



FLANDERS TODAY



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Hotel Ots

The Flemish wave

How the Flemish put the style in Brussels

Steven Tate

When Sonja Noël came to Brussels from Grimbergen to study art history in the early 1980s, the European Union had less than half the number of countries it does now, the ecu was supposed to succeed

the Belgian franc, and Belgian fashion was, if not nonexistent, then thoroughly non-acknowledged.

A few years later, when Noël opened a clothing shop in the city centre, her friends thought she was mad. "The Dansaertstraat was then the last place one expect-

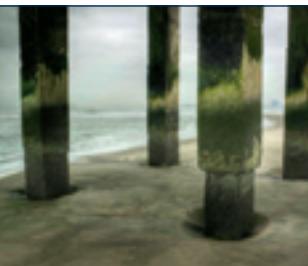
ed a boutique to be," she remembers. "It was run down, grimy, and there was nothing else down here." More controversial was the name she chose for the shop: Stijl. "Flemish friends asked me, 'Why are you giving it a Flemish name? Don't you know everything that's fashionable has to be French or

Italian?'" She smiles, realising she's had the last laugh: Noël and her boutique were instrumental in putting Belgium – particularly the celebrated Antwerp Six – on the fashion map.

It is difficult to overstate the role of the Flemish in reinvigorating Brussels. After centuries of

being undervalued, they literally transformed the Belgian capital. A quarter of a century after it opened, Stijl remains a fashion magnet for expats, locals and tourists from as far off as Japan. And that's just the beginning.

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Business

The restaurant La Riva opened three years ago in a restored shelter for dock workers in Antwerp's old port area. Marc Maes reports on a recent change of tack that has turned it into a scintillating venue for events and parties.

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Arts

The sea is almost lapping the steps of the Concertgebouw in Bruges this season as the city celebrates the 100th anniversary of Zeebrugge port. Marie Dumont reports on a programme that fearlessly shuns the obvious in favour of bold contemporary music.

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Active

The Antiques Fair in Brussels is one of the most prestigious art and antiques events in Europe. Even if you can't afford a Picasso, it's worth taking a look at the works on show before they disappear into a billionaire's private collection.

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Hospital crisis grows acute

Begging for beds as bug bites

Alan Hope

Antwerp province last week declared a serious shortage of hospital beds due to an increase in the number of respiratory-tract infections in the province. Hospitals were ordered to postpone all non-emergency admissions. In Antwerp's university hospital extra beds were placed in the accident and emergency department, as well as in a meeting room. "Normally we send patients we can't handle to other hospitals," one A&E doctor said. "But now they're all full as well."

The situation was being monitored every two hours, said a spokesperson for the emergency doctors. Patients whose condition

made it possible for them to leave hospital early were being asked to go to make room for new admissions. Non-urgent surgery was being cancelled, not because there is pressure on operating rooms, but because there are no spare beds for patients before and after surgery. "However anyone who really needs urgent help will not be turned away," said Dr Jan Stroobants.

In Mechelen, the two hospitals reached full capacity and stopped taking new admissions. The situation was approaching the same level in Bruges and other Flemish towns.

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

Jan Vekemans

The Mayer van den Bergh Museum in Antwerp has hardly changed in more than 100 years. This dark and rather gloomy museum was built in 1904 by Henriëtte Mayer van den Bergh to display the art collection of her dead son Fritz. The rooms are filled with an extraordinary collection of old books, oil paintings and furniture, arranged in the sort of interior beloved of art connoisseurs.

The collection recently grew by one – a 1624 portrait of a boy called Jan Vekemans painted by Cornelis de Vos. It's a strange, sad portrait of a young boy wearing an enormous Spanish-style embroidered costume and lace collar, holding a hat that seems several sizes too large for his head.

The painting was one of five family portraits commissioned by the Antwerp merchant Joris Vekemans. Rather than have all the family in one painting, he commissioned a separate framed portrait for each family member. Money was presumably in plentiful supply in the Vekemans household. The first work shows Joris sitting at a table covered with a richly woven carpet. The

next shows his wife Maria sitting in the same room dressed in a stiff lace ruff.

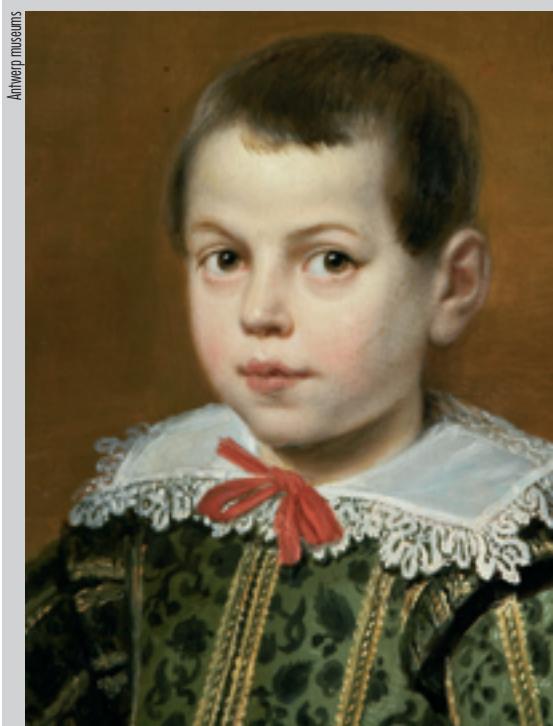
Then come the children: little Fransje, dressed in heavy costume and standing in the room of what looks like a palace, with a view through the window to a formal Renaissance garden. His sister Elisabeth (who might have been called Cornelia) sits stiffly in a leather-backed chair wearing a dark green silk dress.

We know most about Joris, who was a successful businessman with six children. He died soon after the birth of the sixth, at the height of his career, aged just 35. We also know something about Jan, who grew up to become a prominent Antwerp lawyer and alderman in the city council. The fate of the other family members remains less certain. The daughter, with her pale face and wide brown eyes, is perhaps the most intriguing.

Fritz Mayer van den Bergh managed to buy four of the portraits, but the fifth, that of Jan, remained in a private British collection. It was recently bought by the King Baudouin Foundation and now hangs in the main room of the museum, reunited

with the rest of the family members. The five paintings have been added to the Flemish government's list of "masterpieces", which means that they can never be sold abroad. The family will remain safely together in Mayer van den Bergh's dark interior.

DB



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FACE OF FLANDERS

Cortepix



Koen and Kris Wauters

When Clouseau played its last show of the Clouseau 20 series at the Antwerp Sportpaleis on 2 January, the band, propelled by front men Koen and Kris Wauters, had attracted nearly 252,000 concertgoers – breaking its 2006 record by 2,000 pop revellers. Take into account that the band primarily addresses Dutch-speaking audiences and that Flanders, compared to territories like France, Germany or even the Netherlands, is not exactly a leader when it comes to making business out of domestic talent, and the whole event becomes much more impressive.

Back in 2000, Clouseau staged its first "Special Edition" performance at the 16,000-seat Sportpaleis, following a number of guest appearances at the Night of the Proms concerts in the same arena. "It was great to play with a huge classical orchestra, but we were just a part of the big event, with two songs. The audience wanted more," remembers Kris Wauters. "So we decided to stage a Sportpaleis show ourselves with the 52-strong Il Novecento classical orchestra. We had two sell-outs... and Clouseau became the first local band to fill the huge hall on its own." The Special Edition concerts are now an annual December tradition at the Antwerp venue.

The Clouseau audience continued to grow – and so did the production values. "After five sell-out shows in 2002, we decided to invest in extra elements – like the Rolling Stones' stage bridge, which they used on their Babylon Bridges tour. We have a big advantage over international acts on tour here; all of our equipment stays in place for three weeks." That allows Clouseau to build a more visually impressive stage. "The audience loves it," says Wauters.

Twenty years after releasing its first single "Brandweer", which sold 427 copies, Clouseau is now one of the most financially successful bands in the history of Flemish pop music – despite low ticket prices of €18–€36. "The production is quite expensive, but the ticket revenue with a 250,000 audience is a bonus," says Wauters. "That partially makes up for declining album sales." Clouseau released its latest CD, *Vonken & Vuur*, last spring, and it has sold 65,000 copies. "Sales are still huge compared to other artists but dramatically bad compared to the 600,000 copies of *Hoe Zo?* (1989), or the 430,000 copies of *Oker* (1996) that went over the counter in Belgium and the Netherlands." Still, *Vonken en Vuur* was the top-selling album in Flanders last year. (The number 2 slot was filled by the *Clouseau 20* collection, even though it wasn't released until November. It currently remains the top-selling album in Flanders.)

Every year, anything from 5,000 to 10,000 people (predominantly female) buy multiple tickets to the Antwerp concerts. "Some of them have tickets for more than three shows," Wauters smiles. "But the 250,000 visitors really say what Clouseau stands for: a super live band with great musicians, 20 years of songs in Dutch and an audience that has become friends with the artists. Local music has been brought to a new level."

Marc Maes

online
www.clouseau.be

TALKING DUTCH

notes on language



Schuld

Now and again I get hold of the wrong end of the stick in Dutch; just a little bit of inattention and *ik heb het bij het verkeerde eind*. Well, it's not my mother tongue, so I'm allowed the occasional slip-up. But I still feel a bit stupid for being caught unawares recently when I read *Vlaamse schuld smelt weg*. What was this all about? I thought. "Flemish guilt melts away"? Had the grip of the Catholic church loosened to such an extent?

Schuld, as I should have remembered, is one of those Dutch words that has several meanings in English. Of course, *het was mijn eigen schuld* – I only had myself to blame. I should have read further. Then I would immediately have realised that the article was about debt, not guilt, and the cheering news that the Flemish government's debt would be wiped out in 2008. This will free up money for, among other things, the wonderfully-named *Toekomstfonds*, a sort of war chest for the future to pay for *de vergrijzing en het klimaatdossier* – a future with lots of oldies in an unending summer. It will also mean *minder geld op de bank, meer geld voor de mensen* (a sound bite if ever I heard one), which, if you are a taxpayer like me, will bring a tax reduction: *een korting van 200 euro op de personenbelasting*. Well, every little bit helps.

