



FLANDERS TODAY

THE FUTURE ISSUE



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"Antwerp 2020"

2020 Vision

Flanders faces up to an inconvenient truth

Derek Blyth

The Flemish government has launched an action plan to shape itself up for the future. The idea is to nurture talent, improve mobility, develop creativity and encourage an inter-

national outlook. It looks impressive on a spreadsheet, but is this plan anything more than hot air?

It seems a long way off to most people, but the Flemish government is already making plans for 2020. Minister-president Kris Peeters launched a business plan

last December called Flanders in Action which aims to make this one of the top five regions in Europe by 2020. At present, Flanders occupies 27th position out of 214 European regions, so there's a lot of catching up to do over the next 12 years if the target

is to be reached.

To get his project into first gear, Peeters recently called together more than 250 "captains of society" – eminent Flemings from business, trade unions, universities and the arts – to put together proposals that would lead to

"fundamental policies for change".

The Minister-President reminded the audience that the situation in Flanders was hardly catastrophic.

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Business

The River Scheldt is being deepened to allow the world's largest ships to reach Antwerp's port without being delayed by the tides. The work is being done by the sophisticated Flemish dredger *Brabo*.

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Arts

The four seasons of Limburg: a new Flemish TV series provides a tantalising glimpse of the eastern province's lush beauty.

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Architecture

The Flemish government wants people to move back into urban areas, but the plan will only succeed if cities are made more appealing. We talk to an architect who shows how it can be done.

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New year, new laws

Bigger letterboxes, higher gas bills and cleaner cows

Derek Blyth

The year began with the introduction of a number of new measures that will affect almost everyone living in Flanders. For householders, the annual electricity bill is expected to rise by €30 for an average family, while gas bills could go up by as much as €75. The price hikes are due to distribution companies raising their tariffs, but the government gas and electricity regulator CREG hopes to gain the power to control excessive price rises in the course of 2008.

Visits to the doctor will also be slightly more costly. Patients will pay 75 cents more for a consultation, while evening visits will go up in

July by €2. These price increases will normally be absorbed by the health insurance funds. Other health costs could go down next year. The government is hoping to lower the price of many prescription medicines by applying the "kiwi system". Introduced last year, this follows the system adopted by New Zealand under which the drug companies are persuaded to reduce "excessive" prices. The drug Zocor, for instance, which reduces cholesterol levels, will come down in price from €184 to €31 as a result. Most of the cost will be reimbursed by the health insurance funds, leaving the patient with just €7.75 to pay at the chemist.

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FREE WEEKLY

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Filip Dujardin

For our first issue of 2008, we are taking a sneak peek at how Flanders might look in 2020. As well as examining the government's plans for the coming 12 years, we ask architects, futurologists and artists what direction they think we might be heading.

Exactly 50 years ago, Expo 58 in Brussels was an attempt to imagine the future. The temporary pavilions at the Heysel exhibition ground gave people new ideas about transport, food and architecture. Some of the ideas were realised in the 1960s and 1970s, while others were quietly forgotten.

The Ghent photographer Filip Dujardin has tried to imagine the future of cities in an exhibition that recently opened at Bozar. Using photomontage techniques, he has created a series of remarkable images of imaginary buildings. Some of them might one

day be built, like the apartment tower made from random housing blocks. Others, like the giant rock squeezed between two dull apartment buildings, look more like a surrealist dream.

The Bozar exhibition also includes a series of photographs of random structures in the Flemish countryside taken by Dujardin for the Belgian architectural journal *B+*. They illustrate the various constructions put up by local farmers or city dwellers using bits of salvaged junk. Dujardin calls this "intuitive architecture." These strangely appealing photographs are a reminder of the way that things evolve accidentally, according to individual whim, out of sight of government planners and critics.

online
www.bozar.be



Cover illustration

The cover illustration for our Future Issue was done by Flemish graphic designer Eva Cardon, who signs herself Ephameron. One of Flanders most exciting young illustrators, she has designed magazine covers, websites, t-shirts and book illustrations. Her work has been exhibited in group and solo shows in Rome, Paris and the United States. She has further shows coming up this spring in Antwerp, Berlin and Paris.

online
www.ephameron.com

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FACE OF FLANDERS

Probo



It might look like a simple cuddly toy, but this little piece of green artificial intelligence is no toy. Several years in the making and a huge investment by the Brussels region, the project of the Robotics and Multibody Research Group at Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Brussels Free University) is a fully-functioning robot with the ability to read your emotions and respond in kind. Called Probo, the 60-centimetre tall "huggable robot" will debut at the end of this year in the children's ward of the Brussels VUB university hospital.

Brussels' Anty Foundation, which works to improve the experiences of kids in hospitals, came to the university a few years ago with a proposal to create a robot that could comfort children by understanding their emotional and physical traumas and even explain medical procedures to them. Probo is equipped with cameras in his eyes and with audio programmes, so it can actually assess a child's emotions. "Vision analysis is used to recognise facial expressions and then translate those into emotions," explains Jelle Saldien, an engineer working on the project. "Audio analysis can identify the intensity and pitch of a child's speech. If you combine the two, you have some idea of the emotional state – if a child is calm or angry."

Probo will also be able to respond to children appropriately with its own facial expressions and speech that correspond to happiness, sadness or confusion. "There are no real words, so it's not really a language," says Saldien. "But it can communicate emotions with sounds – like the Teletubbies do." Through the use of artificial intelligence, programmers can actually train the robot to improve its recognition and response skills.

Speaking of Teletubbies, the Brussels' robot will also be fitted with a screen in its stomach to show children videos explaining medical procedures they will undergo and "which crazy, scary machines they will see," says Saldien. "The robot can prepare the children so we can reduce their fear before medical examinations." Kids will also be able to play computer games on Probo, and older kids can surf the internet. Eventually, you could have a Probo sit in a classroom and focus on the teacher and the blackboard and relay the images to the child in the hospital, so he or she could continue with school.

But can an expensive robot really perform services that medical staff can't? "You have to give children information in a special way," explains Saldien. "When they are really young, they are living in a fantasy world. You have to sustain that world, even when they are in the hospital. Otherwise, it can be really traumatic for them."

Hence Probo's look and feel. To children, he is a big stuffed toy. The name is derived from the Latin *proboscidea*, a zoological order that includes a number of extinct species and now includes only elephants. Of course, "robo" refers to its own modern species, making Probo a mix of an ancient past and a technological future. Kids get a kick out of such a fantastical creature.

Currently, robotics are being employed in other parts of the world to perform tests, particularly with autistic children. Probo is only one of two in the world, though, that is "huggable" – Japan has a baby seal version they are using with children and the elderly.

The ultimate goal is to have Probos scattered throughout hospitals in Belgium. But only one is expected to be serviceable this year. "Then we need to build more prototypes and do a lot of testing and see what is working, what isn't, what could be improved," says Saldien. "The vision and audio software will be upgraded gradually, so the robot becomes more and more autonomous. But for now, the main aspect is really just safe interaction."

Lisa Bradshaw

online
http://anty.vub.ac.be/info/Probo

TALKING DUTCH

notes on language



Slurptaks

Words come and words go. Some wish that certain words had never come in the first place. Such fuddy-duddies will have been having seizures these days if they have come across *Woord van het jaar 2007*. All languages have to add to and refresh the vocabulary if they are to survive. Some new words are nine-day wonders; others do a job, appeal to the imagination and stay. *Het Woord van het jaar 2007* attracted over 10,000 visitors who voted online for their favourite new word of last year. Here are two that have gained a toehold in the Dutch language.

Bokitoproof was voted the word of the year. It means that something can stand up to anything you throw at it. So I suppose you could describe some gas-guzzling 4x4 with sufficiently strong off bodywork that every other car simply bounces as *bokitoproof*. Bokito is the name of silverback gorilla who ran amok in a Dutch zoo last summer seriously injuring a woman. "Bokito" is used now to mean een *reischopper*, though I wouldn't call any hooligan that to his face. Of the 10 words you could vote for, my favourite is *slurptaks*. I love those Dutch words that you instantly recognise from English but have a twist in their meaning. In English, one should not slurp one's soup, and also in Dutch, *slurp uw melk niet!* But Dutch goes further: *Zijn 4x4 (vier maal vier) slurpt benzine*. You can almost hear the thirsty engine... slurping!

The definition of *slurptaks* is: *een heffing op auto's die veel brandstof verbruiken*. It's short and to the point, a word that should continue to be used as long as it's necessary to levy a tax on those cars that use too much fuel. And there we have another visual Dutch word, *brandstof*, "fire stuff".

Our languages are also changing as a result of the use of short message services, or sms. The young are blamed for ruining the language with their phone contractions, but they should be thanked for unshackling the language so that we can all take advantage of sms. English influences a lot of smsing in Dutch: *omg* is "oh my God", or it could be *oh mijn God*. Certainly, *fool* can only be "for crying out loud". Now if you want to ask a Dutch-speaking young lady what she has done today, simply sms *whigv*, and she will understand that you mean *wat heb je gedaan vandaag?*

If you later arrange to meet in town, you can sms her when you see her across the square: *xiudaar! (ik zie je daar!)* if you don't fancy shouting and waving. And if you are feeling affectionate, you can send her a kiss and a cuddle, which in Dutch is *een zoen en een knuffel*; in sms-taal, *een znuifel*!

If you need further help with smsing in Dutch, you should get hold of *het Smszkwrdnbk* (sorry but that's the title), which alphabetically lists all the most commonly used expressions.

Alistair MacLean

Smszkwrdnbk is published by Van Halewyck, price €9,95.

FEATURE



Renat Braem's "Linear City" (1964) on show at the Architecture Foundation, Brussels, until 20 April

Flanders looks to the future

Continued from page 1

"When we look at the GNP per inhabitant – which is a good indication of prosperity – we come in the upper 25% of European regions." But he added that there were serious weaknesses in the region's economy. "When you look at the labour costs, we're 117th out of 125 regions. And the number of people over the age of 55 in employment puts us in an unenviable 109th position."

Another weakness lies in exports, which are currently too focused on Europe, Peeters argues. The region needs to turn its attention to the Asian Tiger economies and the "BRIC countries" (Brazil, Russia, India and China). "All of this adds up to an inconvenient truth," Peeters warns.

The minister-president referred to Ireland and Finland as exam-

ples of countries that had tackled chronic economic problems by undertaking radical measures. He suggested that Flanders might benefit from a similar shock therapy. "It's a terrible, unforgivable thing to say, but it might actually be better if Flanders was confronted with a recession, or a crisis, to wake us up."

The region's sluggish enterprise culture was evident at the European Enterprise Awards last year when prizes went to Estonia, Luxembourg, Denmark, Tuscany and a team from French-speaking Belgium – but not to Flanders.

Long-time businessman Karel Vinck has been put in charge of Flanders in Action to bring some private-sector energy to the project. The former head of Belgian railways already has some clear ideas about how to turn underperforming Flanders into one of

Europe's top regions. "We need to innovate more and faster," he said in a recent interview with *De Tijd*. "But if you say innovation, then everyone in Flanders thinks of improving products and services. That's just one form of innovation. There are others, like innovation of processes – production, marketing, distribution, government, administration – and structural innovation of the social and economic environment, like education, tax, healthcare, culture."

Critics have argued that Flanders in Action is just going to be another government-funded think tank that achieves nothing. The previous Flemish government set up a similar action plan that fizzled out without having any impact. But Vinck believes that the latest project is different. "It's not just going to be another talking shop where people say what has already been said a thousand times before. I want the experts to indicate what concrete measures we can actually achieve that will help Flanders to become one of Europe's top regions."

His experience in business has given Vinck a tough approach to measuring success. "In the companies where I've worked, we only talk about a breakthrough if we can achieve productivity increases of 25% or 30%, not just 3% or 5%."

Baron Paul Buysse, the chairman of the board of directors of Flanders in Action, agrees that it is essential to take action. "We need to urgently come up with an ambitious program to develop Flanders more and put it on the map," he says.

