



Joke van Leeuwen, p.9



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Ghent invests in the future

Bigger, better, busier – the city of three towers is investing unprecedented sums in new projects

Lisa Bradshaw

€ 1.3 billion. That's the amount that is being spent in Ghent over the next few years. The projects range from new university buildings to a smarter railway station.

As a three-year resident of the city of the three towers, I can attest that Ghent is never without a major construction project underway. Residents simply give a weak sigh, turn their cars around and try another route. The citizens of Ghent are endlessly patient because the projects are endlessly neces-

sary. Though the growth rate of the city isn't terribly alarming (about 1% annually since 2000), that of Ghent University is: the number of students has doubled in the last 15 years to 31,000 – the same number as the more venerable Catholic University of Leuven.

Many of those students are staying on

in Ghent after they have graduated, which will have a long-term impact on population growth. In the meantime, the short-term impact on the university's facilities is more drastic. "Every year there are about 1,000 more students," says the university's rector Paul Van Cauwenberge.

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Business

Bloch's bakery in Ghent has been around for 110 years. The cakes are delicious, and the interior is a gem. So why is it closing down?

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Arts

A new arts festival opens this week in Budapest focusing on the culture of Flanders and the Netherlands. We find out why the Hungarian capital is going Dutch.

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Active

Pull on your gum boots. We have some unusual city walks in Flanders – ranging from a sewer tour in Antwerp to a gourmet walk through Brussels.

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Terror trial verdict upsets Turkey

Membership of terror group is not enough to convict, judge says

Alan Hope

The Turkish community in Belgium has reacted with shock to a ruling by the Antwerp Court of Appeal which found seven members of the extreme left-wing organisation the Revolutionary Party for the Liberation of the People (DHKP/C) not guilty of terrorism. The group is alleged to have carried out over 300 attacks in Turkey, is outlawed in Germany and stands on the United Nations' list of terror organisations. However the Antwerp court ruled that

membership of the organisation alone was not sufficient to constitute a criminal offence, unless concrete actions or planning took place in relation with terrorist acts. Four members of the group had their sentences quashed, and three were given lighter sentences for other offences, including the possession of false papers and firearms. Four members had originally been found not guilty of any charges against them.

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

The Flemish Culture Awards



Aalter's new cultural centre

Every year for the past five years, the Flemish government has doled out a clutch of prizes to artists and cultural organisations that are seen to be doing something interesting or worthwhile in Flanders. The latest batch of *Vlaamse Cultuurprijzen* was announced last week in deSingel cultural centre in Antwerp. As usual with these things, the winning names for 2007 included a few surprises, but the biggest shock this year was the number of prizes that went to Ghent.

No less than five out of the twelve bronze statues were grabbed by the East Flanders capital. The architect firm of Coussée

en Goris carried off the architecture prize; scout camp organisers Open Kamp pocketed the voluntary prize and the public prize; Sylvia van Peterghem of Ghent

theatre on what they find in the sewers of human existence," said Klara radio boss Chantal Pattyn, who chaired the theatre prize jury. She must have realised that the

tive renovations of old industrial buildings in East Flanders, such as the subtle restyling of Ghent's Grote Vleeshal. They may not be big names, but the jury was keen to reward the architects for their quiet craftsmanship. "They have developed an architecture that goes back to the basics of building," noted jury chairman Paul Vermeulen.

The prize for heritage went to an even more retiring figure. Librarian Sylvia Van Peteghem has "transformed the Ghent university library from a stuffy repository of books into a digital knowledge centre," said jury chairman Pierre Muylle. Her latest achievement is a joint project with internet search company Google called Open Access Project, which aims to bring her library into the 21st century.

It's encouraging to see that the *Cultuurprijzen* interpret Flemish culture in the broadest sense.

Winning designs

Ralf Coussée and Klaas Goris, who won the architecture award, designed Aalter's new cultural centre (above); Vooruit cultural centre in Ghent (below), scooped the main prize for overall cultural achievement; and cutting-edge theatre group Abattoir Fermé (right) took the drama prize in this year's award ceremony.



Vooruit cultural centre in Ghent



Cutting-edge theatre group Abattoir Fermé performs "Mythobarbital"

university library won the heritage prize and Vooruit cultural centre (profiled in *Flanders Today* on 24 October) took home the prize for overall cultural achievement.

Scooping five out of twelve awards is not bad for a medium-sized town that is generally bypassed by culture critics in favour of Brussels or Antwerp. But this was evidently the year of the small towns. The prize for drama went to Abattoir Fermé, a marginal theatre group based in the formerly sleepy town of Mechelen. "They don't take inspiration from the higher arts, but base their

decision would be controversial because she added: "Maybe some people are going to be shocked by the decision."

The shock effect is what makes this prize so interesting. The Flemish government puts up the prize money (€12,000 for each winner and €20,000 for the overall achievement prize), but the final list can include some unexpected names. So the juries this year picked out a scout group that works with excluded young people and a librarian with a low public profile, whereas internationally acclaimed figures such as sculptor Berlinde De Bruyckere and choreographer Meg Stuart got no further than the short list.

Ralf Coussée and Klaas Goris, the Ghent duo that took the architecture award, are hardly headline-grabbing architects. They mainly specialise in sensi-

There is even a prize for *smaakcultuur*, or eating culture, which this year went to the little-known Academy for Regional Gastronomy in 's-Gravenwezel. Also known as the "centre for culinary heritage," this organisation seeks to promote the local cooking traditions of Flanders through a range of creative initiatives, including themed micro-histories on topics such as millet, cider, witloof (Belgian endive), sorrel, the tomato and the strawberry. "Eating and drinking are an important part of our cultural heritage, and shouldn't be forgotten," said jury chairman Stefaan De Clerck.

Derek Blyth

online
www.cultuurprijzen.be

TALKING DUTCH
notes on language

Vijftigplussers

At various points in our lives we feel that we have suddenly aged: 30 or 65 are examples. I passed one such threshold a couple of years ago when I turned 50. And then, just as you only notice a particular car model when you buy one yourself, I started coming across references to *vijftigplussers*. I had joined a club I did not really want to be a member of and can only leave when I reach 65. Adverts for the over-50s abound showing people who have aged with such grace and no loss of good looks, people that in an earlier age only appeared in pension adverts. I even stumbled across a magazine of that name giving advice on what awaits those who pass the half century. Having a defined category of *vijftigplussers* has given researchers plenty to study. And what a range of topics they have found to investigate! Here are two typical headlines about money and work: *Vijftigplussers laten de oude Belgische frank niet los* ("Vijftigplussers won't let go of the old Belgian frank" – yes, only 5.6% of them think in new money). *Eenenzestig procent van de vijftigplussers wil liefst aan het werk blijven*. But surely most only do so because they need the money – I bet that if they won the lottery they would answer differently.

Veertigplussers never seems to crop up, yet *50plussers* has become a solid category, certainly if you read anything to do with employment. Take this headline: *Bijna heel Vlaanderen werkt* – nearly all Flanders works! The article began with the most amazing news: *In september telde Vlaanderen 20 procent werklozen minder dan een jaar geleden*. Imagine – 20% less unemployed than a year ago! Either they have changed the way of counting or Flanders is booming. This reduction has also occurred in the categories that have usually had difficulty finding work, namely the *langdurig werklozen*, *vijftigplussers en allochtonen*. So there you have the *vijftigplussers* as a category in between the long-term unemployed and foreigners.

Vijftigplussers have become a group apart. Less than half of them are in work; many benefit from a *brugpensioen*, an early retirement scheme. Of course if you have a physically-demanding job such as a physiotherapist, early retirement is a necessary option. But it has been recognised that the loss of such a wealth of experience in the workforce has to be stemmed, and *vijftigplussers* are being encouraged with various carrots and sticks to continue working. So, as more *vijftigplussers* find fulfilment on the labour market, will they fade away as a distinct category for statisticians and advertisers? Well, cracks are beginning to appear. The other day I heard about a swimming pool which had an hour set aside for *50plussers* so that they could swim without being splashed by noisy kids. This proved so popular that the age limit was abruptly raised to 55. This resulted in heart-rending scenes of barred 50-54 year olds looking on from the cafeteria as their older spouses enjoyed an even quieter pool.

Alistair MacLean

online
www.vandale.be

FEATURE

Ghent invests in the future



Aula Academia at Ghent University is ready for a makeover

Continued from page 1

The university is in the final years of a 10-year renovation plan, but they couldn't wait until 2010 to start the next 10-year phase. "So we'll have a three-year overlap," explains Van Cauwenberge, "because some of the renovation has to be done urgently."

The 190-year-old university is embarking on the most costly renovation in its history: €400 million will be spent on a number of improvements and new buildings. If they don't do it, they will start to suffer from major overcrowding problems and, notes Van Cauwenberge, "our student rate will drop again." He sees no reason for that since the university coffers are full. Having saved the yearly allotments from the economic and education ministries and received private funding, the institution is paying for most of the work itself.

