of three: the chocolate, the beer and the saunas. Though prices are quite affordable, a day at the sauna still feels like pure decadence. Flanders is awash in fabulous saunas, but there are three at the top of my list.

L'eau De Lo: weightless zen

This sauna is a den of tranquillity amid the chain stores and fast-moving traffic on the western outskirts of Lochristi. L'eau De Lo is a spotless two-storey blend of dark hues and clean lines. From a top-floor loft, you can gaze dreamily over into the sauna's centrepiece: a giant swimming pool that is half indoors and half out. Jump in and swim right into the back garden, where you'll find a huge tract of grass to position your lounge chair.

L'eau De Lo has one hot sauna of 95 degrees and a cooler one with those changing colours that are so popular now – as you soak up the heat, the room changes from yellow to green to violet. The hammam, or steam room, is particularly nice – roomier than most, with multiple tiers and beautiful leather cushions on which to rest your feet.

The sauna has a whopping eight infrared heaters, so there's no waiting. (The glow of the red light provides the same radiant energy as the sun without the dangerous ultraviolet rays). It also comes with two relaxation rooms: one kitted out with giant bean bags perfect for napping. The wide, airy spaces are well lit due to huge picture windows that go from floor to ceiling.

L'eau De Lo is only sparsely populated any day of the week. Just opened a year ago and set back off the busy street, it hasn't really been

discovered yet. Visit before it is.
Antwerpsesteenweg 110, Lochristi, East Flanders. 09.348.05.00, www.leaudelo.be

Thermae Grimbergen: kitschy paradise

This is my favourite of what I refer to as the gimmicky saunas. Themes run high at Thermae: there's the African Lodge, the Roman steam bath and the most far out Mayan village relaxation room one is likely to find.

Thermae is actually home to two full saunas – the 'Palmerae' is dedicated to bathing suit wearers, while 'Aquarius' is for more traditional (naked) users. After 21.00, though, Palmerae is open to everyone. This area boasts a breathtaking Arabian style, but the Aquarius has the best amenities. Its gardens, pool, four saunas and two Jacuzzis mingle seamlessly between indoors and out, and it's the kind of place that has corners to peep around and nooks to discover.

The outdoor garden is the place to be: surrounded by the herbal sauna (essences of lavender and rosemary) and the black forest sauna (pine), you hear the cascading water of a free-flowing shower on one side and the neighbour's chickens clucking on the other. This is also the site of my all-time favourite after-sauna plunge: climb up a little ladder to dunk yourself in an old barrel full of freezing cold water.

Thermae has free specialities scattered throughout the day, such as the aufguss sauna: rub a soft lotion over your entire body while an attendant swings towel-wrapped eucalyptus above your head and then fans you with the towel in scalding puffs of hot air.

The pub-style restaurant at Thermae is cosier than the typical sauna dining room and looks out on a pretty glass-enclosed terrace.



Fitopia: the queen of saunas in Antwerp province

Thermae is the best choice if you're looking for an overnight or a weekend getaway because of its location: Grimbergen is a lovely little town with much to offer.

Wolvertemsesteenweg 74, Grimbergen, Flemish Brabant. 02.270.81.96, www.thermaegrimbergen.be

Fitopia: simple elegance

This long-running fitness centre opened a sauna three years ago, and its sophistication and attention to detail have earned it a loyal clientele. If this sauna were a person, it would be the kind who throws fabulous dinner parties.

The first floor is home to the restaurant, with a luxury that outshines its competition. The wood floor winds you between the tables to sitting areas where you can enjoy a drink – choose the one at the back. It faces a large window overlooking the small back garden and through a skylight two floors up. There are three saunas – one for women only – plus infrared, Jacuzzi and steam room. The foot bath is a surprising delight: its stone benches are heated.

fireplaces filled with white stones from which flames emerge that are so tiny, they look like candles. Through a door here is a wonderfully-understated waterbed relaxation room.

