



FLANDERS TODAY



Graffiti art, p.11

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Remembering the Forgotten

Passchendaele: the Flemish village that gave its name to one of war's worst horrors

Ninety years have passed since soldiers fought in the mud of Flanders. But for the people who live in this region, the gardeners who tend the graves, and the people who lead guided tours, the past is still far from forgotten.

We had seen other ruined towns, but none like this," Edith Wharton wrote during a tour of the Western Front in 1915. "The towns of Lorraine were blown up, burnt down, deliberately erased from the earth... But Ypres had been bombed to death."

Wharton came from a wealthy New York family. In 1915, while living in France, she was asked by the French Red Cross to make a

tour by car of military hospitals on the Western Front. The aim was to raise public awareness about the urgent need for medical supplies. Her articles were published in *Scribner's Magazine* later that year and helped to raise funds for the Children of Flanders Rescue Committee.

After visiting the ruined towns of France, Wharton arrived by car in Ypres on 21 June 1915. The novelist was immediately struck by the

deserted ruins. "Whiskered photographs fade on morning-glory wallpapers, plaster saints pine under glass bells, antimacassars droop from plush sofas, yellowing diplomas display their seals on office walls. It was all so still and familiar that it seemed as if the people for whom these things had a meaning might at any moment come back and take up their daily business."

Wharton was suddenly shocked

out of her reverie by the roar of distant guns. "And then – crash! The guns began, slamming out volley after volley all along the English lines, and the poor frail web of things that had made up the lives of a vanished city hung dangling before us in that deathly blast."

Continued on page 3



Business

A glittering new shopping centre has just opened in Antwerp's restored Stadfeestzaal. We find out how it happened and what to expect when you go.

Arts

Look back in wonder. An exhibition shows how Brussels looked when ships docked close to Grote Markt and sheep grazed on the Vleurgat fields.

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Interview

Calum Leggatt is one of the gardeners who maintains the war cemeteries around Ypres. He tells us what brought him here and how he feels about his work.

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Kia stops funding FC Brussels

"We don't want our image linked to racism"

Derek Blyth

Kia Motors, the South Korean car manufacturer, cancelled its sponsorship deal with football team FC Brussels last week following racist remarks made by club chairman Johan Vermeersch. The chairman, who is known for his abrasive style, hit out at the team's Congolese midfielder, Zola Matumona, 25, telling him to "stop living in the land of trees and bananas".

The car company decided immediately to cancel its sponsorship deal, worth €100,000 and 20 cars a year. "We don't

want our image to be linked to racist remarks," said CEO Benoît Morenne.

The company said that it had already warned Vermeersch over his aggressive style. "This was really the last straw," said Marc Coopmans, Kia's communications manager.

The racist comment was made while the chairman was hitting out at his lacklustre squad for another poor performance. FC Brussels has lost eight games out of the past 11 and faces relegation from the Belgian first division.

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

Army museum

The army museum in the Jubelpark is a place where fathers take their sons on wet Saturday afternoons. It's an unreconstructed war museum, untainted by pacifist ideas, crammed to the roof with flags, moth-eaten uniforms and the debris of long forgotten conflicts. Wandering around the dusty displays, it's a revelation to discover that Belgian soldiers were active in Portugal in 1832-35, in Italy in 1860-70 and in Mexico in 1864-67. The Mexican campaign was the most tragic, leading to the execution of the Emperor Maximilian on a lonely hillside. Some of his relics made their way back to Brussels and now lie under a thin layer of dust in cabinet 35.

Other glass cases contain endless relics, some of them almost meaningless, but others strangely moving: the old mirror shattered in the 1830 Revolution, the memorial to the Polish soldiers who refused the Tsar's orders to invade the young Belgian nation, the baffling tricycle that once belonged to King Leopold II.

The atmosphere turns more sober when you enter the vast room devoted to World War One. Here is war at its most brutal.

You can wander inside a mock trench, listen to shells going off and hear the rattle of a machine gun. More gloomy still are the glass cases filled with endless relics of the war – blood-stained medical equipment, flimsy paper sheets used for wrapping corpses, a plain enamel plate inscribed *Hier ruhen 10 Deutsche u. 11 Franz. Tapfere Krieger gefallen am 21 August 1917*. The Occupation becomes more real when you see the German identity cards issued to Belgians in 1914 and the public notice listing Belgians sentenced to death in Brussels.

The museum has a long-running exhibition on Belgian war artists who recorded their experiences in the trenches. The artists brought different styles to the battlefield – Cubism, Impressionism and, in one case, Pointillism. Marc Henry Meunier painted some impressive views of the Flanders landscape wrecked by war. But perhaps the most striking painting is Gustave Flasschoen's *De Maskers*, or *The Masked*, depicting men in the trenches wearing gas masks, like bizarre characters in an Ensor painting.

online

www.klm-mra.be



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FACE OF FLANDERS



Henry De Groux

Henry De Groux was a Belgian Symbolist painter who produced his most important work at the end of the 19th century. His great masterpiece was *The Mocking of Christ* painted at the age of 21 for the 1889 Salon in Brussels. The painting depicts a timid, powerless Christ modelled on the artist himself surrounded by a convulsive mass of women, children and dogs. King Leopold II admired the work and paid for it to be shown in Paris the following year at the Salon des Arts Liberaux. It was condemned by the conventional critics, but greatly influenced radical writers in fin de siècle Paris.

Born in 1867 in the Brussels municipality of Sint Joost, De Groux was a difficult person to like. "It is my destiny to compromise everything" he once wrote. But he was hailed by Guillaume Apollinaire as a prophet.

De Groux's trademark style – featuring masses of tangled bodies – shocked respectable people at the time but proved grimly prophetic of the conditions endured by soldiers and civilians during World War One. Driven by unflinching realism, De Groux produced some of the most harrowing images of the conflict. His dark engravings show soldiers living in grotesque conditions, almost like animals, or wearing strange gas masks like demented figures in a science fiction film.

De Groux's engravings are now barely remembered, but the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres has organised an exhibition of his war works. They were mostly done while he was living in France at the start of the war. He read reports in French newspapers of German atrocities committed in his homeland and made etchings of the imagined horrors. His style was perfect for the grim atrocities that marked the start of the four-year war.

Henry de Groux, War Artist, at In Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres, until 30 March 2008.



online

www.inflandersfields.be

Mike Sheil

Mike Sheil, who took the main photographs on pages 1 and 3, is a British photographer who has spent considerable time exploring the former battlefields along the Western Front. "The men of 1914-18 largely saw the land torn apart and stripped of its covering mantle of grass and trees, its bones literally laid bare as they sought shelter within its protective skin," he writes. "Today that tranquil covering is restored again except where concrete and steel push upwards from the soil like some strange fungus." His work can be seen in Passendale Church and at www.westernfrontphotography.com. "For me, the challenge is to somehow capture the memory of those tumultuous events by combining the elements of land and lights."

TALKING DUTCH

notes on language



Bouwgrond

Drive almost anywhere in Flanders and you will see houses. Ribbon development has turned most roads into streets. The first thing you will notice about this *lintbebouwing* along major roads is that it is not always pretty. Each *huis* appears to be different; in fact, the initial impression is often one of higgledy-pigglediness. Nothing seems planned – it looks as if you can build what you like where you like.

It is true that town and country planning came late to Flanders. With no one dictating where you could build, people built on the most convenient plots, along main roads. Yet this impression of always being in a built-up area belies the fact, which you can check from your Brussels Airlines window seat, that Flanders is a green and pleasant land behind the ribbons of houses.

The individualistic nature of Flemings is reflected in their houses. At one time there were even laws prohibiting identical houses being built in the same street. If you can, you have a new house built. Usually, you will build on *bouwgrond* that your parents bought for you or that has been passed down from grandparents. There does not seem to be much sentimentality for tumbled-down cottages; instead, flatten it and put up a house in the latest fashion, which at present is probably *een passief huis*, which uses practically no energy.

In recent years pressure on the Flemish housing market from well-heeled buyers from Brussels and the international institutions has been felt far beyond the capital. In the municipalities around Brussels most *bouwgronden* are now beyond the means of local young people. As they have looked further afield (which in Flanders is quite relative – moving to the next village is seen as quite a departure) they in turn have added to the demand for housing that most people see as being impossible to satisfy. So it was a surprise to see the headline recently, *Bouwgronden in overvloed in Vlaanderen*. With 410,857 *percelen* unbuilt, on three-quarters of which are privately owned, there is building land galore in Flanders. But of course this does not mean all these plots are for sale. Most are covered in grandpa's cabbages and *Brusselse spruiten* and will remain so until Jantje or Saartje needs a house. Some *percelen* have been bought by those hoping to turn a quick profit, but, with the pressure for *bouwgronden*, these speculators will probably be targeted to make them release the plots sooner than they might wish.

Land which does come free for building is now usually in the form of a *verkaveling*, a piece of land divided up into lots. You might think that is just a housing estate with identical houses. Not so. Each owner will employ an architect and construct a house which will be quite distinct from the neighbours'. It is not for nothing that the Dutch language has a proverb about bricks and stomachs applying to each Fleming: *elke Vlaming is geboren met een baksteen in de maag*, which is quite a way to be born.

Alistair MacLean

online

www.vandale.be

FEATURE



The killing fields

Continued from page 1

The town of Ypres, or Ieper, has now been totally reconstructed. You can barely see any evidence that it was the ruined place described by Edith Wharton. The only sign of damage is a pile of rubble in the cloister of the Cathedral. It's almost as if the quiet West Flanders town decided to wipe out the memory of its violent past.

The war is more present in the fields around Ypres where the war dead are buried in 150 war cemeteries. The graveyards are maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, an international organisation set up after World War One to look after the graves of soldiers buried in battlefields scattered across much of Europe. In 1923, the organisation was shipping more than 4,000 headstones a week to meet demand. By 1927, it

had created more than 500 cemeteries, 400,000 headstones and 1,000 memorial crosses.

The Commission works with an annual budget of almost £49 million (€74 million) contributed by six countries (Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India). The money is spent maintaining cemeteries in 149 countries where some 1.7 million names are commemorated.