One building, though, will be subsidised: the university's famous book tower. Designed by Belgian architect Henry Van den Velde in

1933, the 64-metre high tower is a protected monument and houses the university's collection of three million books. The €40-million upgrade is necessary, says Van Cauwenberge, "or we will have a disaster one of these days." In fact, there already was a small one: a few months ago, a water leak destroyed 20,000 books.

Another €50 million will go toward the renovation and extension of the Faculty of Sciences, which was built in the late 1950s. "It's difficult to renovate the building while people are still working," says Van Cauwenberge. "We plan to move everyone from one side to the other while we're doing the work." Improvements to the 100-year-old buildings that house the Faculties of Applied Science and Arts and Literature will run to a further €60,000.

The university hospital, located in the south of the city (the main university is in the centre), will also receive some much-needed work, including a complete renovation of the administrative build-

ings, as well as a new building for bioengineering at a location across town. The work is important as Ghent University is now considered number one in biotechnology in the Low Countries.

"The number of students who are choosing to pursue higher education, and particularly university education, is growing," Van Cauwenberge says. "Other universities are also seeing this growth, but not in the same percentages that we are seeing it." A poll of students showed that this was due to two major factors – location and location. It's the only university in East or West Flanders, so students who live in those areas tend to choose it over Leuven or Brussels. They also really like Ghent. "It's a lively and very modern city with good cultural activities," notes Van Cauwenberge. "It's much more than a student city."

Once students leave university, the city council is there to take care of their needs. Led by Socialist mayor Daniël Termont (Sp.a), city leaders just approved their most ambitious investment programme ever: €470 million will be spent over the next four years on everything from purifying ground water to creating jobs and from building sports halls to building a new city library. Alderman of culture, tourism and festivals Lieven Decaluwe attributes this growth spurt to the council's focus on the big picture. "One of our strengths is that we act as a group, so we can go for the really big projects," he says. "That's why you see results in Ghent."

Decaluwe's own department will see €66 million, the largest investment in culture in Ghent's history. One project on the agenda is STAM – the highly-anticipated new city museum, which should open next year. Part of the museum will be housed in the historical Bijloke Abbey, and a new building will be added in the grounds on the banks of the River Leie. They city will also help to construct a new wing for Ghent's Design Museum in the city centre and assist the internationally-known Flemish dance company Les Ballets C de la B with a new studio in Ghent.

Much of the total investment budget is earmarked for the surrounding areas beyond the city's centre. In terms of culture, Ledeberg (featured in the new Flemish film *Aanrijding in Moskou*) will see €7 million of the culture budget, some of which will fund the complete renovation of a theatre building. Decaluwe says that it's "absolutely necessary" to invest in the surrounding communities to connect them to the arts – and to each other. "Last year in Zwijnaar-

de, for example, we opened a new library, and we see that people are really using it and having meetings there and organising exhibitions," he says. "We'll do this in Ledeberg, too, and some of the other communities."

One of the city's most ambitious projects is to build a new city library and media centre near the current library on Woodrow Wilsonplein – a transport hub and home to Ghent's main shopping centre. The current glass-fronted building, which dominates the square, will become home to several municipal departments – currently gasping for space in the building next door. "It's appealing to investors when the city is dynamic and has a high level of culture," Decaluwe notes.

Not to be left out, the Belgian rail operator NMBS launched Project Gent-Sint-Pieters in 2006. This will take a further nine years and €400 million to complete, but the result will be a brand new state-of-the-art station with underground parking, improved tram and bus facilities, a block of shops and apartments and a nearby nature park. Roads are also being redirected to make the area easier to get around. The project involves several investment partners, including De Lijn and property developer Eurostation – and the city of Ghent.

"Investing in a city makes it a better place to live," asserts Decaluwe. "Last month we received no less than six culture awards from the Flemish Region. That means something. It's proof that we are doing our best."

Online
www.gent.be



NMBS is spending € 400 million for a brand new Gent-Sint-Pieters train station



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putting people first

Turkey upset at terror trial verdict



Continued from page 1

Among those given a lighter sentence was Fehriye Erdal, who is still a fugitive from justice following her escape from State Security surveillance on the eve of the original verdict against the DHKP/C in Bruges in February 2006. Her original four-year sentence was reduced to two years suspended.

None of the other DHKP/C members will return to jail, but

Erdal faces continued investigation over her alleged role in a triple murder in Turkey in January 1996, for which an international arrest warrant is still in force.

The court admitted the violent nature of the organisation in Turkey (and also in Germany), but restricted itself to acts carried out in Belgium. In particular, the prosecutor had to provide concrete evidence that the accused had taken part in or planned to take part in terrorist acts. "The

proof provided by the prosecution is hardly convincing, not to say non-existent," the ruling states.

The decision goes against the trend in judicial responses to the war on terror by refusing to make membership of a particular group a terrorist offence in itself. It also flatly contradicts the outcomes of several cases in Brussels, where Arab Islamists were convicted of terrorism by virtue of their membership of a group.

The Turkish foreign affairs

ministry issued a statement saying the court's ruling would give encouragement to terrorists and "strike a blow to the international struggle against terrorism". The interior minister here, meanwhile, said he "respected the separation of powers" and went no further in commenting on the court's ruling.

Antwerp city politician and lawyer Ergün Top, however, said the Turkish community was "shocked" and "furious" at the ruling. "It is as if Osama bin Laden were found not guilty," he said. "Like the DHKP/C, he also committed no attacks in Belgium, but everyone knows all the same that he is a terrorist."

Other representatives of the Turkish community in Belgium spoke of "surprise" and "incomprehension" at the apparent different treatment by the Belgian courts of Turkish terrorists and Muslim fundamentalist terrorists.

The strongest sentiment was to be seen in the press, with the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper headlining "Sooner a reward than a punishment for Fehriye Erdal". The liberal daily *Sabah* led with "Belgium lets terrorists go free". And the popular daily *Hürriyet* claimed "Belgium washes the DHKP/C clean".

NEWS FLASH



Flemish Culture Prize winner Vooruit puts money into scholarships

The Ghent culture centre Vooruit, which last week won a Flemish Culture Prize for "overall cultural achievement," could earmark the €20,000 prize money for bursaries for young artists. "We'd like to give the money away as fast as possible," said artistic director Luc Dewaele. "We have no concrete plans as yet, but we're clear that we would like to create two grants for artists or companies that are not receiving any support at present."

Ghent bees have buzzed off

Researchers at Ghent University have recorded the disappearance of 30% to 40% of the bees in their hives, a figure described as "worrying". Bees worldwide are suffering from a drastic fall in numbers as whole hives vanish at once. The problem is thought to be caused by a mite. The effect on agriculture could be "alarming," according to Ghent Professor Frans Jacobs. Bees play a crucial role in pollinating plants – from fruit to cotton and coffee – and are second only to beef cattle in their economic importance to the agricultural sector.

Privacy Commission warns Vlaams Belang about crime site

The Privacy Commission has warned Vlaams Belang that a website which plans to show footage of criminals caught in the act could be a breach of privacy legislation. The website was planned to come online this week but has now been delayed "for technical reasons," the party said. The proposed site will be run by the party's head of security Bart Debie, a former policeman who was last week convicted of racism and assault on prisoners.

Coast mobbed as temperatures soar

Tourists flocked to the Flemish coast last weekend as temperatures soared to record levels for this time of year. The Observatory at Ukkel in south Brussels recorded a temperature of 16.8°C on Saturday 9 February, the highest logged on this date since records began in 1833. Elsewhere in the country, thermometer readings rose to 15°C, and many people took off for the coast to bask on café terraces. But weather experts at the Royal Meteorological Institute (RMI) said that the warm weather was not exceptional for February and fell far short of the record of 21.1°C recorded at Meeuwen in Limburg province on 25 February 1991.

Belgacom ordered to open up VDSL to competition

Telecommunications operator Belgacom has been ordered to release plans before the end of the month for opening up its super-fast VDSL2 broadband internet lines to competition from other companies, according to a decision by the Belgian Institute for Post and Telegraph, the industry regulator. Belgacom denies that the technology gives it a monopoly on high-speed internet access and claims it plans to use VDSL2 lines for high-definition TV, where Telenet is a strong competitor via the cable system. The European Commission recently announced that Belgacom would be required to open up its technology to outside competition.

Antwerp plans rest home for ageing junkies

Antwerp city council is considering plans to open a rest home for ageing drug addicts and alcoholics to provide them with the care and treatment they require. "Addicts are already old at 45 or 50," explained social affairs alderwoman Monica De Coninck. "They often live on the street or in inhuman circumstances. A rest home could give them the solution they need." Addicts are not welcome in ordinary rest homes because of their particular requirements, including psychiatric help. There are as yet no concrete plans regarding financing or location, though Ms De Coninck noted that the city could not afford to proceed on its own.