When you descend downstairs into the sauna area, you're immediately struck by the beauty of the huge round pool, which doubles as a Jacuzzi. Push the buttons you find on the side for your own personal burst of air and bubbles. Nearby is a calm, warm pool in a dark corner with dotted lights above it looking like stars. The entire open space is dimly lit, with most of the light coming from windows that overlook the small back garden and through a skylight two floors up. There are three saunas – one for women only – plus infrared, Jacuzzi and steam room. The foot bath is a surprising delight: its stone benches are heated.

Up on the tippy top is a roof deck with lounge chairs, another Jacuzzi and a hot sauna. Peer down through the skylight to revellers in the pool far below.

Mechelsesteenweg 154, Edegem, Antwerp. 03.454.55.66, www.fitopia.be

Prices for these saunas are between €19 and €22 per day. Hours are generally between 11.00 and 23.00, and all three are open on Sundays. They all have restaurants, massage therapies and beauty treatments and offer special packages so you can customise your experience. Reservations are not required, but if you want an arrangement or treatment, it's best to call ahead. Saunas have bathrobes and towels to rent if you haven't brought yours, but do take along your own footwear.



Thermae Grimbergen's outdoor garden manages to be both social and relaxing

Sauna like a pro

If you go home from the sauna with a headache, you just need to change your habits a bit. Kaat Eerdeken of Fitopia, goes over the finer points of the perfect sauna.

Shower first: "With a shower gel so you are perfectly clean."

Then salt: "Scrub your body with the salt that all saunas provide. It sloughs off the dead skin and opens the pores, allowing you to sweat more easily."

Foot bath: "After rinsing off, dry yourself completely, then spend 10 minutes in the foot bath. There are a lot of nerves in the feet, so you're preparing your body."

Sauna: "Then start with a sauna, normally about 15 minutes. But everybody is different, and it's important to listen to your body. If it tells you after 10 minutes that it's enough, leave."

Cool down: "After a sauna, it's very important to cool down. You should go outside for awhile so your body can let go of the warmth inside. Even in the winter, it's important to go outside. Then take a cold shower and then a quick plunge into the cold water bath."

Hydrate and rest: "It's important to drink a lot of water, take time to relax between every sauna and listen to your body. Some people can do one sauna after another, while others only do one and then just relax the rest of the day."



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ING 

Classical, orchestra, new music**Brussels****Astoria Hôtel**

Koningstraat 103; 0900.28.877
OCT 21 11.00 Talweg Trio: Pâque, Liszt, Mendelssohn

Bozar (Paleis voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

OCT 21 11.00 Sergei Krylov, violin: Bach, Prokofiev, Paganini

OCT 23 20.00 The Cleveland Orchestra, conducted by Franz Welser-Möst: Debussy, Pintscher, Beethoven

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39

OCT 24 20.00 Association Femmes d'Europe Gala: Orquestra Metropolitana Académica de Lisboa, conducted by Jean-Marc Burfin: Beethoven's Concerto op 56, Mendelssohn's A Midsummer Night's Dream op 61, Braga Santos' Staccato brillante op 63 (tickets 02.660.56.96).

OCT 25 20.30 Music Fund Benefit Concert: Augustin Dumay, violin; Saleem Abboud Ashkar, piano; and students from the Queen Elisabeth College of Music: Fiorini, Mozart, Haydn, Ravel

Dieleghem Abbey

Jan Tiebackxstraat 14; 02.428.71.03
OCT 19 20.00 Maria Callas & Beniamino Gigli tribute with Tonino Carliano, tenor; Eva Nyakas, soprano; Marie-Claude Roy, piano

Kapel van de Minnemien

Minnemienstraat 62; 02.507.82.00
OCT 21 10.30 Chapelle des Minimes Choir and Orchestra with Jan Caals, conductor and tenor; Hilde Coppé, soprano; Isabelle Everarts de Velp, alto; Philippe Souvage, bass: Bach cantatas

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be
OCT 25 20.15 Vlaams Radio Koor conducted by Erik Van Nevel with Bart Naessens, organ: Buxtehude's Membra Jesu Nostri cantatas.

Royal Music Conservatory

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37
OCT 18 20.00 Artemis Quartet: Beethoven, Stravinsky, Tchaikovsky

Get your tickets now for...