Most English-speaking learners of Dutch share the same misunderstandings, though you soon learn that *een slimme mens* is not a thin but a clever person. Also that *een scotch* is strong dark beer. And *Hoe laat is het* does not necessarily mean "How late is it" but "What time is it?" And of course that *hoe* means how, not who.

Often the situation helps clarify the meaning. As soon as we arrive at *de parking van een groot warenhuis* we of course realise that we are in the car park of a large department store and not some warehouse.

Some words that are spelled the same and have different meanings in the two languages are so obviously unrelated that you would surely not confuse them, as for example with *Earl Grey thee*. And *witte bonen in tomaatsaus* will never offend English-speaking veggies, unless they don't like baked beans.

Other tricky words are less easy to identify. *Een actuele kwestie* is a matter that is topical, not just real. And be careful if Jan says *Ik zou dat eventueel kunnen doen*. You cannot rely on his help because all he's saying is that he could possibly do that, not that he will do it in the end. Some Dutch false friends are almost too good to be true. Everyone's favourite must be *eekhoorn*, a squirrel, pronounced just like acorn.

So the next time you get it wrong, just say *Sorry, ik heb het bij het verkeerde eind*. You can heap on the ashes and add a *mea culpa* by saying *eigen schuld dikke bult*, but you should feel no guilt.

Alistair MacLean

online
www.vandale.be

FEATURE



KVS: Flemish theatre in the heart of the city

The Flemish Wave

Continued from page 1

Thierry Coppens has turned Fuse into a dance club of international renown. Ancienne Belgique, the city's Flemish cultural centre, is essential in supporting bands on the cusp of global acclaim. And many more Flemings have kept the energy flowing in a city that was (and often still is) in danger of being stripped of its local identity in favour of some global one that ends up being less a melting pot than a tasteless stew (or waterzooi, if you prefer).

"It's a problem that's, unfortunately, not unique to Brussels," says Dorian van der Brempt. "You have Zara and C&A and H&M and McDonalds in most major cities, and they all begin to look

alike. Even Prague, one of the most beautiful cities in the world, has to fight against it." Contrary to how that might sound, van der Brempt is far from xenophobic, as evidenced by his job: the director of De Buren, the Brussels cultural centre that isn't completely Flemish but is abundantly cultural. "First of all, we're an initiative of the Dutch government and the Flemish Region," he explains. "Secondly, we're interested in all cultures: we have lectures in French and English, too, as well as featuring artists and performers from all over the world. We recently hosted a festival organised by the Young Arab Theatre Fund. We promote diversity."

There is an old saying: no two people can be more unlike each

other than brothers – thus, an initiative involving the Flemish and the Dutch could have its hiccups. "It's true that we have our cultural differences, which could be compared to the differences between the UK and the US," he admits. "But cultural differences are not the same as cultural disputes. For example, the influence of religion on politics in the Netherlands – it's unimaginable that such a situation could happen in Belgium, just as the British find America's Bible Belt a bit alien. But we still speak the same language and share a history that is deeply interconnected."

De Buren's manifesto: to present the beauty of the Low Countries through the culture, while being open to anything else of quality.

Does this compromise Flemish identity? Van der Brempt does not think so. "People's idea of what it is to be Flemish can be amusing," he says, recounting a Wim Vandekeybus dance piece in Barcelona with a Moroccan lead dancer, a German singer, the London String Quartet and dancers of seven other nationalities. The headline in the newspaper the next morning: "Flemish dance is alive and well." Van der Brempt chuckles, amused more than confused.

A mere two years in existence, De Buren is a relatively new kid on the block. De Markten, which opened in 1982, is older – but even more vital today than when it began. Housed in a building that was once a showroom for Val Saint-Lambert, De Markten is arguably the epicenter of Brussels bohemia – with an eclectic cultural appetite. Courses in tai chi and yoga are offered, as well as Dutch classes that attract refugees, expats and anyone else wanting to learn the language. "I'm surprised – and happy – about the mix we get," says Nora De Kempeneer, the centre's cultural director.

She remembers the early days when a rag-tag team that had little idea of what they were doing decided to put together a cultural centre. A stone's throw from the Stijl shop, De Markten's address was also then in a rundown part of town. "The city followed with investment, and slowly it became the place to be. Anyone interest-

ed in culture, art, theatre, dance and film can often find something here," she says, noting that De Markten is not only a venue for cultural events, but it also produces them.

The team today – a dozen paid, plus volunteers – are interested not just in providing alternatives to more mainstream sports, arts and entertainment: They make De Markten a real Flemish quarter. In summer, the ground floor café spills out onto the Oude Graanmarkt, creating a terrace under a canopy of trees. When the weather is less hospitable, it remains a meeting point for various strains of Brusseleer – imported and domestic. "We have the reputation of having a lot of trendy people coming here, but, 50 metres away, there are older people, and 50 metres in another direction, yet another crowd," De Kempeneer says. "It's important to keep that diversity because it adds to a city."

When asked about Brussels being a victim of its own success – and, in effect, becoming too expensive for its traditional inhabitants, De Kempeneer is realistic. "When a place becomes attractive, prices go up," she says, agreeing with van der Brempt's statement: "You'll have a Belgian who'll complain that Eurocrats are driving up real estate prices – but when you ask him who he sold his house to, he'll say a German or an American because 'What do you expect? I wanted the best price I could get.'"

While some sell out, Sonja Noël continues to sell: Stijl not only remains a fashion mecca, but her influence in nurturing up-and-coming designers has become legendary. "I don't just order pieces from a designer and then sell them," she explains. "With new designers, I develop a relationship. It's been that way since the beginning: It's not that I chat with Dries (Van Noten) or Ann (Demeulemeester) everyday," she says. "We may see each other once or twice a year. But when we do, it's like family." Not one to rest on her fashionable laurels, Noël is also the president of Modo Bruxellae, the Brussels Region-subsidised group that promotes Brussels designers and provides a professional and educational network. Always on the search for the next hot thing, she has tipped designers Tim Van Steenbergen and Cathy Pill to follow in the footsteps of Dries and Ann.

"Once, it was hard to get a Flemish person to wear anything with a Flemish name on the label," she marvels. And the French wearing a Flemish designer? Forget it. Now Raf Simons and Kris Van Assche – two designers she promoted early on – are respectively heads of design at Jil Sander and Dior. Where go the Flemish, the world will follow... sooner or later.

online

www.demarkten.be
www.deburen.eu
www.modobruxellae.be



Stijl: where it all began



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The Welcome Offer Expat

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Bed shortage grows acute

Continued from page 1

This time of year is typically a high-point for respiratory infections, but the situation this year is being described as "exceptional" and even "extreme". As well as hospitals, the waiting-rooms of family doctors are under siege, with an estimated one in five of all medical consultations in Belgium last week a result of a respiratory infection. The elderly were particularly affected and made up a large proportion of those admitted to hospital. Old people are more vulnerable to infections in the first place and also more likely to develop complications such as pneumonia.

In Brussels the authorities of the St Jan's hospital in the city centre complained about the region's structural over-capacity in hospital beds. The problem surrounds the imminent takeover by St Jan's of the St Etienne

hospital in nearby St Joost municipality. Brussels has seven hospital beds for every 1,000 inhabitants, compared to a national average of 5,200 – amounting to a total of 14,000 beds. Estimates suggest that is a surplus of between 1,000 and 2,000.

For that reason, parts of St Etienne are facing closure after the fusion in an effort to limit costs. It is also likely that staff will have to be laid off, although the authorities at both institutions refuse to comment.

Ironically, last week saw the release of polling figures showing that a massive 91% of Belgians considered themselves healthy or "very healthy". The poll was carried out among 500 families for the wellness fair Life2, which takes place this March in Brussels Expo. The survey also found that 24% of Walloons said they took no special care of their health, compared to only 4% in Flanders.

Meanwhile, according to figures from the General Pharmaceutical Union, Belgians swallowed 5.8 million packets of vitamin supplements in 2007 – 15% more than in 2004. Over the same period, the consumption of over-the-counter remedies for coughs and colds rose by more than 9% to over 32.6 million units.

In another sector, it was revealed that Belgium does not have the facilities to deal with fully half of all serious and urgent cases of young people in need of psychiatric help. Flanders should ideally have 420 specialised child psychiatrists, whereas the actual number is 160. Just 12 new graduates enter the field every year, of whom four on average leave to work in the Netherlands. At current growth rates, the minimum figure will only be reached in about 2050.

Special €1 youth ticket for Flemish museums

Belga



Francine de Nave, director of Antwerp's Plantin Moretus museum

The Flemish government will offer a special €1 entry ticket to museums in Flanders for visitors under the age of 26, culture minister Bert Anciaux announced. The museums concerned attract some 2 million people annually, about one-quarter of them in the under-26 group, though most young people visit in connection with a study trip. The measure aims to make museum visits more affordable at other times. Children under 12 already have free entry for permanent exhibitions. They will now pay €1 to visit special exhibitions – including blockbusters,

which can cost up to €10 at present.

At the same time, however, museums in Ghent announced a general price rise from 1 April that could double the cost of entry. Culture alderman Lieven Decaluwe explained that prices have remained unchanged since 1995. The new €5 price for the Fine Arts Museum is still cheaper than the €8 ticket for the Groeningemuseum in Bruges and €6 for the Rubens House in Antwerp. City residents will be given a reduction of €3.75 so that they will pay no more than previously.