The office in Ypres is responsible for cemeteries spread across northern Europe from two world wars, mainly in Belgium, Germany, Poland and Scandinavia. The office employs more than 200 staff, including 150 gardeners and about 30 stonemasons. The gardeners in the Ypres area work in nine mobile units, each with responsibility for a number of cemeteries. Most gardeners are locals, but 10 come from Britain (including Calum

Leggatt, interviewed on page 16).

The gardeners follow planting ideas that were laid down in the 1920s by the horticultural expert Gertrude Jekyll. The overall aim is to recreate the style of an English cottage garden rather than a cemetery by using herbaceous perennials and floribunda roses. The gardeners plant some 20 different types of plants along the borders, choosing low plants in front of the stone to avoid covering the inscriptions.

The cemeteries are visited every year by thousands of individuals and tour groups interested in the war. Willie Mohan from Northern Ireland runs regular tours of the battlefields beginning in Brussels. "I try to present the human face behind historical events and make them as personal as possible by describing the experiences of individual soldiers," he says.

Douchy Farm, Ypres,
photograph by Mike Sheil

As a former soldier, he can easily empathise with those who fought in the Battle of Passchendaele. "Six weeks of constant rain followed by three million shell bombardments reduced the site to a quagmire," he explains. "The drainage system was destroyed, and sewage ran freely. Soldiers with even slight wounds risked amputation because of gangrene."

Thousands of soldiers simply drowned in the thick mud. A few skeletons are discovered every year during construction work and buried in one of the war cemeteries around Ypres. The bodies of five Australian soldiers were found a year ago in Zonnebeke. They were named the "Zonnebeke Five" and sent to the Belgian National Institute for Criminology for DNA identification. The institute succeeded in identifying two of the dead soldiers by analysing bone fragments and teeth – a world first.

The identified soldiers were John Hunter and George Calder. Several distant relatives travelled from Australia to attend the burial ceremony last October in Buttes New Cemetery, including John Hunter's nephew and niece, Jim Hunter, 73, and Mollie Millis, 81.

They knew the story of their uncle, although they had never met him. John Hunter, 28, was killed on his first day in battle. "His group consisted of 250 men when it arrived here," said Jim Hunter. "After a night of fighting there were just 42 fit for combat. The others were dead or wounded." John Hunter's body lay undiscovered for almost nine decades until a Flemish workman noticed his shoe sticking out of the clay. One of the missing had been found.

Events this week

The Road to Passchendaele

Exhibition in the Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917 focusing on recent excavations along the old Ypres to Roulers railway line. The exhibition contains archaeological finds, photographs and drawings. The body of a soldier from the Lancashire Fusiliers was discovered during the excavations and buried at Tyne Cot last summer.

Passchendaele, 90 Years Later

An exhibition in the reconstructed Passchendaele Church marking the end of the battle on 10 November 1917. The church stands on the spot where the Allied offensive finally halted. The church is hosting an exhibition of photographs of the former battlefields by British photographer Michael Sheil.

Naval Division & Iron Harvest
The story of Varlet Farm during the Battle of Passchendaele, told by the Flemish family who own the reconstructed farm. They have collected extensive information and relics found on their land, including bits of helmets, rifles and bayonets.

A Descent into Hell: The New Zealanders in Passchendaele

An award-winning exhibition first organised in the New Zealand Army Museum in Waiouru. Held in the Old Cheese Dairy, Passchendaele.

Mine Path

A walking route across the hilly Heuvelland that takes in craters and cemeteries. The footpath begins in Wytschaete village and follows a newly-created trail through Wytschaete Wood.

The Old Railway Trail

This new cycle and walking trail along a disused railway line links Zonnebeke with Tyne Cot. The route crosses the area where the Australians advanced on 4 October 1917.

Reflection

An exhibition of works by contemporary photographers, including Stephan Vanfleteren and Bart Michiels, focusing on Passchendaele 1917 and Tyne Cot Cemetery. Most exhibitions run until 15 November.

online

www.passchendaele.be

Flanders commemorates Scots war dead

Celtic Cross stands on Passchendaele battlefield

Rory Watson

As ceremonies to mark the 90th anniversary of one of the First World War's bloodiest battles, Passchendaele, come to an end next weekend, a three-metre-high Celtic Cross on a small ridge outside Zonnebeke pays tribute to the sacrifices Scottish soldiers made on the western front.

Unveiled at the end of August, the stunning memorial is the brainchild of Belgian army warrant officer Erwin Ureel and is a fitting symbol of the close links which exist between Flanders and Scotland.

"People tend to forget just how much the Scots were involved here," he explains. "There were three Scottish divisions in very close proximity: the 9th, 15th and 51st Highland. In many ways, Passchendaele is more important for the British than the

Somme. There, they supported the French, but here it was their own offensive."

While there are small memorials to individual Scottish military units, Ureel began exploring the idea some three years ago of a monument to commemorate the wider Scottish involvement. This would be dedicated not just to Scots, but to all who had emigrated and were fighting under new flags – Australian, New Zealand, South African and Canadian (at least half of Canada's Victoria Cross winners were of Scottish origin).

Gradually, the concept, whose total cost was just under €50,000, began to take shape. The Flemish government and province of West Flanders gave financial support, Zonnebeke community council covered the €15,000 cost of the original bunker stones on which the cross now stands, the Passchendaele memorial museum

provided practical help and volunteers in Flanders and Scotland raised the funds.

Ureel, a frequent visitor to Scotland, had briefly considered erecting a large cairn, as found on the summit of mountains, but instead chose a Celtic Cross, examples of which are found in villages, towns and cities throughout Scotland to honour the dead from past wars.

"I thought a cross would be taller and would dominate the landscape. It is like a parish memorial. We wanted to bring Scotland and something of its villages here. It is also more universal," he says.

The location of the pink granite cross is on the Frezenberg ridge which the Scots captured on the first day of the attack in July 1917. The design is the work of Dirk Uytterschout, a friend of Ureel's and a Flemish art teacher. It incorporates a strip of barbed wire to symbolise No Man's Land and an extract from the 1320 Scottish

Declaration of Arbroath emphasising the importance of freedom.

The dedication to all people of Scottish origin who took part in the Great War 1914-1918 is in three languages: Dutch, English and Gaelic. The Flemish, Scottish and British governments were all represented at the inauguration ceremony on 25 August for which Major Gavin Stoddart, a former director of Army Bagpipe Music, had specifically composed a new pipe tune, *The Road to Passchendaele*.

It also featured the presentation to the people of Zonnebeke of the new Passchendaele tartan. Consisting of red and brown stripes, it represents the blood the soldiers shed and the mud in which they drowned.

As part of the 90th anniversary commemoration, Ureel, Franky Bostyn, the director of the Passchendaele memorial museum, and other volunteers have followed the

Peter Begemann



Scottish weekend in August with other themed events. In early October, attention was focused on the contributions made by Australians and New Zealanders. The programme will close on Saturday 10 November with a remembrance ceremony for Canadians who eventually captured the ruined village of Passchendaele on 30 October 1917.

online

www.scottishmonument.be



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Sponsorship deal stopped

“It was stupid,” manager admits



Dutch arrest escaped gangster

Dutch police are still holding the notorious Belgian criminal Nordin Ben Allal, who escaped from Ittre prison in Walloon Brabant. Ben Allal made a spectacular escape by helicopter on 28 October. He fled to The Netherlands where he was arrested by Dutch police after he and an accomplice threatened the owner of a motorbike shop with a gun.

Ben Allal had escaped from Belgian jails several times in the past. The most recent escape caused a storm of protest and demands for improved security in the country's prisons. The government has said it will build new high-security wings at Bruges in West Flanders and Lantin in Liège province to house high risk prisoners with a history of violence or prison escapes.

Anciaux targets immigrants in culture budget

Flemish culture minister Bert Anciaux is to invest an extra €19 million in cultural activities aimed at attracting immigrants. The goal is to ensure that the cultural programme includes a broad range of events that encourage an exchange between Flanders and other cultures. His plan includes the creation of a Flemish-Congolese Cultural Centre in the Matonge quarter of Brussels, where a large concentration of Congolese live, and an Islamic centre where people can find information on “the presence of Islamic culture in Flanders”. Anciaux also wants to encourage “gifted” asylum seekers to develop their artistic talents. “Illegal immigrants are included in the plan as one of the main priorities,” he stressed.

Continued from page 1

Johan Vermeersch has admitted that he made a mistake and apologised for causing offence. “It was stupid, dumb, call it what you want,” he told *De Morgen*. “I’m going to have to change the way I talk.” But he denies racism and claims that he has given many African players a chance to play in Belgian football.

Meanwhile, Matumona’s lawyer, Laurent Denis, has advised his client to break his contract with the club on the grounds of racism. The player also plans to file complaints with the Belgian football union, the international football association FIFA and the anti-racism centre.

Kia began operations in Benelux in 2002 and has increased sales from 211 cars in the first year of operations to an expected 12,000 in 2008. The car maker has increased its market share over the same period from almost zero to 1.5% and has built its dealership network from 20 to 85. Kia has invested heavily in sport sponsorship to boost its brand image in Belgium and currently sponsors the Red Devils national football team and athletes Kim Gevaert and Tia Hellebaut.

NEWS FLASH



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Cervical cancer vaccine to cost less

The government has cut the cost of cervical cancer vaccinations. The vaccine, given to girls aged 12 to 15, was previously priced at €130 per shot. But patients will now pay just €10.60 a shot for a course of three inoculations.

Pensions promise

The five parties involved in coalition talks agreed last week on a new deal that would tie pensions and social benefits to wages. The acting Prime Minister, Yves Leterme, said that the aim was to ensure a fair division of wealth in Belgium. The main target groups would be people on low pensions, the chronically ill and the handicapped.

Pole position

Thirteen Belgian soldiers have set off for the South Pole where they will help to build a new Antarctic research station. The Princess Elisabeth polar research station will largely use recycled water and run on renewable energy sources.

New cancer drug developed

Scientists from the biotech firm ThromboGenics and the Flemish Biotechnology Institute are developing a new drug to fight cancer. The new drug limits blood supplies to a tumour and so prevents it growing.

Proud to be Belgian

Pro-Belgium activist Marie Claire Houart has called for a demonstration in favour of Belgian unity in Brussels on 18 November. Houart, a civil servant in Liège, launched a petition against separatism last August, which has gathered 125,000 signatures.