Rufus Wainwright, November 16, 20.00, Koninklijk Circus, Brussels. Tickets from 02.218.20.15 or www.koninklijk-circus.org

The son of folk singers Kate McGarrigle and Loudon Wainwright III, Rufus Wainwright defies classification, which could be the reason why his popularity crosses both generation and genre lines. In the last 10 years, his crooning voice has blended effortlessly with pop, classical and lounge backings, while his latest album, *Release the Stars*, finds him fronting sweeping orchestral compositions. His onstage performances are passionate and emotional. Get your tickets now before they're gone.

OCT 19 20.00 Autumn Concert 2007: European Union Choir conducted by Dirk De Moor and Ensemble Orchestral de Bruxelles conducted by Jacques Vanherenthal with Ivan Goossens, tenor, Stefaan De Moor, baritone: Puccini's *Messa di Gloria*, Schubert's Concerto for Four Horns (tickets: 0475.35.36.76).

OCT 21 20.00 Laurent Korcia, violin, Michael Wendeberg, piano: Schumann, Debussy, Janacek, Achron, Bartok, Bloch, Wieniawski.

OCT 22 20.00 Diana Axentii, mezzo, Roberto Giordano, piano, Feng Ning, violin: Berlioz.

Kaaithéater

Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59

OCT 20 20.30 Prometheus: ensemble conducted by Mauricio Kagel: works by Kagel

Théâtre Marni

Vergniestraat 25; 02.354.43.68

Until **OCT 21** International Festival of Acousmatic Music

Antwerp**Amuz**

Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28

OCT 19 19.00 Microwaves & Turntables by Slagwerkgroep Den Haag: Pateras, Wright, Kourliandski, Nas/Snoei

OCT 20 18.00 Hermes Ensemble and Thomas Smeyrns: new work for viola da gamba, harpsichord, percussion and DJ sets by Smeyrns, Saariaho, Matthews, Ralske

OCT 21 15.00 Isotropes by Collegium Vocale Gent + Bl!ndman, conducted by James Wood: Harvey, Slechim, de Sancto, Abaraardus

DeSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28

OCT 18 20.00 Ictus conducted by Georges-Elie Octors: Scratches & Sequences: Gordon, Cendo, Oomen, Nova

OCT 19 20, 21.00 Erbarme Dich by Muziektheater Transparant & Oxalys Ensemble: Void (dance/theatre)

OCT 20 20.00 Slag werkgroep De Haag & Champ d'Action: new works by Kyriakides, Kourliandski, Verstockt.

OCT 21 12.00 Bl!ndman Junior (4x4): contemporary works. 17.00 Jong Nederlands Blazers Ensemble: contemporary works. 20.00 Film concert: Vlaams Radio Orkest conducted by David Atherton: Decasia by Bill Morrison with music by John Cage

OCT 23 20.00 Ictus in Waits/Weill, new arrangements of Tom Waits and Kurt Weill songs by François Deppe, Jean-Luc Fafchamps and Fabian Fiorini with Judith Vindevogel, soprano, Kris Dane, singer

OCT 24 20.00 Cuarteto Casals: Haydn, Ravel, Bartók

Sportpaleis

Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.45.045

OCT 19-NOV 11 20.00, Night of the Proms with Il Novecento Orchestra & Fine Fleur Choir, conducted by Robert Grosset with Macy Gray, Soulsister and Roby Lakatos (tickets 070.34.53.45)

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14

OCT 20 11.00 (promenade concert) & 14.00 (final concert) I Solisti del Vento: Janssens, Murphy, Coppens, Brzoska, Prins, Stulginska, Desimpelaere (music/dance)

Bruges**Concertgebouw**

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02

OCT 19 20.00 Prometheus: ensemble conducted by Mauricio Kagel: works by Kagel

OCT 20 20.00 Orchestre des Champs-Elysées conducted by Philippe Herreweghe with Carolyn Sampson, soprano: Strauss, Mahler