Top 50 companies have 17,500 job vacancies

Belgium's top 50 companies have a total of 17,500 unfilled job vacancies, according to a study by the business magazine *Bizz*. The largest potential employer is supermarket chain Colruyt, with 2,500 vacancies, followed by Fortis bank, looking for 2,000 new employees, and rival KBC, with 1,000 jobs going begging. Half of Colruyt's jobs are reserved for school-leavers and other new entrants to the workplace. All four big banks are looking to recruit 4,600 staff in total to compensate for retirement. Meanwhile, one in six of the jobs advertised last year in Flanders – 17.1% of 281,000 vacancies – were never successfully filled, government figures show. In economically buoyant areas like Zwijndrecht, close to the port of Antwerp, and in Zaventem, the number of unfilled vacancies has risen to 34% and 28% respectively, while the total number of jobs on offer rose by 22.4% in 2006.



Kind & Gezin short of doctors thanks to low fees

Kind & Gezin, the Flemish agency for the care of newborns and small children, is suffering a shortage of doctors for consultations and vaccinations, the organisation said. About 700 doctors work for the 330 local K&G offices in Flanders, where rising birthrates (see *Flanders Today* last week) are making the shortage worse. Lack of money is blamed for the difficulty in finding doctors. Those working for K&G are paid a gross fee of €33 per hour, with travel time unpaid despite a rule that prevents them from working in the municipality where their practice is based. But a former representative of doctors within the organisation said consultations and vaccination programmes would go ahead, despite the shortage of doctors. "I know my former colleagues too well. They would never let their work suffer," Dr. Hans Wauters said.

Flemish government takes on more disabled workers

The Flemish government is to employ severely disabled people without putting them through the usual tests, civil service minister Geert Bourgeois announced. From March, service directors will draw up a list of jobs that can be reserved for the disabled, amounting to up to 1% of all jobs. At present, the Flemish government has only 0.7% of jobs filled by disabled people, far below the target it set of 4.5% by 2010. Unions, meanwhile, reacted positively, as long as the employees' suitability for the job was maintained as a criterion for employment.

NEWS FLASH



Campaign tackles aggressive parents on touchline

The national Football Union has launched a campaign to combat the aggressive behaviour of some parents at sporting events involving children. The action follows a number of incidents late last year, including one in which a parent attacked a referee and another where a trainer came to blows with an aggressive father. The worst offenders are fathers aged between 30 and 40 years.

Accor expands in Belgium

Accor, the French hotel group with properties in all the market segments, is planning to open up to 45 new hotels in Belgium between now and 2011. The company is in the process of selecting locations and sites in Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent and Bruges.

New trams for Brussels

MIVB, the Brussels public transport company, is investing €106 million to acquire 102 new trams from the Bombardier rail equipment manufacturer. The trams, to be built at Bombardier's Bruges facility, will allow MIVB to increase its traffic to an expected 320 million passengers in 2010.

Ambassadors told to promote Belgium

Belgium's foreign minister Karel De Gucht has called on the country's ambassadors to take action to promote a more positive image of Belgium abroad. The diplomats have been given tips on how to develop informal contacts with key figures such as politicians, business leaders, journalists and commentators. De Gucht wants the ambassadors to argue that the recent governmental crisis has not dented the country's economy or political structure.

Two die in light aircraft crash

Two people died last Sunday when their ultra light plane crashed at Moorsele airfield in West Flanders. The judicial authorities have been called in to investigate the accident, which happened after the plane had been in the air for about 15 minutes. An eyewitness said that the aircraft plunged to the ground from a height of about 300 metres. The victims were a man, 27, from Kortrijk and a woman, 29, from Eeklo.

Antwerp is the "Naples of the North"

An estimated 20 tons of rubbish swirled around the streets of Antwerp following the New Year celebrations. The rubbish remained uncollected for several days because the normal collection day fell on a public holiday. Critics dubbed the city the "Naples on the Scheldt".

Lernout & Hauspie case takes dramatic turn



"Depressed, stricken, complicit, guilty": Pol Hauspie (right) and Jo Lernout (middle)

The trial of two men who were once Flanders' brightest industrial hope took a spectacular turn last week when a fundamental split appeared in the united front they have up until now presented to the public and the justice system.

Pol Hauspie and his partner Jo Lernout are facing the final phase of a trial on fraud charges that started last May after six years of

investigation. The trial was suspended in November when lawyers for the defence asked for more time. The two are accused of false accounting, drawing up fake contracts and manipulating the stock-market price of Lernout & Hauspie Speech Products, which developed sophisticated speech-recognition software for industry from the company's base in Ieper.

During the second week of the new session last week, Hauspie suddenly admitted guilt for "three-quarters" of the charges against him. According to his lawyer he is "depressed, stricken, complicit, guilty, ashamed and scarred" by the process so far. His lawyer has pleaded for a five-year suspended sentence with no time in jail, in contrast to the five years demanded by the prosecutor.

Hauspie's surprise strategy contrasts with that of Lernout, who claimed he acted in good faith, denies making any profit from the fraud and blames various others – from German intelligence "moles" within the company to businessman Philip Bodson, who came in at one point as a possible rescuer – for the company's collapse. Lernout's defence lawyer is pleading for an acquittal.

Earlier in the week, Lernout had told the court of his regret and compassion for those who had lost their investments in the collapse of his company. But he denied claims that he was an "ordinary fraudster" who had decided to defraud shareholders from the outset. The proof, he said, is that many of the technologies they were in the process of developing when the company went under in 2000 are now in use elsewhere.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



65,274

Number of babies born in Flemish hospitals last year, representing an increase of 1,210 births (or almost 2%) compared with 2006. The total is the highest since 1987, when the birth-rate began to decline steadily as many women decided to postpone having babies, explains the Flemish families agency Kind & Gezin. These women are now partly responsible for the rise in the number of births, while today's young women are choosing to have babies earlier than was the trend in the 1990s. The greater share of the increase was caused by women of foreign origin, the figures show. East Flanders was the exception to the rule, with a slight drop of 0.4%. The biggest baby-boom came in Limburg, with a rise of 4%, double the regional average.

€6.2 million

Amount invested by the Flemish government to adapt a barge so that it could be used on the open sea as well as inland waterways. The Ambers will be used to transport freight from Zeebrugge to Meerhout in Antwerp province, providing the Flemish sea port with a link to Europe's inland waterways. The barge link could mean 5,000 fewer heavy trucks on Europe's roads, said Flemish minister for public works Hilde Crevits.

50,000

Number of workers who are needed to fill jobs in Flanders, according to Flanders minister president Kris Peeters. The extra manpower is needed because the Flemish economy is booming, he said. He also wants to encourage more people over 55 years to remain in work rather than retire early.

3,288

Bottles of fake American Champagne destroyed by Belgian customs. The bottles bore the label "California Champagne from the André Champagne Cellars," but the name Champagne is protected in the European Union and can only be used for sparkling wine from the "Champagne" region of France.

Bloggers criticise VRT online news

A group of bloggers and web-designers has started an action to help redesign the VRT news site www.deredactie.be, launched last week as part of the broadcaster's overall makeover. Critics have attacked the site's lack of structure, poor image quality and various technical glitches. "All the news reports come at the visitor in one stream," an expert said. The critics have now launched www.de-red-actie.be (a pun meaning "the rescue action") and have offered the VRT a new site design for free. So far, the broadcaster has declined to respond. The new site includes an English version featuring video clips with English voiceover.

online
www.flandersnews.be



"The Loop" complex gets go-ahead

Ghent city authorities are planning a major new office and commercial district near Flanders Expo, dubbed The Loop. The area will include shops, offices and apartments, beginning with a new Ikea store due to open next year. The name The Loop was chosen to mark the world's first ever loop-the-loop exploit, performed in 1913 by French aviator Adolphe Pégoud from the Sint-Denijs-Westrem aerodrome, now the site of Flanders Expo. The site will require transport infrastructure, including an extension of tramline 1 and possibly new access ramps to link with the E40 motorway.

But while there will be a "retail park," the city doesn't want to include a shopping centre. "The typical shops found in a shopping centre are already in the city centre," argues Karin Temmerman, alderwoman for city planning. "The idea is not to set up in competition," she adds. But there could be a new Kinepolis cinema on the site, on the understanding that the existing Kinepolis cinema in town remains open.

The entire project, according to some estimates, could take up to 20 years to complete. As environmental impact studies have yet to be carried out, and building permissions obtained, there is no word as yet on how much the whole project might cost.



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CAR SHOW

Changing Gear

Car industry faces uncertain future



The Flemish automobile industry is bracing itself for another year of turmoil as it tries to recover from the shocks of 2007. Belgium was for many years the world's leading per capita producer of cars, at 87 vehicles a head in 2006 – three times as many as the UK or the US. But the country has slipped into second position behind Japan and is now barely ahead of Korea.

Total production dropped by 133,000 to 749,000 cars, and the closure of the Brussels-based Volkswagen plant in the early part of the year, coupled with the restructuring programmes implemented by the other producers – Ford in Genk, General Motors in Antwerp and Volvo in Ghent – have had a dramatic effect on employment in the sector. The result: a drop in the total workforce to some 25,000 compared to nearly 34,000 in 2000.

But the future is not all bleak. The decision by German Audi to take over the Volkswagen plant with a reduced workforce is positive news, and there are hopes that new models at General Motors and Volvo may sustain activities over the next few years. Ford Genk – riding on the sales success

of the S-Max, Galaxy and Mondeo models – is expected to increase its production by almost 10% to some 300,000 vehicles in 2008. But the globalization of the car industry and the sector's vulnerability to exports (over 90% of production) to mature markets do not allow for wild optimism. With total exports totalling 814,000 vehicles in 2006, the Belgian industry's leading markets are the UK and Germany with some 150,000 cars each. Even the US imported 53,000 Belgian-made cars in 2006. However, the consumer spending slowdown in those markets is likely to weaken demand for cars.