Blog closed

The Belgian-Turkish journalist Mehmet Koksal has closed down his weblog following threats from extremists. Koksal is an outspoken critic of Turkish nationalism and has been sued in the past for his comments on Belgian politicians of Turkish origin. He was taken to hospital recently after being attacked by Turkish youths.

Keep the flags flying



Reporters

Belgium faced a new milestone in its history earlier this week when it marked 148 days without a government – the longest period in the country’s 177-year history. The previous record was set in 1988 when Wilfried Martens’ eighth administration finally took office after 148 days of tough negotiations.

Yet there has been some progress over the past months – negotiators have secured agreement on future legislation covering justice, defence, security and foreign policy, although the federal budget has still to be hammered out.

The main stumbling blocks that remain for prime minister designate Yves Leterme are state reforms giving more power to the regions and the splitting of the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde electoral constituency.

Last Passchendaele survivor speaks out



The last surviving soldier from the Battle of Passchendaele spoke about his experiences last week as he launched a week of commemorations leading up to 11 November, Armistice Day. Harry Patch, 109, from Wells in southern England, was called up for service in the summer of 1917. Just weeks later, he took part in the Battle of Passchendaele, east of Ypres, where many of his comrades were killed. Speaking at a convalescence home for former soldiers, he said: "Today is not for me, it is for the countless millions who did not come home with their lives intact. They are the heroes."

Like many who served in the trenches, Patch spoke for soldiers on both sides. "It is important we remember those who lost their lives on both sides."

Patch has made several visits to the war cemeteries in the Ypres area. In November 2004, he met Charles Kuentz, 108 at the time, who had fought on the German side in the Battle of Passchendaele. Patch said: "I was a bit doubtful before meeting a German soldier. Herr Kuentz is a very nice gentleman, however. He is all for a united Europe and peace – and so am I."

On his most recent trip to Ypres, in July 2007, Patch stood in a cemetery and said: "Any one of them could have been me. Millions of men came to fight in this war, and I find it incredible that I am the only one left."

De Wever apologises

Bart De Wever, chairman of the Flemish nationalist party, was forced to apologise to the Jewish community last week after he condemned Antwerp mayor Patrick Janssens' Holocaust apology. Janssens had apologised to the Jewish community at a Holocaust conference in Antwerp for the help given to the Nazis by city officials and police officers in rounding up Jews for deportation to concentration camps in 1942. De Wever said that the mayor's statement was "gratuitous" and intended as an attack on the far-right Vlaams Belang. But he was condemned by the Jewish community and several leading Flemish politicians. Mark Eyskens, Christian democrat Minister of State, told journalists that De Wever's comments were: "vulgar, shocking and totally misplaced".

Belgium calls for ban on cluster bombs

Handicap International is pressing countries to speed up implementation of a treaty banning cluster bombs. The organisation issued its plea at a conference held in Brussels to look at progress in banning cluster bombs, which cause many civilian casualties. Belgium was the first in the world to pass legislation banning the sale and production of cluster bombs and is pledged to destroy the country's stockpile by the end of 2008.

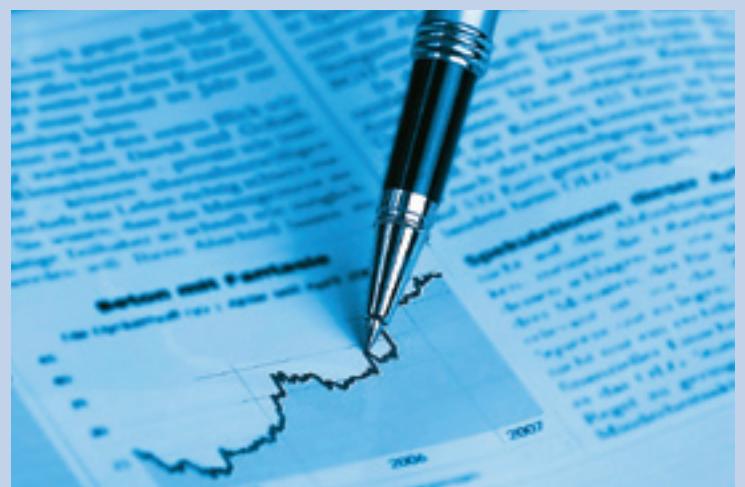
Book Fair opens

Boekenbeurs, The Flemish Book Fair, opened in Antwerp Expo last week. Now in its 71st year, the 12-day fair features 115 exhibitors presenting some 600,000 books in Dutch. This year's event

showcases 335 celebrated authors and features internet radio and web TV for the first time. The organisers are hoping that the fair will attract at least 170,000 visitors.



THE WEEK IN FIGURES



150 days

Number of days without a government, on Tuesday 6 November. This breaks the previous record set in 1988 when Wilfried Martens struggled to create a government during a period of acute crisis.

€3.29 million

Cash spent by the Flemish liberal party Open VLD in last June's elections, according to research published by Leuven University. Open VLD spent the highest amount of any party but lost the election.

57%

Percentage of employees who have taken out a second pension, according to Flemish daily *De Standaard*. Only 31% of existing retired people have a second pension, the paper adds.

6%

Percentage of Belgians confessing to working in the black last year, according to figures by the European Union's statistical office Eurostat.

52%

Percentage of Flemish who think that writers should be paid more, according to a survey in *Knack* magazine.

32

Triplets born in Flanders in 2006, compared with 2,253 twins and 63,655 single babies. The birth rate in Flanders is one of the highest in Europe.

1,124

Number of gay marriages in 2006, compared to 1,027 the previous year. Gay marriage became legal in Belgium in 2003 and has become increasingly popular, especially among women, who often have children from a previous marriage and want to give them the security of married parents.

12,000

Number of hunters registered in Flanders. The hunting season kicked off a few weeks ago with a special mass held in Beauvoorde, West Flanders, in honour of St Hubert, patron saint of hunters.

34.6 million

Number of *dienstencheques* used in Belgium for paying household help in the first nine months of this year, compared to 32 million issued in the whole of 2006. The cheques were introduced by the previous government to cut down on illegal work and provide domestic workers with a decent wage and social benefits. They have proved enormously popular, though critics say they cost the government too much.

125,000

Number of people who have signed a petition calling for Belgium to be saved from disintegration.

Thomas Leysen heads employers' federation



Thomas Leysen has been appointed chairman of the Belgian employers' association VBO. Leysen, who heads the steel company Umicore, takes over from Jean-Claude Daoust next April. Leysen is the son of former Agfa-Gevaert CEO André Leysen and sits on the boards of several other companies, including publishers Corelio. The VBO is an umbrella organisation that represents about 30,000 Belgian businesses and employing some 1.5 million people.

Job target reached

The previous government reached its controversial target of creating 200,000 jobs, according to the latest figures released by the national statistical institute. The outgoing Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt, pledged during his second term to create the new jobs over four years. But the economy is now experiencing a downturn, which will make it difficult to maintain this momentum, warns financial daily *De Tijd*.

Eat, drink and be merry

Turnover in the hotel, restaurant and cafe sector rose last year by 5.7%, according to the latest figures from the industry. This comes as good news to hotel and restaurant owners, who have been through lean times in recent years. In Brussels these businesses are doing particularly well, with turnover three times as high as Flanders and five times above Wallonia. But the total number of cafés and bars is on the decline, and 1,400 businesses in the sector went bust in 2006.

Eco plan for Ghent stadium

A plan has been submitted for a new 20,000-seat stadium in Ghent with 13,000 square metres of solar panels on the roof and a sophisticated rainwater collection system to water the grass. The design is inspired by the Allianz Arena in Munich and includes a lounge bar with capacity for 1,000 guests, a bowling alley, casino and gym. Work on the complex is expected to begin next February if planning permission is granted.

Brucargo West gets first tenant

Belgian Post International (BPI) plans to move into a new 10,000 square-metre warehouse space at Brucargo West late next year. BPI – De Post's international division – is the first firm to take residency in the new 120,000 square-metre logistics park under construction at Brussels Airport. "The new state-of-the-art logistics park will become our European hub for international activities," says BPI director Peter Somers.

More competitive

Belgium became a little more competitive last year, according to the annual Global Competitiveness Report. The country was ranked 20th in the world – one place up on the previous year. The report looked at 113 different factors, including the quality of government, infrastructure and business sophistication. Belgium scored high marks for education, railways, harbours and business sophistication, but lost ground because of its high wages and inefficient labour market. The United States came top in the ranking.

online

www.weforum.org

BUSINESS FLASH



Saturn

The German household equipment and appliances store Saturn has opened its first Belgian store in Antwerp's Stadsfeestzaal. Saturn is a sister company of the well-established Media Markt, and both form part of the Metro retailing group. Another store is expected to open in Wilrijk later this year. Saturn offers a vast selection of 100,000 electronic goods with a "lowest-price guarantee".

Wienerberger

Wienerberger, the world's leading bricks producer, is to invest €54 million in its Flemish operations in Rumst, Zonnebeke and Egem. The company also plans to cut production at its Kortemark plant with the loss of 70 jobs.

Cote D'Or

The chocolate company Cote D'Or – a household name in Belgium – is opening its first store in the fashionable Zavel area of Brussels. The company, now a subsidiary of the US corporation Kraft Foods, hopes to capitalise on the current rage for luxury Belgian chocolates.

Blue Air

The Romanian airline Blue Air is transferring its operations from Charleroi to Brussels Airport. The company operates four flights a week between Brussels and Bucharest.

Galapagos

The Mechelen-based bio-technology company Galapagos has signed an agreement with Janssen Pharmaceutica, an affiliate of US-based Johnson and Johnson, to develop and market molecules for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis.

Myair

Low-cost airline Myair plans to fly two flights a week between Brussels Airport and Bari, southern Italy. The service is scheduled to begin on 15 December.

Brantano

The shoe retailer Brantano – controlled by the Mitiška group and the Brantegem family – has been acquired by the Dutch Macintosh company. Brantano operates 125 stores in Belgium with a 12% share of the local market. Shares in the company surged some 27% on the news.

Alcatel-Lucent

The ailing telecommunications equipment producer is considering a cut in its Antwerp-based regional headquarters as part of its worldwide restructuring.