One of the speakers at the launch of Flanders in Action was Gro Harlem Brundtland, a former Norwegian prime minister and leading campaigner for sustainable development. She told the assembled "captains" about a 10-year plan she launched as

Norway's environment minister that used tax incentives to drive down carbon emissions without denting the economy.

She explained that the Norwegian oil companies had been storing about one million metric tons of carbon dioxide in the sea bed since 1995 and argued that carbon storage was an essential policy given that coal-burning power stations are expected to generate the bulk of the world's energy in the 21st century.

Peeters is determined to make this plan succeed. "If Flanders in Action doesn't work, I don't know what we're going to do."

online

www.vlaandereninactie.be

THE FUTURE IN FIGURES

One million tons

Possible reduction in carbon emissions under a proposed project to recycle waste heat in the port of Antwerp area. The project is modelled on a scheme in Rotterdam that uses heat from harbour activities to power industry, homes and greenhouses. The scheme could also be extended to the ports of Ghent, Ostend and Zeebrugge to produce further gains.

56 billion cubic metres

Estimated reserves of methane gas trapped in the former coal mines in Limburg province, of which at least seven billion cubic metres could be used, according to a recent study by VITO, the Flemish Institute for Technological Investigation. The Limburgse Reconvertiemaatschappij (Limburg Conversion Company) wants to begin test drilling as soon as possible to find out whether the gas can be used to produce electricity, which could potentially meet one half of Belgium's annual needs. But some experts warn that the process involved in recovering methane is extremely costly and difficult.

35 million kWh

Estimated amount of energy that could be produced in Hasselt using solar energy, wind turbines and water power, according to city councillor Toon Hermans. This could provide Hasselt municipality with all its energy needs, estimated at 10 million kWh annually, and leave a large surplus. Hermans hopes that Hasselt can generate all its energy from renewable sources "in the near future".



Filip Dujardin's imaginary architecture



All you need to know about banking services on arriving in Belgium

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New laws in 2008

From small claims to big letterboxes

Continued from page 1

The position of self-employed workers is slightly improved; they are now covered for minor health risks (*kleine gezondheidsrisico's*) in the basic health insurance package. In the past, they were only covered for major expenses such as operations and hospital visits unless they took out a supplementary insurance premium. Under the new system, they have the same healthcare benefits as employees when they visit a doctor or dentist.

The legal system is being changed to make it cheaper to go to court – as long as you win. The losing party is required to pay a substantial part of the winner's legal costs – €200 in cases involving €250-€750 and €400 in disputes ranging from €750-€2,500.

In Flanders, candidates for municipal housing will have to show a "willingness to learn Dutch" to qualify for subsidised housing. Tenants will be allowed a two-year trial period to learn the language.

The cost of new houses is likely to rise next year due to an increase in the price of basic building materials. The building federation Bouwunie says that concrete will be 8% dearer, while insulation material will go up by 6% and steel products by 5%.

New school buildings are likely to cost more to construct because of a Flemish regulation which

requires projects to be 30% more energy efficient. The Flemish region plans to construct more than one million square metres of new building in the coming years, but the higher construction costs will be offset by lower energy bills, says education minister Frank Vandenbroucke.

Some households may have to call in a builder this year to enlarge their letterbox so that it conforms to European Union standards. Under new regulations, letterboxes must be at least 23cm wide and 3cm high. In addition, they have to be at least 70cm but no more than 170cm from the ground, to prevent postal workers from injuring their backs.

Road traffic could become less congested as a result of a new traffic regulation banning trucks from overtaking on dual carriageways. They will still be allowed to overtake on three-lane motorways, but they will have to stay in the slow lane on regional roads and ring roads. The aim of the measure is to cut down on accidents and ease traffic flow, but road hauliers are lukewarm about the measure.

Cattle farmers now have to ensure that cows sent to slaughterhouses are clean when they arrive. The new measure is designed to prevent contamination in the food chain. Meanwhile, restaurant owners can put a "smiley" sign in their windows if they pass hygiene controls.

Late refunds fill tax coffers

The federal tax authorities made a profit of €842 million in the last four months of 2007 simply by failing to pay refunds to taxpayers on time. As a result of tax reforms, the state was due to pay back €1.87 billion, while reclaiming €1.36 billion from under-payers. But instead of a net deficit, the tax authorities have made a net surplus of €326 million. The tax authorities are now being accused of withholding refunds above a ceiling of €600, and retaining higher refunds longer into the new year for accounting purposes. CD&V deputy Carl Devlies claims that half of all declarations involving underpayment have been processed, compared to only 38% of those involving refunds.

NEWS FLASH



Flemish tippie gets EU protection

Flemish jenever, or gin, has been granted worldwide protection by the European Union as a regional product. The regulation applies to "Belgian jenever", "Balegemse jenever", "Hasselt jenever" and other traditional names. Some eight million litres of jenever are sold in Belgium every year.

Anciaux saves tvbrussel

Flemish local broadcaster tvbrussel will produce news programmes during the month of August after all, following a one-off grant of €25,000 announced by the Flemish minister for Brussels affairs Bert Anciaux. The broadcaster recently announced plans to close the news service in the first half of August to save money and stay within budget. tvbrussel receives €1.6 million in subsidies every year from the Flemish Community and €1 million from the Flemish Community Commission, but it claims the latter sum has not changed since 1999, and is no longer enough to cover costs for the whole year.

Record year for Flemish films

Flemish films saw a record year in 2007, with a total audience of 1.2 million people – 30% more than in 2006. Two films, *Ben X* by Luc Balthazar and *Firmin* by Dominique Deruddere, were each seen by more than 200,000 people. Three others topped the 100,000 mark. Meanwhile the Flemish Audio-visual Fund was set to finance 12 new films in 2008, in addition to four films due to be released by the private-sector media giant Studio 100, which last year had films at numbers four and six in the rankings.

Database gathers all Dutch-speaking care-workers in Brussels

A new website, www.zorgzoeker.be, was due to come online this week to provide details of all Dutch-speaking health- and care-workers in Brussels Region. The database covers professionals such as GPs, medical specialists, midwives and nurses, and was set up by the Brussels Welfare Council, the non-profit Pro Medicis and the healthcare network Zorgnet. It also provides information and contact details on transport, child-care, meals services and housing. The service is also available via the free-phone number 1700.

Terror alert scaled down

Widespread disruption, but authorities refuse to disclose sources



Police patrol the Christmas market

The terrorism alert which has been in force in Brussels since 21 December was expected this week to be reduced again, as questions remain over the handling of the situation by police and politicians. Last week the threat was downgraded from "imminent" to

"possible to probable".

The alert was raised after 14 people were arrested in connection with a plot to free convicted terrorist Nizar Trabelsi from prison, at the same time as carrying out a terrorist attack on the capital. The suspects were later

released from detention, leading to criticisms that police had moved too quickly under pressure from the US, which only days before had issued a warning to government workers to avoid travelling to Belgium. By moving too fast, critics said, police had lost the chance to develop a valid case against the conspirators.

The highest stage of the alert saw a massive and highly-visible police presence in the centre of town, at stations and at Brussels Airport, with Christmas shoppers being made to submit to random searches of their purchases. Rubbish bins were welded closed in streets and in the metro. To cap it all, the traditional New Year fireworks display was cancelled, although thousands of people still crowded into the Grand Place under the eye of burgomaster Freddy Thielemans.

The alert was criticised by VUB lecturer Herman Matthijs, an expert on the intelligence services. "A group of people is picked up, almost immediately let go, and yet the terror alert remains," he said. "That raises the question: for whom and for what?" The government needed, he said, to explain the role of the new threat-assessment agency OCAD in the alert, and make it clear where the information about the threat came from in the first place. One possible trigger may have been a call from top Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri for attacks on countries with troops in Afghanistan, which includes Belgium. Another might have been the expected verdict in the trial of a group connected to Belgian suicide bomber Murielle Degauque on Monday next week.

On a more practical and less esoteric level, the terror alert was blamed for taking police resources away from the more pressing

business of drink-driving checks at the year-end. No checks were carried out in Brussels region on New Year's Eve, despite Brussels having a rate of drink-driving three times higher than other parts of the country.

The alert immediately became an opportunity for police and intelligence services to demand more resources and extended investigative powers. Director of the judicial division of the federal police Glenn Audenaert, who went on holiday to the US during the alert, called for civilians to be employed by police services to bring in skills such as translation from Arabic, bookkeeping and computer skills.

Alan Hope

Fear for Belgian jobs as Dutch dairy giants move closer

Workers in the dairy foods industry in Belgium fear job losses if a rumoured fusion of two Dutch dairy giants – Friesland Foods and Campina – goes ahead. The two cooperatives are themselves the product of previous fusions. Friesland Foods is best known for brands such as Fristi, Cecemel and Appelsientje, while Campina (formerly Melkunie) produces Joyvalle and Yazoo. Belgium accounts for 1,360 of the companies' combined total of 22,000 jobs worldwide, and unions expect jobs to go as a result of the fusion, in particular at factories in Lummen, Bornem, Aalter, Aalst and Sleidinge. Both companies support the idea of a fusion, with an agreement expected by the middle of the year.



Mosques get official recognition

The first six mosques in Flanders have received official recognition from the Flemish government. Four of them are Turkish, while the others belong to the Moroccan and Pakistani communities. They were granted recognition by Flemish interior minister Marino Keulen, which means that they can claim public subsidies, including 30% of building construction costs. The imams will also receive government support, as long as they can prove they are integrated in the community, speak Dutch and understand Flemish society. Islam has been a recognised religion since 1974, but it has not received public subsidies up until now. Other mosques are expected to receive recognition in future.

Ghent scientists announce flu vaccine breakthrough

A research team at Ghent University led by professors Walter Fiers and Xavier Saelens claims to have developed a flu vaccine that can offer lifelong protection from the most common strain of flu with a single shot. In tests carried out on humans, 90% were protected by the new treatment – which has no side-effects. The vaccine was developed by the Anglo-American biopharmaceutical company Acambis in cooperation with Ghent University and the Flemish Institute for Biotechnology. The researchers are now beginning a second round of tests, and believe the vaccine could offer protection against a global flu pandemic.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



64,000

New business start-ups in Belgium in 2006, according to the latest figures from the federal government service on the economy. This represents a record number of new companies, the government says.

90,337

Legal immigrants settling in Belgium in 2005, according to a report by the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Against Racism. Most came from EU countries, with France, the Netherlands and Poland heading the list. There were also large numbers of Moroccans and Asians. The report said that more people were coming to Belgium because of globalisation and the European Union, while the number of refugees had been declining since 2000.

35

Number of households whose energy needs will be served by solar panels installed on the roof of Ghent's Stadhuis. The project involves the largest area of solar panels on a public building in Belgium.

€40,268

Average annual cost of a prisoner in a Belgian jail. The country currently holds 10,200 people in 34 prisons.

30%

Percentage of Belgians over 50 who still calculate in Belgian francs, rather than euro. "At this rate it will take 196 years for everyone to get used to the new currency," said Pascal Vyncke of the internet site SeniorenNet.be.

9.6 million

Number of bottles of Champagne sold in Belgium in 2006, or almost one bottle per person. Belgium leads the world in per capita consumption of French bubbly.

5,912

Number of Belgians active in the online virtual world Second Life. The number peaked at 6,477 in June 2007, but has now declined. Interest briefly revived when a virtual Miss Belgium contest was staged in Second Life last September.