Brussels Airlines protests over low-cost terminal plans



Brussels Airport plans low-cost terminal

Residents living in the municipalities surrounding Brussels Airport have joined with Brussels Airlines in protesting at plans announced last week to build a new terminal for low-cost airlines by 2009. Residents' representatives, already locked in battle over the noise nuisance created by the airport, descri-

bed the plans as "a slap in the face". The new terminal aims to process four million passengers a year.

Meanwhile Brussels Airlines, which would not be eligible to use the new terminal, complained of discrimination in pricing. Low-cost airlines Jetairfly and Ryanair said they

would not be interested in using the proposed terminal. Jetairfly argued that the turnaround was too rapid for the level of comfort they want to offer, while Ryanair claimed that Brussels would remain too expensive compared to its current hub at Charleroi.



ABC-Huis opens for art education in Brussels

A new centre offering art education for children opened last week in Brussels. Located in a former industrial laundry in Schaarbeek, close to the North Station, the centre is called the ABC house (ABC stands for Art Basics for Children). The new centre is an initiative by Austrian artist Gerhard Jäger. The Flemish region gave €1.1 million for the renovation of the building, which was gifted to the organisation. Further financial support was provided by the Fund for Cultural Infrastructure, while €206,000 in annual operating grants was provided by art education funds. The house will be open to the public on the weekend of 16 and 17 February at Gaucheretplein in Schaarbeek.

Online
www.abc-web.be

Criticism over Belgian buses in US

Passengers and drivers using public transport buses in Oakland, California, have complained about a fleet of buses supplied by Van Hool, a company based in Koningshooikt near Lier. The 236 Van Hool buses operating in Oakland have been described as "the worst buses ever" by a poll of drivers, while passengers have christened them "Van Hell" buses. The buses were chosen by Oakland city authorities for their third door and low step. But to arrive at the seating level passengers need to climb another internal step, just as the bus is moving off, leading to a sixfold increase in falls. One woman, whose injury led to amputation, is suing the public transportation authority AC Transit for \$6.1 million.

Flemish municipalities may sell land to own residents first

The Flemish government plans to allow municipalities to give priority in sales of plots of publically-owned building land to their own residents, as long as legal opinions on anti-discrimination rules permit. Municipalities in sought-after areas around Brussels, at the coast and near the Dutch border complain that the children of long-time residents can no longer find affordable land on which to build in the areas where they grew up. Local councils are considering selling off plots of land, but want to give first refusal to residents. If an acceptable formula can be found that satisfies the Council of State, the Flemish government intends to pass a regulation allowing the sales.

Minister against tougher rules on arms sales

Tougher rules on the final destinations of arms sold by Belgian manufacturers would be a threat to jobs and the national economy, Flemish economy minister Patricia Ceysens said last week. The minister was replying to calls for stricter rules on end-users following revelations that parts for military vehicles sold to Britain found their way to Saudi Arabia. Ceysens said the 2003 law governing export certificates, the toughest in the EU, was working well. But the law only requires the country of export to be specified – and not the end-user, which can often be different, and even one for which a Belgian export certificate would not have been granted. According to one report by the Flemish Peace Institute, up to 15% of arms exported from Flanders are heading for an unknown end-user.

Bruges mayor orders investigation after Jewish professor allegedly barred from restaurant

Patrick Moenaert, the mayor of Bruges, has ordered an investigation into an incident in which an American Jewish professor was allegedly barred from a Bruges restaurant because he was a Jew.

The incident happened about two weeks ago while Professor Marcel Kalmann, 64, was spending a few days in the Flemish town, according to a report published this week in the Belgian Jewish newspaper *Joods Actueel*. Kalmann went into the café-restaurant Le Panier d'Or wearing his kippah, or cap, and was apparently told by the waiter: "We don't serve Jews here, out of here."

Kalmann went to a second restaurant, where he was advised to report the incident to the police. But the police officer on duty told him that he did not believe the story and refused to file the complaint in English, according to the *Joods Actueel*. A second officer told the professor that the declaration had to be made in Dutch. Kalmann now plans to file a complaint with the Comité P, the supervising body of the Belgian police.

Patrick Moenaert immediately apologised to Kalmann for "any inappropriate behaviour that does not fit with the city council's vision of a welcoming city," according to a spokesman for the city council. The burgomaster, who takes a tough line on racism, has ordered a "full clarification" of the incident.

In an official statement, Moenaert said: "Bruges has been a cosmopolitan city for many centuries. It cannot be otherwise in the 21st century: we have to show respect for different races, faiths and nationalities."

Professor Kalmann was born in Auschwitz concentration camp just a few days before the camp was liberated by Allied troops in 1945, making him the youngest survivor of the Nazi extermination camp.



Flemish art treasures find home on the internet



Some 6,500 works from three major Flemish museums will shortly be available to view online, thanks to an agreement between the Groeningemuseum in Bruges, the Fine Arts Museum in Ghent and Royal Fine Arts Museum in Antwerp. The new site will also feature 40,000 drawings and prints, until now mostly kept in storage, and will be searchable in English. The collection includes prints and drawings by James Ensor, and more than 600 pages of notebook sketches by the sculptor George Minne. Some works, among them drawings from Antwerp, have still to be added to the site. The website also includes articles and other background information on Flemish art, covering subjects as diverse as neoclassicism in Bruges and the Italian artist Ambrosius Benson, active in the city in the 16th century. The museums hope an increase in web visitors will translate into an increase in visitors to the collections themselves.

online
www.vlaamsekunstcollectie.be

BUSINESS

EU Regions body gets Flemish boss

Van den Brande takes over the Committee of the Regions



Rory Watson

Luc Van den Brande, the former Minister-President of Flanders, has been elected President of the European Union's Committee of the Regions. A member of the Committee since it was created in 1994, Mr Van den Brande succeeds the mayor of Dunkirk, Michel Delebarre, and will preside over the advisory body for the next two years.

Setting out his political priorities, the new President emphasised the need for national and European authorities to work together to create a new partnership that would enable all levels of government to cooperate on an equal footing towards common objectives. "What we need is not a 'Europe of the Regions' but a 'Europe with the regions, towns and local authorities,'" he told the Committee's members.

In addition to the major political challenges (ranging from the need to stimulate economic growth to tackling climate change) now on the EU's agenda, Mr Van den Brande intends to give symbolic expression to the process of European integration during his term of office.

"I want to take the Committee to the places where Europe was made (Strasbourg), wounded (Dresden/Ieper) and transformed (Gdansk), to the places where Europe is being called into question (Prague) and is in demand (Croatia), to the places where Europe is in the process of renewal," he said.

A lawyer by training, Mr Van den Brande's political career began over 30 years ago when he was a member of the bureau of the young CVP before being elected to the House of Representatives in 1977. In addition to the Committee of the Regions (CoR) based in the Jacques Delors building on Brussels' Belliardstraat, he also sits in the Benelux advisory inter-parliamentary Council, the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe and the assembly of the Western European Union.

Mr Van den Brande's elevation to the CoR presidency means that two Flemish politicians will be at the head of influential regional organisations this year. Last month, Geert Bourgeois, the Flemish Minister for Foreign Affairs, took over the presidency of REGLEG, the loose network of European regions with legislative powers.

BUSINESS FLASH



InBev

InBev, the Leuven-based beer giant, is again said to be considering a merger this year with the US Anheuser-Busch brewery, producer of the mythical Bud beer. The move, which would create the world's largest beer group, has already been mooted several times. The recent takeover of Britain's Scottish and Newcastle by Heineken and Carlsberg points to a further consolidation in the beer market. The announcement that Carlos Brito, InBev's CEO, purchased a large number of his company's shares fuelled further speculation.

Tiffany

The famous New-York-based jewellery store Tiffany's is to open a store on Waterloolaan in Brussels in the spring.

Alcopa

Alcopa, the Kontich-based distributor with activities ranging from car distribution to second-hand office furniture, is to take over the French Brevindex furniture distribution company. The move will strengthen Alcopa's activities in the sector with activities in 12 European countries including Russia.

Port of Brussels

The Port of Brussels increased its traffic by 3% overall in 2007. Container traffic, however, surged some 42%.

Dexia

Dexia, the Belgian financial institution that specialises in the financing of local authorities, is investing \$500 million in its US FSA affiliate to shore up its balance sheet. The aim is to protect the US-based company from the effects of the sub-prime mortgage crisis and allow it to seize potential market opportunities.

Car sales

Sales of new cars rose by 2% in January this year compared to the same period in 2007, bucking the average European trend. Market analysts expect further increases in February and March as the favourable effects of the Brussels car show result in new registrations.

Babcock

Babcock, the Australian investment group, is to build a new container terminal in the Port of Ghent in partnership with the Finnish Container Finance company. The new facility, to be inaugurated later this year, will have a capacity to handle some 150,000 containers by the end of 2013.

LWWK

Liedekerke, Wolters, Waelbroeck and Kirkpatrick, a leading Brussels law firm, is to open a practice in London, the first of its kind for a Belgian firm.