Ghent**Sint Stefanuskerk**

Sint Margrietstraat 11; 070.22.02.02

OCT 25 20.00 Royal Flanders Opera Chorus, conducted by Kurt Bikkembergs: Rossini's Petite Messe solennelle

Leuven**Schouwburg**

Bondgenotenlaan 21; 016.20.05.40, www.festival.be

OCT 18 20.30 Prometheus Ensemble

Grimbergen**Sacristie Abdijkerk**

Kerkplein 1; 02.263.03.43

OCT 25 20.15 Trio Fenix: Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, Beethoven

Opera**Brussels****De Munt**

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39

OCT 18-NOV 11 Mitridate, Rè di Ponto by Mozart, conducted by Mark Wigglesworth

OCT 21 & 25-26, 15.00 Cendrillon, adapted from Massenet's work and conducted by David Miller, with Zeno Popescu, tenor; Madeleine Colaux, soprano

Jazz, soul & blues**Brussels****Ancienne Belgique**

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24

OCT 23 20.00 Marcus Miller

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be

OCT 20-21 16.30 Film concert: *Feel like Going Home*, documentary by Martin Scorsese (US 2004) with Corey Harris, Boubacar Traoré, Vieux Farka Touré and Othar Turner (part of the concert weekend) *The Blues: from Mali to Mississippi*

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193-195; 02.733.13.78

OCT 20 18.00 Marc Demuth/Sofia Ribeiro Quartet

OCT 24 20.30 Patrman/Verheyen/Vermeulen

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45

Concerts at 20.30:

OCT 18 Ivan Paduart Trio, tribute to Bill Evans. **OCT 19** The Soul & Swing Dealers! **OCT 20** Jazz Me Do: The Beatles Revisited. **OCT 24** A Young Talents Jazz Concert: Christian Mendoza Trio

Théâtre 140

Eugène Plaskyalaan 140; 081.22.60.26

OCT 24 20.30 Stacey Kent

Antwerp**Luchtbal Cultural Centre**

Columbiestraat 8; 03.543.90.30

OCT 22 20.30 Mose Allison

Borgerhout**Hof Ter Lo**

Noorderingel 30; 03.543.90.30

OCT 20 from 20.00 Rockabilly Psychosis Night with Batmobile Rochee & The Sarnos + The Swampys. Spellbound + Milwaukee Wildmen

Ghent**Handelsbeurs**

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01

OCT 25 20.15 Les Rita Mitsouko.

OCT 26, 20.00 Marina Celeste & Anton Walgrave

Vooruit

Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060

OCT 21 20.00 Hard-Fi

Kortrijk**De Kreun**

Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44

OCT 21 14.00 Deerhof + Numbers + Dirty Projectors + Gomm + Sonic City

Leuven**Het Depot**

Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03

OCT 18 20.00 De Mens

OCT 21 20.00 Audio Bullys

World, folk**Brussels****Ancienne Belgique**

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24

Concerts at 20.00:

OCT 18 Kaki King + Tiken Jah Fakoly.

OCT 19 Flip Kowlier + Gésmán. **OCT 20** Nick Lowe. **OCT 22** Jaya the Cat + Beatsteaks. Jim White. **OCT 24** Sharon Jones & The Dap Kings + The Dynamites + Michael Fakes + The Brown Acid.

OCT 25 Stijn in 4-D

OCT 25 Stekerlapotte

Priesterstraat 4; 02.512.86.81

Concerts at 21.30:

Argos
Werfstraat 13; 02.229.00.02
Until NOV 11 Open Archive #1, videos, concerts and conferences based on Argos' permanent collection

Arthurus Gallery
Simonisstraat 33; 02.544.07.55
Until OCT 27 Dreams in Dreamland, photography by Michael Chia

Arts en Marge
Hoogstraat 312; 02.511.04.11
Until NOV 24 outsider art by Serge Delaunay

Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.84.44
Until NOV 30 The Void, architecture show with models, plans and photographs of projects by Portuguese architect Gonçalo Byrne
Until JAN 6 Melting Ice, group show on the theme of global warming.
Until JAN 20 The Grand Atelier: Pathways of Art in Europe, 350 paintings, drawings, sculptures, manuscripts, books, prints, furniture and objects dating from the 5th to the 18th century