Many of the assembling industry problems in Belgium stem from personnel costs. Despite being hailed regularly as the world's most productive workforce, the average hourly cost of a Belgian worker is €32.50, five times as much as the €6.20 an hour paid in Slovakia and even higher than the €28.60 cost incurred by a German worker. In fact, labour costs have soared by 30% since 2000, a huge handicap in a global economy.

Almost 525,000 vehicles were sold in Belgium last year, a small 0.26 percent dip on the 2006 record – a reasonable result given

there was no car show in Brussels in January of last year. For this year, Febiac, the car industry federation, is organising the event at the Heysel in Brussels from 17 to 27 January. It expects over 700,000 visitors over the 10-day period, with distributors investing heavily in advertising and special offers to tempt buyers.

Market leader Volkswagen – with a 10.6% share and 55,708 cars sold – hopes to consolidate its position, but there are challenges from Peugeot and Citroen in second and third position respectively. Both companies are bringing new models to the Brussels show. All manufacturers, however, expect high sales for the first quarter of this year and hope that the love affair between the Belgians and their cars will continue, despite the surging price of petrol.

Indeed, the Belgian market is vying with Iceland as the European country with the highest number of cars per person. With 47 cars per 100 inhabitants today and a total of some 4.9 million vehicles on the road, it is no wonder that the Belgian road network is nearing saturation point. Flanders now has 30% more cars on the road than 15 years ago – a healthy sign of economic development, perhaps, but also a headache for traffic planners. Today, however, with greenhouse gases and a growing emphasis on pollution control, people are beginning to ask whether there is a long-term future for the car industry. While it would be premature to write off the Belgian automobile industry, it might be useful to look at alternatives to avoid a repeat of the successive oil crises in the 1980s.

online

www.salonauto.be

VENUE

La Riva becomes events venue

The prestigious Antwerp restaurant La Riva has changed its strategy and target public to focus on business events, product presentations, parties and seminars. Located in the Schuilplaats voor Werklieden, a 100-year-old workers' shelter near the old port of Antwerp, La Riva started out three years ago in the beautifully restored building in the Londenstraat. While safeguarding the authentic character of the building, the owners quickly established the restaurant's reputation by offering top class food and service. The spacious interior also occasionally served as an event area. "When the restaurant was booked for events, we had to turn down regular customers too often," comments La Riva manager John Nauwelaerts. "Therefore, we will position ourselves as an event hall from January, offering a fully fledged service to larger audiences – business or private."

To cater to the need for multi-purpose venues with scaleable capacity, La Riva welcomes groups from 20 to 550 people. Alongside a high tech DJ set, rooms can be tailored to clients' needs with LCD projectors, LED screens, show lights or auditorium seats.

Marc Maes

online

www.lariva.be

BUSINESS FLASH



Shutterstock

Open Skies

Open Skies, the UK-based airline affiliate of British Airways, is considering the launch of a service between Brussels and New York from June this year. The name of the new carrier is a reference to the "open skies" air traffic agreement between the United States and Europe. The company is expected to fly a Boeing 757 on the route with extended business class facilities.

KBC Bank

KBC Bank's André Bergen has been elected "Manager of the Year 2007" by readers of the weekly business magazine *Trends*.

IPTE

IPTE, the Genk-based supplier of automated production equipment, is to acquire the Munich-based automation company Platzgummer.

Merrill Lynch

The US-based financial institution Merrill Lynch will open a private banking affiliate in Brussels to handle clients with liquid assets of more than \$1 million (€678,653).

First Industrial Realty Trust

First Industrial Realty Trust, the California-based property investment firm with some 11 million square metres under management worldwide, has created a joint-venture company in Zaventem to invest up to €325 million in logistics and semi-industrial facilities in the region between Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent and into the Netherlands.

Abelag

Business jet company Abelag will acquire three new aircraft to meet fast-growing demand. The planes are to be based at Wevelgem/Kortrijk airport in West Flanders. The company is planning to order up to eight additional planes in the next few years.

Westvleteren 12

Westvleteren 12, hailed by connoisseurs as the world's best beer, is at the forefront of the huge success enjoyed by Belgian beers in the United States. The fad, with new Belgian cafes opening weekly, and Americans preferring beer to champagne, has pushed the price of a glass of special beer to \$55 (€37) in some cases.



SALES

Discount madness

The sales have hit Belgium – but why can't shops offer sales whenever they want to?



Steven Tate

The January sales – and their summer counterpart in July – offers ample opportunity for bargain hunters and “lets merchants get rid of stock that hasn’t sold before the next season’s shipments arrive,” says Philippe Ruelens, director of the Neutraal Syndicaat voor Zelfstandigen, or the Belgian Association for the Self-Employed. But some would argue that placing limits on when sales can occur stifles market freedom.

Similar regulations have existed throughout Europe for decades, but they are under increasing threat. Germany and the Nether-

lands have abolished all regulations controlling when a merchant can slash prices. Italy maintains different sales periods per region, while France is still among the most regulated – though President Sarkozy is looking to change that. Cross-border shopping and a single currency for most of the EU have put Belgian shops in serious competition with the entire continent. Are sales regulations in Belgium necessary protections to keep local businesses thriving – or do they put Belgian retail at an unfair disadvantage?

Luc Ardies thinks the former. “In the 80s, small and medium-sized enterprises comprised 80% of

the retail food sector,” says Ardies, Director of Branch Organisations at UNIZO, the Flemish Union of Independent Small and Medium-Sized Businesses. “Then supermarkets took over. Now, only 30% of food retail outlets are SMEs.” By contrast, sales regulations – which cover clothing, leather goods and shoes only – and other measures have maintained a more than 50% share of the apparel market for SMEs, according to Ardies.

Technically, merchants can reduce prices at any time throughout the year – except for the six-week period leading up to the January and July sales. Merchants do not need to justify price reduc-

tions if they are moving shop or renovating the premises, but they often do to attract customers. The reason: They are forbidden from displaying the magic words “salden” or “soldes” in their shops or windows outside the legally-specified sales periods. So “Everything Must Go Before Renovations” catches a window-shopper’s eye enough to entice him or her inside.

The word “Salden”, in fact, has become its own brand – that’s why appliance stores, bookshops and other businesses not covered by sales regulations trumpet “salden” in January and July, too. “A small shoe shop can’t mount a

huge media blitz like a multinational chain can,” says Ruelens. “So it depends on the automatic increased store traffic the sales period guarantees.” Large chains can afford to advertise, explains Ruelens and “can have ‘loss leaders’: items priced near or under cost that draw shoppers who end up spending more on other items in their stores. Profit margins in smaller businesses don’t allow for marketing and cutting prices all the time.”

To avoid diluting the brand’s power, the law restricts the “salden” period to January and July. “Small businesses depend on Christmas shopping to boost sales figures,” says Ardies. Merchants are forbidden from reducing prices for six weeks before the sales for good reason: economies of scale mean that a large store can slash prices more easily, putting them at an unfair advantage during holiday shopping. By blocking off the gift-buying period from price reductions, SMEs benefit from shoppers paying the full price.

The Association for the Self Employed and UNIZO are both in the process of launching formal legal complaints against the big retail chains Inno and E5 Mode for violating the regulations. Advertising or posting upcoming price reductions in the six-week period before sales is also a big no-no, and Inno and E5 Mode are alleged to have used direct mail campaigns – using mailing lists provided by American Express and Visa – to tempt shoppers with discounts this past December. “And this wasn’t the first time Inno and E5 had done this,” says Ardies. Although both had been found in violation before, no sanction was rendered. “We’re hoping that some punishment this time will discourage them from doing this in the future.”

Whether you agree or disagree with limiting the sales period, there is one regulation that inarguably protects the consumer: what constitutes “full price” and “discount”. If a price tag reads “30% off” the regular price of €100, the seller must be able to prove that the item really cost €100 the month before the markdown – preventing merchants from artificially inflating “the original price” to make the discount seem more dramatic.

The jury is still out on whether less restrictive attitudes towards sales in Germany and the Netherlands have put a dent in Belgian merchants’ pocketbooks. But the big question is whether the country can remain an island protecting itself in the middle of market liberalisation.



Bozar Shop

The builders took a bit longer than expected, but the Bozar Shop in Brussels is now fully open for business. Finally, you can satisfy your need for designer bowls, art notebooks and stylish pens while waiting for your show to start. There’s a dimly lit music shop with endless rows of sophisticated CDs (look for Phaedra’s “In Flanders Fields” label for something original), long shelves lined with art and style magazines and tables stacked with wildly expensive designer cups. One of our colleagues over at *The Bulletin* found the red carpet a bit over the top, and another complained about a €12 candlestick, but we are utterly besotted with the shop, even if the price tags are a bit towards the upper end of our credit card limit.

online

www.bozar.be

Countdown

Flanders' favourite singer-songwriter is bound for France – but not without one hell of a send-off concert

Sury/BNC



Get your tickets to the second Ozark Henry show before they, too, are gone

INTERVIEW

An Gyde: How did you know that this was the time to move on?

Ozark Henry: I don't know really; it's simply a feeling. I'm a curious person in everything I do. I've been making this kind of music and have been learning and, at one point, you reach some kind of development. If you're at that point, it means that you can work more freely than before because you control the technique – you speak the language, as it were. You can express yourself a lot better.

Do you think you'll have more artistic opportunities if you pursue an international career?

The two are not necessarily linked for me. I had received some interesting proposals from France in the past, but I had always been too busy with something else.

This time I accepted the offer. I'm curious to find out if new surroundings will influence my music. I find that very interesting. I'm open to whatever happens. I'm a musician because music fascinates me, I really feel good making music. If you're successful, then you get a career. It's nice to have a career; it helps in some respects, but it's just something that comes with the music. It's not supposed to become the baseline of what you're doing musically.

You're heading for Paris. Does that city appeal to you in any special way?