Brussels Airlines

Brussels Airlines, which increased the number of its passengers by 2% last year, plans to join one of the large airline alliances Oneworld, Star Alliance or Skyteam before the summer.



CLOSING SHOP

Bloch bakes its last bun

After 110 years, a Ghent landmark can no longer afford to stay open

Lisa Bradshaw

Citing high taxes and labour costs, Patisserie Bloch, a landmark in Ghent's main shopping street, the Veldstraat, will close next month after 110 years in the same location. "Quality isn't manageable anymore," says François Bloch, who runs the business with his father. "The only way you can be financially healthy today is to be automated, and then you don't have the same quality."

François' great-grandparents opened the shop in 1898, together with bakeries in Charleroi and Brussels. After a turbulent history, the others have gone, but the one in Ghent is still going strong. Long queues stretch out the door on busy weekends, and all the tables are full in the bustling café-style bakery. Veldstraat shoppers mingle with older regulars who meet there to sip coffee and ponder a lengthy menu of sweet and savoury specialities.

The bakery's Jewish founders came from Alsace, which was then part of Germany, and introduced Belgians to different varieties of breads and pastries. The business was originally known as Boulangerie Viennoise but, after the First World War, changed its name to Patisserie Alsacienne for political

reasons. Eventually, the son of the founders (François' grandfather) was running the shop, but he fled to New York during the Second World War. His mother, who had jointly founded the shop many years earlier, refused to leave, staying in Ghent to run it. She was eventually deported and died in a concentration camp.

Later on, François' grandfather came back to Ghent and was able to reopen the business. It eventually passed to François' father, and François himself has been helping to run it since the 1970s. Because of its longevity and history, it's considered a veritable heritage site for many *Gentenaars*. But now "there is more money going out than coming in," says Bloch. "We have fought for 30 years, and every year it becomes more expensive. We are subject to the same laws as large factories, but we don't work the same way. When one of my people works one hour, it costs me more than it would cost a big business. The European Union is not helping small companies – on the contrary. It's the end of small businesses."

Bloch contends that most profitable bakeries have been forced to cut corners – using mixes or buying their bread "half baked" from a factory and just finishing the baking on their premises. He refuses to sacrifice Bloch's quality in that way. "The only way to make money is to close your small business and open a factory and make everything with machines. Then you sell your poor quality in a very nice package."

Patisserie Bloch will remain open until 29 March at 60 Veldstraat in Ghent.

Online

<http://members.lycos.nl/bloch>



"The end of a small business": the Bloch family must give up its café bakery, which spans three centuries

MINDING MY OWN BUSINESS

Fashion model for a day

How Karen Devriese can turn you into a star



Dressed to kill: journalist Stéphanie Duval becomes a model for a day

After more than seven years working for an employer, Karen Devriese finally got fed up with endless traffic jams, nine-to-five office hours and problems organising holidays. So she took a sabbatical from her job at IKEA, and started working on her own as a portrait photographer.

Stéphanie Duval

“Even as a child, I’ve always been fascinated with beautiful images,” says Karen Devriese. “I have scrapbooks full of pictures I used to cut out of magazines.”

Devriese now runs Fotokado.be, a highly original photogra-

phy business which allows people to order online gift certificates for different kinds of photo shoots. They can give them to a friend, a loved one – or even to themselves.

Devriese’s studio is located in her home village of Denderhoutem, East Flanders. It’s a cosy work space where she works alongside a make-up artist to turn a photo shoot in an unforgettable experience.

She chose not to study photography and opted instead for graphic design and digital media. “I didn’t really care for the traditional methods of photography, and I wanted to have a strong background in digital photography. Afterwards, I took up a course to learn specific tricks, but most of it I taught myself.”

Devriese started shooting models’ portfolios for agencies like Dominique Models and New Models. Some of her friends began to ask her whether she could photograph them as well. She arranged some small-scale photo shoots with inexperienced young models and immediately received positive reactions. “It was incredibly satisfying for me,” she says. “Mothers sent their daughters because they wanted them to know how proud they were of them. Other girls got back to me after the shoot to tell me that they were now full of confidence, whereas before they were timid and insecure. It was heart-warming. I just had to do

something with it.”

Devriese noticed that most people were interested in her photo shoots as a gift to someone else. This gave her the idea of offering different kinds of gift certificates. “I discussed the idea with some make-up artists I knew and we came up with four different certificates: “Model for a Day,” “Before and After,” “Fashion Restyling” and “Babies and Kids.”

She then designed a website where she could offer the certificates, and coined the name Fotokado.be. After seven years as an employee, Devriese finally decided to set up her own business. “I now put in many more hours than before, but being able to work the hours I like is a luxury I wouldn’t want to lose.”

The success of Fotokado.be is thanks in part to the Internet. “I don’t have a shop, so I rely on my website to inform potential customers. So far, this arrangement has worked perfectly. Lots of people have posted the pictures that I took of them on websites like MySpace or Facebook, which helps to spread the message. I get phone calls all the time from people who have seen those pictures and want something similar for themselves.”

online

www.Fotokado.be



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Poetic licence

City poets are in fashion – but what do they have to say about urban life in Flanders?



Write on poet: Willie Verheghe of Ninove

Monique Philips & Lisa Bradshaw

Does Antwerp have something against itself? Joke van Leeuwen is its fourth *stadsdichter*, or city poet – and the fourth who has not actually come from the city. Still, Antwerp knows a good writer when it sees one: the freshly-inaugurated van Leeuwen follows in the footsteps of three of Flanders' best writers: Tom Lanoye, Ramsey Nasr and, most recently, author and poet Bart Moeyaert.

Though city poets are popular in both the Netherlands and Flanders (Diest and Ninove also have one, and Brussels has four), it's actually a new phenomenon. In Flanders, Lanoye was the first ever, appointed in January 2003. "Antwerp

was first and is quite unique in its concept of city poets," notes van Leeuwen. "Everyone is free to fulfil the task as they please, unlike little towns in the Netherlands where the city poet has to turn up at every occasion."

It's Diest, though, in Flemish Brabant, that takes the honour as the first Flemish city to appoint a female poet: Ina Stabergh will serve her two-year term until September. Ninove's Willie Verheghe, meanwhile, was appointed for two years in 2004 but continues in the function to this day in the East Flanders city. Ghent currently doesn't have a city poet – opting instead for a city composer – but they have had two in the past. Erwin Mortier, who served from 2005 to 2007, immortalized the city's architectural heritage in a poetical series.

Brussels' city poets reflect the multicultural make-up of the capital: Geert van Istendael is a Dutch speaker, Laurence Vielle and Manza are French-speakers, and Djavière Keipo comes from Galicia in the north-west corner of Spain.

Antwerp's city poets, then, reflect the fashionable port city's appeal to outsiders. Its first poet, Lanoye, was a superb choice. Born in Sint-Niklaas 50 years ago, he is Flanders' most prolific and popular writer – a one-person firm producing columns, novels and highly-acclaimed plays. His 12-hour adaptation of eight historical Shakespeare plays in verse, for which he won the innovation prize at the Berlin Theatre Festival in 2000, immediately put him on the

international map. Lanoye's work – and his frequent live performances and TV appearances – provide the perfect mix of intellectualism and popular appeal.

Lanoye has left his stamp on his chosen city in many ways: he and his Dutch partner were the first gay couple to sign Antwerp's *samenlevingscontract*, or civil partnership contract, and no one in Antwerp has forgotten one of his (many) dramatic gestures: a big banner on the city's Boerentoren in which the tower declared its love for its neighbour, the cathedral. (The answer was finally declared through huge loudspeakers in the voice of local singer La Esterella in broad Antwerp and humbly received.)

Lanoye's successor was the 30-something Ramsey Nasr – half Dutch, half Palestinian, and totally charming, riding his bike through the city. An actor, director, journalist and poet, he's well-loved in Flanders and the Netherlands (despite claiming that the only element that unites Dutch culture is hysteria). Nasr's eloquent essay on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was ill-received by some but didn't stop him from winning the Netherlands' Journalist of Peace prize in 2006. His performance at the annual open-door literary event *ZuiderZinnen*: Festival of the Word in 2005 left everybody first speechless and then wildly enthusiastic. You can still read Nasr's poem "A Minimum" on the wall of Antwerp's OCMW building on Mechelseplein, denouncing the poverty of living on a minimum income.

Then Antwerp chose Bart Moeyaert, born in 1964 West Flanders. The multiple-prizewinning novelist, playwright and poet was the seventh son born to his parents, which, according to Belgian tradition, made the former King

Boudewijn his godfather. (He also sports "Boudewijn" as his second name.) Like Lanoye before him, he won the prestigious Gouden Uil award for Dutch literature. For his city poem "Lighthouse" the Boerentoren was turned into a beacon of light with searchlight beams sweeping across the city. He also wrote the poem "Woman and Child" following the shocking 2006 Antwerp killing of a toddler and nanny by a young racist. This spring, Moeyaert's poem "Lokomotief" will be displayed on one of the new majestic platforms of Antwerp's Central Station.