Brussel in de Kijker
Koninginnegalerij 17; 02.502.09.73
Until NOV 19 Royal Greenhouses of Laeken, some 50 photographs of the greenhouses' flora and architecture by Olivier Polet

Belgian Centre of Comic Strip Art
Zandstraat 20; 02.219.19.80
Until OCT 21 Europeans look at Europeans, a comic-strip portrait

De Markten
Oude Graanmarkt 5; 02.512.34.25
Until OCT 28 group show of contemporary art

Espace Parallèle (in Anciennes écuries de l'Abbaye)
Stallingen Roodkloosterstr 7a, 02.675.27.23
Until OCT 28 Abstraction textile, fabrics from the Congo

Espace Photographique Contretype
Verbindingslaan 1; 02.538.42.20
Until NOV 4 Tuinen, photographs by Paul den Hollander, Daniel Desmedt and others

Gemeentehuis van Schaarbeek
Colignonplein 2; 02.247.27.25
Until NOV 7 Op Papier, original Belle Epoque posters by Toulouse-Lautrec, Anna Boch and others

Goethe Institute
Belliardstraat 58; 02.230.39.70
Until OCT 26 Das Saarland, eine Europäische Geschichte, photographs tracing the history of the Saar region on the 50th anniversary of its foundation

ISELP
Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70
Until DEC 1 Eves' Phase I: le complot, video, drawings, photographs and installation by Didier Mahieu. Also Interactions, paintings by Claude Celli and sculptures by Clémence van Lunen

Ixelles Museum
Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.21
Until JAN 26 All Roads Lead to Rome: Artists travelling in Europe from the 16th to 19th centuries, paintings, texts and objects related to travel
Until JAN 27 Ontmoetingen, 1997-2007, photographs by Géraldine Langlois

Jacques Franck Cultural Centre
Waterloosesteenweg 94; 02.538.90.20
Until NOV 4 Photographeur un territoire: le Foyer Saint-Gillois, social housing in the Brussels commune of Saint-Gilles

Jewish Museum of Belgium
Miniemstraat 21; 02.512.19.63
Until DEC 31 Jewish Spaces and Itineraries: The Shoule of Molenbeek, Aspects of contemporary Judaism

KVS
Arduinckai 7; 02.210.11.12
Until NOV 17 Decors, photographs of Flanders by Peter De Bruyne

De Loge Architecture Museum
Kluisstraat 86; 02.649.86.65
Until DEC 23 Vienna-Brussels: the Secession Years, the reciprocal artistic influence of the two capitals at the turn of the 19th century

Le Botanique
Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
Until NOV 11 Congo op weg, group show with paintings, drawings, photographs, installations and performances

Huis van de Culturen (Sint-Gillis)
Belgradstraat 120; 0496.08.76.36
Until OCT 28 Soyons.ici, group photography show

Gemeentelijk Museum (Sint-Jans-Molenbeek)
Mommaertsstraat 4; 02.414.17.52
Until OCT 20 Verborgen Schatten (Hidden Treasures), some 50 paintings, drawings and prints dating from the 16th to the 20th century belonging to Molenbeek commune's collection

Pascal Polar Gallery
Charleroissteenweg 108; 02.537.81.36
Until NOV 3 Une femme, photographs by Claude Fauville and texts by Claude Javeau

Royal Military Museum
Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33
Until NOV 2008 Penseel op het geweer (A Paintbrush in the Barrel), World War One paintings, drawings and etchings by soldiers

Royal Library
Kunstberg; 02.519.58.73
Until NOV 30 Bollandistes, Saints and Legends: 400 Centuries of Research, exhibition commemorating the 400th anniversary of the publication of Héribert Rosweyde's Fasti Sanctorum

Royal Museum of Art and History
Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11
Until DEC 2 A Princely Hobby, some 150 works from the workshops created by Charles de Lorraine to furnish his palatial residences
Until DEC 31 België op kijndoosprenten, some 400 views of Belgian cities dating from the 17th and 18th centuries

Royal Museum of Fine Arts
Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11
Until JAN 27 Rubens: A Genius at Work, major show of works by the Flemish master and his workshop

Schaarbeek Cultural Centre
Lochtstraat 91-93; 02.245.27.25
Until DEC 7 Pekin Contemporain, contemporary art from China.