Distrigaz

Distrigaz, the natural gas import and distribution company with extensive operation in the Port of Zeebrugge, is attracting interest from Britain's Centrica company. Distrigaz, controlled by the French Suez group, is widely expected to be put on the market as part of an agreement with the European authorities in the merger discussions between the French energy companies Suez and Gaz de France.



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STADSFEESTZAAL

Palace of the people

Luxury Antwerp shopping centre mobbed on opening day



Derek Blyth

“Expect the unexpected,” read a large banner hung outside the back entrance of Antwerp’s Stadsfeestzaal, or City Festival Hall. For the 30,000 people who pressed inside during the opening day, the interior was truly unexpected. A building that was a smouldering ruin seven years ago has become one of the most scintillating shopping centres in Europe.

The Stadsfeestzaal was built 100 years ago by the architect Alexis Van Mechelen. It contained the largest hall in the country and for many years was the setting for

the most glamorous events in the port city, from book fairs to car shows. But then disaster struck in 2000 when fire swept the building, reducing the gilt mouldings and neoclassical pillars to a charred mess.

The building was restored to its original state by the historical architect Romain Berteloot, who took enormous care in restoring the gold-leaf stucco and vast glass dome. The overall design was done by Multi Development’s agency T+T Design, working with Danish architects Exners Tegnestue and Belgian Ferre Verbaenen.

So who paid for all of this palatial

splendour? It was a joint venture by the group Multi Development and Bank of Ireland Private Banking. In other words, some bankers decided that an Antwerp shopping centre was a safe place to put their clients’ money.

The building’s unique location was one of the main factors that persuaded the investors to put down large amounts of cash, according to Marleen de Wolf, managing director of Multi Development Belgium. “A wide passageway on the ground floor connects Meir with Hopland, two shopping thoroughfares that attract different types of customer. So the varied

range of stores will appeal to shoppers on both Meir and Hopland”.

The building offers some 20,500 square metres of commercial space spread over four floors. The setting is spectacular, with shops located along the galleries that run around the edge of the main hall. There are 40 shops, ranging from low-cost Dutch retailers down in the basement, like Blokker and Bart Smit, to a chic Laurent Perrier champagne bar poised above the main hall.

The mixture is as diverse as Antwerp’s population. There are fashion boutiques for the street-wise, home furnishing shops for

young city dwellers and a city supermarket where locals can buy food. Several major international retailers were won over by the project, including Urban Outfitters, an American chain of youth clothing shops which has chosen the Stadsfeestzaal for its first Continental Europe branch. O’Neill has also opened a European Flagship store in the building, snuggling in with Nike Antwerp, Tommy Hilfiger Tailormade and Onara.

The champagne bar is designed to appeal to the fashion city’s glamorous crowd. Designed in the shape of a large champagne glass, it is poised some 7.5 metres above the hall, like a scene in a James Bond movie.

A branch of La Place, the gourmet self-service restaurant found in Dutch cities, provides gourmet food at rock-bottom prices. It can get hot and crowded in the eating area, but there is one relatively quiet room furnished with mirrors and sofas.

The Stadsfeestzaal is Multi’s third project in Belgium, following the Den Tir commercial centre in Antwerp’s Kiel district and a sports centre and commercial centre in Ostend. The company is now working on De Klamp in Boom, a commercial centre with an undulating roof that will serve as a park for local residents.

Multi is one of a new breed of developers committed to sustainable development in urban centres. “Multi aims for projects that add more to the town or city than just buildings,” explains Marleen de Wolf. “For us, the context is important, but this may take the form of small details, which are characteristic of that area or have particular local importance. With the restoration of the Stadsfeestzaal, a place that is special to many Antwerp residents has been returned to the public domain”.

Pick of the shops

Urban Outfitters

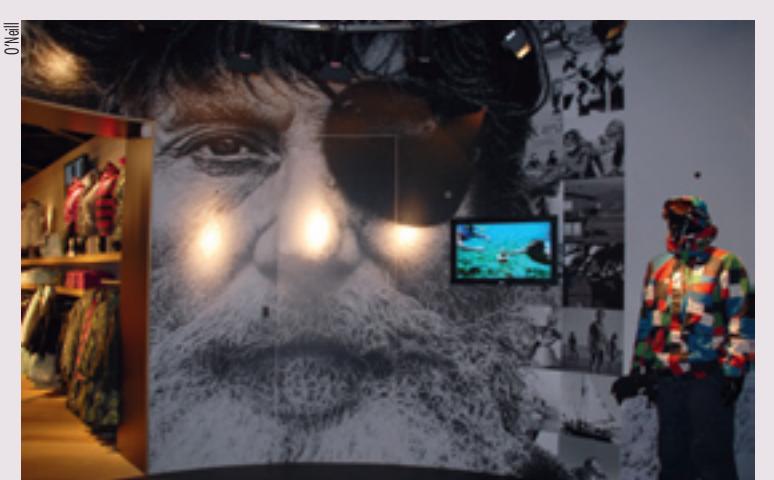
The very first European sighting of this American chain. The hippest of the hip shop here, where the speciality is to make expensive clothes that look like you picked them out of the garbage. Loose-fitting dresses, floral hoodies, t-shirts sporting logos from 1950s cafes – for both boys and girls. Buy this youthful urban wear and fashionably look like you just can’t be bothered.

Crocs

Do you love those plastic shoes that people used to wear just for gardening? Then you’ll love Crocs, which is a whole giant store just for them and other similar styles. The first in Belgium, your kids will go crazy in this colourful, bouncy store.

O’Neill

Release your inner slacker with the oversized sweatshirts, wool caps and baggy slacks of this outdoor clothes shop. Skateboarders, surfers and skiers vie for attention with the multi-media art and multi-cultural mannequins that make this incredibly stylish flagship store more of an “experience” than just a mere shopping trip.



Shopping for slackers: O’Neill

EXHIBITION

Town and country



"Koopliedendok" by Andreas Martin

Derek Blyth

The town hall in Brussels has organised *Van 't stadt en schoone buytens*, an interesting exhibition that looks at drawings and paintings by two 18th-century artists who lived and worked in the city. Ferdinand-Joseph Derons and Andreas Martin were active during a relatively peaceful period in the first half of the 18th century, and they spent their time depicting picturesque quarters of the old town and idyllic country houses built outside the city walls.

Derons is best known for a series of precise engravings of the guild houses on Grote Markt. The French had destroyed the square in a fierce bombardment in 1695, but that happened five years before Derons was born. By the time he was active, the houses had all been rebuilt in a gorgeous Flemish Baroque style inspired by the extravagant Rubensian style of Antwerp.

Martin was more of a painter in the tradition of Jan Brueghel,

and he produced an extraordinary view of the Koopliedendok, or Merchants' Dock. Most visitors will have enormous difficulty working out what part of Brussels they are looking at when they see this work. The artist shows a sailing ship arriving at a quayside crowded with fashionable people, including an artist – presumably Martin himself – sitting on the ground.

It hardly seems possible, but ships once arrived in Brussels along a 28km canal built under Emperor Charles V to connect Brussels with the Scheldt. This massive engineering project, carried out by Brussels mayor Jean de Locquenghien, brought large galleons to within a few hundred metres of Grote Markt.

The two docks were filled in during the second half of the 19th century, along with several others, to create a series of open squares in the city centre. But the names of the quaysides have survived – Baksteenkaai, where bricks were unloaded, Brandhoutkaai, where firewood arrived by boat, and

Hooikaai, behind the KVS theatre, where hay was brought ashore.

The two artists ventured frequently beyond the city walls to produce views of elegant country houses built by Brussels' wealthy families. They depicted rustic retreats that have long since vanished, like the Lusthuis bij Vleurgat that once stood near the present-day Louizalaan. People walked out to this "pleasure house" on public holidays to drink a beer and dance, until it vanished under the family houses of Elsene.

A few of the country houses still exist, although almost all have lost their original role. The sublime country retreat of the Ansillon family is still standing on one of the old quaysides. It is now called the Klein Kasteeltje and serves as a reception centre for asylum seekers.

Exhibition in Brussels town hall, Grote Markt, until 13 January.

online

www.brucity.be

Baroque harmony

Derons produced a series of views of Grote Markt in the mid 18th century, covering all four sides of the great urban square. This view shows the six houses on the square's north side, all rebuilt after the 1695 bombardment. Hardly a window pane has changed since Derons did this work, making this one of the most perfectly preserved Baroque squares in Europe.



Grote Markt as seen by Ferdinand-Joseph Derons

PARTY

I love Techno

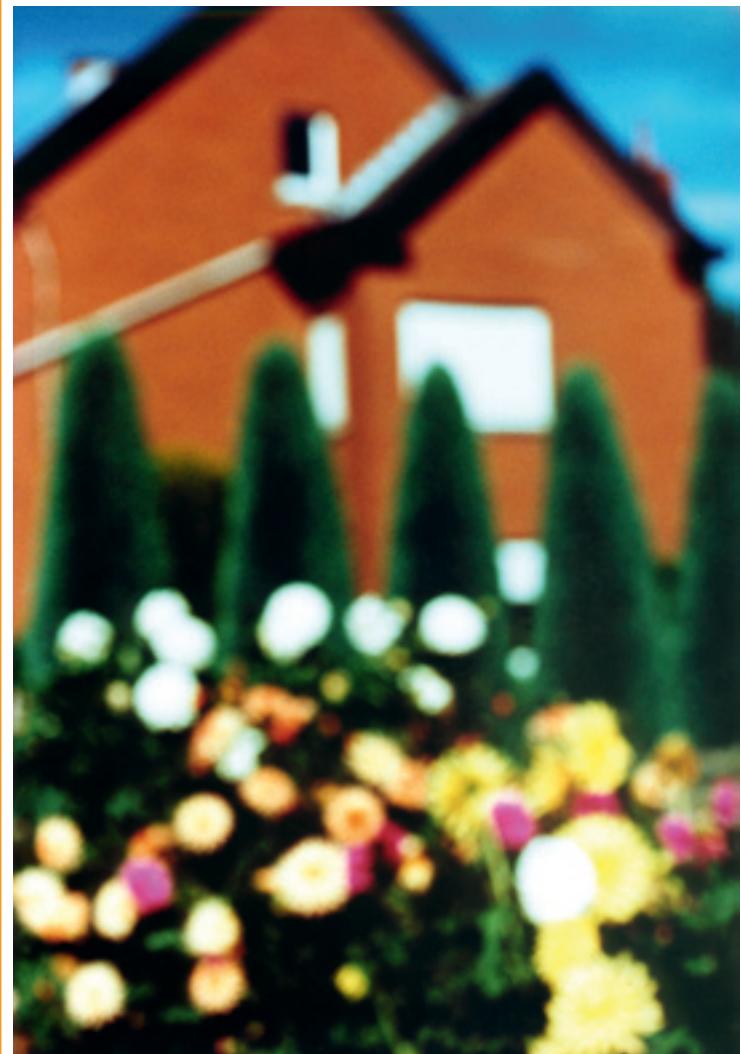
It must be autumn in Flanders – I Love Techno is back at Flanders Expo. The annual event has been going on for 12 years now, having outgrown its original home in Ghent's Vooruit arts centre to take over several halls of the Expo centre just outside the city. Its 35,000 fans come from all over Europe to hear DJs in special colour-coded rooms and to hang out in the club area – watching videos, dancing and flirting with an international crowd. Scandalously, it's possible that some of them don't even *love* techno. They just know a good party when they see it.