In fact that, too, is a coincidence. Paris is a place where I have some opportunities, so that's where I'm heading now. But I'm also looking forward to working in New York, for instance. It's not like I'm studying the world map in order to decide where to go next. The place

is not the determining factor, the action taking place there is. Of course, Paris is an attractive city, an inspiring place. Every concert I've ever played in Paris, I felt completely at home. And when you think about it, that's a weird thing. I feel the same way about Berlin. I don't know why. Maybe I have to go just to find that out. And even if I don't, it will be enriching at least to have tried.

Looking back, what do you consider the most important artistic highlight of the past 10 years?

Maybe *The Sailor Not The Sea*. That's an album I'll probably be happy with for some time yet. It was perhaps a more personal album than the previous ones. Of course, the others were personal too, but they all felt like I was telling a story in a language that wasn't yet completely my own. I was using beautiful words, but it wasn't really my way of putting

An Gyde

Ozark Henry is the pseudonym for an artistic centipede: singer, songwriter, arranger and producer Piet Goddaer. The Ozark story started in 1996 with a debut album called *I'm Seeking Something That Has Already Found Me*. Since then, there have been five studio albums and three soundtracks. The songs are typically introverted and sometimes enigmatic. Add to this the 37-year-old's distinctive, almost mumbling, way of delivering lyrics, and you have a style that is incomparable. But its originality works.

The breakthrough album was 2001's *Birthmarks*, with hits "Rescue", "Sweet Instigator" and "Word Up". It went platinum, and the same year Ozark started a new project: Sunzoo Manley, a jazzy, loungey trio also made up of the musically free-thinking percussionist Stéphane Galland and world-famous sax player Frank Deruytter. The band soon released the acclaimed free jazz album, *To All Our Escapes*.

Since *Birthmarks*, everything Ozark touched turned to gold. In 2003, he co-wrote, arranged and produced the Belgian band Nova-star's *Another Lonely Soul*, both an artistic and commercial success. He continued to broaden his scope, cooperating on *A Change Of Light*, UK cellist Audrey Riley's music and visual art exhibition. In 2004, he released a new studio album, *The Sailor Not The Sea* – platinum again. In 2005, Ozark worked with Flemish fashion designer Dries van Noten on music for two of his shows in Paris. By the time the

fifth album, *The Soft Machine*, was hitting the record shelves, the sale of advance copies meant that it was already gold – coinciding with double platinum for *The Sailor Not The Sea*.

Ozark Henry's name is also firmly connected to music for movies. He wrote scores for *Crusade In Jeans* and *To Walk Again*, the recent documentary about the paralysed Flemish triathlete Marc Herremans. He also wrote the music for the popular Flemish TV detective series *Sedes & Belli*.

At the moment, the Kortrijk-born artist is at a turning point in his career. Last year, he released a best-of compilation, *A Decade*, together with the announcement that he is moving abroad. New opportunities are around the corner: he has been invited to Paris by (as yet unnamed) artists. He shies away from being too specific but admits he will be cooperating with major talents in the French music scene.

The news of his imminent departure from Flemish soil gave a boost to his concert tour, which completely sold out, extra shows and all. But an emotional farewell will no doubt be reserved for the *A Decade* concerts in the Lotto Arena of Antwerp's Sportpaleis in April. The first scheduled show sold out so fast that a second one has been added.

Buy tickets for Ozark Henry's April 25 "A Decade" concert at www.lottoarena.be
online
www.ozarkhenry.com

things. That's different now. "Godspeed", for instance, was a song that just presented itself to me. I didn't have to mull over the idea for long – and still it says a lot about how I feel. It's great to have a language in which you can express emotions like that, that you wouldn't be able to express otherwise. I find that really liberating.

Writing movie soundtracks is a craft that seems to fit you.

I can write music for a specific purpose, yes. But actually the music I write that's not meant for movies often has a more filmic quality than my soundtrack scores. If there are no images, you have to work a lot harder to add a visual quality to a song. You can be a lot more frugal in your lyrics when you're writing for film. Writing scores is how I figured out what exactly the visual components are in my music, or in the

arrangements.

What movies would you have liked to write for?

Lost Highway by David Lynch. That must have been great, to write music for such a freaky film. But also the films *Europa* and *The Element of Crime* by Lars von Trier. And loads of others, actually.

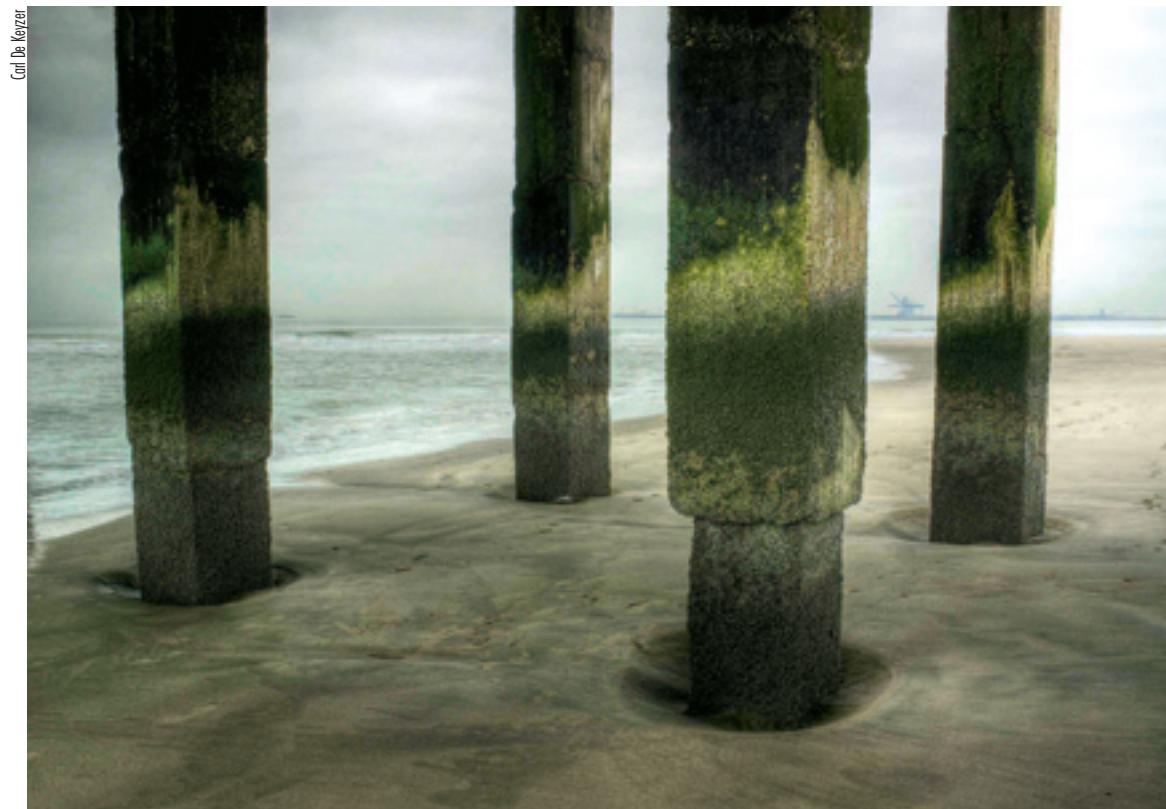
In your early career, you received a lot of praise from David Bowie. Do you have plans to ever work with him?

No. It's been great to meet him and to get his respect, but I don't want to push him in any way. I think someone like Bowie gets an incredible amount of offers, and many factors and interests come into play when he has to choose. I have to admit, I've never asked him; maybe I should give it a go. I do think we could complement each other.

CLASSICAL NOTES

Oceans of sound

Expect the unexpected at this boldly eccentric programme in Bruges



Carl De Keyzer's seascapes on view at the Concertgebouw until 1 June

All the water of Bruges seems to flow into the Concertgebouw this season as the city's imposing auditorium hosts several concerts on the theme of water to mark the 100th anniversary of the Zeebrugge port. Those expecting rippling piano music by Liszt or Debussy are in for a shock: the programme

is resolutely offbeat and challenging, consisting mostly of contemporary pieces that have never, or seldom, been heard in Belgium.

The one exception was the first concert of the series, which took place last November. Jordi Savall, the legendary Catalan viola da gamba player, conducted his

Concert des Nations in Handel's *Water Music*. Commissioned by George I in 1717 for festivities on the Thames, the stately suites ring familiar to most ears.

But the series resumes this month with something completely different: "Zum Wassermann" is an excerpt from *Aquarius*, an opera

of sorts composed in the 1980s by the Antwerp-born Karel Goeyvaerts. Dispensing with harmony, characters and plot, it's a radical yet oddly engaging meditation on "John's Apocalypse", the final book of the New Testament. Its libretto is a jumble of onomatopoeias which gradually morph into recognisable words in Dutch, Latin and half a dozen other languages. "Zum Wassermann" will be performed by Reinbert de Leeuw and the Schönberg Ensemble.

April will bring *Circulating Ocean*, a minimalist evocation of a tide's ebb and flow by Japanese composer Toshio Hosokawa. It premiered at the Salzburg Festival in 2005 and will be played here by the Belgian National Orchestra under Patrick Davin. April also finds intriguing folk music from Guernsey performed by baroque harpist Andrew Lawrence-King, a native of the island. Entitled *Les Travailleurs de la mer* after the novella that Victor Hugo wrote there while in exile, the concert is a stirring and colourful evocation of stormy seascapes, towering cliffs and local seafaring communities, performed on baroque harps and guitars, bagpipes, hurdy-gurdies and the like.

Writing on Water, by filmmaker Peter Greenaway, composer David Lang and calligrapher Brody Neuenschwander, also

premiered in 2005. Commissioned to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Lord Horatio Nelson's death, it's a beautiful multimedia show on a maritime theme that uses texts from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Melville's *Moby Dick* and Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. It will be presented in May by the London Sinfonietta.