And now it's Joke van Leeuwen's turn as the city's first female laureate. "It's about time," she says, pointing out the danger in calling someone "poetess". "The tendency is to not take them seriously, to regard their poetry as the 'home and garden' variety," she says. "That's why I insist on being called *stadsdichter* and not *stadsdichteres*."

The Dutch-born van Leeuwen, 55, moved to Belgium as a teenager. She started her career as an illustrator and writer of children's books, and her work has been translated into a myriad of languages, from Japanese to English. Now also a novelist and stage performer, she has received several top literary awards (the Gouden Uil, the Gouden Penseel and the Zilveren Griffel) which have paved her way to being one of Flanders' and the Netherlands' best-loved authors.

Van Leeuwen has already produced her first city poem. Called: "Hoe is 't?" ("How's it going?"), it will be projected until 15 February on the corner of Sint-Jacobsstraat and Kipdorp. The conclusion for Antwerp: it may not give birth to Flanders' greatest literary talents – but it knows how to find, keep and nurture them.

Interview

Joke van Leeuwen became Antwerp's new city poet on Poetry Day, 31 January. She'll produce 12 poems in her two-year term – in some surprising places.

Monique Philips: What was your reaction when you were chosen to be Antwerp's city poet?

Joke van Leeuwen: I was delighted that they had thought of me. It felt like a little hug from the city. And I'm up for the challenge.

Do you know why the commission elected you?

For my international charisma and something else positive. I'm sure it was positive. [laughs]

Speaking of positive, are you required to write nice things about Antwerp?

Oh no, I'm totally free. The only thing that they ask is a minimum of six poems a year for two years. In reality, of course, you do much more, and you're always on the lookout for new ways in which to present the poetry. My first poem, for example, won't be published in the newspaper. It's a moving poem projected on a wall outside at night. You can see something move and stop to watch it. It's projected in a loop. We have offered the projection to districts further afield so that those who live further from the centre can have the poem, too.

Your poetry has the reputation of being deceptively accessible.

True, it usually means more than it says. When you're a city poet, you're often writing for an audience that doesn't normally read poetry, so the threshold can't be too high, either. But writing clear-

ly and writing unequivocally are two different things."

You're equally known for your illustrations of children's books. Can we expect some drawings as well in Antwerp?

For the time being, my plans have a different shape. But never say never. This first poem was produced in collaboration with motion designer Bob Takes, and I think that we'll explore other means that modern electronics have to offer. But let's wait and see. It also has to remain a bit of a surprise.

You were born in Den Haag, in the Netherlands, but you don't feel Dutch, right?

I don't believe you have to be born somewhere to feel connected to that place. I've been living in Flanders for 40 years. Having spent half my childhood in the

Netherlands and the other half in Brussels and Antwerp, I was influenced by two cultures, and that makes me a rather interesting hybrid.

Do you admire other Dutch-language artists?

I immediately turn into a 50-year-old woman who forgets names. I appreciate certain writers. And I prefer carefully-written sentences that surprise me rather than long epic stories. "Extensively chewed on sentences" is what I call them somewhere.

Now that you've been in the media, the chances are that you'll be recognised in the street.

Do you think so? I'll take that into account and make sure I've brushed my hair.

How does it feel to follow in the footsteps of three such



Joke van Leeuwen

famous city poets as Antwerp has had?

I like their footsteps, and I'll try to make mine beautiful, too.

Online

www.jokevanleeuwen.com

EXHIBITION

The second sex

Flemish artist finds life, death and mystery in the shape of a woman

One show, one woman: Rik Vermeersch's *De Journaals* focuses on a single model (left); movements of life and death in sculpture (right)

Lisa Bradshaw

To mark Rik Vermeersch's 50th year, his city of birth hosted an exhibition of his work titled *Rik Vermeersch 50 Years: a Promenade*. It was well put. Experiencing such a diversity of sculptures, drawings and paintings of landscapes, still lifes, portraits and nudes is like taking a stroll through half a century of Flemish life.

Born in Kortrijk in 1949, Vermeersch will say that all his work has a singular line running through it: "I always work with reality. Even my first works from when I was 17 were a reaction to what I saw around me – which for me was aesthetic. I wanted to show the real aspects of everyday life, what I saw in the streets."

Still living in Kortrijk, Vermeersch exhibits his work in Flanders, the Netherlands and occasionally other countries, including Switzerland and Russia. His carefully protracted paintings of average people, always posed, are occasionally playful, occasion-

ally melancholy. He flirted with abstraction in the early 1990s to bold effect – squares of colour seemingly slide around the canvas, calling into question notions of identity.

Also in the 1990s, Vermeersch fine tuned a visually-impressive technique he started playing with 30 years earlier – paintings that look as if they were produced through digital imaging. He paints nudes in a series of squares, like a rough dot matrix. "I started with this in the late 1960s, and I didn't know what a computer was," he remarks. "I was on the same road – but on the side of art."

Vermeersch won the Louis Paul Boonprijs in 2003, given yearly to a Flemish artist who in his or her work exhibits "a bond with the people". During the awards ceremony, the public was first shown the work that has been capturing Vermeersch's attention for years before and since: an ongoing series of sculptures of nude women. A striking group of sculptures made

their public debut two years later for a show at Sint-Pieters Abbey in Ghent. The works are most often done in red or blue plaster, but they are sometimes a more natural colour. And though his paintings and drawings of female nudes – a constant in his ongoing work – are realistic, the sculptures slip into the surreal. Something is always out of proportion, drooping too far from where it belongs.

"It's two movements – the movement of life and of death," explains Vermeersch. "Something that is at the same time rising like a flower and falling like leaves in the autumn." Disproportion is more honest, he claims. "It's the relativity of the body. The body isn't only beauty."

Vermeersch's new show, *De Journaals*, which begins on 23 February in Kuurne, West Flanders, exemplifies the artist's urge to focus on one subject, in an apparent attempt to exhaust all possibilities. The exhibition of 50 drawings and paintings, both portraits and

nudes, are all of one model. Two years ago, he based a show around this same model. "She inspires me," he admits. He has also based an entire exhibition on another model. "I like to work on a series with one theme," he explains. "I don't like to do something different every day. I want to work on a whole theme and take it to the end."

Vermeersch is equally at home with oils and acrylics as he is with ink and pencil. His sculptures might be plaster, bronze or ceramic. Some of his tabletop sculptures, in fact, recall the work of his father, José Vermeersch, often regarded as Belgium's best post-war sculptor – squat, open-mouthed figures letting forth a kind of silent scream.

But those are strikingly different from the female nude that keeps returning and makes up most of Vermeersch's recent work. "The human form is the most important subject for me," he says, "and it's my nature to work with the other

sex. A woman is more of a mystery to me because she is the other side of humanity."

The pieces in the show are mostly the model, Alex Coppens (also an artist from West Flanders) in a variety of poses – mostly playful and often portraying exhibitionism. The most arresting, though, finds her looking uncomfortable, standing with her back to the artist, who is taking her photo. It draws attention to the voyeurism inherent in Vermeersch's work – and in the viewer. "I think that women are more complex than men," says Vermeersch. "Her reality is less rational, and she is a greater survivor."

De Journaals, 23 February-16 March, Galerie Jos Depypere, Kerkstraat 59, Kuurne, www.galerijdepypere.be

Online
www.rikvermeersch.be

FILM FREAK

Ciné Privé

It may seem like we're talking a lot about Ghent in this issue, but the city is so bursting with fresh ideas it's hard to ignore. Take Cultuurcentrum, the city's year-old effort to provide a platform for young artists and to bring communities together. This month it presents Ciné Privé, an intriguing series of film evenings in people's homes that fulfils both aims.

On 10 different nights, a private home in the city or in one of its suburbs will host a screening of shorts and video projects by lesser-known Flemish filmmakers. Some of the hosts are related to Ghent's arts scene, but some are "just families with kids," says Cultuurcentrum's Klaartje Van der Bauwhede. One (or more) of the filmmakers is always present, and residents have collaborated with them to arrange live performances or exhibitions alongside the movies.

On February 14, the festival's opening night, you'll see five shorts, including the award-winning *My Bonnie* by Nele Meirhaeghe. You are also given the opportunity to see the Oscar-nominated *Tanghi Argentinini*. Meirhaeghe will be present, as will two other filmmakers. Dries Phlypo, who did line production work on *Man zkt vrouw* and *Aanrijding in Moskou* will also stop by.

Lieven Debrauwer, director of *Confituur* and *Pauline and Paulette*, has dusted off his collection of shorts and will present them on 16 February, including the one he made when he was only 15 (a highly recommended evening). Another good bet for the slightly younger, punkier crowd is on 24 February with experimental filmmaker Tom Myny (aka Crimson Stardust), which includes a live performance by the band White Dogs and Black Cats.