Because this is one of techno's biggest events in Europe, I Love Techno draws the continent's best music DJs, and organisers are hell bent on eclecticism. Among the line-up of about 30 are Dave Clarke, the Brit who started the trend back in the mid-90s of crossing genres in DJ play, and the French duo Justice, with their combination of rock and electro. Just cross your fingers that they'll bring their trademark giant lighted cross that hangs above their heads during shows.

November 10, 19.00-4.00, Flanders Expo, Ghent. Tickets from all FNAC and Free Record Shop outlets or online at www.ilovetechno.be.

FLANDERS EYE

Peter De Bruyne



Flemish photographer Peter De Bruyne recently decided to photograph his home patch after returning from a stint in the United States and Mexico. He wandered down suburban streets in quiet residential neighbourhoods taking deliberately blurred shots of houses. The result conveys something of the eerie atmosphere that prevails in these new settlements that have sprung up overnight on *bouwgrond* plots sold by local farmers. He has an eye for the mystery of these unreal places, with their neatly trimmed lawns, scrubbed driveways and obsessively clean paintwork. The owners are always absent, hiding behind net curtains or off on escapist travels. "I wanted to show how people distance themselves and outline their territory," explains De Bruyne.

De Bruyne's work can be seen until 17 November at KVS, Arduinkaai 7, Brussels.

online

www.kvs.be

EUROPALIA

A rugged temptation

Celebrating the utter strangeness of the Polish avant-garde

Lisa Bradshaw

Our *Europalia* Highlight of the Month for November is, hands-down, a deranged little theatre group from the far reaches of north-eastern Poland. Theatre Wierszalin, based in Bialystok, is experimental performance at its best: moody, unafraid and pushing your boundaries to the breaking point.

Saint Oedipus has only two actors playing many roles: midwives, knights, cardinals and occasionally brother and sister. But their eclectic performances take place alongside roughly-hewn wooden puppets. The actors' movements are often so doll-like and the puppets so smooth that you sometimes forget there's a difference. Which just adds to the creepiness of the mood: 18th-century gentlemen in frock coats and dangling white cuffs suddenly transform into frenzied leather-clad hedonists – with all that you might imagine that would entail. Against a backdrop of Mozart's *Requiem*, the human pair of the cast eventually produce a child who must atone for the sins of the family.

The actors, Rafal Gasowski and Edyta Lukaszewicz-Lisowska, are veritable shape shifters. Gender and age be damned – they can do it all and with the grace of

classically-trained dancers. The pair have taken *Saint Oedipus* around the world over the last couple of years, making a splash at Edinburgh's Fringe Festival and getting a rave review from *The New York Times*. The work's writer and director is also the theatre company's founder, Piotr Tomaszuk, and he weaves a tradition of Polish folk plays with religious metaphor and postmodern abstraction so expertly that Wierszalin is now one of the most respected troupes in his country.

Though *Saint Oedipus* is based on its title character, as well as the tragic *The Holy Sinner* by Thomas Mann, its dark comedy outweighs any sense of despair. It knows how to laugh at its own excesses and escape from a yoke of guilt – perhaps one of its most obvious messages. It's a piece that's definitely not for the prude, but it is for those who like their stage-work daring – and memorable.

November 8 to 10, Théâtre Les Tanneurs, Huideveterstraat 75, Brussels. In Polish with subtitles in Dutch and French. Tickets from 02.512.17.84 or www.lestanneurs.be

online

www.europalia.be



Not for the squeamish: Theatre Wierszalin in *Saint Oedipus*

FASHIONISTA

Romy Smits



While Gucci, Louis Vuitton and Dolce & Gabbana fight to plaster you with logos, Antwerp-based designer Romy Smits ups the ante in the style game with a more original fashion signature: the wacky. Smits works this totem-like silhouette in kaleidoscopic colours into dizzying optical-art patterns that seem like the spiritual children of Keith Haring and Missoni – but are singularly Smits.

The wide-eyed innocence of her motifs echoes the naivety with which she started her fashion line seven years ago. "After years of doing visual presentations and working on fashion shows for Dries Van Noten, I thought, why not start a collection?" Completely self-taught, the Dutch-born, Belgian-bred designer tapped into her inner child for a debut that had buyers from the New York style Mecca Barneys snapping up every piece.

Unfortunately, the newbie miscalculated the costs of producing the garments – meaning her successful first season ended up barely breaking even. Smits got smart about costs and pricing for her next collection – "Then 9/11 happened," she says, "and the US business dried up."

Japanese customers kept her afloat, as well as collaborations with Peugeot, Lexus, L'Oréal and others.

A designer who doesn't like fashion might seem a contradiction in terms, but with Smits it makes sense. "The idea of having to come out with a collection according to a certain schedule doesn't thrill me," she says. "I approach my work as a mix of couture and art. I don't think in terms of seasons. Clothes I made from my first collection seven years ago, I still make today – and people still like them."

Some, however, are more decorative than practical: the dress composed of gardenias in black fabric is more of a style statement than a frock for nipping out to the shops. First of all, cleaning would be a problem, as Smits doesn't even know what fabric it's made of: "Something I got from China". Secondly, the intricately sewn dress took three days to make and is as delicate as the flowers in its composition.

Despite Smits' rebel stance, she is ambitious. She points to a candleholder composed of stencilled wacky forms interlaced. "I would love a company to come to me wanting to produce this – or even to have my own perfume," she admits. "But I don't want to become so much of a business that it takes me away from design. The bigger you get as a designer, the more that becomes a problem." Though she shudders at the idea of hopping on the fashion bandwagon, she does have a line of handbags called Citrien: jelly-bean-vivid dazzlers that you'd have to build your whole outfit around. And, unlike the LV and Gucci bags that are easily duplicated, you won't see Citrien knock-offs swinging from arms of fashion victims. "You either love it or you hate it," Smits says. Spoken like a true fashion brat.

Steven Tate

online

www.romysmits.com

FILM FREAK

Festival triple-play

There are three excellent film festivals going on in Flanders at the moment, which is terribly unfair. How to choose? Well, perhaps you can decide based on proximity to your house since they are a bit scattered about.

First up: The International Festival of Independent Film over at the Jacques Franck Cultural Centre in Brussels. This much-anticipated annual event hosts movies and moviemakers

who don't quite fit the traditional mould. Visual artistry, small budgets and work shot on old-fashioned Super 8 film rule this fest, which presents a total of 100 features, shorts and videos.

This year there is a focus on India, so you'll see *Dosar*, the new movie by award-winning director Rituparno Ghosh about grief and infidelity in modern-day Calcutta, and *Missed Call*, the wonderful debut by co-directors Mridul

Toolsidassa and Vinay Subramanian about an obsessive young filmmaker. This is one of the best alternative film festivals in Belgium; hurry to catch it before it ends on 11 November.

Moving northward, Perspectief takes over cinemas across Antwerp through 30 November. This festival of "films with a social look" screens the best of recently-released movies that focus on social justice issues.

There are several excellent selections: South African film *Tsotsi*, which won the Oscar for Best Foreign-Language film last year; *Grbavica*, the Bosnian winner of last year's Golden Bear in Berlin; and *La Raison Du Plus Faible* (*The Right of the Weakest*), the Belgian film by Lucas Belvaux, which has won Perspectief's 2007 Social Film Prize.

And finally, the event that drenches Leuven each year in a lovely shade of pink, the Holebi Film Festival. For the uninitiated, "holebi" stands for homo, lesbian and bi, and the highlight this year is *Vier Minuten* (*Four Minutes*), the second multiple-award winner from German director Chris Kraus (*Shattered Glass*) about an old piano teacher who trains a young convict in a women's prison. This fest wraps up with a big party on 23 November. Naturally.

Lisa Bradshaw

online

www.centremultimedia.org
www.festivalperspectief.be
www.holebileuven.be/filmfestival



Hannah Herzsprung is an unlikely piano student in *Vier Minuten*

GRAFFITI

The art of graffiti

A new shop in Ghent gives your garden wall that urban touch and teaches kids how to wield a spray can



Remember when graffiti was just vandalism? Not anymore – now it's a complex mixture of art, communication and urban identity.

Lisa Bradshaw

I first wandered into Artifex on Ghent's Walpoortstraat in the university district because I was so enchanted with the large-scale painting above the door: A young woman in men's underwear and white ribbed tank blows smoke carelessly up into the air, while a young man with shaved head hunches next to her in a half prayer, half foetal position. I didn't know what it was, but I knew it was my kind of place.

It turned out to be a graffiti shop that sells a variety of merchandise while acting as a gallery for graffiti artists. But what makes it unique in Belgium is the range of services. As well as running workshops for graffiti wannabes, the artist-in-residence hires himself out to anyone who wants to have his unique blend of realism and fantasy on their garden walls and office buildings. Since opening last July, he's been swamped with work. "It's really nice that people like it so much," says Steve Locatelli (whose artist's name is 'fuckone'). "I try to give people what they want and not do my own thing. They have their own ideas." But, as with any painter, "it all has my touch."