Regional surplus bigger than expected

Flanders region ended the year with a budget surplus of €779 million – more than twice as high as the €346.6 million forecast, finance minister Dirk Van Mechelen announced. The strong result was due to a combination of factors, he said, including economic growth of over 2%, and a reform of regional taxation which saw lower rates lead to higher receipts. In normal circumstances such a surplus would go to paying off debt, but Flanders is virtually debt-free – with a mere €238 million of debt, down from over €5 billion in 2000. As a result, Van Mechelen plans this year to hand €612 million over to cities and communes to help them pay off their own public debts. Another €100 million will go to the fund set up to maintain reserves for the healthcare sector, as part of a policy to tackle the increased cost of an ageing population. And next year Van Mechelen intends to increase the so-called Future Fund – described as a "war chest" for unforeseen expenditure – by around €150 million to €500 million.

Rail timetables get revised

The rail authority NMBS will this week undertake a review of ten of the most complained-about routes in its new timetable, which came into force in December. The main lines are Turnhout-Brussels and Antwerp-Mechelen-Brussels, which together accounted for one-third of the more than 3,000 complaints received since the timetable came into effect. Double-decker trains will be introduced at certain times to provide more seating. In other cases the number of stops will be increased, and extra trains brought into service. Other lines affected by the review are Brussels-Leuven, Leuven-Mechelen, Ghent-Antwerp, Hasselt-Leuven, Charleroi-Brussels and Brussels-Ostend. The train users union called the review "insufficient, but a step in the right direction". At the same time, rail bosses have promised unions that they will warn staff earlier regarding working times over Christmas and New Year. This year's introduction of a new timetable in early December left many workers unable to make plans for the holiday period because they had no idea when they would be working, unions said. The number of passengers carried last year by the NMBS reached a record level of more than 200 million, it was announced.

EU supports call for Belgacom to open up VDSL network

The EU Commission has come out in favour of a call for Belgacom to open up its super-fast broadband VDSL network to competitors. The opinion has no legal force, but it is an important boost to the demand by the public-sector Belgian Institute for Post and Telecommunications for open access to VDSL. Belgacom claims it needs sole access to recoup the hundreds of millions of euro invested in the technology. In addition, the company says, it will be using VDSL for high-definition TV in the first instance, and not to provide Internet access. Meanwhile the EU commissioner for telecommunications, Viviane Reding, said the lack of competition meant Belgian customers were still paying too much for broadband Internet access, at an average of €38 per month – about €10 more than in the UK and €7 more than in France.



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THE FUTURE ISSUE

SOLAR CAR

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's a Flemish car.



Zero emissions – but not in the showrooms yet

The Umicar Infinity took second place in the World Solar Challenge in Australia. So is this the car of the future?

Derek Blyth

Car drivers can only dream of a day when they won't have to pay €1,49 a litre to fill up at the pump. But a team from Leuven have come up with a car that can reach 130 km/h without needing a drop of fuel. The Umicar Infinity was developed by a 14-strong team from Leuven's Groep T technology

college. They raced it across 3,000 km of dusty roads in the Australian outback last autumn, gaining second place out of 40 contestants in the Panasonic World Solar Challenge. It was their second stab at the prize – and a significant improvement on their previous effort when they came home in 11th place.

It took the equivalent of 14 years of manpower to design and construct the one-seater car. Some 40 Belgian companies were involved in the project, including the Leuven-based measurement company Metris. According to team leader Pieter Vangeel,

"the fact that 40 companies were involved in the construction of Infinity underlines the potential for high-tech projects in this region – the full extent of which has hardly been realised".

The car uses sophisticated solar panels developed by the Flemish materials company Umicore. "We used solar panels made from galliumarsenide, on the basis of germanium," explains Vangeel. "The same basic technology is used in the Mars explorer vehicles."

The car is driven by a small electrical motor with a power of just 1,800 watts – "about the same as a domestic vacuum cleaner," according to marketing manager Koen Van Beneden. Yet it can reach speeds of up to 130 km/h thanks to its low weight (195 kg) and sophisticated aerodynamic design.

The big problem that keeps these vehicles off the Belgian roads in the near future is the price tag. The car cost €1.5 million to build not including labour (the team members were all volunteers). The solar panels alone cost half a million euro – galliumarsenide is much more expensive than the silicon used in domestic solar panels. So it's going to be a good many years before you see one of these slender cars on a stand at the Belgian Car Show.

online
www.solarteam.be

SHIPPING

Scheldt dredging begins

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters recently approved a major operation to deepen the Flemish side of the River Scheldt. The work is being carried out under the 2005 River Scheldt Treaty signed by Flanders and the Netherlands. Work will begin on the Dutch sector of the river in June, and the whole operation is expected to be concluded by 2009.

The work is being carried out to enable a new generation of container ships and other vessels to berth in Antwerp. This requires the traffic channels to be deepened to 13.1 metres. In 2007, some 1,500 ships were delayed due to tidal influences – after the completion of the project, this figure will drop to some 500 vessels.

"On the operational side, ships with up to 13.1 m draught will no longer face restrictions due to a limited tidal window, and tidal windows will increase for bigger ships," says Jan Verbist, commander of the Antwerp Port Authority. "We already have ships

calling at the port with a draught of 15 metres and more. Ships will have a broader window to enter or leave the port and save precious time."

The Flemish Government is investing €100 million in the deepening project and is financing the dredging operations on both sides of the border. The expected economical return for Flanders is estimated at between €700 million and €1.1 billion.

The launch of the project was applauded by the Port of Antwerp authority. "I'm happy that we have

been able to push the button," declared Marc Van Peel, President of the Antwerp Port Authority and alderman for the port. "We have been announcing the 13.1-metre draught deepening worldwide without setting a date, and now the project is running."

Operations were begun by the Flemish dredging specialist DEMA using the vessel Brabo – its latest trailing suction hopper dredger. The dredging companies De Nul and Decloedt are also participating in the project.

Marc Maes



River deep: Marc Van Peel celebrates the start of operations, with the Brabo in the background

BUSINESS FLASH



Port of Antwerp

Antwerp's port had a record year in 2007 with total traffic topping the 181 million tonnes mark, eight percent above the 2006 figure. Container traffic surged 16% to some eight million TEU (container units). The latest figures confirm the port's position as the second largest in Europe after Rotterdam.

Bankruptcies

The number of bankruptcies increased by 2.44% in Flanders in 2007, but the country's total of 7,721 remains below the 2003 record. The number of new businesses created in 2007 reached a record of 73,126, an 8% increase on the previous year. The most flourishing sectors include restaurants and snacks. The country as a whole has 942,691 enterprises.

Iscal Sugar

Iscal Sugar, the country's second largest sugar producer, is to close its Moerbeke-Waas plant next year as part of a Europe-wide restructuring of the industry. The leading producer, Germany's Südzucker, already decided to close its Brüggelette facility in October. The remaining units are Südzucker's Wanze and Tienen plants and Iscal's Fontenoy factory.

KBC

KBC Bank, Flanders' leading financial institution, has been shortlisted by the Union Bank of India to create a joint venture to develop mutual funds and assets management activities for the local market.

VLM

VLM (Vlaamse Luchtvaart Maatschappij), the Antwerp-based airline with a hub at London City Airport, has been acquired by Air France and KLM. The carrier, which operates 19 aircraft, is to become a leading regional carrier linking the heart of London with leading continental European cities.

DEME

The Antwerp-based dredging company DEME has won some €300 million worth of contracts in recent weeks. The biggest is in Abu Dhabi, but others include dredging work in Venezuela, South Africa, Australia and Flanders (see our story on Scheldt dredging operations, opposite).

Godiva

Godiva, the Brussels-based chocolates company, owned by Campbell Soup in the US, has been sold to the Turkish Yildiz holding company for some \$850 million (€577 million). Created in 1920, Godiva is one of Belgium's oldest chocolates company. It has 500 stores worldwide and is distributed in over 8,000 outlets.

Fortis

Belgium's largest financial institution has sold its 8.23% stake in ICBC Asia, the affiliate of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, a leading Asian bank. Fortis has also been granted banking rights in Japan.

Umicore

Umicore, the non-ferrous metals group, is to acquire the Canadian Imperial Smelting and Refining Company of Toronto. The deal will allow Umicore to expand its activities in the supply and recycling of precious metals for the jewelry sector. See our business story, opposite, on Umicore's role in developing the world's second-fastest solar-powered car.

De Lijn

The Flemish public transport company De Lijn carried a record number of passengers last year. Some 483 million passenger journeys were made on the company's bus and tram services during 2007, up 20 million on 2006. The biggest increase was in Flemish Brabant, up 8.5% on 2006. The company hopes to attract 500 million passengers in 2008.

THE FUTURE ISSUE

Move over, geek boy

Technology continues to advance in leaps and bounds, and some people are making sure they're not left behind

Photos by Peter Boert: www.peterboert.be



Dishing tech over dinner: Girl Geeks get together and show off their latest gadgets

Lisa Bradshaw

Next month in Destelbergen, just outside Ghent, an office building, closed for the night, will be crawling with little creatures. Mostly rabbits but also a few penguins. And the occasional dinosaur. They're robots, and they're all getting together for the first time, which, considering they are interactive, should make for an interesting little evening.

There will be humans, too. Not a roomful of robotics engineers but those who have bought the robots for fun. They are self-proclaimed "geeks" and – here's the surprising bit – they are all women. "Sometimes when someone sees pictures from our group's events, they'll say they didn't know female geeks looked so good," muses Clo Willaerts. "But we're women! We like to dress up."

Willaerts recently founded Girl Geek Dinners, a Belgian networking group for women interested in information technology (IT), after seeing the same thing take off in London. They get together somewhere in Belgium for food and talk – and to welcome a special guest who makes a presentation. An Adobe Photoshop expert spoke at the first event, and the topic of the second looked at the connections between sex and the internet: legislation, cybersex and statistics on the number of people who view online porn at work.

There have only been two Girl Geek Dinners so far, but already people are trying to crash the party – guy type people. "They can only come if they're accompanied by a geek girl, and they're using their own networks to try to get girls to

bring them along," laughs Willaerts. "They are so curious."

And they're welcome. But the Girl Geek Dinners are predominantly female. This is in stark contrast to conferences or other tech events where you might be the only woman in a room of one hundred professionals. "It's harder to network when you're always a minority," explains Willaerts, 37, in reference to the motivation to start such a group. "It's different with men – they use these business cards, they shake hands. Those rituals are fine, but that's not how women do it. They sit down together and have tea and talk about all kinds of things. You can switch from a high tech conversation to 'oh, you have three kids?' We easily go from one subject to another, and I think that's harder for men."

To get around the French or Dutch issue, the dinner presentations are always in English. Most of the Girl Geek members work in IT, whether it's website development, media or advertising. "We're the token geek at any corporation," says Willaerts. The group has had some media attention, giving girl geeks a bit of needed publicity. Now they know how to find each other. "I like to talk about geeky stuff, like problems I face while making a site or about the latest features of the newest phone," says Ine Dehandschutter, a member of Girl Geek Dinners. "Most people look kind of weird when you techtalk, but in girl geek company you don't need to worry about that."

The group also makes the professional tech world more visible to girls and young women, who often shy away from studies or jobs in the

sector. Boys and men still dominate techno circles, though as many girls and women use the technology. "If you were to go out into the street and ask the average 15-year-old girl if she knows what RSS is or if she uses 'social networks', she would have no idea," says Willaerts. "But she's using Facebook, instant messaging, video streams and downloading music while chatting. Girls are average users of new technology, they just don't know the buzzwords around it."



Clo Willaerts, founder of Girl Geek Dinners

This is changing, though, says Dehandschutter, because of that average use factor. "The computer has turned from a programming device, which is more attractive to boys, into a useful device. I work in a college and see a lot more girls in the web design department. I believe the future will show us many girl geeks."

But Flanders doesn't work hard enough, she says, to integrate technology at an educational or institutional level. "I think we're behind

when you compare us with the Netherlands or Estonia, for example. We embrace technology, but we don't adapt it fast enough." Dehandschutter notes that schools are not adapting or fulfilling future professional needs. "There is going to be an expanding need for programmers," she says. "Why not offer extra possibilities in high school? Many kids have the capacities, but not always the right classes." Even her own institution of higher education has "only been offering web design for two years."