Finally, in June take your family to Tan Dun's *Water Concerto* performed by the Flemish Radio Orchestra and percussionist Gert François on water-based instruments. Dun, who composed the soundtrack for the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, grew up in rural China, which has long been attuned to the musical potential of everyday objects and where festivals are often celebrated with makeshift instruments. His *Paper Concerto* will receive its Belgian première during the same concert.

If all this bubbling and gurgling hasn't made you sea sick, take a few minutes to contemplate the dramatic seascapes of Magnum photographer Carl De Keyzer, which are on display in the concert hall's lobby throughout the season.

Marie Dumont

online

www.concertgebouw.be

FILM FREAK

Gay & Lesbian Film Festival

It's time for one of Brussels' most fun-filled movie events: the Gay & Lesbian Film Festival. Every year organisers dig up the best – but also sometimes the worst, and delightfully so – of international queer cinema. The movies, together with art exhibitions, debates, readings and parties, offer a lively, feel-good celebration of cultural and sexual identity, all taking place inside Botanique.

The festival's cultural events have been expanded this year to include a beautiful photo-theatrical performance called *Le Cri (The Cry)*, stand-up comedy by Antoine Guillaume and a tribute to the late French singer Monique Serf (better known as just "Barbara"), who lived for a time in Brussels. She's an icon to gay men, not just for her cabaret style of chanson or fashion sense (long, flowing, black) but because of her tireless fight against Aids in the 1980s.

An art exhibition features paintings by young Vietnamese artists and work by South African photographer Zanele Muholi. January 26 is a very special day in the festival calendar, when organisers host a tribute to filmmaker Suzan Daniel. Considered the founder of Belgium's gay and lesbian movement, she died last November. A documentary about Daniel will be screened, as well

as several of her films.

The quality of the film programme has improved compared to past years, and counts some wonderful highlights among the nearly 40 shorts, documentaries and features. *Shortbus* is a rollicking sex romp by American John Cameron Mitchell, who previously directed and starred in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. At the centre of a cast of transsexuals, dominatrixes and threesomes, is the soft-spoken Sofia, a relationship counsellor with a relationship problem of her own: no matter how much she loves her husband, she is incapable of having an orgasm. The gay couple she is counselling (Jamie and Jamie) let her in on a little secret – a sex club called Shortbus. The naive Sofia's journey into New York's queer underground is peppered with humour and the realisation that practically everyone is in need of a revelation.

Also on the bill is the slapstick romantic comedy *Adam & Steve* in which two guys fall in love at first sight – twice. (The title references homophobes in America hollering "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve!") *No Regret* by South Korea's first out gay director, Hee-il Leesong, successfully mixes emotion and social commentary in the story of an 18-year-old who leaves a

rural orphanage for the big city and eventually becomes a prostitute in a "host bar". Never having formed a familial relationship, he is confused when someone actually cares for him. The best of the documentaries, meanwhile, is *Hineini: Coming out in a Jewish High School*, which follows a brave American teenager as she puts to test her belief that her faith must make room for her sexual identity.

But perhaps the best film on offer at the festival is Argentinean director Lucía Puenzo's *XXY*. Having swept up an impressive number of awards in festivals across the world, including two at Cannes, this sensi-

tive drama portrays the difficulties faced by Alex, a 15-year-old hermaphrodite, and her parents. Having lived as a girl until now and moving every few years to avoid questions, Alex (Inés Efron) is pressured by her mother, who has brought a surgeon to visit, to make a final choice. *XXY* is a tense and quiet study of the perils of gender neutrality in a world that insists on categorisation.

Lisa Bradshaw

January 17-26, Botanique, Koningsstraat 236, Brussels. Schedule, ticket and subtitle details at www.fglb.org.



Sook-Yin Lee is the perfectly ambivalent Sofia in the uproarious *Shortbus*

RESTAURANTS

Just around the corner

Eating out in Brussels? Don't be tempted by the touristy and trendy, when a revelation might be a few steps away

Restaurants are in no short supply in Brussels, especially in the crowded tourist and EU areas. When you find yourself looking for somewhere to eat in one of these quarters, and the brasseries all start looking the same, it's time to veer off the beaten path and discover the gems. Here are three of them.

Le Perroquet in the Zavel



I recently asked a few Brussels colleagues where I could catch a quick bite in the Zavel (Sablon) that wouldn't cost too much. They smiled at me sympathetically. "Go to another part of town," one said. So imagine my delight when I was recently trying to play tour guide to hungry friends from the US and stumbled into Le Perroquet. The cosy eatery on Watteeustraat is a 1920s paradise of Art Nouveau with marble tables, stained glass and dark wood. But it's the menu that will keep you coming back. Pitas – more than 70 different kinds (very appealing to Americans). Don't stop reading if you've grown tired of the pita craze. The owner, Jérôme de Brouwer, thought the same thing when he opened the place 24 years ago. He planned to cash in on pitas and then close down or change the menu when customers lost interest. But they stayed interested.

All pitas start with salad and then fall into the categories of grilled meats, beef, chicken, fish or vegetarian. I, however, head straight to the "Pittas Croc" for a warm *croquante*. Cheese features heavily, and my favourites are herbed cheese or feta with tomatoes. You'll also find spicy sausage with corn and double cheese, and a *roquefort* with bacon and fish. The friendly server plops a selection of sauces on your table – you can douse the whole thing in your favourite or dab a bit on each new bite for a bevy of contrasting tastes.

Prices run from €5 to €7 but the pitas do appeal more to a lighter appetite. If you're super hungry, order two. Le Perroquet also has a large selection of fresh salads and a few other plates, including a lightly-sweetened smoked salmon and a ginger *ballotine* – fried dough encasing a delectable little blend of rice, cashews, ginger and crispy vegetables.

Le Perroquet attracts an interesting mixture of clientele: students, antique dealers, office workers and plenty of classical music enthusiasts coming from the nearby Royal Music Conservatory. And they're open seven days a week from morning until after midnight. Your American friends will be delighted.

Watteeustraat 31, 02.512.99.22

Lisa Bradshaw

Vincent near Grote Markt

The Beenhouwersstraat is a narrow street in the heart of Brussels lined with restaurants, but don't even think of eating in any of them (except perhaps Aux Armes de Bruxelles or Chez Léon). This street off the Grote Markt has been a tourist trap for decades. It tried recently to clean up its image, but the restaurants are still so-so. The trick is to turn off Beenhouwersstraat into the narrow and unpromising Predikherenstraat and look out for the window filled with one-kilo slabs of butter.

This is Chez Vincent, an old Brussels institution that has been around since 1905. Push open the door, and you're in for a shock. You seem to have arrived in the kitchen. That's all right. A waiter in crisp white linen will arrive to guide you past the simmering pots of mussels. Then you come into a room with a huge tile mural of a Flemish fishing boat battling a high sea. The next room is a plain Belgian brasserie interior with an old menu affixed to the wall giving the price of a steak at 1.5 francs.

The place quickly fills up (booking is a must). Some of



the diners are tourists, others live in the neighbourhood. Everyone has a good time, except perhaps the occasional vegetarian for whom this place is really not suited.

Predikherenstraat 8, 02.511.26.07

Derek Blyth

El Vergel in the EU quarter

Looking for a quick lunch between meetings at the commission? Then you're in the wrong country – unless you trot on over to Troonstraat, where "fast food" is fresh, delicious and unique. El Vergel, a name that refers to the crops that grow in the fertile fields throughout Latin America, prides itself on serving healthy dishes that fuse the spice of Latin America and the lighter tastes of the Mediterranean. EU workers are so taken with the place that many of them are on a first-name basis with the staff.

The menu includes tacos, tostadas and salads with empanadas – oven-baked pastry filled with beef, onions, olives, raisins and spices. You'll also find churrasco – Brazilian beef steak on homemade Chilean village bread. El Vergel offers vegetarian versions of all their dishes and often of the daily special. If you're lucky, you'll hit a day when they're serving one of their two authentic Chilean dishes: Charquican, a mix of pumpkin, mashed potatoes and spiced lamb or Pastal de Choclo, a layer of spicy minced meat under a breast of chicken, which is meticulously topped with one olive, two raisins, corn and a touch of sugar.



The Cyprus-born owner, Stella de Garcia, lives in London, where she runs the first El Vergel. Her sister runs the one in Brussels, and together they have a long history of ethnic cooking. The restaurant also serves breakfast and welcomes take-away orders. But try to sit in the dining room for lunch, where you'll enjoy long oak tables, brightly coloured lamps and even brighter coloured markers, which you're invited to use to leave messages or create drawings – directly on the walls.

Troonstraat 39, 02.502.69.30

LB

ANTIQUES FAIR

Beauty and the buyer

Looking for a little Picasso to hang above the fireplace?
Then head down to the Antiques Fair before someone snaps it up



Gustave De Smet, "The Potato Harvest", 1930

Derek Blyth

Not everyone can afford to buy an authenticated antique statue from the Yuan Dynasty, but it doesn't do any harm to dream. The annual Antiques and Fine Arts Fair of Belgium allows you to wander among some of the world's most precious objects almost as if you own them. The 130 dealers who exhibit take enormous trouble to

show off some of their finest pieces in the hope that someone will buy. Even if you can barely scrape together the €20 entrance fee (plus €5 parking), it's worth visiting the fair to immerse yourself in the luxurious setting of the Tour et Taxis warehouse complex in Brussels.

Now in its 53rd year, the Antiques Fair brings together an impressive list of dealers from

countries like Belgium, France, Germany and Italy. Each dealer tries to seduce buyers into closing a deal by presenting the objects in a beautiful gallery-style space. They are more than happy to explain the background of different works or the likely evolution of prices in years to come.