Among the 28-year-old's recent work is a giant panel that separates the space in an apartment loft. It's on wheels and has images on both sides: "busy on one side, not too busy on the other," notes Locatelli, so the owner can rotate

it based on his mood. Another couple commissioned the artist (or "writer" in graffiti jargon) to paint the four walls that surround their small outdoor terrace. He made an underwater paradise with fish, turtles, blue-green waves and a bit of Greek graphic design. "It's as if you're sitting on the water looking into it," explains Locatelli. "And it's three dimensional, so it looks as if they have more space."

Businesses are also jumping on the bandwagon: along with permanent designs, Locatelli is getting a great deal of advertising work. Recently, he made a publicity panel for a ballet school and a promotion for Lucky Strikes tobacco. "I like to work in different environments," he says. "Every time, it's new." It's new for the advertisers, too, who use the graffiti style to appear hip and modern – attracting younger people to their businesses or products.

Graffiti has in recent years managed to move towards the mainstream while still keeping its edge, which Locatelli thinks is good news. After having spent time in jail in the 1990s for his, shall we say, un-commissioned work (on bridges, factory walls, railway stations), he's glad to have an outlet that is safe and legal – and where he can earn a living. "Since 2000, there have been a lot of spaces created in Belgium where it's legal to paint," he explains. The city administrations hope that this will help to keep graffiti confined

to acceptable spaces, lowering the number of cases of vandalism.

But that also takes the danger out of graffiti writing, which is half the fun. Locatelli admits that he still does "bridges and trains", but he's against defacing private property. "If someone did my home or my car, I would be angry," he says. In addition, putting graffiti artists into legal spaces provides them with a meeting place, he notes, "so younger writers can learn from the others."

Artifex is ready to sell those writers the only material they really need: paint cans. Their wall of hundreds of choices of Montana Cans is a wonder to behold. The German brand of spray paint was specially designed in a collaborative effort by several European graffiti writers. "With regular spray paint, you get too much pressure, and it's very difficult to work in detail," explains Locatelli. "These have less pressure and more choices of colours. We have 10 variations of every colour." And, believe it or not, it's cheap. Spray paint in a home-improvement shop will cost you €8 or €10 a can. Artifex sells Montana for a mere €3,70. The shop even gets do-it-yourself types in to buy the cheaper paint.

But is it really a good idea to sell products specifically designed to deface property? "I've been doing this so long that it's actually difficult for me to answer that question," admits Locatelli. "But it's only paint. We're not selling guns or knives. It can be cleaned off." He emphasises that city authorities are behind Artifex. "We worked with the city to open the shop, and they were very supportive of the idea. That's one of the reasons I like

Ghent – it's open to all kinds of art." He also asserts that no real graffiti artist is going to vandalise historical architecture. "Most people have respect for monuments," he says. "Plus, if you're caught doing that, you're going to be fined a lot."

The shop does indeed promote legal graffiti painting. They offer a space to artists to display wall paintings, and they provide a studio upstairs where artists can work on canvas. "Because it's expensive for young people to find a place to paint," Locatelli says. Artifex also sells books and magazines, t-shirts with graffiti art designs and "design toys" – fun pieces of merchandise, like bags and sculptures, designed by graffiti artists.

Artifex also leads graffiti workshops for children and adults, including groups of school kids. "I like to work with kids – to see them playing with the cans," says Locatelli. "And I learn from them, too, because they use colours that I would never use. They give me inspiration." But kids have to be at

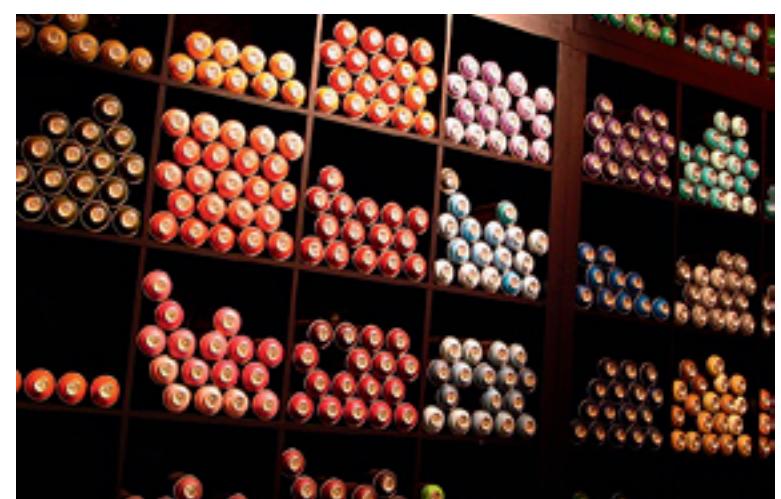
least 10 years old, Locatelli notes, "so they can push the top of the spray can."

Locatelli ultimately hopes that Artifex can change the minds of those who don't see graffiti as art. It appears to be working: his parents, for instance, have come around to his way of thinking. "They used to be worried because I was arrested three times," he says. "But now they understand me, and they are proud. It's a contradiction, but, yeah." That's okay. This is an art that is all about contradictions.

Several Flemish cities now have zones set aside for graffiti art. Some are specifically sanctioned by the city; others are just overlooked. Check out Muntplein in Antwerp, the Keizerviaduct or the famous Werregarenstraat in Ghent and two notable tram stations in Brussels: Kapellekerk in the centre and De Wand in Laeken.

online

www.graffitishopartifex.be



Ten degrees of colour: Montana Cans at Artifex

GARAGE TV

Have fun and success will follow

Forget about YouTube. We take a look on GarageTV to see what some people in Flanders get up to behind drawn curtains

Monique Philips

With 700,000 visitors a month, GarageTV was the fastest-growing Belgian website of 2007 and celebrates its first birthday with bells on. Your pc screen illuminates Jean Leeke's intent face as he's recording another small slice of life in his crummy welfare apartment in Antwerp. In the background you see the middle-aged man's eager co-star (and dog) Sloeberke lounging on the bed, waiting for his cue. When the bedraggled terrier playfully attacks, Jean calls out: "Police!" It's all in good fun, and most of the action appears to involve testing the camcorder. Jean drinks coffee. The Moroccan girl from next door exchanges pleasantries with Sloeberke in Moroccan and broad Antwerp dialect.

It's amusing, it's real and it only took two mouse clicks to upload these and other video gems onto www.garagetv.be, Flanders' own version of YouTube. You can sample 8,000 clips, respond and "become friends" with other users.

Nobody foresaw the sudden success and rapid growth of Telenet's latest brainchild. "One of the biggest concerns was whether a Flemish audience would be able to overcome its famous misplaced sense of inferiority?" says Jeroen van den Broek, a Telenet Media Manager.

Fortunately, the team could find out at leisure. "On a small-scale, we launched many new ideas in their experimental stages, did away with some and then focused on the most promising concepts," says

van den Broek. "Thanks to day-to-day interactive feedback, we have continuously improved on the original idea. GarageTV will never be a completed product."

De Kennedys – the comedy-duo Bert Poucke and Aron Wade – are popular hits on the site and consider the forum of public opinion a heaven-sent stepping stone. "Not only do we get the time and freedom to improve our craftsmanship as actors," Wade says, "but we also have a much bigger and more critical audience than we could have hoped. Initially we posted our clips on YouTube, but now our exposure and, hopefully, our future TV audience has tripled."

De Kennedys' weekly films feature Flemish characters expressing opinions on hot issues. Wade and Poucke play all the characters. 'Benny' is from Antwerp. He's been looking for a job for 19 years. 'Franky' – West Flanders through and through – is a self-proclaimed entrepreneur.

Wade stresses the importance of their characters as front men: "It's an easier route in dealing with sensitive political issues. We would be booed off the stage as Bert and Aron commenting on local issues: 'Sheer arrogance!' But the unemployed Benny is allowed to say: 'This new government can kiss my ass.'

Next spring will see the stage show *De Kennedys Live*, a patchwork of live acts and video. But, Wade promises, "Even if we achieve a breakthrough on stage or TV, we're going to stay free-spirited on the Internet as well."



De Kennedys' Franky has a lot to say on GarageTV

They're not alone – many artists and other professionals consider multiple media presence as the key to future success. Van de Broek agrees. "As a triple player focusing on digital TV, the Internet and mobile phones, Telenet wants to expand, serve and stimulate the interactive community even further. Through celebrating GarageTV's first birthday, we want to draw attention to a huge creativity in Flanders and show how thrilled we are that our initial philosophy works."

online

www.garagetv.be
www.dekennedys.be

FOOTPRINT



A couple of weeks ago, we introduced you to the Witches Guild of Laarne & Kalken, a group of women who dress up in black cloaks and tall hats to keep the history of witches in their area alive. Both villages, just east of Ghent, also have *heksenpadden*, or witches walks. The route in Laarne is better for cycling, but Kalken's circular *kruidenpad*, or herb walk, at six kilometres is perfect for walking. It can be covered in a leisurely 75 minutes, and I recommend a leisurely pace because in the fall this area is green, gold and stunning.

The herb walk – which is also a haven for all sorts of animals – passes many sites where 'witches' used to gather herbs for cooking and healing. An excellent map of the walk describe (in Dutch) the flora, their uses and the lives of the women who gathered them. The trail starts on *Vaartplein* and travels along the *Kalkenvaart*, a slough that was dug in the 16th century to connect Kalken to the Scheldt. Dandelions colour the area in bright yellow and attracted herbalists in droves; they were (and still are) treasured in salads but also used to treat kidney and liver ailments.

You'll soon veer right and walk along the marshy bank of the Old Scheldt, where hawks circle, eyeing the fish that regularly break the surface. There are also heron in the area – this was a popular place to capture the stately birds in the 16th century while hunting for ducks and other waterfowl. Although heron are not good eating, they were used to adorn the dinner tables of the wealthy families of Ghent.

A bit of an incline takes you to fantastic views of vast green fields dotted with Elderberry trees. Willows droop along the path here, too. For centuries their delicate branches were used as tooth floss. The dampness of this area is also great for mushroom gatherers and offers the occasional rabbit sighting – both popular ingredients for witches' pots. You leave the waterside for the last third of the walk, where you'll find plenty of the herb shepherd's purse, with its interesting little heart-shaped leaves (mashed up, they make great plasters), and nettle, used for centuries to make soup (when the leaves are boiled, they lose their sting). The yellow flowers of the coltsfoot are still visible in the autumn here, and so are white dead-nettles, the blooms of which, despite its name, are eaten by children like sweets.