But now that the geeks are coming out of the closet, demand could foster educational services. It's already clear that "geek" is no longer a four-letter word. Now it's cool to be a geek: people stamp it on t-shirts and list it as a personality trait on dating sites. Geeks understand IT, making them valuable in a modern world, and they're almost always really social. "That's the difference between a 'geek' and a 'nerd'," explains Willaerts. "They both have a strong interest in new technologies, but a nerd prefers to do activities on his or her own without being disturbed. A geek is more outgoing and more social."

And the numbers are growing. "There are about 100 of us now, and when I come across one of the girl geeks at a conference, we wink. I think the next step is a secret handshake."

online

www.brusselsgirlgeekdinner.be

Filling the void

A Flemish institute matches technological innovations to industries that need them

It sounds very theoretical, but the "innovation paradox", explains Paul Schreurs, tends to hold small countries hostage. "We struggle with the same problem as many European regions," he explains. "There might be a high level of quality technology produced, but it's difficult for industries to take it up." That's where the Institute for the Promotion of Innovation by Science and Technology (IWT) comes in.

A Flemish Region institution, the IWT provides Research and Development as well as innovation support to Flemish industries in the form of services and direct funding. It also supports "projects that have a collective dimension, that try to improve the interactions between companies and research institutes or universities," explains Schreurs, an IWT programme coordinator. "We serve as a catalyst to encourage different parties to work together." In fact, Flanders excels in the area of collaboration, with a strong track record of universities working with companies, especially compared to other European regions. That's a "win-win situation," says Schreurs.

Founded 16 years ago, the IWT's influence is

slowly improving Flemish industries' uptake of new technologies and their ability to embark on new research. According to a comprehensive survey of industries awarded funding, 40% of their research projects over the last decade and a half would not have taken place without the IWT's assistance. One of the main reasons for this is that investment in innovative research is too risky for profit-making businesses. Still, funding is targeted at projects that should ultimately improve the business financially, thereby ensuring that labour rates remain stable – or even increase.

IWT is "open to all technology domains in all areas," says Schreurs and has funded special research projects in companies ranging from Barry Callebaut (chocolates) to Innogenetics (biopharmaceutical). So the next time you bite into a new kind of chocolate bar based on a technologically-advanced cocoa manufacturing process, give a little nod to IWT.

LB

online

www.iwt.be

Eye on Limburg

The stories behind the landscapes of the new hit TV series *Katarakt*



Katarakt country: Limburgers of the Haspengouw say their land is even more beautiful than TV één depicts

Monique Philips

According to the provincial governor, Steve Stevaert, tourism and fruit farming in Limburg will from now on be divided into the pre- and the post-*Katarakt* eras. The province has staked no less than one million euro on the new Flemish TV series that features its rich orchards and rolling hills, hoping it will give a similar boost to the area that the popular show *Stille waters* gave to the banks of the Scheldt in 2001. Locals of southern Limburg, too, have high hopes that TV-inspired tourists will soon flock to the roads between Sint-Truiden and Borgloon looking for breathtaking scenery and tasty harvests.

First of all, it's all true. The taste of the region's fresh apples, pears and cherries is incomparable, and the green landscapes are magnificent. Every nook and crook harbours another treasure. Sunken lanes, Roman tumuli, silent nature reserves, dilapidated castles, hovering birds of prey, and the strategic Roman highway cutting straight as

an arrow through fields and woodlands. Some locals aren't even sure if *Katarakt* does the landscape justice. Without flinching, they state that this is the Provence of Belgium.

The area is called Haspengouw, which spreads out into its Walloon counterpart, La Hesbaye. Highly fertile loam produces an uncanny diversity of crops, and this wealth is reflected in the no less than 100 castles scattering the area. The word *kasteel* has various definitions around these parts. It can mean the 11th-century ruins in Kolmont, where one of the fortresses of the formerly huge county of Loon once stood – now known as Borgloon, or Looz in French (hence the locally-produced fruit juice Looza). It can also mean the Rococo country estate of a former prince-bishop owned by the family d'Ursel in Hex. (Its unique historical rose and vegetable gardens are open to the public on the first weekends of September and June.)

It could also refer to the small Berloz farm now up for sale in

Vechmaal, where Flemish horror director Harry Kümel filmed part of *Monsieur Hawarden*, or even the extensive Landcommanderij Alden Biesen in Rijkhoven, built by Teutonic knights, accidentally burnt down in 1971 by the last owner (eager to show potential buyers a warm house) and rebuilt by the Flemish Community. That same authority has an eye on the impressively dilapidated castle of Heers that went under following a vendetta between two brothers – one of whom is apparently still living in the old castle in real Miss Havisham style.

It is immense fun to discover the variety of castles on a trip around Limburg, and they're usually open to visit. Every village seems to have at least one – usually with a huge square-built farmstead next to it. These *kasteelhoeven* (castle farms) or *herenboerderijen* (gentleman's farms) often feature old-style stables, usually shouldering a small greenhouse. Fruit used to be just an economical sideline in these parts – a hobby bearing rare strains of fruit. Produc-

tion only became commercialised after some English businessmen visited the area in about 1830 – on the newly-built railway – and showed a keen interest in shipping fruit to England. Local apple and pear syrup was highly sought after, too, and you can still visit the Stoomstroofabriek, one of the former syrup factories in Borgloon. Although the old building isn't all that charming, this underdog won top prize on Canvas TV's *Monumentenstrijd*, a monument competition, earlier this year, beating architect Henry Van de Velde's famous *Boekentoren* at the University of Gent, which came in second. (Don't underestimate Limburg solidarity in competitions.)

In modern times, fruit farmers have had to switch gradually from standard trees to the shorter half-standards. Narrow lanes of these more easily-reached trees shape the landscape more drastically than the old style of orchards. Many farms and castles have turned into bed & breakfasts or restaurants to accommodate tourists – the Château de La Motte, for instance, which features in the series. Particularly recommended for lunch is Castle Rullingen with its expanse of 500 standard fruit trees. In its former stables a modest meal is on offer, while the castle itself hosts a classy hotel and restaurant.

Other top restaurants have incorporated the exquisite fruits of the region in their recipes, which fill half of the *Katarakt* book (on sale in every local shop). The other half reads like an expensive tourist leaflet, sporting glossy pictures and enthusiastic texts and interviews with the actors, who stayed in local castle B&Bs through four seasons. Also on sale in the *Katarakt* info centre (open until the end of 2008) in Sint-Truiden's Unesco-listed *begijnhof* are official *Katarakt* cookies and pies, plus maps to explore the hilly area on foot, car, bike or even rented Vespa.

A nice bit of entertainment in the info centre is a computerised booth in which you can play a part in the show. You dress up in blue

overalls and are filmed re-enacting a scene involving pruning shears and a sliced off finger. (Be aware, though, before you wrap your shawl around your head à la *Katarakt* character Sikh, stating: "goodness gracious me, fruit is Indian", these films aren't only sent to your e-mail address but are publicly displayed on the website.)

The driver of the *Katarakt* shuttle bus, which tours the area, hopes that there will be more visitors as the series continues to air: "It's a bit monotonous now," he says. "This time I only have three pollsters on board." (One of them hands me a card to check out the *Katarakt* website survey.)

Traditionally, spring is the high season around this part of Flanders, when busloads of tourists come to admire the wide expanses of white cherry blossoms, and cyclists arrive to ride the never-ending network of back roads. Ramblers flock the orchards, blocking roads and pubs – and tending to sample the fresh fruit for themselves a bit too often for the farmers' liking. Rumour has it that's the reason why the "cherry tower", a historical building that features prominently in the series, has suddenly collapsed. The fretting farmer, thinking the tower would solicit too much unwanted attention from people trampling through his orchard, allegedly razed it with his tractor. Whatever the truth, the result is that the city council will reconstruct the tower, albeit not on exactly the same spot. For "technical reasons", it will move 50 meters further, which will allow tourists to stay on the designated footpath.

Katarakt info centre, Begijnhof 8, Sint-Truiden, 011.31.32.10. (All the information is in Dutch, but English is spoken.)

online

www.katarakt.tv
www.toerismelimburg.be
www.sint-truiden.be
www.borgloon.be

www.belgiumview.com (info and maps on castle tours in English)

Katarakt: the show

Katarakt, an 11-part series now airing on TV één, is a beautiful leap in the right direction for Flemish drama, which has traditionally been either male oriented (*Koning van de wereld*, *Stille waters*) or soap opera-ish (*Emma*). The show focuses on Elisabeth, a college professor who loses her job and decides to invest her money and time in her husband's family business – an apple and pear orchard in Limburg province. She's savvy and determined, helping her in-laws to modernise and save the farm from bank foreclosure.

The series in fact highlights the contrasts between the modern and the tradition-

al – not just in farming techniques, but in marriage, gender roles and parent/child relationships. Elisabeth (Karlijn Sileghem) and her generation struggle to deal with the farm's older patriarch (Jaak Van Assche), as well as with her own teenage kids. They also deal with the question of illegal labour: in the fourth episode, they are forced to hire undocumented immigrants to get the fruit picked on time and then hide them when the police arrive.

Katarakt also employs a key element responsible for the success of many recent American drama series – an element of mystery and spirituality. Elisabeth's journey is one of revolt against her tyrannical father, a surgeon, and against her husband,

who doesn't want to get mixed up in the family business. The title refers to a debilitating eye condition she is keeping a secret. The question is: as she continues to go her own way and forge a life in nature based on the prosperity of an unpredictable Flemish land, will her vision become any clearer?

Although it's the sixth episode that airs this week, don't hesitate to dive in. It's an easy programme to enjoy even if you haven't seen them all. And a tip: Although *Katarakt* isn't subtitled like much Flemish television, you can add subtitles through teletext. If your Dutch isn't perfect, it makes it much easier to follow.

Lisa Bradshaw



Elisabeth ushers in a fresh start – and a bit of mystery – to the Donkers family farm in *Katarakt*

FILM

Welcoming the light

Flanders celebrates the life and work of the world's most famous director



Starring it in the face: Bergman's masterpiece *The Seventh Seal*



The director in 1953

Lisa Bradshaw

There are a handful of great directors who need no introduction (or first name): Fellini, Visconti, Hitchcock, Antonioni. But perhaps the most recognised – and deservedly so – is Bergman. Deservedly, because Ingmar Bergman changed the face of filmmaking not just once but a number of times during his astonishing 60-year career. His innovative manipulations of colour and light alone (somewhat forced through the restrictive number of sunny hours in his native Sweden, where he shot most of his movies) has had an immeasurable affect on visual artists. That includes filmmak-

ers but also photographers and stage directors. (Bergman himself was a prolific playwright and stage director.)

But it's the emotional response of the audience to Bergman's themes that keep his work alive on screens across the world to this day. "There are not very many filmmakers who have addressed so successfully the fundamental questions of the human condition," says Jean-François Pluijgers, who has programmed the Bergman retrospective in Brussels and in select cinemas across Flanders. "Other filmmakers have tried, but he has a very personal way with the subjects. He was also a truly

great filmmaker on a visual level. Both those things together – that's pretty rare."

Bergman's favourite subjects included relationships between lovers, between life and death and between belief and doubt. His films were surreal and theoretical enough to provoke debate in the highest quarters of academia (and cafés) but unguarded and provocative enough to appeal to the masses. Even if you've never seen Bergman, you know Bergman: women in bonnets and night-dresses framed like oil paintings, an old man on the ultimate road trip facing his past, a knight playing chess with Death.

The Film Museum in Brussels is screening all Bergman's films made for the cinema (he directed many others for television), and many of the classics enjoy extra screenings at Flagey. Cinemas in Bruges, Ghent, Kortrijk, Leuven, Mechelen, Turnhout and Antwerp also have several Bergman screenings apiece. On 25 January, Harriet Andersson, who starred in Bergman films over four decades, will be interviewed on stage by Flemish journalist Patrick Duynslaegher (in English) before a screening of the 1972 *Cries and Whispers*.