Stadhuis
Grote Markt; 02.279.43.50
Until JAN 13 Van't stadt en schoone buytens, drawings and paintings of Brussels and its surroundings by 18-century artists Ferdinand-Joseph Derons and Andreas Martin

WIELS
Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.347.30.33
Until NOV 18 Dots Obsession, walk-in balloon installation by contemporary Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama

Antwerp
Contemporary Art Museum (MuHKA)
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60
Until OCT 21 Lonely at the Top #5, installations evoking Ulrike Meinhof by Annik Leroy
Until NOV 18 Panamarenko's studio, selected contents of the Flemish artist's house donated to the museum

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
Until DEC 16 The Wrong House: Alfred Hitchcock & Pauhof, exploration of architecture in the films of Alfred Hitchcock with installation by Austrian architectural firm Pauhof

Extra City, Center for Contemporary Art
Klamperstraat 40; 0484.42.10.70
Until DEC 16 Numerous Incidents of Indefinite Outcome, works by Joachim Koester
Until DEC 16 The Nine Monads Of David Bell, works by Luke Fowler

Fifty-One Fine Art Photography
Zirkstraat 20; 03.289.84.58
Until OCT 27 Los Sabena Club, vintage and modern prints by Malian photographer Malick Sidibe

FotoMuseum
Waalse Kaa 47; 03.242.93.00
Until JAN 6 Belgicum, Stephan Vanfleteren's photographs of Belgium, with humour and nostalgia. Oorlogsmaterial by film director Robbe De Hert. Ost. Modern, images from Eastern Europe by Annemie Augustijns. Stage fright, thematic exhibition on the effects of the ever-growing presence of cameras in society

Hessenhuis
Falconrui 53; 03.206.03.50
Until NOV 25 Bivak Gloria, group show by Dwight Marica, Michele Matyun and friends

Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten (Royal Museum of Fine Arts)
Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09
Until NOV 18 MuHKA at the KMSKA, installations by contemporary artists Mark Manders, Nedko Solakov, Patrick Van Caeckenbergh, Jimmy Durham and Michelangelo Pistoletto, among others, on the occasion of MuHKA's 20th anniversary
Until DEC 31 The Rijksmuseum comes to the Scheldt, 40 16th- and 17th-century masterpieces, including paintings by Spranger and Goltzius plus works by Chiaroscuro painters lent by the Amsterdam museum

Beersel
Herman Teirlinckhuis
Uwenberg 14
Until OCT 30 Small Stuff Three (Meeting Bernd Lohaus), contemporary art works in three locations in Flemish Brabant. See also Beersel's Frankveld and Drogenbos' Felix De Boeck Museum

Bruges
De Bond
Buitenveldestraat 1; 050.44.30.48
Until NOV 4 Indefinite Reflections, works by Anneke Eussen

Ghent
Caermersklooster
Vrouwebroersstraat 6; 09.269.29.10
Until DEC 9 VIPs - Very Important Paintings, portraits by Karl Meersman

Design Museum
Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99
Until DEC 31 Studio Glass, the Alonso glassware collection from Art Nouveau to the 1960s
Until JAN 13 Retrospective covering the 65-year career of architect and designer Ettore Sottsass, with furniture, ceramics, glass, jewellery, architecture and industrial design
Until JAN 13 Christopher Dresser, pioneer of modern design, display of Eastern-inspired minimalist objects by the Scottish designer (1834-1904)

Museum of Fine Arts
Citadelpark; 09.240.07.00
Until JAN 13 British Vision, Observation and Imagination in British Art 1750-1950, with works by William Hogarth, Thomas Gainsborough, Stanley Spencer and Francis Bacon, among others