LB

The herb walk is not well marked, but a map of it, as well as the witches bike trail in Laarne, is available in cafes and shops in both villages, as well as at the Laarne tourist office, Dorpsstraat 2.

Food for Foodies

Food for Foodies organises culinary theme walks that end in its stylish new premises on De Coninckplein, smack in the middle of all the exotic food shops of North Antwerp. Participants shop, cook and then eat together in the chunky pink kitchen studio while the world noisily passes by outside.

"I wouldn't have dreamed of starting my business anywhere else," says Daphne Aalders, Foodies chef and manager. "This is where you can find all the flavours of the world. Most people taking part in the walks and workshops are either very interested in cooking or in rediscovering this slightly neglected neighbourhood – or both."

During the latest walk, "Hidden Flemish", they stopped at liquor store Van Gastel for a nip of some Elixir d'Anvers and at André Bakery for a chocolate truffle. They bought "forgotten" vegetables like quince and cardoon (a relative



Enjoying a group-cooked meal in Food for Foodies

of the artichoke) and some pork jaws and black pudding at Criée, the former meat auction market hall. They rolled them altogether and made a meal of it, enjoying the company of other foodies.

Skimming their programme, you're spoiled for choice. Theme walks and workshops include

Spicy Thai, Real Moroccan, Surprising Africa, Fine Vietnamese and Easy Asian. Brazilian, Pakistani and Moroccan guest chefs are just a few to have visited recently. The outings are in Dutch, but English is also spoken.

Aalders has also written two free booklets for the city council that

let you in on the secrets of exotic ingredients and how to prepare them. To get yours, email vanessa.morganti@stad.antwerpen.be.

Monique Philips

online
www.foodforfoodies.be

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Classical & new music**Brussels**

Astoria Hôtel
Koningsstraat 103; 0900.28.877
NOV 11 11.00 Wibert Aerts, violin; Caridad Galindo, piano: Beethoven, Van Damme, Turina, Ravel

Beursschouwburg

Auguste Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50
Until NOV 11 20.30 LOD in Liefde/ his hands, concert and performance by Josse De Pauw with music by Jan Kuijken

Bozar (Paleis voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
NOV 8 20.00 deFilharmonie, conducted by Paul Watkins with Seeli Toivio, cello: Liszt, Servais, Rachmaninov
NOV 9 20.00 Film concert: Metropolis by Fritz Lang (Ger 1927) with the Belgian National Orchestra conducted by Dirk Brossé

NOV 10 20.00 Barocca di Venezia Orchestra conducted by Andrea Marcon with Magdalena Kozená, mezzo: Handel, Vivaldi

NOV 11 11.00 Quatuor Accord: Haydn, Kodály

NOV 12 20.00 Orchestre

Révolutionnaire et Romantique and Monteverdi Choir conducted by John Eliot Gardiner: Brahms, Schütz, Bach

NOV 13 20.00 Orchestre

Révolutionnaire et Romantique and Monteverdi Choir, conducted by John Eliot Gardiner: Brahms, Mendelssohn, Schumann

NOV 14 20.00 Gil Shaham, violin; Akira Eguchi, piano: Brahms, Bach, Rodrigo, Sarasate

NOV 15 20.00 Freiburg Baroque Orchestra conducted by René Jacobs: Haydn's Oxford Symphony, Mozart, ballet music (extract from Idomeneo), Symphony No 39

Royal Museums of Fine Arts

Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.512.82.47
NOV 7 12.40 Jalina Trio: Martin, Brahms

Get your tickets now for...



Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band, December 12, 20.30, Sportpaleis, Antwerp. Tickets from 0900.26.060

There are still a few scattered seats left for this, so don't be the one who misses him while all your friends – of any age – talk about it the next day. Bruce Springsteen (together with his ever-faithful E Street Band) is the kind of rock star who ages gracefully and never becomes a parody of himself. The music may be familiar, but he reinvents every show with energy and spontaneity. That's why he's the boss.

NOV 14 12.40 Jean-Luc Votano, clarinet; Sebastien Brusco, piano: Saint-Saëns, Schubert, Poulenc, Bernstein

Royal Conservatory of Brussels
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37, www.kcb.be
Concerts at 20.00 unless otherwise noted:

NOV 7 Leonidas Kavakos, violin, Denes Varjon, piano: Beethoven, Brahms, Szymanowski, Stravinsky (tickets: 02.507.82.00)

NOV 8 20.30 Ensemble Musiques Nouvelles and Laudantes Consort conducted by Guy Janssens: Pierre Bartholomé's Requiem (tickets: 02.507.82.00)

NOV 9-11 Mini Bartók Festival: Mikrokosmos Quartet conducted by András Schiff: string quartets (tickets: 02.507.82.00)

NOV 12 Hungarian Day: Huldeconcert Jenő Hubay: Zsolt, Bartók, Rózsa, Ysaye, Vecsey, Hubay

NOV 13 Tallinn Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Andres Mustonen, and Latvian State Choir conducted by Maris Sirmais: Vasks, Maskats, Tobias, Arvo Pärt (tickets: 02.507.82.00)

Antwerp

Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28
NOV 9 21.00 Wim Becu, trombone, Joris Verdin, harmonium and piano: Frescobaldi, Wagenseil, David, Guilmant

NOV 11 15.00 Enrico Baiano, harpsichord: A Scarlatti, Vivaldi

DeSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
NOV 7 20.00 Sol Gabetta, cello; Henri Sigfridsson, piano: Schumann, Shostakovich, Franck
NOV 10 20.00 Stavanger Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Niklas Willén with Martin Frost, clarinet: Nielsen, Sibelius, Tveitt, Grieg
NOV 14 20.00 Collegium Vocale Gent Orchestra and Choir conducted by Philippe Herreweghe with Dorothee Mields, soprano, Matthew White, alto, Jan Kobow, tenor, Peter Kooij, bass: Bach advent cantatas

Sportpaleis

Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.45.045
Until NOV 11 20.00 Night of the Proms with Il Novecento Orchestra & Fine Fleur Choir, conducted by Robert Groslot with Macy Gray, Soulsister and Roby Lakatos (tickets 070.34.53.45)

Bruges

Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
NOV 9 20.00 Champ d'Action & Slagwerkgroep Den Haag conducted by Jaan Bossier: Iannis Kyriakides, Serge Verstoek, Dmitri Kourliandski

Sint-Truiden

Beginhofkerk Sint-Agnes
NOV 10 20.30 Ensemble Musiques Nouvelles and Laudantes Consort conducted by Guy Janssens: Pierre Bartholomé's Requiem

Opera**Brussels**

De Munt
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39
NOV 8 & NOV 11 Mitridate, re di Ponto by Mozart conducted by Mark Wigglesworth, with Bruce Ford, Mary Dunleavy, Myrtò Papatanasiu, Bejun Mehta, Veronica Cangemi
Until NOV 11 Mitridate, Rè di Ponto by Mozart, conducted by Mark Wigglesworth

Ghent

Vlaamse Opera
3 Schouwburgstraat (070.22.02.02)
NOV 10-DEC 1 Der Ring des Nibelungen: Siegfried by Wagner, conducted by Ivan Törzs, staged by Ivo van Hove, with Lance Ryan

Jazz & blues**Brussels**

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
NOV 15 & 16 20.00 Brad Mehldau Trio

Archiduc

Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52
Concerts at 17.00:
NOV 10 Jazzisfaction
NOV 11 Paul Hubweber/Philip Zoubek Duo
NOV 17 Jazzisfaction

Bozar (Paleis voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
NOV 9 21.30 Archie Shepp

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193-195; 02.733.13.78
NOV 8 20.30 Jazz Station Big Band.
NOV 10, 18.00 Les Doigts de l'Homme
NOV 12 20.30 Certified 31% Evil
NOV 14 20.30 Walrus
NOV 15 17.00 Fred Delplancq Quartet

Le Grain d'Orge

Waversesteenweg 142; 02.511.26.47
NOV 9 21.30 Excellos

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpstraat 28; 02.512.92.50
NOV 9 22.00 Jean-Paul Estiveneart Quartet

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
Concerts at 20.30:
NOV 8 Dan Wheldon Trio
NOV 10 Rhoda Scott & Félix Simtaine
NOV 14 Trio Cachai
NOV 15 A Tribute to James Brown

Borgerhout

De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.235.04.90
NOV 8 20.30 Andy Declerck-Kari Antila Group & Yaron Herman

Bruges

De Werf
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29
NOV 10 20.30 Gerard Kleijn Group-Le Flirt de Satie

Turnhout

De Warande
Warandestraat 42; 014.41.69.91
NOV 8 20.00 Dianne Reeves

Pop, rock, hip-hop, techno**Brussels**

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
Concerts at 20.00 unless otherwise noted:
NOV 9 Rockstar Taste of Chaos with The Used + Rise Against + Aiden + Escape the Fate + Gallows. **NOV 11** Hopesfall + Oceansize. **NOV 12** The National. **NOV 13** MC Solaar. **NOV 14** Gogol Bordello. **NOV 14** 22.00 The Aggrolites. **NOV 15** Hollywood Porn Stars

Biberium

Cantersteen 55; 0476.31.60.17
NOV 10 22.00 Strictly Niceness: The Goodfella DJ's

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89
NOV 10, 23.00 Toys for Boys Label Night: Sierra Sam + Marcus Vector + Deg-Pierre

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 8; 02.218.20.15
NOV 16 20.00 Rufus Wainwright

Le Botanique

Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
NOV 13 20.00 Orchestra Baobab. **NOV 14**, 20.00 (sold out) The Twilight Sad + Beirut
Théâtre Molière
Naamsestraat 96; 016.320.300
NOV 14 20.30 Creature with the Atom Brain + White Circle Crime Club
NOV 15 20.30 Dez Mona + Simple Brain and the Long Haired Ponchomen

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
NOV 7 20.00 Future of the Left

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Roussealaan 208; 0900.00.991

NOV 11 20.00 Enrique Iglesias

VK Club

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07

Concerts at 20.00:

NOV 10 Pharoah Monch

NOV 13 Mono + Wixel

NOV 15 Necro

Antwerp**Lotto Arena**

Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060

NOV 14 20.00 Bloc Party

Queen Elisabeth Hall

Koningin Astridplein 26, 0900.26.060

NOV 13 20.00 Lisa Gerrard

Stadsschouwburg

Theaterplein 1; 077.37.38.39

NOV 8 20.30 Udo Live.