Though Bergman had a repertoire of actors he cast again and again, Andersson (one of many with whom the director had a personal relationship) was the Film Museum's first choice for a special guest. "*Cries and Whispers* is aesthetically one of Bergman's strongest films," says Pluijgers, "so it is really interesting to have someone who was a part of that and who has been associated with his work on so many levels – and in so many different kinds of films."

The retrospective, which runs all month and into February, also

Screening highlights

Wild Strawberries: Film Museum bis on 16 January, Flagey all month

One of the two 1957 films that solidified Bergman as one of the finest filmmakers of his generation (see below for the other). An elderly professor (Victor Sjöström) travelling across Sweden with his daughter-in-law sees the past and the future in flickering scenes of reality and imagination.

The Seventh Seal: Film Museum bis on 21 January, Flagey all month, plus screenings across Flanders

Probably the most recognised classic film in the world and certainly tough to beat in the contemplation-of-death-category. A knight (Max Von Sydow) returning from the Crusades staves off Death by challenging him to a game of chess.

Cries and Whispers: Flagey 25 January (with special guest Harriet Andersson), plus screenings across Flanders

One of Bergman's finest films exploring relationships between women, this story of a dying woman (Andersson) cared for by snobby sisters but a loving maid was a breakthrough in the use of symbolic colour schemes, influencing cinematographers for decades to come. For more Bergman films starring Andersson, see *Through a Glass Darkly*, *Smiles of a Summer Night* and, most especially, *Summer with Monika*.

Persona: Film Museum bis 31 January, Flagey throughout February, Antwerp's MuHKA 24/26/30 January

A brilliant meditation on the subject of identity when, on a remote island, a nurse (Bibi Andersson) tends to a famous actress (Liv Ullmann), who cannot (or will not) speak. Self-referential 1960s art-film techniques while remaining riveting. A Bergman masterpiece.

hosts a video installation at Flagey by Swedish artist Charlotte von Poehl and a number of conferences, including the English-language "Ingmar Bergman at Home and Abroad", led by Professor Birgitta Steene, an author and Bergman scholar. In March, the Film Museum will screen work by contemporary Swedish filmmakers and present the conference "Swedish Filmmaking Post-Bergman: A Wasteland or Revival?"

When Bergman died last July (the same day as Antonioni), many journalists contacted Woody Allen, a Bergman friend and confidante, for his comments. How had the great Swedish director influenced him? they asked. "He couldn't have influenced me," Allen responded. "He was a genius, and I am not a genius, and genius cannot be learned or its magic passed on." Influence is one thing, genius quite another.

EUROPALIA

Highlight of the month

Living on

Samuel Beckett like you've never heard

If you're trying to decide how to enjoy Europalia this month, look no further than Barry McGovern's one-man show. *I'll Go On* is an energetic and wry compilation of passages from Samuel Beckett's pivotal 1950s trilogy of novels: *Molloy*, *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable*. The books share an inner dialogue and stream-of-consciousness that makes them extremely difficult to adapt to a stage play but perfect for a one-man tour de force. The dialogue – funny, biting, morose – comes channelling through McGovern like a ghost of times past.

Those not familiar with Beckett, the Irish-born playwright, novelist and poet who spent most of his life in Paris, have as much to enjoy as those who know him; his eloquent and timelessly relevant prose will be a revelation to new audiences.

McGovern premiered *I'll Go On* in 1985 at Dublin's Gate Theatre and has performed it around the world ever since. Rarely has so much praise been heaped upon a solo performance. Rarer still is the ability of a modern reworking of classic fare to remain fresh for more than 20 years. Don't miss it.

LB



January 22-26, Théâtre Le Public, Braemtstraat 64-70, Brussels. In English with French and Dutch surtitles. Tickets from 0800.944.44 or www.theatrepublic.be.

online
www.europalia.be

THE FUTURE ISSUE

CITY LIVING

Dreaming of a better future

Evert Crols of B-architecten gives us his vision of Flemish urban life in 2020



Everyone agrees that things could be better in Flanders. The daily commute has become a misery for thousands of workers in big cities like Brussels, and Antwerp. Carbon emissions are running out of control, and almost everyone complains of stress. Some people say it can only get worse, but the Antwerp architectural firm B-architecten believes that the future could be brighter if people could just be persuaded to move back to the cities.

Derek Blyth

B-architecten have carried out some striking projects in this country, like the renovation of the Beursschouwburg in central Brussels and Winkel Walter (Walter Van Beierendonck's shop in Antwerp). But they have also spent time reflecting on ways that architecture could improve life in Flanders in the 21st century.

"Transport is one of the biggest problems that we have to tackle over the coming years," explains Evert Crols, one of the founding members of B-architecten. "Our motorways have reached full capacity, and commuters have to face the daily grind of long traffic jams. We also face rising fuel costs and the problem of global warming, which means that we need to come up with some creative solutions."

Crols believes that the current thinking is not going in the right direction. "Some people argue that we need to improve public transport and encourage working at home. But these don't have much impact on public space. I think it would be better to encourage more people to live in cities. Cities have to become real cities. They have to offer people a high density of housing and amenities."

He admits that people in Flanders prefer to live in leafy suburbs. But this lifestyle could become increasingly unattractive in the future. "If you live somewhere like Brasschaat, then you have to use your car to do anything, like going to see a film. And that's maybe going to be a very expensive option in a few years."

Crols points out that the suburban lifestyle is modeled on the United States, where serious prob-

lems could develop in the coming years. "You can hardly imagine the scale of the disaster in the United States if oil prices continue to rise," he says. "You have a huge number of sprawling cities where almost everyone relies on their cars. If the price of fuel continues to go up, then these people will literally be stuck at home. This will obviously hit the poorest people hardest. But, sadly, nothing is likely to change until the cost becomes prohibitive."

The solution, he argues, is "to design cities so that they offer the amenities that people flee the cities to find. We need to have green cities surrounded by open countryside – with cows in fields."

He argues that the architects should be focusing their efforts on existing residential areas. "I think that some of the most unattractive residential districts – like the Antwerp suburb of Deurne – could become hip places to live in a few years' time. These are areas with lots of green space, located close to the city centre, with good public transport connections."

Crols praises Berlin as a good example of urban planning. "There are broad avenues all over, with old trees and high buildings. You see greenery everywhere. After they developed Potsdamer Platz, they planted big mature trees as soon as the work was finished. That makes a big difference. You are sitting

on a terrace in the shade of a tree from day one. Fantastic."

He argues that Flanders can learn a lot from Berlin. "Look at the tower blocks in the Kievitwijk development in Antwerp. They have put down four miserable pots where they might one day put some plants. They won't last a year. Greenery is extremely important for people's perception of a livable city. Some people have lovely gardens behind their houses, but you never see them."

Three years ago, B-architecten took a serious look at what young Flemish people wanted from city living. They also looked at the government regulations on sustainable living, rules on housing density and statistics on family size in Flanders – and drafted a manifesto titled "I have a dream".

The manifesto listed 14 different factors that would make city living more attractive to people who would otherwise flee to the suburbs. "We want to create an urban environment that doesn't scare away young families and that will persuade the next generation to stay in the city," says Crols. The list included the desire that "every house has a big garden" and "all gardens are south-facing." Other important factors included: "quality houses built like warehouses" and for "everyone to be able to park their car on their own land so

there were fewer cars parked in the streets."

B-architecten has produced an attractive image of an imaginary city where each urban house occupies an average of 0.4 square metres. The houses are surrounded by playgrounds, small parks and patches of water. The housing units would be delivered in raw state, allowing the owners to modify them according to their own ideas.

Dream on, you might think. But architects are practical people who want to put up buildings, not just write manifestos. "Even though we have started out from a dream, we are not proposing a utopian fantasy," Crols says. "Our proposals fit in with the urban realities of Flanders."

B-architecten has already built some small developments based on their ideas. Crols believes that the D-Factory project in Deurne – a new housing project in a former factory – comes closest to their manifesto. Each apartment has its own private garden or terrace, but there's also a collective garden with a swimming pool heated by solar power and surrounded by rampant tropical plants. "This is a good example of a housing project with large houses in a green environment, but with all the amenities of a large city near at hand," he says. "We believe really strongly in this sort of project, because it shows that you can, with a bit of creativity, create some wonderful living spaces in difficult urban environments. The reuse of old industrial buildings is an extremely sustainable solution."

Crols believes that we should be trying to make a "sustainable social life". He means that we should live in houses where it's easy to work at home and where grandparents could eventually be accommodated. He argues that houses needn't be large, pointing to the astonishing range of compact houses in Japan and the recently-built architect's house in Antwerp that was just two metres wide and four floors high.

Crols' own lifestyle could easily serve as an example of his ideas. "I live in Antwerp with my partner and son in an old factory, above my office, 15 minutes from an international high-speed train station. We're 200 metres from Antwerp zoo, five minutes from 15 cinemas, close to the crèche and trendy restaurants like Wagamama. I never use my car. In fact the engine is starting to rust. But I have all the quality time I need."

THE FUTURE ISSUE

Visions of the future

What's the next big thing? Three Flemish leaders on the cutting edge give their own views of things to come

"Innovation is hotter than Madonna"



Koen Peeters: "If Apple can do it, why can't we?"

Flanders District of Creativity, a Flemish organisation for encouraging entrepreneurial creativity, published a study back in 2005 titled 'Challenges for the Future: Flanders in 2015'. The challenges we identified then are still the same today. By 2020 we need to have prepared Flanders for the impact of our ageing population and increasing globalisation.

Regarding the global challenge, Flanders is a very open economy due to its size and geographical location at the hub of Europe. This brings, besides the obvious advantages, the disadvantage of

being subject to major international competition – maybe even more so than in neighbouring regions and countries.

The ageing population will cost us lots of money (about 3.6% of GNP up to 2030) and will lead to shortages on the labour market. To add to the problem, young people are no longer interested in certain trades and professions. So what should Flanders be doing between now and 2020 to turn these challenges into a positive result?

I believe Flanders needs to become a world-class innovative region. We have heard that before. When you enter 'innovation' into

Google.com, you get 86 million results, whereas you get 67 million for 'Madonna'. So innovation is hotter than Madonna. Every region in the world now has the same objective – even India and China have started restructuring themselves to encourage innovation. But we don't have any other choice. Our strategy up until now – to become the productivity champion of the world – is clearly not enough anymore to keep the jobs in Flanders.

To differentiate ourselves from our competitors, Flanders needs a different approach to innovation from the current one. We cannot

limit innovation to pure R&D, to technology. Technology is a necessary but not sufficient condition. We need it, but we also need people with the creativity to turn these technologies or other good ideas into new products, services or policies. We also need the entrepreneurial spirit to do something with those good ideas.

So let us not only focus on how much of our GNP we put into R&D; we should also invest in creativity and entrepreneurial skills, in marketing our new products and services, in integrating Flemish design into our innovations and in innovative business models and markets. In 2020, Flanders should be a region where companies and knowledge institutions invent new technologies – or just buy them (if Apple can do it, why can't we?) – where we then match those new possibilities with the needs of the market or with society, as well as with entrepreneurs who turn them into businesses. Our design, as well as our other world-class creative industries, should play a major role in the economy.

We also need an open Flanders. Like it or not, we need to recruit educated people from abroad for positions we cannot fill with local workers. We also need people who want to clean offices, make sandwiches, collect the garbage and so on. These are jobs that keep a society running. Flanders in 2020 should be an open and tolerant society that embraces those people.

An open Flanders also has to look across borders. In 2020 our companies will need to consider the whole of Europe as their home market. And they also have to take Asia into account. An estimated 52% of the world population will be Asian in 2020. If we ignore this then we are ignoring one out of two potential customers. Finally, we should be open to new opportunities. We could try, for example, to export services at which we excel – such as our healthcare system.