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)
Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03
Until DEC 2 Kunst Nu: Leaving These Landscapes Behind, monumental sculpture installation by Tim Vanhaeert
Until JAN 13 Daria Martin, 2 films by the American artist

Grimbergen
Strombeek-Bever Cultural Centre
Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43
Until OCT 31 Looking for the Border, show of recent Belgian and Italian art, with works by Marcel Broodthaers, Alighiero e Boetti, Guillaume Bijl and Cesare Pietroiani

Hasselt
Stedelijk Mode Museum
Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.23.96.21
Until OCT 30 Les Elégantes: Damesmode 1750-1950, two centuries of women's fashion with pieces from private Dutch collections

Z33
Zuivelmarkt 33 (in begijnhof); 011.29.59.60
Until DEC 12 Toegepast 12, works by young designers from Limburg, Wim Buts, Hanne De Wyngaert and others

Knokke-Heist
Lagunahal
Krommedijk - Duinbergen; 050.63.04.30
Until NOV 30 Kunst & Wunderkammern, artists' rooms by Eric Angenot, Franck Bragigand, Loek Grootjans and others

Leuven
Park Abbey
016.20.30.20
Until DEC 21 In the name of God: 1000 years of monasticism, from the origins of the first monastic orders to today

Stuk
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
Until NOV 11 Sculptures by Erwin Wurm

Tervuren
Central Africa Museum
Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11
Until AUG 31 2008 Knock on Wood! Forest and Wood in Africa, thematic exhibition on African trees and forests and their need for sustainable management

Ypres
Municipal Museum
Ieperleestraat 31; 057.21.83.00
Until NOV 18 Paintings by Ypres artist François Böhm (1801-1873)

Festivals & special events

Audi Jazz Festival: blues, world, avant-garde and hip-hop
Until DEC 10 in venues across Belgium 02.456.04.85, www.audijazz.be

Nocturns in Brussels Museums: Late opening in several museums on Thursday evenings, some offering free entrance
Until DEC 20 02.512.77.80, www.brusselsmuseums.be

Oboefest: International oboe symposium on the occasion of the 11th Congress of the French Oboe Association
OCT 24-29 at the Royal Conservatory of Music and other venues across Brussels www.obofest.be

Viva Cuba!: Festival of Cuban culture includes screenings, exhibitions and a Caribbean music night
OCT 18-21 at Evere Cultural Centre 02.241.15.83, www.centreculturel.be

The Welcome Fair: Focus on Life in Belgium: A festival for new expatriates with representatives from the Brussels' communes, banking, English-language social groups and media, health clubs and more
OCT 20-21, 11.00-18.00 at Autoworld in Cinquantenaire Park 02.373.99.09, www.welcomefair.be

Other towns

Flanders International Film Festival: More than 200 films, musical performances and the World Soundtrack Awards
Until OCT 20 at venues across Ghent 09.242.80.60, www.filmfestival.be

Kuifje De Zonnetempel, musical by Dirk Brossé and Frank Van Laecke (in Dutch)
Until NOV 1 at Stadsschouwburg, Theaterplein 1, Antwerp 070.25.20.20, www.musicalkuifje.com.

Don't miss this week



Congo, Saturday, October 20, from 14.00 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23, Brussels

Brussels' Centre for Fine Arts turns itself into CongoBOZARville for a day (and well into the night) with this exploration of the culture of the Congo. You'll find film, exhibitions, workshops, talks, dance and especially music: Central Africa's most popular musician, Werrason, will take the stage, and traditional will mix with contemporary all day for a fascinating blend of styles.

MY FLANDERS

Anders Aspling

The Swedish professor Anders Aspling recently moved to Ghent to take up a post as dean of Vlerick Leuven Ghent Management School. He tells us about his fondness for Bruges and Ghent and his views on the Flemish way of doing business.

What have you been doing in Flanders since you arrived?

I have been working mostly since I arrived. The former dean of the school, Professor Roland van Dierdonck, helped me settle into the job. At the end of the summer, I went on an integration seminar. It was really great to get to know all the staff and faculty. We talked about corporate and social responsibility and produced a first charter on sustainable actions for the school. I have also met other interesting people connected to the school, including partners, alumni and colleagues from other management schools. This is an exciting time for me.