Celebrating young artists: discover the work of Crimson Stardust from the comfort of someone else's home

Every screening is accompanied by an interactive video installation by Peter Monsaert called "Instant Romance", in which you may – or may decidedly not – find your dream date. Just in time for Valentine's.

Lisa Bradshaw

online
www.gent.be/cultuurcentrum

FESTIVAL

Hungarian Rhapsody – LOW Festival opens in Budapest

500 artists from Flanders and the Netherlands

Derek Blyth

The streets of Budapest are plastered with bright posters announcing the month-long LOW Festival, a new Dutch-Flemish arts festival that aims to bring the culture of the Low Countries to some 20 theatres and concert halls in Budapest and Pécs (European capital of Culture in 2010).

The festival is a joint project launched by the Dutch embassy in Budapest and the Flemish Representation in the Hungarian capital. The programme features about 500 artists in 120 different performances, ranging from jazz to fine art and from pop to film.

"We invited a team of Hungarian curators to choose the programme," explains Zsuzsanna Lénárt, an assistant in the Flemish Representation in Budapest. "We're hoping that the festival marks the first step in a long-

term project bringing together Flemish, Dutch and Hungarian artists."

On the Flemish side of the festival are some familiar figures such as artist Wim Delvoye, Paul Van Nevel's Huelgas Ensemble, jazz band The Flat Earth Society and dramatist Benjamin Verdonck. Also on the programme is an intriguing exhibition charting the story of some 50,000 starving Hungarian children adopted temporarily by Dutch and Flemish families after World War One.

The festival opens this Friday (15 February) and runs until 12 March. An information centre in the Merlin Theatre is open throughout the festival.

Online
www.lowfestival.hu



Benjamin Verdonck's unique vision on stage in Budapest

Dutch for beginners

A Flemish theatre group stages plays for Dutch-language learners

Shakespeare in easy Dutch: *Romeo & Juliet*

Steven Tate

Getting a grip on Dutch is difficult for many non-native speakers, and practicing the language is especially challenging for Anglophones, as Dutch-speakers are often fluent in English. For the past seven years, Fast Forward has taken an innovative approach to helping non-natives learn Dutch: the magic of live theatre.

Peter Schoenaerts founded the company Fast Forward in 2001. The actor was – and still is – a teacher of Dutch as a foreign language. But he finds the classroom limiting in inspiring students to learn Dutch. This month, the company premieres its adaptation of Annie MG

Schmidt's *En ik dan?* across Flanders, a comedy sure to get audiences laughing – and learning.

Most Dutch-speakers acquire English at an early age by watching American and British TV programmes. Unlike France, Germany and other European countries, the Flemish and Dutch subtitle rather than dub foreign programmes. This means that viewers in the Netherlands and Flanders become accustomed to hearing English (and other languages) while being entertained.

Through Fast Forward, Schoenaerts decided to combine entertainment with education by staging plays in easy-to-understand Dutch

throughout Belgium, the Netherlands and even the United States. He also provides study lessons to Dutch classes so that teachers can go over the story a bit before students see the play. The performances are open to the public – and the audience runs the gamut of Dutch learners, from diplomats to refugees – but entire Dutch classes often attend as a group. Sponsorship for the company's work has come from organisations such as the Flemish socio-cultural centre De Rand, the Catholic University of Leuven, the Nederlandse Taalunie (Dutch Language Union) and the Instituut voor Levende Talen (Institute for Living Languages).

Schoenaerts, who lives in Limburg province, authored the first two plays that the company performed, but churning out an original work every year proved difficult. "There is only so much I could create using basic Dutch," he says. "From then on, I decided to adapt other works, making the original texts easier to understand by working with the 2,000 most-used Dutch words and using visuals to help communicate to the audience when they might not completely comprehend what is being said."

Audiences have a penchant for comedies, but Schoenaerts and company go where inspiration takes them, and the Dutch learners always follow – whether it be

an existential drama like *Zomer-dag* by Polish playwright Slawomir Mrozek or a revamped version of Shakespeare. Retaining the poetry and complexity of the Bard while making the language accessible to new Dutch speakers was a challenge, but Schoenaerts has proof that he succeeded.

"With *Romeo & Julia*, we toured universities in the US with audiences filled with students learning Dutch," he remembers. "One day a group of people wandered into a performance by accident; they were actually looking for another theatre. They stayed and watched the play and were crying by the end – even though they didn't understand a word."

Fast Forward chose to perform *En ik dan?* this year because of the playwright's humorous approach to language and situations. "Annie MG Schmidt is a renowned author – many Dutch and Flemish people know her, especially for her children's books," Schoenaerts says. "Her writing works on several levels: children understand it, but there are subtexts that are more sophisticated." *En ik dan?* is a comedy of errors in which an embezzlement of €100,000 leads to a mother trying to cover up for a son's fraud. "The play is 40 years old, but its message still rings true today," says Schoenaerts. Still, there was work to be done to make it digestible for modern audiences whose Dutch is wobbly. "The original play runs

three hours," he says. "We've cut it down to an hour and a half."

Sien Diels, a legend in Dutch and Flemish television, plays a part in *En ik dan?* She is known to generations of Dutch-speaking children for her long-running performance on *Sesamstraat*, the Dutch version of *Sesame Street*. When Fast Forward invited her to join the production, she signed on immediately. The stage-trained actress had spent the bulk of the last 40 years on television, and "she welcomed the chance to inspire, as well as entertain. Entertaining is great, but there is something added when you are bringing something new to an audience." Other television veterans like Bob Selderslaghs (*Kinderen van Dewindt*, *Flikken*) and Gerd Ley (*Katarakt*) are also involved in the production, as well as Schoenaerts, who takes to the stage under the direction of Selderslaghs.

On television, even Flemish programmes are often subtitled – such are the differences between dialects in this country. But Fast Forward doesn't have trouble with that. "We make sure that actors articulate clearly and speak loudly enough for the audience to hear," he explains. "And the Dutch used is ABN: Algemeen Nederlands," or Standard Dutch.

Online
www.fast-forward.be

TOURS

Brave new walks

Get on your walking shoes – we’ve found a few tours of Flemish cities that are far from ordinary



These boots are made for sewers: pick a pair and set off into the underworld

Lisa Bradshaw and Monique Philips

Known for their, shall we say, fondness for themselves, the citizens of Antwerp only have one ideal daytrip: their own city centre. This civic pride is totally justified: the city offers a multitude of reasons for visiting it, but the best way is to take one of the guided tours that don’t just show you the pretty cathedrals and fashion hubs, but the city quarters that the tourists don’t see. Antwerp doesn’t mind showing its underbelly, but it goes a step further and literally boasts about it. There’s something to be said for that.

Probably the best “alternative” Antwerp tour – though not for the squeamish – is the sewer system. The city used to have canals, like Bruges, that allowed little boats

to tie up inside the town. Street names that end with *-rui* and *-vliet*, like Falconrui or Brouwersvliet, are reminders of these former ports that cut into the waterfront. By the 19th century, the quayside was straightened and the canals vaulted over to allow bigger ships to moor and create room for public squares.

That put an end to the infamous “Antwerp smell” that came from what had become open sewers. In 2002 the hidden *ruien* were reopened to the public. You can put on Wellington boots (which are provided) and take a guided tour through the dripping tunnels. You will wade through rainwater and mud for 1.6 kilometres, visiting the various former sluices, bridges and collectors. The biggest underground space is called the *Ruien-kathedraal* and is located below

Sint-Paulus square. The temperature is a permanent 13°C, which is ideal for spiders and, er, rats.

The tour costs €18 for adults and is given in Dutch (though some guides will speak English if you ask). Walks can be cancelled for safety reasons – such as heavy rainfall flooding the sewers. The sewer walk isn’t suitable for children under 12, and don’t even think about taking any photos.

Meanwhile, above ground, Antwerpen Averechts (Antwerp Inside Out) started off in the 1980s as a highly critical civic group that wanted to show what kind of impact urban development was having in certain lesser-known areas of the city: the red light district of Schipperskwartier, the “parish of the poor” of Sint-Andries and the old Napoleonic port of ‘t Eilandje. The tours are still a great success;

one of 60 guides can show you every known and unknown street and blind alley in town and tell you all about the social and architectural history. Other “insight” visits introduce you to the Jewish, Moroccan and Turkish communities, while bus tours explore the extensive modern port, including the remaining church steeples of lost villages, dwarfed by piles of containers.

Ever fancied an all-night cycle ride? Then Averechts has the tour for you. From 1 am to 9 am, you can witness some of the activities that keep Antwerp turning while most people are asleep in their beds. This 20-kilometre tour takes you to the hectic vegetable and fruit *vroegmarkt* (midnight to 4.00) then on to a quick stop at the Fish Market and a glimpse of the night shift at Radio 2. Smell and taste a bakery at work, while watching the Jewish kids cross the nearly empty streets on their way to their first classes. Meanwhile, in “het Kot” in Antwerp’s north, stocky dockworkers patiently wait to receive their daily assignments. It’s a fast game of offer and demand, unique in the world. There’s a lot at stake: “It’s more fun driving fancy cars out of a ship all day than hauling heavy cargo,” one of them tells me.