Koen Peeters

Director, Flanders District of Creativity

"You have to destroy"

In order to give new tendencies a place, you first have to seriously destroy. The need to kill your "master" comes up again. Either we drown in a multitude of monotonous variations, or we invest blindly and like rebels in a frightening unknown that has the scent of fresh renewal and makes immediately clear that it may not be compared but has to be seen as a new beginning.



Erwin Vastopjan

Wim Vandekeybus

Theatre walls will have to bend to accommodate new virtual shapes. Still, through their common creative impulses, the content of both the classic and the renewed forms will be understood. A content that does not rely on morality is capable of being ironic and moreover...fantastical.

We will have a need for the unreal in the real – an outlet into the emotional that's neither educational nor evaluative, but bears a power of seduction due to its being different and unrecognisable. Hesitant, identifiable boats keep drifting aimlessly, while speed boats will shoot forth in that same sea and shatter into a million different directions.

Wim Vandekeybus

Photographer, choreographer, founder of dance company Ultima Vez

"A new language of cinema"

As a leading supplier of 3D films, the future seems very bright to us. 3D cinema has been around since the early days of moving pictures, but enthusiasm for 3D film has never been more than a passing fad. Several factors led to the decline of 3D cinema, such as the poor quality of the projection systems or the fact that the majority of 3D films were low budget B-movies. The advent of digital projection technologies is taking care of the technical issues, and, to judge from the line up of 3D releases over the next couple of years, it looks like the quality of the films shown in 3D will be first class.

But the long term viability of 3D cinema will depend on the feature film industry's willingness to treat the 3rd dimension as a *revolution*, rather than an *evolution*. There have been several important evolutions in the history of cinema, such as the transition from black and white to colour. This type of change affected the way movies were experienced by the public, but didn't radically alter the way the movies were made. There has been only one major revolution in the past – the move from silent films to sound. This not only affected the movie experience itself; it revolutionised the way films were made, from the writing to the casting, the directing and the editing.

The long-term appeal of 3D requires us to drastically change the way films are made. The 3rd dimension brings about a new language of cinema. The writing, pacing, framing and lighting must be radically altered to achieve 3D immersion. If there isn't total immersion, I think audiences will quickly tire of this type of cinema.

From our experience in producing and exhibiting 3D films in special venues, it's clear that the real appeal of 3D doesn't come from the gimmicky use of in-your-face effects, which are fun, but rather from the sensation of total immersion: The audience no longer watches a



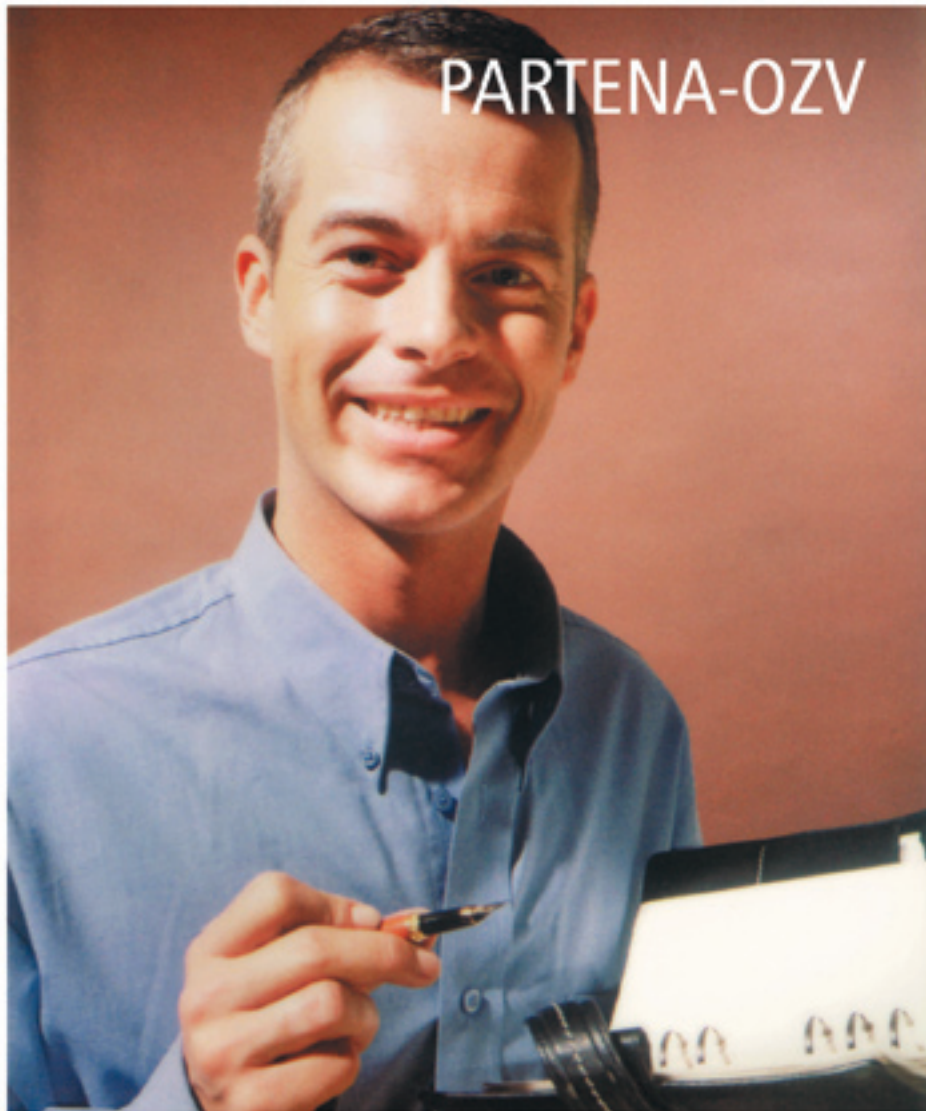
Ben Stassen, right, with astronaut Buzz Aldrin, ahead of the release of Stassen's new 3D feature film *Fly Me to the Moon*, which releases in Belgium on 30 January

film through a window (the screen) but is transported into the filmic space itself. We don't bring the story to the viewer; we take the viewer into the story.

For several decades, the international motion picture industry has been dominated by Hollywood. But whenever a revolution takes place, there are always opportunities to change things. We have a strong background in producing 3D films for niche markets, and so we have a good chance of succeeding in this brave new world.

Ben Stassen

3D film director and co-founder of nWave Pictures



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Classical & new music

Brussels

Bozar (Paleis voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
JAN 13 11.00 Capriola Di Gioia: Amaryllis Dieltiens, soprano, Bart Naessens, harpsichord: Morley, Dowland, Kapsberger, Picchi, Cavalli, Ford, Monteverdi.
15.00 Belgian National Orchestra conducted by Roberto Minczuk with Sergio and Odair Assad, guitar: Rossini, Castelnuevo-Tedesco, Busoni, Tchaikovsky.
JAN 15 20.00 The King's Consort conducted by Matthew Halls: A Gabriele, G Gabriele, Kapsberger, Monteverdi, Piccinini.
JAN 16 20.00 Chapelle Musicale Reine Elisabeth Gala Concert: Royal Wallonia Chamber Orchestra conducted by Christopher Warren Green with José Van Dam, bass-baritone, Plamena Mangova, piano, Augustin Dumay, Hrachya Avanesyan, Harriet Langley, Jae-Eun Lee and Michael Guttman, violin, Tomoko Taguchi, Anne-Fleur Inizan and Anneke Luyten, sopranos, Nicolas Zielinski, counter-tenor: Chopin, Strauss, Mozart, Ravel, Vivaldi.
JAN 17 12.30 Sophie Causanschi, violin, Aroa Sorin, viola, Olsi Leka, cello, Dimitar Ivanov, double bass, Jean-Michel Charlier, clarinet, Bob Permentier, bassoon, Jan Van Duffel, horn: Strauss, Beethoven

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be
JAN 10 20.15 New Year in Buenos Aires: Vlaams Radio Orkest conducted by Michel Tabachnik with Gwen Cresens, accordion, bandoneon: de Falla, Piazzola, Khachaturian, Strauss, Brahms.
JAN 11 12.30 Trio Talweg and Jean-Pierre Peuvion, clarinet

Forest Abbey
Sint-Denijsplein 9; 02.332.11.19
JAN 11 20.00 Fusion with Brussels Music Academy children's choir, European Christmas carols performed on traditional folk instruments (charity concert)

Kapel van de Miniemen
Miniemenstraat 62; 02.507.82.00, www.minimes.net
JAN 11 20.00 Huelgas Ensemble conducted by Paul Van Nevel: Rebelo's Vespers and Lamentations

Royal Museum of Fine Arts
Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11
JAN 16 12.40-13.30 Belgian National Orchestra Chamber Ensemble: Strauss, Beethoven

Royal Music Conservatory
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.507.82.00
JAN 12 20.00 Jordi Savall & Hespèrion XXI ensemble: German and British 16th- and 17th-century consort music (02.507.82.00).
JAN 17 20.00 Trio Jean-Paul: Haydn, Brahms, Schumann (02.507.82.00)

Antwerp

Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28
JAN 12 21.00 B'Rock conducted by Alexis Kossenko: Rebel, Telemann
JAN 13 15.00 Ictus Wind Quintet and BC Manjunath, mridangam: Riccardo Nova's Ma's Sequence 8

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
Concerts at 20.00
JAN 10 Plamena Mangova, piano, Natascha Prischepenko, violin: Stravinsky, Schubert, Beethoven.
JAN 12 Jorg Widmann, clarinet, Steven Isserlis, cello, Dénes Várjon, piano: Schumann.
JAN 16 Le Concert spirituel ensemble conducted by Hervé Niquet: Charpentier's Missa Assumpta est Maria Te Deum.
JAN 17 Rotterdam Philharmonic conducted by Eliahu Inbal with Antje Weithaas, violin: Webern, Britten, Strauss

Borgerhout
De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.235.04.90
JAN 11 20.30 New Year in Buenos Aires: Vlaams Radio Orkest conducted by Michel Tabachnik with Gwen Cresens, accordion, bandoneon: de Falla, Piazzola, Khachaturian, Strauss, Brahms

Bruges
Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
JAN 12 20.00 Il Gardellino: Bach's Musikalische Opfer BWV 1079

Opera

Brussels
Theatre National
Emile Jacqmainlaan 115; 02.203.53.03
JAN 12-17 Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin and Vocalconsort Berlin in Dido & Aeneas by Purcell, conducted by Attilio Cremonesi, staging and choreography by Sasha Waltz with Sarah Connolly, mezzo-soprano, Reuben Willcox, baritone, Virgis Puodziunas, Valeria Apicella and Michal Mualem, dancers (tickets: 070.23.39.39)

Ghent
Vlaamse Opera
Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02, www.vlaamseopera.be
JAN 12-20 Le Nozze di Figaro by Mozart conducted by Andreas Sperring, staged by Guy Joosten with Paolo Szot and Tuomas Pursio, baritones, Maria Bengtsson and Ainhoa Garmendia, sopranos

Jazz & blues

Brussels
Archiduc
Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52
JAN 12-19 Pierre Anckaert Trio

Beursschouwburg
Auguste Ortstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be
JAN 10 20.30 Jan Rzewski-Fabian Fiorini Duo & Erik Vermeulen Trio

Espace Senghor
Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40, www.senghor.be
JAN 10 20.30 Theodosil Spassov Trio + Hilda Kazassian, Bulgaria (Europalia.europa)

Jazz Station
Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78
JAN 10 20.30 Jazz Station Big Band
JAN 12 18.00 Ronald Baker International Quintet

Le Grain d'Orge
Waversesteenweg 142; 02.511.26.47
JAN 11 21.30 Chess

Sounds Jazz Club
Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50
Concerts at 22.00 unless otherwise noted:
JAN 10 21.00 The Singers Night
JAN 11 Sian Jazz Band
JAN 12 Ronald Baker International Quintet
JAN 14 Ester's Birthday Party
JAN 15 Da Romeo Band
JAN 16 Chamaquiando, salsa
JAN 17 Ben Dubray Quartet