Borgerhout**Hof Ter Lo**

Noorderingel 30; 03.543.90.30

NOV 9 20.30 UDO + Primal Fear

Ghent**Flanders Expo**

Maaltekouter 1; 09.241.92.11

NOV 10 20.30 I Love Techno

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01

Concerts at 20.00

NOV 11 Jon Anderson

NOV 13 Kraakpand #2.3 (The Hong Kong Dong/Too Tangles/De Fanfaar)

NOV 14 De La Vega

Kortrijk**De Kreun**

Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44

NOV 8 20.00 Soapstarter + The 4 T Four

Leuven**Stuk**

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

Clockarium Museum
Reyerslaan 163, 02.732.08.28
Until JAN 28 Guided tour of the exhibition Steen-Goed: From Art Nouveau to Art Deco, with ceramics by Edgard Aubry and Roger Guérin

Costume and Lace Museum
Violetstraat 12; 02.213.44.50
Until JAN 27 Gerald Watelet, retrospective of work by the Belgian fashion designer

Espace Photographique Contretype
Verbindingslaan 1; 02.538.42.20
Until DEC 30 Variations, photographs by Armyde Peigner

Fondation pour l'Architecture
Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.80
NOV 13-APR 20 Landscapes of Architecture: 150 years of Drawings by Belgian Architects

Husson Gallery Bookshop
Alsembergsesteenweg 142; 02.534.33.54
NOV 8-JAN 31 People in Motion by Michel Dusariez

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

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

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

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

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

Park Tournai Solvay
Terhulpensteenweg 201; 02.660.99.80
Until DEC 23 Sculptures in bronze, steel and neon by Portuguese artist José de Guimarães

Passa Porta
A Dansaertstraat 46; 02.226.04.54
Until NOV 9 De Stad, the city of Helsinki in photos and poems by Pentti Sammallahti and Bo Carpelan

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 Sancti

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 kijndoorsprenten, some 400 views of Belgian cities dating from the 17th and 18th centuries

Saint Michael and St Gudula Cathedral
Parvis St-Gudule; 02.217.83.45
Until NOV 27 Paroles Ouvertes, paintings by Anne Piron

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

Sint-Gorikshallen
Place Sint-Goriks 1; 02.502.44.24
Until DEC 31 Brussels, urban landscapes and computer-reworked photographs by Georges De Kinder

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 18th-century artists Ferdinand-Joseph Derons and Andreas Martin

Stadsarchief
Huidevettersstraat 65; 02.279.53.33
Until DEC 31 Zicht op licht: Het licht in de stad, the history of the use of lighting in Brussels and its effect on society, past and present

WIELS
Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.347.30.33
Until DEC 16 Dots Obsession, walk-in balloon installation by contemporary Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama

Young Gallery/Hotel Conrad
Louizalaan 75b; 02.374.07.04
Until NOV 24 Pistoleros, photographs by Karel Fonteyne

Antwerp
Contemporary Art Museum (MuHKA)

Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60
Until NOV 18 Panamarenko's studio, selected contents of the Flemish artist's house

Until JAN 6 If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want To Be Part Of Your Revolution, Edition II: Feminist Legacies And Potentials In Contemporary Art Practice
Until JAN 6 Lonely at the Top #6, photographs by Ives Maes
Until JAN 6 Recyclable Refugee Camp TOURISM by Ives Maes

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

FotoMuseum
Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00
Until JAN 6 Belgicum, Stephan Vanfleteren's humourous and nostalgic photographs of Belgium

Until JAN 6 Oorlogsmaterial by film director Robbe De Hert. Ost.Modern, images from Eastern Europe by Annemie Augustijns
Until JAN 6 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 Caekenbergh, 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

Mayer van den Berghe Museum
Lange Gasthuisstraat 19; 03.232.42.37
Until JAN 27 Facing death, drawings of the artist's dying wife by Eugène van Mieghem (1875-1930)

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 Dr Guislain
Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95, www.museumdrguislain.be
Until APR 27 2008 Sick: Between Body and Soul, the links between mental and physical pain

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 Volckaert
Until JAN 13 Daria Martin, 2 films by the American artist
Until FEB 17 Head Shop/Shop Head, Paul McCarthy retrospective 1966-2007

Hasselt
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
Abdij van 't Park (Park Abbey)
Abdijdreef 7; 016.20.30.20, www.parkabdij.be
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

Don't miss this week



Transport XX, until 12 November, Albertpark, Antwerp

This open-air exhibition commemorates the attempt on 19 April 1943 to stop the train known as "Transport XX" that was travelling from Mechelen to Auschwitz. An impressive 100-meter long mosaic of portraits of all 1,631 people on board lines the Albertpark in Antwerp until 12 November.

With a self-made red lantern, Robert Maistreau and two of his old school friends managed to stop the convoy, shakily open one of the barbed-wire wagons and free 17 people. ("Only 17", he said later.) Nevertheless, the action stirred many others to jump from the train. It was the only attempt to stop such a death train in wartime Europe. Walking past all the faces, one gets a real sense of the loss of life – more so than through numbers or names.

Meise

Belgium's National Botanic Garden
Nieuwelaan 38; 02.260.09.70
Until DEC 31 Hard Rain, photographs by Mark Edwards based on Bob Dylan's eponymous song

Ypres

In Flanders Fields Museum
Grote Markt 34; 057.23.92.75
Until NOV 15 Oorlogsgesluijde 1914-1918, drawings of war scenes by Henry De Groux

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

Europalia: Festival of music, literature, dance, exhibitions and cinema celebrating the cultural diversity of the 27 EU countries
Until FEB 3 at venues across Belgium 02.507.85.94, www.europalia.eu

Moussem Festival: Dance, theatre, music and film from the Arab world. The programme focuses on the meeting point between traditional and contemporary at home and abroad
Until NOV 17 in venues across Brussels and Antwerp www.moussem.be

Insolent.be and Zap Mama present the comedy cabaret Insolences schaerbeekaises
NOV 9 20.00 at Schaerbeek Cultural Centre, Lochtstraat 91 02.245.27.25, www.culture1030.be

Other towns
Biennale ClassicA: period home and lifestyle fair
Until NOV 11 at Kortrijk Xpo, Doorniksesteenweg 216 www.classic.be

Boekenbeurs 2007: book fair
Until NOV 11 at Antwerp Expo, Jan Van Rijswijcklaan 191 www.boek.be

Cirque du Soleil presents the show Varekai
Until DEC 2 under the circus group's big top in the Zuiderdokken, Antwerp 070.22.32.30, www.cirquedesoleil.com

MY FLANDERS

Calum Leggatt

Calum Leggatt is one of the full-time gardeners who looks after 150 war cemeteries around Ieper, or Ypres. We ask him about the work he does and his impressions of Flanders.

When did you move to Ypres?

I've lived in Ieper since August 2005. But I already spent five years living in this area between April 1988 and July 1993. I've also worked as head gardener at Bapaume in France for six years and senior head gardener in the Cambrai group for a further six years.

What made you decide to do this job?

I trained in Scotland as a gardener. After I left college, I found a job on a private estate as head gardener. I worked there for almost six years and then decided to look for other work. Then I saw a job advertisement for gardeners to work in Belgium or France. I applied and got a job. I was posted to Tyne Cot mobile group and started as gardener caretaker, 1st class. I have now gone back to the Tyne Cot group after 15 years of postings in France.

What do you think of Ypres as a place to live?

I find Ieper a great place to live. There are plenty of things to do and you can easily reach The Netherlands or France. I find the people friendly. There is a small British community in and around Ieper, most of them working for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



Sébastien Delin

Do you miss anything about home?

I found Ieper very easy to adapt to. Most of the locals speak good English and you can get British TV. When I first came abroad, I missed certain types of food that you couldn't find here, but over the years you become more used to what you can get in the local supermarkets and you bring fewer things back from the UK when visiting. Also, the shops now sell a wider range, including things you couldn't find before.

Anything you don't like about Flanders?

No, there is nothing that I dislike. What I do like is that Belgium has a very good health service – with very short waiting lists. The education system here is also very good.

What does your job involve?

I am responsible for the maintenance and caretaking of 19 cemeteries in the Ieper area, along with three memorials and a number of smaller communal cemeteries. I am in charge of a team of 11 to 14 men and women. We have two vans and an assortment of machines that have to be kept in good working order.

Is there one cemetery that is particularly special?

Tyne Cot, which is one of our cemeteries, is the most impressive. This is the most visited cemetery in the Ieper area. There are almost 12,000 soldiers buried there and about 35,000 names on the panels at the back of the site commemorating soldiers who were never found. Tyne Cot is the largest Commonwealth War Cemetery in the world in terms of the number of graves.

What does the work involve at this time of year?

We are still mowing grass and

clearing up leaves at this time of year. We will shortly start spraying all the headstones to stop them turning green. We will also be starting our border planting – introducing new plants, roses, shrubs and trees.

Is this a depressing job?

No. I find it a very interesting job; otherwise I don't think I would still be doing it after 19 years. It's nice to be able to help visitors who come looking for lost relatives after all these years. And gardening is my hobby so I am lucky to be able to do it as a job.

THE LAST WORD

what they're saying in Flanders

Fasten safety belts

"Our country is like a plane on automatic pilot. Sooner or later, the fuel is going to run out, and we're going to crash."

Koen Muylle
Scientific assistant
Institute of Constitutional Law,
Leuven University

"I usually take home a souvenir from the Olympic Games, but I'm not sure I will be able to do it next year in Beijing. I don't want to take home something that's been made using child labour."

Veerle Dejaeghere
Flemish runner competing in the
3,000 metre steeplechase

"Absolute security is an illusion, even in prisons."

Hans Meurisse
Head of the Governing Body of
Prisons
following the daring escape
of Nordin Ben Allal

**Eurostar SecretsofAfrica Week van
deSmaak Scheldt Alloctoon Film
Freak FlandersinLondon**
next week in Flanders Today