But they have to be serious dealers to get past the rigorous entry procedures, which are designed

to weed out the dubious dealing in potentially grey areas. So every dealer, no matter how established, has to submit the works for a vetting process that is among the toughest in the world. The fair organisers call on about 100 experts in different areas to ensure that there isn't the slightest possibility of a piece coming from a Far East fake factory or a looted museum collection.

The fair feels a bit like wandering through one of the world's great museums. In fact, some of the pieces you see on display will probably end up in a major museum. You can look at paintings by René Magritte and Gustave De Smet, delicate Chinese figures or impressive African masks.

This year's highlight is a pair of 15th-century tapestries which once hung in the Palazzo del Principe in Genoa. They were woven in Tournai for an admiral in the

fleet of Charles V but became so threadbare over the centuries that the illustrations were no longer visible. They were recently restored in the Royal De Wit Manufactory in Mechelen, revealing for the first time in years the scenes from the legend of Alexander the Great.

This was the most complex restoration ever carried out by the Mechelen tapestry workshop. The wool – from sheep that have been shorn almost 600 years ago – had to be cleaned, repaired and stabilised. After two years of painstaking work, these splendid and rare works can be seen for 10 days in Tour et Taxis before they disappear into a private collection.

January 18-27, Tour et Taxis, Havenlaan 86, Brussels

online

www.antiques-fair.be



Two globes, Matthaeus Greuter, 1644

EXHIBITION

Luc Tuymans

Antwerp artist exhibits in Eastern Europe



Luc Tuymans, "Dusk," 2004, private collection

Luc Tuymans is a melancholy artist who draws his images from some of the more dark regions of human experience. He is someone who dwells on themes such as the Holocaust, child abuse and the Nazi past with grim determination. For the past decade or so, his gloomy realism has won him considerable acclaim in art cities like London, New York and Tokyo.

Now the new democracies of Eastern Europe are getting a chance to discover this Flemish artist in a major retrospective that opens in Budapest this month.

The venue could hardly be more apt. Some 70 works are being shown in the Mücsarnok, a grand 19th-century neoclassical building founded by the Hungarian National Fine Arts Association and now organised along the lines of a German Kunsthalle.

The exhibition has been put together by Zsolt Petranyi, director of Mücsarnok, and Ottilla Pribilla, who runs an Antwerp gallery specialising in artists from Eastern Europe. Tuymans is the first big name from abroad to get wall space in this old Hungarian institution, and his exhibition is intended to relaunch the Mücsarnok as an international art centre.

The organisers have worked hard to chart Tuymans' evolution from the mid 1970s to the present day. They have managed to secure loans of some key works, including "Our new quarters", which evokes the horrors of the There-

sienstadt concentration camp, and the more recent "The worshipper", from 2004, which refers to religious fundamentalism.

After Budapest, the exhibition moves on to Munich and then Warsaw. The organisers believe that audiences in these cities will feel a special affinity with the haunting atmosphere of loss and fear that pervade Tuymans' work. They aren't happy paintings, but they remain in the memory long after the exhibition has closed.

DB

Until 11 February in Mücsarnok, Budapest. From 2 March in the Haus der Kunst in Munich and during the summer months at Zacheta in Warsaw

online

www.mucsarnok.hu

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Classical & new music**Brussels**

Bozar (Paleis voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be

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
JAN 24 20.00 Liège Philharmonic,
conducted by Pascal Ropé with Frank
Braley, piano: Copland's Appalachian
Spring, Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue,
Varèse's Amériques (part of Festival
Amériques)

Gemeentehuis Ukkel

J Vander Elstplein; 02.343.30.63
JAN 18 19.30 Frédéric Pierard, clarinet;
Jessica Themelin, saxophone; André
Grignard and Jean-Noël Remiche,
piano: Baas, Brahms, Decruci,
Lutoslawski, Piazzolla, Puccini, Sancan,
Singelée, Verkaeren

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11
JAN 23 12.40-13.30 Sébastien Walnier,
cello, Eliane Reyes, piano: Lysight,
Rachmaninov

Royal Music Conservatory

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.507.82.00
JAN 17 20.00 Trio Jean-Paul: Haydn,
Brahms, Schumann
JAN 19 18.00 Julita and Paula
Sokolowski, violin: Polish music
(charity concert: 0477.292.353)
JAN 21 20.00 Anna Vinnitskaya, piano;
Schumann's Kreisleriana, sonatas by
Medtner, Rachmaninov

Antwerp

Kammstraat 81; 03.248.28.28
JAN 19 21.00 Opus X Ensemble: CPE
Bach piano and string concertos
JAN 20 15.00 Collegium Vocale
Gent soloists, conducted by Philippe
Herreweghe: Lassus' Lagrime di San
Pietro

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
Concerts at 20.00
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
JAN 19 Jan Michiels, piano: Busoni,
Bach, Bartók
JAN 23 Collegium Vocale Gent,
conducted by Christoph Siebert, and
Muziektheater Transparent in Ruhe by
Josse De Pauw: music by Aneelies Van
Parys, adapted from lieder by Schubert
JAN 24 Belgian National Orchestra,
conducted by Walter Weller, with Till
Fellner, piano: Schubert's Symphony
No 3 D200, Symphony No 4 D417,
Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 5 op 73

Bruges

Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
JAN 22 20.00 Opus X Ensemble: CPE
Bach piano and string concertos.
JAN 24 20.00 Capilla Flamenca & Het
Collectief: Stockhausen's Tierkries

Onze-Lieve-Vrouw ter Potterie**Museum**

Potterierei 79; 070.255.055

JAN 23 20.00 Vlaams Radio Koor,
conducted by Celso Antunes: Bach,
Dallapiccola, Schnebel, Villa-Lobos

Stadsschouwburg

Vlamingstraat 29; 050.44.30.60

JAN 20 15.00 New year Concert with
Operastudio Vlaanderen & Collegium
Instrumentale Brugense, conducted by
Ivan Meylemans: traditional songs and
opera extracts

Ghent**Handelsbeurs**

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01

JAN 18 20.00 Bl!ndman & Danel
Quartet: Oehring, Purcell, Slechtem

Opera**Brussels**

Kaaithetere
Sainctelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59
JAN 18-22 20.30 Dido & Aeneas by
Purcell, staged by Jan Decorte with
B'Rock, conducted by Richard Egarr

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39
JAN 20-FEB 7 Freiburger Baroque
Orchestra in Giulio Cesare in Egitto,
conducted by René Jacobs, with
Lawrence Zazzo, counter-tenor;
Marijana Mijanovic, alto
Theatre National
Emile Jacqmainlaan 115; 02.203.53.03
Until JAN 17 Akademie für Alte Musik
Berlin and Vocalconsort Berlin in
Dido & Aeneas by Purcell, conducted
by Attilio Cremonesi, staging and
choreography by Sasha Waltz (tickets:
070.23.39.39)

Uccle Cultural Centre

Rodestraat 47; 02.374.64.84
JAN 20 15.00 La Camera Lirica in
Barbe bleue, opera buffa by Offenbach,
conducted by Philippe Lambert, staged
by Blanche Gérard

Bruges

Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
JAN 19 20.00 Dido & Aeneas by
Purcell, staged by Jan Decorte with
B'Rock, conducted by Richard Egarr,
with Wilke te Brummelstroete, mezzo-
soprano; Maarten Koningsberger,
baritone; Barbara Hannigan, soprano;
Giles Underwood, bass

Ghent

Vlaamse Opera
Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02,
www.vlaamseopera.be

JAN 18-20 Le Nozze di Figaro by
Mozart, conducted by Andreas Spering,
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 19 17.00 Pierre Anckaert Trio
JAN 20 17.00 Rick Hollander & Station
to Station

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,
www.flagey.be
JAN 24 21.30 Jacky Terrason Solo,
piano

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78
JAN 18 20.30 Delvitagroup
JAN 19 18.00 Martin Melotte Quartet
JAN 23 20.30 Dacosse

Le Grain d'Orge

Waversesteenweg 142; 02.511.26.47
JAN 18 21.30 Made J

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50
Concerts at 22.00:
JAN 16 Chamaquiando, salsa **JAN 17**
Ben Dubray Quartet **JAN 18** NK-Jazz
JAN 19 Brussels Rhythm'n Blues

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
Concerts at 20.30:

JAN 17 Bernard Guyot 4tet **JAN 18**
Etienne Richard 'No Vibrato' Quartet
JAN 19 Frits Landesbergen & the
New Look Trio **JAN 21-23** The Music
Village Young Talents 5th Anniversary
Concerts: **JAN 21** Philipe Ivanov, piano
JAN 22 Bender Banjax **JAN 23** Sir Trio
JAN 24 Greg Houben Trio

Antwerp

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
JAN 18 20.00 Het Improviserend

Strijkorkest with Tristan Honsinger,
cello

Antwerp

Arenberg
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.22.21.92
JAN 22 20.15 Félix Lajko, violin;
Antal Brasnyo, viola (Hungary, part of
Europalia)

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00
JAN 23 20.30 Boi Akih, jazz,
Indonesian, Indian and European
classical music
JAN 24 20.30 Snehasish Mozumder,
mandolin

Dance**Brussels**

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.84.44
JAN 24 20.00 Expensive Darlings
by Maja Delak (Slovenia, part of
Europalia)

Kaaitheaterstudio's

Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat 81;
02.201.59.59
JAN 16 20.30 D.A.M. in Satellites by
Roberto Ramos
JAN 18-19 20.30 D.A.M. in Continuum
by Roberto Ramos

Theatre 140

Eugène Plaskylaan 140; 02.733.97.08
JAN 18-19 20.30 Mirjami & Mikael,
choreographed by Satu Tuomisto
(Finland, part of Europalia)

Bruges

MaZ
Magdalenastraat 27; 050.33.20.14
JAN 17 20.00 Neddcompany in The
Porcelain Project by and with Grace
Ellen Barkey