The Music Village
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
Concerts at 20.30:
JAN 10 Siân Potttock
JAN 11 Gregorz Karnas & the Sabin Todorov Trio
JAN 12 Florin Niculescu, Romania (Europalia.europa)

Antwerp
Zuiderpershuis
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00
JAN 12 20.30 Theodosil Spassov Trio + Hilda Kazassian, Bulgaria

Borgerhout
Rataplan
Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
JAN 15-18 20.30 Djangofollies: tribute to Django Reinhardt

Eeklo
N9 Villa
Molenstraat 165; 09.377.93.94
JAN 11 21.00 Theodosil Spassov Trio + Hilda Kazassian, Bulgaria (part of Europalia)

Mechelen
De Jazz-Zolder
Sint-Romboutskerkhof 2, Wollemarkt; 0497.02.93.61
JAN 11 20.00 Chris Joris Trio

Sint-Truiden
Academiezaal
Plankstraat 18; 011.70.17.00
JAN 17 20.15 Koppel-Andersson-Riel Trio, Denmark (Europalia.europa)

Pop, rock, hip-hop, soul

Brussels
Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
Concerts at 20.00:
JAN 11 Orishas
JAN 12 Kris De Bruyne
JAN 19 Woodface
JAN 23 Man Man Man
JAN 27 Arid
JAN 28 Jimmy Eat World
JAN 31 Underworld
FEB 10 36 Crazyfists

Fuse
Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89
JAN 12 23.00 Dj Pierre

Le Botanique
Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
Concerts at 20.00:
JAN 10 Robyn
JAN 18 Enon
JAN 30 Yaël Naim
FEB 1 Yoav
FEB 10 Idaho
FEB 15 British Sea Power
FEB 18 Kula Shaker
FEB 19 Sons and Daughters
FEB 24 Vinicio Capossela

VK Club
Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07
JAN 12 20.00 Quit Your Dayjob + Chrome Hoof

Vorst-Nationaal
Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991
FEB 2 20.00 Plain White T's
FEB 19 20.00 The Smashing Pumpkins
MAR 3 20.00 Tokio Hotel
MAR 8 20.30 Jenifer
MAR 16 20.00 James Blunt

Antwerp
Lotto Arena
Schiijnpootweg 119; 0900.26.060
JAN 28 Deathstars + Flyleaf + KoRn
Sportpaleis
Schiijnpootweg 119; 0900.26.060
MAR 14 20.00 The Cure

Stadsschouwburg
Theaterplein 1; 077.37.38.39
FEB 11 20.00 Neil Young.

Borgerhout
Hof Ter Lo
Noordersingel 30; 03.543.90.30
JAN 10 20.30 Halloween – Gamma Ray
JAN 11 20.30 Prong

World, folk

Brussels
Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
JAN 17 20.00 Ronny Mosuse

Au Stekerlapatte
Priesterstraat 4; 02.512.86.81
JAN 10 21.30 Augusto Pirodda, piano
JAN 17 21.30 Augusto Pirodda/Lynn Cassiers

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.84.44
JAN 14 20.00 Mafalda Arnauth, fado with guitarists Fernando Judice, Luis Pontes, Ramon Machio and Paulo Parreira

Bruges
Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
JAN 10 20.00 Ttukunak, Basque percussion instrument duo

Stadsschouwburg
Vlamingstraat 29; 050.44.30.60
JAN 12 20.00 Guido Belcanto, Vitalski, Lady Angelina and Martin Jansen

Dance

Brussels
Kaaithheater
Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59
JAN 11 20.30 Schritte Verfolgen, choreography and performance by Susanne Linke (part of Europalia)

Kaaithheaterstudio's
Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat 81; 02.201.59.59
JAN 16 20.30 D.A.M. in Satellites by Roberto Ramos

Uccle Cultural Centre
Rodestraat 47; 02.374.64.84
JAN 10-11 20.15 Théâtre d'Esch in Timeline, choreography by Anu Sistonen, music by André Mergenthaler, Luxembourg (part of Europalia)

Antwerp
deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
Until JAN 12 20.00 La La La Human Steps in Amjad, choreographed by Edouard Lock, music conducted by Njo Kong Kie

Bruges
MaZ
Magdalenastraat 27; 050.33.20.14
JAN 12-13 15.00 Gaff Aff, dance/theatre/music by Martin Zimmerman and Dimitri de Perrot
JAN 17 20.00 Needcompany in 'The Porcelain Project' by and with Grace Ellen Barkey

Leuven
Stuk
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
JAN 16-17 20.00 Wim Vandekeybus and Ultima Vez in Mense, choreography by Vandekeybus

Theatre

Brussels
Beursschouwburg
Auguste Ortstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be
JAN 11-12 20.30 Lazarus in Iets anders!

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.84.44
JAN 10-12 20.30 NTGent in Fort Europa by Tom Lanoye, staged by Johan Simons, Belgium (in Dutch with French surtitles; part of Europalia)

Théâtre La Montagne Magique
Broekstraat 57; 02.210.15.90
JAN 12 15.00 Imaginerie in Les Petits cailloux (for children two to five)
JAN 12 19.30 Foule Théâtre in Bon débarras (six and up)
JAN 17-18 20.00 Foule Théâtre in Adrenaline (12 and up)

Leuven
Predikherenkerk
Onze-Lieve-Vrouwstraat; 016.20.30.20
JAN 11-12 Theater Artemis in Pakman by Bruno Vanden Broecke, Michiel Cauwelaert, Nico Sturm, Raven Ruëll and Floor Huygen (in Dutch)

Stuk
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
JAN 14 20.00 Missie by David Van Reybrouck, staged by Raven Ruëll
JAN 15-16 20.30 Theater Onderhetvel in PLOT

Tervuren
British School of Brussels
Leuvensesteenweg 19; 02.766.04.42, community@britishschool.be
JAN 11 19.00 TNT Theatre Britain in Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury (in English)

Visual arts

Brussels
Arts en Marge
Hoogstraat 312; 02.511.04.11
Until FEB 16 Anarchitecte, constructions by outsider artist Richard Greaves pictured by Swiss photographer Mario del Curto (see also Brussels' CIVA)

Atomium
Atomium Square; 02.475.47.72, www.atomium.be
Until MAR 30 Willy Van Der Meeren, furniture from the 1950s by the Belgian architect

Baronian-Francey Gallery
Isidore Verheydenstraat 2; 02.512.92.95
JAN 11-MAR 1 Landscape photography by Florian Maier-Aichen

Bibliotheca Wittockiana
Bemelstraat 23; 02.770.53.33
Until JAN 30 La Nuit bleue, books by the late Belgian poet Pierre Lecuire

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.84.44
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 centuries

Bozar
Koningsstraat 10; 070.22.52.29
Until FEB 2 Encompassing the Globe. Portugal and the world in the 16th and 17th centuries, 180 art works, maps, navigational instruments and early printed books from the time of Portugal's trading empire and voyages of discovery

CIVA
Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.71, www.civa.be
Until FEB 16 Anarchitecte, installation by outsider artist Richard Greaves (see also the photographs of his constructions at Brussels' Art en Marge)
Until MAR 9 MAXXI Museum Rome: Zaha Hadid Architects, models, photographs and video presenting Rome's future Museum of Art for the 21st century

Get your tickets now for...



The Grand Atelier: Pathways of Art in Europe
Until January 20, Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23, Brussels, www.bozar.be

This magnificent exhibition closes in a couple of weeks, so get there if you haven't yet. It's an adventurous, eclectic journey through 14 centuries of European art and cultural history constructed around specific themes. Find out exactly what "Europe" has meant – and continues to mean – through masterpieces by Vitruvius, de Vinci, Titian, Rubens, Poussin and many more.

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

Violettestraat 12; 02.213.44.50
Until JAN 27 Gerald Watelet, retrospective of work by the Belgian fashion designer

De Electriciteitscentrale – European Centre for Contemporary Art

Sint-Katelijnestraat 44; 02.279.64.31, www.brupass.be
Until JAN 13 Agorafolly Inside, works by 27 young European artists

deBuren

Leopoldstraat 6, www.deburen.be
Until FEB 8 90dagenrotterdam: Exhibition of photographer Friederike von Rauch's work in Brussels and Rotterdam

Elsene Museum

Jean Van Volssemstraat; 02.515.64.21
Until JAN 26 All Roads Lead to Rome. Artists' travels from the 16th to the 19th centuries, paintings, texts and a variety of objects related to travel
Until JAN 27 Ontmoetingen: 1997-2007 (Encounters, 1997-2007), photographs by Géraldine Langlois

Espace Architecture La Cambre

Flageyplein 19 ; 02.642.24.50
Until FEB 24 European Supermarket: 50 years, from the opening of the first self-service store in Belgium in 1957 to the construction of supermarkets all over Europe

Espace Photographique Contretype

Verbindingslaan 1; 02.538.42.20
Until JAN 13 Variations, photographs by Armyde Peigner
JAN 16-MAR 9 Les yeux dans les yeux, photographs by Andreas Weinand

Fondation pour l'Architecture

Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.80
Until APR 20 Landscapes of Architecture: 150 years of Drawings by Belgian Architects

Husson Gallery Bookshop

Alsebergsesteenweg 142; 02.534.33.54
Until JAN 31 People in Motion by Michel Dusariez

ISELP

Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70
Until JAN 12 National Parks, by German nature photographer Norbert Rosing

Indigo Studios

Overwinningsstraat 96 ; 02.534.75.72
Until JAN 31 Golden Years-Rock 70/80, photographs by Paul Coerten

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63
Until FEB 24 Sarah and her Brothers, history through the eyes of the Kaliskis family of artists

Koekelberg Basilica

Basiliekvoorplein 1; 02.420.55.05
Until MAR 15 Leonardo Da Vinci: The European Genius, paintings, mechanical models, original drawings and manuscripts

Le Botanique

Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
JAN 11-MAR 2 Un certain regard, works by artists from CRéHAM (creativity and mental handicap), including Abderrhamane Ahruil, Roger Angeli, Roland Buyse, Jules César, Massimo Cottone, Isabelle Denayer, Pierre De Peet, Willy De Smedt, Julien Detiège, Pascal Duquenne, Manuel Gonzalez, Paloma Gonzalez, Roland Goossens, Patrick Ladrière, Sylvie Laurent, Céline Mertens, Magali Meert, Marie-Jeanne Moreau, Richard Moszkowicz, Anne Ndaiziga, Lynette Ricker, Daniel Sterckx, Nouzha Serroukh, Félicienne Vanhove,

Géraldine Vink, Pascale Vincke and Nicole Zbierski

Royal Library

Kunstberg; 02.519.58.73
Until FEB 8 Formatting Europe: Mapping a Continent, maps from the Middle-Ages to the 20th century

Royal Museums of Art and History

Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11
Until MAR 2 Beauty Singular-Plural, 5th Design Triennial, on the theme of beauty, its criteria, diversity and subjectivity

Royal Museums 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
Until MAR 30 Alechinsky from A to Y, retrospective of work by the Belgian artist on the occasion of his 80th birthday
Until MAR 30 Quadrum: International Magazine of Modern Art, tribute to Ernst Goldschmidt, curator and publisher

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

Tour & Taxis

Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49
Until MAR 23 It's our History!, multi-media exhibition on the development of the EU and the lives of Europeans citizens since 1945

Antwerp

Contemporary Art Museum (MuHKA)
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60
Until FEB 10 Collection presentation XXI, with works by Charif Benhelima, Suchan Kinoshita, Sergei Bratkov, Paul Casaer, Jacques Charlier, Vaast Colson, Leo Copers, François Curlet, Mark Dion, Eugenio Dittborn, Jan Fabre, Robert Filliou, Roman Signer, Ilya Kabakov, Barbara Krüger, Gordon Matta-Clark, Danny Matthijs, Vlad Monroe, Bruce Nauman, Ria Pacquée, Panamarenko, Kerim Ragimov, Joëlle Tuerlinckx, Luc Tuymans, Uri Tzaig, Patrick Van Caeckenberg, Lidwien Van De Ven, Barbara Visser, Ian Wallace, Konstantin Zvezdochotov, Michaël Van den Abeele, Amal Kenawy, Panamarenko and Khaled Hafez