If you’re looking for something a little lighter (and less expensive), “Nibbling through Ghent” will guide you through the centre and its many gastronomic shops, letting you sample a few regional delicacies. This is similar to Tasty Brussels, but Vizit also offers a Yummy Brussels, which includes a meal and a beer, and Appetizing Brussels which is an intriguing outing to cafes that serve special *apéritifs*.

Far be it from us to suggest “teambuilding”, but if you and your colleagues or a bunch of friends want to get to know a city better, CityTracks is a right-on way to do so. Each group gets a GPS receiver and a smart phone, and you’re then given instructions in a race fraught with tasks, challenges – and a saboteur trying to shut down your phone. The GPS



The early-morning fish market awaits

Or perhaps you are, like your correspondent, more inclined to want to eat sumptuous Flemish food than ride around on a bike in the dead of night. In that case, you don’t have to travel far. The tour company Vizit offers its Walking Dinners in several cities across Flanders. You’ll travel with a guide around the city centre (in Brussels, there is also a Walking Dinner in the Marollen) and learn about some of the sights before diving into a restaurant for the first of your four courses. You carry on to three more eateries, continuing to learn about the city as you go. The guides keep it light. You won’t hear any history lessons, but you will hear little anecdotal stories about the area that you might actually remember.

The Walking Dinners take place in Ostend, Kortrijk, Ghent, Aalst, Antwerp, Brussels – and soon Leuven. But beware – you need to form a group of 10 people, except in Ghent or Brussels where you can reserve any number for the regular Saturday night Walking Dinner.

will tell you how to avoid him and how to get to the many landmarks where you will have to answer questions via your phone. “You’ve reached St Paul’s Church. What’s the name of the famous architect who built this church?” (It’s multiple-choice, fortunately.)

Online

Antwerp Sewer Tour

03.232.01.03
toerisme@stad.antwerpen.be

Antwerpen Averechts

03.260.39.39
www.antwerpenaverechts.be

Walking Dinners

09.234.17.28
www.vizit.be

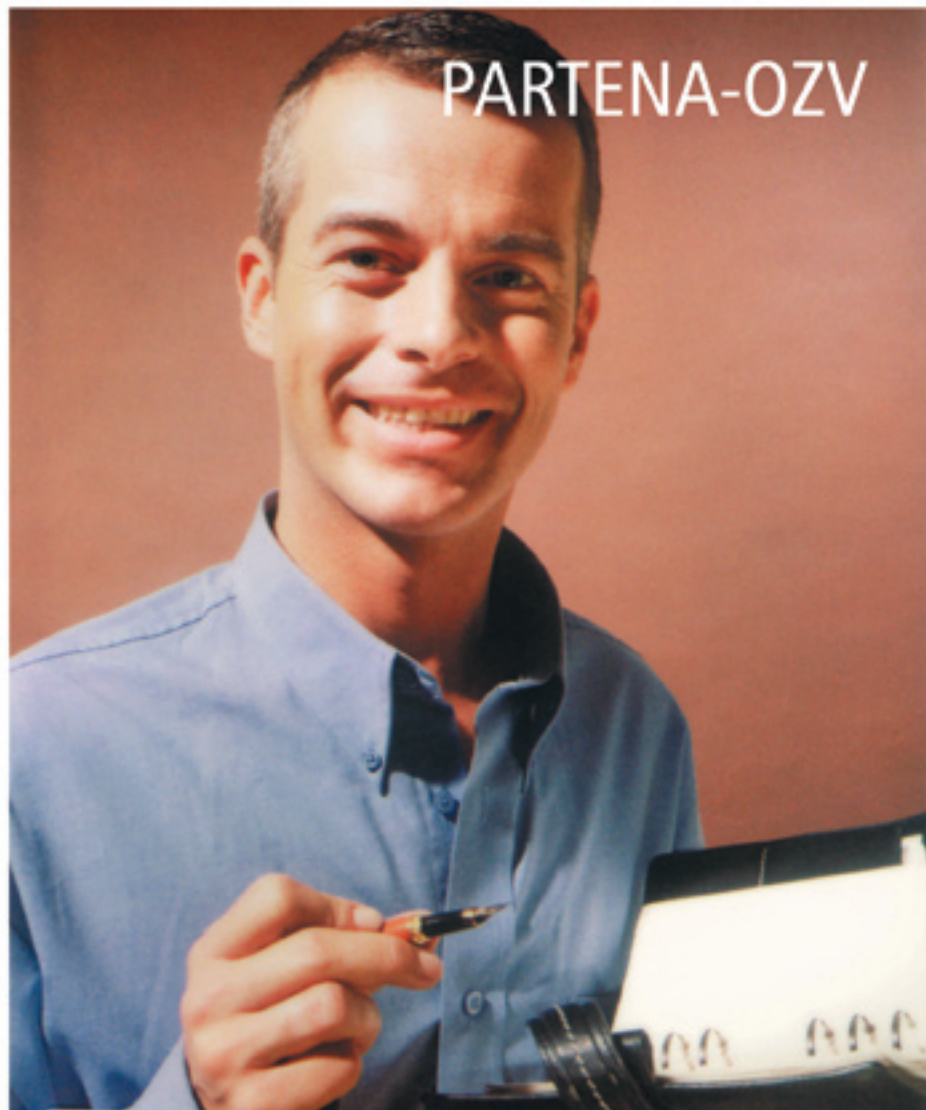
City Tracks

Ostend, Ghent or Bruges:
www.eventmosaic.be

Antwerp:
www.kellyevents.be



Tunnel vision: explore the sewers of Antwerp on one of the city’s many unconventional tours



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Ghent University and Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

Classical & new music

Brussels

Astoria Hôtel
Koningstraat 103; 0900.28.877
FEB 17 11.00 Jean Dube, piano: Bizet, Chopin, Sibelius, Liszt, Ravel

Bozar (Paleis voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
FEB 14 20.00 deFilharmonie, conducted by Jaap Van Zweden, with Mikhail Rudy, piano; Joris Van den Brande, actor: Martinu's The Frescoes of Piero della Francesca, Bartok's Concerto No 3, Berlioz' Symphony fantastique op 14
FEB 15 20.00 Lille National Orchestra Ensemble, conducted by Roberto Minczuk, with Karen Gomyo, violin: Barber, Adams, Schumann
FEB 17 11.00 Katia Veekmans, piano: Chopin, Rachmaninov, Prokofiev. 15.00 Belgian National Orchestra, conducted by James Gaffigan, with Marie Hallynck, cello: Ravel, Lutoslawski, Prokofiev
FEB 18 20.00 Orchestre des Champs Elysees, conducted by Philippe Herreweghe, with Christian Gerhaher, baritone: Mahler's Ruckertlieder, Bruckner's Symphony No 5
FEB 19 20.00 Maurizio Pollini, piano: Bach's Das Wohltemperierte Klavier, Buch I

Espace Senghor
Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40, www.senghor.be
FEB 15 20.30 Tribute to Olivier Messiaen with the Aton Ensemble: Messiaen's Quatuor pour la fin du temps and Vingt regards sur l'enfant Jesus

Schaerbeek Hotel Communal
Colignonplein; 02.240.34.99
FEB 17 16.00 Tribute concert to Puccini: opera duets and the third act of La Boheme

Kapel van de Miniemen
Miniemenstraat 62; 02.507.82.00, www.minimes.net
FEB 17 20.00 Pierre Robert Ensemble with Frederic Desenclos, conductor and organ: Charpentier, Clerambault

Maison Pelgrims
Parmastraat 69; 02.534.54.27
FEB 15 20.00 Obbrussel Trio with Prosperus string quartet and Dirk Van Gorp, double bass: Debussy, Jongen, Kuppens, Walter-Kune, Lenaerts

Musee Van Buuren
Erreralaan 41; 02.343.48.51
FEB 18 20.15 Betty Bruylants, harpsichord; Eveline Legrand, narrator: harpsichord and poetry recital

Royal Museum of Fine Arts
Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11
FEB 13 12.40-13.30 Baudoin Giaux, flute; Therese-Marie Gilissen, viola; Annie Lavoisier, harp: Bax, Marais, Donizetti, Debussy
FEB 20 12.40-13.30 Hans Ryckelynck, piano: Bach, Busoni, Jongen, Chopin

Royal Music Conservatory
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.507.82.00
FEB 13 20.00 La Divina Armonia, conducted by Lorenzo Ghielmi: Handel, Boyce, Geminiani
FEB 16 20.00 Paul Lewis, piano: Mozart, Ligeti, Schubert
FEB 18 20.00 Charlemagne Orchestra, conducted by Bartholomeus-Henri Van de Velde: Bach, Rodrigo, Diemecke, Mendelssohn