Stadsschouwburg

Vlamingstraat 29; 050.44.30.60
JAN 24 20.00 Ballet Preljocaj in
Annonciation

Leuven

Stuk
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
Until JAN 17 20.00 Wim Vandekeybus
and Ultima Vez in Menske,
choreography by Wim Vandekeybus

Theatre**Brussels**

Beursschouwburg
Auguste Ortstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50,
www.beursschouwburg.be
JAN 17-19 20.30 Muziektheater
Transparant/Johan Bossers/Viviane
de Muynck/Gunnar Brandt, sardonic
cabaret by Stefan Wolpe (in Dutch)

KVS Bol

Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.12
JAN 23-24 20.00 NTGent in Tien
Geboden, staged by Johan Simons (in
Dutch)

KVS Box

Arduinkaa 9; 02.210.11.12, www.kvs.be
JAN 22 20.30 NTGent in Utopia
GMBH, staged by Peter Verhelst (in
Dutch)

Kaaitheaterstudio's

Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat 81;
02.201.59.59
JAN 23-26 20.30 Songs of the Dragons
Flying to Heaven, written and staged by
Young Jean Lee, video by Dean Moss,
dance, theatre, standup and multimedia
performance (in English)

Théâtre Le Public

Braemstraat 64-70; 0800.94.444
JAN 22-26 20.30 Barry McGovern in
I'll Go On, based on works by Samuel
Beckett (In English with French
and Dutch surtitles. Ireland, part of
Europalia)

Antwerp

Het Toneelhuis/Bourla
Komedielaan 18; 03.224.88.44
JAN 17-26 20.00 Olympique
Dramatique in De Geruchten by Hugo
Claus, staged by Guy Cassiers (in Dutch)

Get your tickets now for...

Danny Willems

**Arno**

February 14, 20.00, Vooruit, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat, Ghent.
Tickets from 0900.260.60 or www.proximusgoformusic.be
(Also plays the Hof ter Lo in Borgerhout on April 12)

What better way to spend Valentine's night than with a man who may very well eject sexual expletives onstage, embarrassing the hell out of you and your lover. But Arno won't be embarrassed – after 25 years of raspy-voiced anthems and a few too-many Jupilers, Belgium's King of rock & roll has seen it all, done it all, and isn't afraid to tell it. At 58, he's still as much fun as when he was fronting for TC Matic back in the 80s, and his mix of French chanson, English funk and Flemish folk – every word wrapped around a rock beat – is jump-up-and-down crowd pleasing.

Bruges

Stadsschouwburg
Vlamingstraat 29; 050.44.30.60
JAN 22 20.00 Braakland/ZheBilding
in Spoon River by Edgar Lee Masters,
staged by Stijn Devillé (in Dutch)

Ghent

Capitole
Graaf van Vlaanderenplein 5;
0900.84.100
JAN 23-27 Cyrano de Bergerac, staged
by Bruno Van Heystraeten (in Dutch)

Leuven

Stuk
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
Until JAN 16 20.30 Theater
Onderhovel in PLOT
JAN 22-23 20.30 For All the Wrong
Reasons by Lise Pauwels (in English
with Dutch surtitles)

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
Until MAR 1 Landscape photography
by Florian Maier-Aichen

Biblioteca 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

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

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 Volsemstraat; 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 MAR 9 Les yeux dans les yeux,
photographs by Andreas Weinand

Europalia Europa

02.507.85.94, www.europalia.eu
Until FEB 3 Festival of European
culture from 27 EU countries, with
an extensive visual arts programme in
Brussels and other towns

Fondation pour l'Architecture

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

Gallery Garden

Stevinsstraat 206; 02.734.64.38,
0479.01.69.47, www.tonyclerkson.com
JAN 21-FEB 22 In the City, images of
Brussels, Paris, London, Glasgow and
Budapest by Scottish photographer
Tony Clerkson

Husson Gallery Bookshop

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

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

Basiliekvoordeplein 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
Until MAR 2 Un certain regard, works
by artists from CRÉHAM (creativity
and mental handicap)

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

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 and
many others

Mayer van den Berghe Museum

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

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
mayor Nicolaas Rockox

Ghent

Huis van Alijn
Kraanlei 65; 09.269.23.67
Until JAN 27 Gent in bewegend beeld
(video)

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03
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 and others

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 that designed
the ovens at Auschwitz

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 and
many others

Don't miss this week



For All the Wrong Reasons

January 22-23, Stuk, Naamsestraat 96, Leuven.
Tickets from 016.320.320 or www.stuk.be

Flemish choreographer Lies Pauwels of Ghent's Campo Victoria company amassed a number of performers from Contact, Manchester's pioneering theatre for young audiences. Though this peculiar theatre/dance piece is not particularly suitable for the young, it's an intriguing journey through Manchester, Blackpool and a few very British traditions. In English, it explores a number of themes, chiefly the difference between truth and perception. Weird – but wonderfully so.

Festivals & special events

Gratessstraat 3
02.663.85.50

Klara at Bozar: one-day programme of activities at organised by classical music radio station Klara. Music, workshops, exhibitions and discussions. Concerts include Rossini's Petite Messe Solonelle, English folk songs and a Congolese children's choir
JAN 19 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23
02.507.84.44, www.bozar.be

Manliness: On manly virtues and feminist theory; reading and discussion of the provocative book by Harvey C. Mansfield (in English; admission free, reservation required)
JAN 24 20.00 at deBuren, Leopoldstraat 6
02.629.20.93, www.deburen.be

Miouzz.com: comedy/improvisation by the Extincteurs
JAN 21-FEB 22 at Espace Delvaux, Gratessstraat 3
02.663.85.50

World, folk and jazz music festival: celebration traditions from Eastern and Western Europe
JAN 18-19 20.00 at Théâtre Molière, Bastionsquare 3
02.217.26.00, www.muziekpublique.be

Young Arab Theatre Fund contemporary arts festival: performances by artists from across the Arab world and is organised by the Young Arab Theatre Fund
Until JAN 20 at various venues
www.yatfund.org

Antwerp

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

MY FLANDERS

Johann Leten

Johann Leten is managing director of the Limburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Voka). We ask him what his work involves and why Limburg is such a good place to settle

What exactly is the goal of your organisation?

It was created about four years ago, when eight Flemish chambers of commerce and the Flemish employers' association decided to join forces to promote business and tourism in the Limburg region.

Why would someone choose Limburg over another area to do business?

If you've ever been trapped in traffic jams getting to work, you might appreciate Limburg's lack of road congestion. We also have a highly educated, multilingual workforce. Most people here speak four languages: Dutch, of course – and, this being Belgium, French, along with English and German. We've targeted Belgians and the Dutch and the Germans as possible investors, but we also appeal to the Chinese – space is at a premium in China, so we have something to offer in terms of space to set up businesses. Limburg now is serviced by a high-speed train with the TGV stopping at the Liège-Limburg station, and we are only one hour by car from Brussels, an important hub. There are also four major airports all within an hour and a half from us by car: Brussels, Eindhoven, Liège and Maastricht.

Historically, what kind of businesses are located in Limburg?

Well, that's changed over time. Mining had been important in the region until the 1980s when, like many mining areas in Europe, there was a downturn. But the industrial revolution hit Limburg

later than the rest of Belgium: the first real industrial operation was a Ford factory that started production in 1963. Before that, mining and agriculture were the major businesses. There were no value-added services here before.

And today, who comes to Limburg to set up shop?

We still have a very strong industrial sector, with the Ford plant and its suppliers in Genk providing a sizeable number of jobs. We export a great deal of steel, and there is considerable activity in the chemical industry: Umicore and Borealis are both major presences here. Then there are companies like Dow Chemical and the Tescenderlo Chemical Group, as well as a host of others that benefit from our low real estate prices and qualified workforce. A recent study has also shown that Limburg's entrepreneurial base has grown by 80% in the last 10 years.

Most people equate low property prices with economically depressed areas. Is that the case in Limburg?

Quite the contrary: last year, our employment level was higher than the average rate in Flanders.

So Limburg's all right for business. But why visit there?

Great food, beautiful countryside, good culture: people can stay at one of our castles that have been turned into bed & breakfasts, like the Rullingen Castle in the south. My favorite place for mussels is in Tongeren: Konings. Even though



the people here are known to be hard working and never sick (which probably helps them to be hard working), other Belgians see us as more open to new ideas than others. In the summer, there's the Pukkelpop Festival, which brings together famous international pop and rock bands and attracts fans from all around Europe.

But you're a local boy, so you probably are partial to Limburg...

I studied in Ireland and Britain and was thinking about working there. In fact, I wanted to be a chartered accountant and was offered jobs with Arthur Andersen in Wales

and PriceWaterhouse in the Channel Islands. But my girlfriend, who also studied abroad, wanted to come back here after finishing her MBA... and I followed her. I started out as an economic advisor in the cabinet. I would not have come back unless it was really somewhere I wanted to live.

You've spoken of Limburg's past and present. What about its future?

We are focusing more and more on a few specific sectors. Cushman & Wakefield [the New York-based global real estate service] recently analysed different European regions and said that Limburg

was the top location for logistical support – so the provincial government and others hope to employ 30,000 people in this sector by 2012. We're also active in the life sciences and lifestyle sector: environmental concerns will only increase in the future, and Limburg wants to be involved in developing solutions in biochemistry, medicine and other areas through the region's universities and private sector.

Interview by Steven Tate

online

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THE LAST WORD

what they're saying in Flanders

Small matters

"Europe isn't just for the big boys, but for all of its citizens, member states and populations, however small".

Guy Verhofstadt
acting prime minister, reacting to a decision by the four largest European countries to discuss EU finances in London

Poetry in motion

"Once in a while, I'm going to do something that's fun."

Joke van Leeuwen
poet, on being appointed Antwerp's first female city poet

China calling

We, Europeans, have to teach the Chinese how to enjoy life.

Lulu Wang
Chinese writer at the launch of her TV series *China for Beginners*

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