Mayer van den Bergh Museum

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

Middelheim Museum

Middelheimlaan 61; 03.827.15.34
Until JAN 20 Spomenik: The End of History, photographs of communist monuments in former Yugoslavia by Jan Kempenaers

MoMu

Nationalestraat 28; 03.470 .27.70
Until FEB 10 Exuberant fashion designs by Bernhard Willhelm

Rockox House

Keizerstraat 12; 03.201.92.50
Until FEB 10 Samson and Delilah: A Rubens Painting Returns, the famous painting shown along with other works of art originally owned by Antwerp's mayor Nicolaas Rockox

Eupen

Ikob
In den Loten 3; 087.56.01.10
Until JAN 13 La Ricarda, multi-national installation and video project

Ghent

Design Museum
Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99
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)

Huis van Alijn

Kraanlei 65; 09.269.23.67
Until JAN 27 Gent in bewegend beeld (video exhibition)

Maaltebruggekasteel

Kortrijksesteenweg 1023; 09.242.88.22
Until APR 27 Het DNA van de kunst (The DNA of Art), works by Tjok Dessauvage and Katy De Bock

Museum Dr Guislain

Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95, www.museumdrguislain.be
Until APR 27 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 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 FEB 10 Nr17 Slow: Looking at things differently, video installations by designer Marina Yee and work by artists who have inspired her, including Léon Spilliaert, Luc Tuymans and Erik Verdonck

Knokke-Heist

Cultuurcentrum Scharpoord
Merlaan 32; 050.63.08.72
Until JAN 20 Impressionisten in Knocke & Heist, more than 200 paintings by Impressionist artists who were in Knokke between 1870 and 1914, including Permeke, Rops and Parmentier

Pascal Polar Gallery

Zeedijk 811; 050.68.56.23
Until JAN 31 Photography & Photomontage, photographs by Olivier Christinat, Godfried Donkor, Claude Fauville, Manuel Geerinck , Martial Lorcet, Michel Scarpa and Karl Waldmann

Leuven

Stuk
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
Until FEB 3 Video works by Keren Cytter

Mechelen

De Noker
Nokerstraat 4; 015.29.06.60
Until FEB 10 The Engineers of the Final Solution, the role of Topf und Söhne, the German firm which designed the ovens at Auschwitz

Tervuren

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

Don't miss this week



John Scofield Trio

April 9, 20.00, Handelsbeurs, Kouter 29, Gent.
Tickets from 09 265 91 65 or www.handelsbeurs.be.

One of the greatest jazz guitarists in the world, John Scofield is a master of improvisation, which is what makes every live performance a one-night-only event. Having reached celebrity status through his work with Miles Davis, he plays Ghent as part of the now-famous trio, which includes bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Bill Stewart. They're also bringing along a four-part horn section for a blasting rich sound of funk and blues fusion. Don't underestimate how fast this show will sell out.

Tongeren

CC De Velinx
Dijk 111; 012.39.38.00
Until FEB 17 Decors + stills, photographs by Peter De Bruyne

Waregem

BE-PART
Westerlaan 17; 056.62.94.10
Until JAN 27 So Close/So Far Away, contemporary art show with works by Adel Abdessemed, Sergey Bratkov, Elina Brotherus, Peter De Cupere, Desiree Dolron, Sutee Kunavichayanont, Esko Männikko, Zwelethu Mthethwa, Masato Nakamura, Deimantas Narkevicius, Shirin Neshat, Anri Sala, Manit Sriwanichpoom and Céline van Balen

Ypres

In Flanders Fields Museum
Grote Markt 34; 057.23.92.75
Until MAR 30 Oorlogsgetuige: 1914-1918 (War Witness: 1914-1918), drawings by Henry De Groux

Festivals & special events

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

Festival Pays de Danses: new dance festival
JAN 24-MAR 1 in venues across Belgium
04.342.00.00, www.theatredelaplace.be

Brussels

An Evening in Vienna: New Year Concert and ballet with the LODZ Johann Strauss Music Theatre Orchestra, conducted by Leslaw Salacki
JAN 11 20.30 at Koninklijk Circus, Onderrichtsstraat 81
02.218.20.15

It's a Free World... avant-première: Ken Loach interviewed onstage by Brigid Grauman, former editor-in-chief of The Bulletin, followed by the première of his new film
JAN 9 20.00 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23
02.507.82.00, www.filmarchief.be

Bollywood: The Show!: Musical comedy celebrating the biggest film industry in the world

JAN 10 20.00 at Vorst-Nationaal, Victor Rousseaulaan 208
0900.26.060

Djangofollies: Annual festival celebrating Belgian gypsy jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt
JAN 18-20 at Riches Claires Cultural Centre, Rijkkelarenstraat 24
02.548.25.70, www.lesrichesclaires.be

Musica Universalis: Polyphony festival with music by composers from Flanders and northern France
Until JAN 11 at Kapel van de Miniemen, Miniemenstraat 62
02.507.82.00, www.minimes.net

Théâtre 02 in Jojo la vache: puppet theatre (for ages five and up)
JAN 12 16.00 at Espace Senghor, Waversesteenweg 366
02.230.31.40, www.senghor.be

Antwerp

An Evening in Vienna: New Year Concert and ballet: with the LODZ Johann Strauss Music Theatre Orchestra, conducted by Leslaw Salacki
JAN 13 16.00 at Queen Elisabeth Hall, Koningin Astridplein 26
0900.26.060

Bouw & Reno: building, renovation and real estate fair
JAN 12-20 at Antwerp Expo, Jan Van Rijswijcklaan 19
03.260.81.22, www.antwerpexpo.be

British American Theatrical Society presents Little Red Riding Hood: with music by The Beatles performed by Blues en Fun
JAN 12-14 at Stadsschouwburg, Theaterplein 1
070.22.21.92, ticket@arenberg.provant.be

Kortrijk

Wij trouwen: wedding fair
JAN 11-13 at Kortrijk Expo, Doorniksesteenweg 216
056.24.11.11, www.kortrijkexpo.be

Ostend

An Evening in Vienna: New Year Concert and ballet: with the LODZ Johann Strauss Music Theatre Orchestra, conducted by Leslaw Salacki
JAN 12 20.00 at Ostend Kursaal (Casino), Monacoplein
070.22.56.00, www.sherpa.be

MY FLANDERS

Joachim de Vos

Joachim de Vos is the director of Business Communication for Living Tomorrow, a Flemish company that encourages innovation. We asked him to predict the shape of things to come in Flanders

Your company launched "The House of the Future": what was the thinking behind that?

Actually, there are three houses of the future: the first was opened in 1995 in Vilvoorde, and we opened a second one in Amsterdam in 2003. A third opened in Belgium last year, and another is scheduled for 2010. The concept was to create a physical meeting place for companies to develop and try out product innovations. At first, our primary focus was the home – but now we've branched out into "The Office of the Future", "Banking of the Future", "Travel of the Future" and so on.

What technological changes did the team at Living Tomorrow foresee that have come to pass? And which ones are still to come?

Think about the communications revolution: who would have thought 20 years ago that the Internet would play such an important role in our daily lives? Who would have thought that we would all be carrying digital cameras and taking professional quality photos – on our GSMs? Who would have thought that CDs would have such a short life? Vinyl records were around for 80 years before CDs replaced them – but after only 20 years CDs are being edged out by MP3s. And the DVD, around for only 10 years, will soon be replaced by other technology. In a relatively short time, we've gone from "a PC in every home" to "a PC on every desk" to "a PC everywhere": the PDA in your pocket, computers systems in your car, at the movies, etc. In 1980, no one

had a fax machine, a PC, a PDA, a mobile phone. In 2020, no one will have a fax machine, a PC, a PDA, a mobile phone. Everything will be more integrated, ubiquitous, pervasive. The PC will control almost everything, from software to hardware. In the future, you might be able to walk around with an ID that will allow you to access your whole music library wherever you go. We could go from storing data on a memory stick to storing it virtually on a server somewhere, accessible everywhere. The Internet and Internet services are already necessities, but in every home there will be one server for everything: home automation, media, telephony, videoconferencing, distance control and internet services. Energy developments will see things powered by photovoltaics, a solar power technology, and hydrogen fuel cell energy.

What future developments do you see in the workplace?

There will be two types of workplace: the minimal office, because workers will be more mobile; and the all-inclusive office with shops, entertainment, sports, laundry services, hairdressers, doctors, dentists and various other services at the office site. This all-inclusive office will be more typical for larger companies or communities, where the office site is kind of a living space.

How is the "House of the Future" in Amsterdam different from the one in Vilvoorde?

They were designed by different architects, for one thing. But also, the Belgians and the Dutch are very



different when it comes to innovations. Five years ago, the Dutch were already beginning to be interested in building homes to accommodate their owners as they aged. This trend has only recently started in Belgium. On the other hand, innovations like home automation start much earlier in Belgium because Belgians build their own homes one by one – while in the Netherlands and Germany, big companies build a large number of similar homes at one time. Belgians are the early adopters who take risks on innovations at an individual level – because convincing a construction company to use an innovation in several homes at one time is difficult.

Your company works with an impressive list of partners such as Delhaize, Suez, Microsoft and Johnson & Johnson. How does that work?

We have a team of 100 people, one quarter of them involved in research, while another one quarter is in daily contact with our partners – finding out what needs are out there and what's in development. A company like Carrefour might come to us wanting to improve the shopping experience for their customers, and then we brainstorm. A lot of this is cross-fertilisation: there may be existing

technology used by one industry that could be adapted for another.

What special edge does Flanders have in developing technology?

Our diversity. Within a relatively small region, you have a very high level of expertise in many areas. Ghent is world famous for its biotechnological innovations, Leuven is renowned for its work in nano-technology, while Vilvoorde is impressive in the area of interactive media. This geographical closeness helps: only last week, it was reported that scientists in Ghent have made huge advances on a flu vaccine – perhaps in the future there could be long-distance diagnosis with technology developed in Leuven. The government has been good at promoting these competence centres. These exist in other countries, as well, but Flanders is remarkable in having so many within an area of 250 square kilometers.

With so much change going on, do you see anything staying the same?

There is only one thing that will stay "the same", namely the *acceleration* of innovation-speed. Everything will change, even more dramatically than we could ever imagine today.

Still, there are some things that people feel too sentimental about to ever let go: some people still have their vinyl records and turntables, others like baking in a gas oven instead of a microwave. Is there anything old-fashioned that you own that you're too nostalgic about to ever replace?

My first Mac from 1988. It still works. I just can't bring myself to get rid of it.

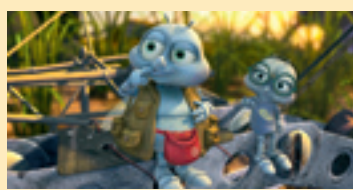
THE LAST WORD

Things we're looking forward to in 2008



Expo 58 Revisited

Massive programme of events to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the 1958 Brussels World Fair, when the Atomium appeared on the Brussels horizon and the country looked forward to a brave new future.



Fly Me to the Moon

Flemish director Ben Stassen's new animated 3D comedy premieres at the end of January. The plot involves three housefly stowaways on board Apollo 11 as it sets off for the moon.



A new government

The interim federal government led by Guy Verhofstadt is due to hand over power to a new fully-fledged government at the end of March. The business of government reforms will then begin in earnest.

FlemishinBrussels Clouseau BrusselsCarShow Aquarius Schuld Ozark Henry ParanormalFestival
next week in Flanders Today