Have you settled into Ghent?

I live just a five-minute walk from the campus. I generally take the same route, but I seem to discover something new every time I do the walk. Ghent is a very dynamic city with a lot of things going on.

Have people been friendly?

The people are really warm and friendly, even when you don't speak fluent Dutch. I think almost everyone here speaks some English, while Belgians commonly speak three or four different languages. They are also eager to learn and practise their languages, which really makes me feel at home.

Were your first impressions positive?

I was lucky enough to be here on the opening day of the Ghent Festival last summer. The whole town was getting ready for ten whole

days of theatre, music, dance and partying. While I was walking around with my camera, I secretly took a photograph of a family drinking beers and enjoying the opening parade. It looked really nice to see three generations enjoying the same thing. One of them saw me taking the picture. I didn't know if he would like the idea of a stranger photographing his family, but he in fact felt really proud. The family posed for some more shots, smiling into the camera. It really felt as if I was welcome.

Is Ghent as attractive as Stockholm?

It's a really charming and beautiful city with a rich history and culture. Stockholm is built on twenty-one islands, so we are used to living with a lot of water and bridges. I was very pleased to discover that Ghent has almost as many islands and bridges.

You already know Bruges well. What appeals to you about the town?

Bruges is beautiful, peaceful, romantic and very charming. It's a nice historic town, perfect for a city trip. We went there a couple of times before moving to Belgium and always enjoyed it. But we are really happy to be living in Ghent. It's more lively and less touristy.

Do you have a favourite restaurant in Bruges?

We usually just go into the first attractive restaurant we see, but a couple of places stand out. I like Den Dijver for good food



combined with special Belgian beers, and Kardinaalshof for a special experience.

Is there something about this part of Europe that especially appeals to you?

I like the sense of living in the heart of Europe. You really feel that here.

Anything that irritates you about Flanders?

Not really. The cloudy weather sometimes gets me down. I don't mind rain or cold, but grey skies can eventually become depressing.

How about the business climate in Flanders? Is it as dynamic as Sweden?

I am still in the process of getting

to know the business climate in this country. I must say that the entrepreneurial spirit is the same. In both countries you feel that there are a lot of people with great initiatives and energy. The only difference is that Flemish entrepreneurs are sometimes more cautious, whereas Swedish entrepreneurs immediately look at the international possibilities. Maybe that's because they are on the edge of Europe.

Do you have plans for developing Vlerick as a business school?

We have a lot of exciting plans. We are the top school in the Benelux and ranked amongst the best in Europe. We want to differentiate

ourselves even more in the future, so that we really have a presence on the international scene. We have already introduced various new initiatives that show we are getting there: We have a new joint programme with Amsterdam Business School that is starting next year which offers an 18-month weekend programme called the Independent EMBA for people who do not want to interrupt their careers to do an MBA. We have also launched the first Kofi Annan Fellowships for students from developing countries. This involves studying at Vlerick and then receiving help afterwards to set up their own business in their home country. These are just pilot projects, but we hope they will be successful so that we can expand the programme.

Do you work together with schools in other countries?

We are looking at ways to enlarge our activities at the campus in St. Petersburg in Russia. We have set up an exciting exchange project with Stellenbosch University in South Africa. And we are talking to partners in China.

Do you think Flanders' economy is strong enough to face competition from China and India?

The world of today is interconnected, and we can all play an important role in the development of a global economy. With a global outlook, we should be able to play a complementary role in the development of other regions and emerging economies. The role of education is vital in preparing us for a competitive position and a contributing role in the future.

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www.vlerick.be
www.dijver.be
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THE LAST WORD

what they're saying in Flanders

The vision thing

"Flanders should be visionary, ambitious and international."

Kris Peeters
Minister-President of the Flemish Government



Get planting

"The design of the high-speed train line north of Antwerp is a scandal. It's simply unbelievable. They must be paying the engineers by the cubic metre of concrete. They should plant ivy so that it's covered up as soon as possible."

Jo Crepain
Flemish architect

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