Sint-Marcuskerk
de Frélaan 72; 02.331.37.14, www.32sonates.be
FEB 15 20.00 Olivier De Spiegeleir, piano: Beethoven's sonatas No 1, 23, 12, 31

Antwerp
Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28
FEB 17 15.00 Dialogos conducted by Katarina Livljanic: French and English polyphony from around the year 1000

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
FEB 13 20.00 Nederlandse Bach vereniging Orchestra and Choir, conducted by Jos van Veldhoven: Bach's St John Passion BWV 245
FEB 15 20.00 Paul Lewis, piano: Mozart, Ligeti, Schubert
FEB 16 20.00 Film concert: Metropolis by Fritz Lang (German 1927) with

Musik Fabrik, conducted by Martin Matalon. 20.00 Rascher Saxophone Quartet and Rias Kammerchor, conducted by Paul Hillier: Kancheli, Gesualdo/Stravinsky, Franke, Gerhard

Queen Elisabeth Hall
Koningin Astridplein 26; 0900.26.060
FEB 14 20.00 Belgian National Orchestra conducted by James Gaffigan with Marie Hallynck, cello: Ravel, Lutoslawski, Prokofiev

Bruges
Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
FEB 19 20.00 Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen, conducted by Etienne Siebens, with Emily Beynon, flute: Grieg's Peer Gynt Suite No 1 op 46, Nielsen's concerto for flute, Sibelius' Symphony No 2 op 43 (tickets from 050.84.05.87)

Ghent
De Bijloke
Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2, 09.269.92.92
FEB 21 20.00 Vlaams Radio Orkest, conducted by Stefan Asbury: Bartók, Ligeti

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01
FEB 15 20.00 Ebene Quartet: Mozart, Bartók, Schubert

Ostend
Ostend Kursaal (Casino)
Monacoplein; 070.22.56.00, www.sherpa.be
FEB 14 20.00 Valentine concert: Jose Van Dam, bass-baritone and Orkest der Lage Landen, conducted by Walter Proost: opera arias by Rossini, Mozart, Verdi, Puccini

Opera

Brussels
De Munt
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39
Until MAR 9 La Monnaie Symphony Orchestra & Choirs in Wozzeck by Alban Berg, conducted by Mark Wigglesworth, with Dietrich Henschel/ Werner Van Mechelen, bass-baritones; Claudia Barainsky/Solveig Kringelborn, soprano; Douglas Nasrawi, tenor

Antwerp
Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28
FEB 16 21.00 Euridice by Peri with the Koninklijk Conservatorium Den Haag, conducted and staged by Christina Pluhar

Ghent
Vlaamse Opera
Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02, www.vlaamseopera.be
FEB 17-24 La Strada adapted from Fellini's film, conducted by Koen Kessels, with Jeannette Fischer, soprano; Richard Salter, baritone; Yves Saelens, tenor

Jazz & blues

Brussels
Archiduc
Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52
FEB 16 17.00 Jazzfact + Joppe Bestevaar
FEB 17 17.00 Mark O'Leary

Beursschouwburg
Auguste Ortstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be
FEB 16 20.30 Jasper Huysentruyt Trio

Charliermuseum
Kunstlaan 16; 02.507.83.31, www.charliermuseum.be
FEB 19 12.30 Jozef Dumoulin Solo, piano

Espace Senghor
Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40, www.senghor.be
FEB 16 20.30 Dhafer Youssef (Tunisia)

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be
FEB 15 12.30 Wang Wei Quartet

Jazz Station
Leuvensesteenweg 193-195; 02.733.13.78
FEB 20 The Wrong Object

La Brocante Thoumas
Blaesstraat 170; 02.512.13.43
FEB 16-22 12.00-16.00 Carson Barnes & friends (tickets from 0487.59.71.96)

Le Grain d'Orge
Waversesteenweg 142; 02.511.26.47
FEB 15 Asphalt

Sounds Jazz Club
Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50, www.soundsjazzclub.be
Concerts at 22.00:
FEB 14 The Singers Night **FEB 15** M D M Band **FEB 16** Francois Decamps Quartet **FEB 18** Master Session **FEB 19** Da Romeo Band **FEB 20** Caribe Con K, Caribbean music

The Music Village
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
Concerts at 20.30:
FEB 14 Alexia Waku Soul Quartet **FEB 15** Jef Neve-Pascal Schumacher Quartet **FEB 16** Fay Claeseen-Ivan Paduart Quintet **FEB 18-19** Vandergooten-Brunel-Anckaert Trio **FEB 20-23** Tribute to Roger Van Haverbeke: **FEB 20** Just Friends Trio

Theatre Saint Michel
Pater Eudore Devroyestraat 2; 02.732.70.73
FEB 22 20.00 Moving by Augusto Pirodda, piano

Borgerhout
De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.235.04.90
FEB 14 20.30 Savina Yannatou & Primavera and Salonica

Bruges
De Werf
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29
FEB 16 20.30 Sylvain Kassap Quartet

Ghent
Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01
FEB 13 20.00 Lady Linn and her Magnificent Seven

Kortrijk
De Kreun
Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44
FEB 16 20.00 Leafcutter John + Polar Bear

Pop, rock, hip-hop, soul

Brussels
Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
FEB 15 Lisa Papineau + American Music Club
FEB 20 Babyshambles. Dragons of Zynth + Yeasayer

Fuse
Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89
FEB 16 23.00 Bpitch Label Night: Sascha Funke, Zander VT. Lessizmore #15 Seuil, Serafin, Dop

K-NAL
Havenlaan 1; 0479.605.429, www.anarchic.be
FEB 15 23.00 Anarchic: Love is in the Air with Dj Deep, Cosy Mozzy, Hermanos Inglesos

Koninklijk Circus
Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15
FEB 14 20.30 One Night of Queen
FEB 21 20.30 Jean-Louis Aubert

Le Botanique
Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
FEB 17 14.00 Les Classiques ont 20 ans!: Mike Sanchez + Focus + Elliott Murphy + Ten Years After
FEB 18 Kula Shaker
FEB 19 Sons and Daughters. The Willowz

Recyclart
Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
FEB 14 20.00 Cibelle + Polar Bear + Leafcutter John
FEB 16 20.00 (Heart)-Core: Luke Vibert + Dj Remarc + Bong-Ra + Sickboy + Droon + Hellboy

VK Club
Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07
FEB 14 20.00 Skindred + Still Remains
FEB 16 21.30 The Polysics **FEB 17** The Charlatans **FEB 21** 21.30 Sean Kingston Vorst-Nationaal
Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991
FEB 19 20.00 The Smashing Pumpkins + Tim Vanhamel

Ghent
Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01
FEB 14 20.00 Hooverphonic **FEB 16** 20.00 Trixie Whitley/Moiana/Jerboa **FEB 20** 20.00 Joe Henry **FEB 21** 20.00 Pere Ubu

Vooruit
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 09.267.28.28
FEB 14 20.00 Arno
FEB 20 22.00 Thieves Like Us

Leuven
Het Depot
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
FEB 14 20.00 An Evening with Mintzkov & Friends
FEB 15 20.00 Creature with the Atom Brain + Dear Leader + Tim Vanhamel
FEB 16 20.30 Modeselektor. 23.00 Ed Banger Label Night: Mr Oizo + Busy P + Uffie & Dj Feadz

World, folk

Brussels
Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
FEB 13 Saint Amour

Beursschouwburg
Auguste Ortstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be
FEB 20 20.30 Bobby Sandal

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be
FEB 20 20.15 Kora Jazz Trio (West Africa)

Sounds Jazz Club
Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50, www.soundsjazzclub.be
FEB 13 Chamaquiando (Salsa)

Stekerlapatte
Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81, www.stekerlapatte.be
FEB 14 21.30 Ivan Tirtiaux Solo
FEB 16 21.30 Mamalova


Théâtre Molière
Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00, www.muziekpublieque.be
FEB 22 20.00 Juan Carlos Caceres' Tango Negro Trio + Monica y Dante

Woluwe-Saint-Pierre Cultural Centre
Charles Thielemanslaan 93; 02.773.05.80, www.art-culture.be
FEB 22 20.30 Duniya Project, north Indian classical, jazz and contemporary

Antwerp
Zuiderpershuis
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00, www.zuiderpershuis.be
FEB 15 20.30 Homayoun Shaharian & Dastan Ensemble (Iran)
FEB 17 15.00 Ramiro Gallo Quinteto (Argentina)
FEB 21 20.30 Prins Rama Varma (southern India)

Borgerhout
De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.235.04.90
FEB 14 20.30 Savina Yannatou & Primavera and Salonico (Greece)

Get your tickets now for...



Barbara Hendricks
11 March, 20.00, Bozar, Rue Ravensteinstraat 23, Brussels. Tickets from 02.507.82.00 or www.bozar.be

Though Barbara Hendricks graduated from the University of Nebraska with a degree in chemistry, she went to New York's Juilliard School of Music to study opera. Though she was born in the tiny backwater of Stephens, Arkansas, she took master classes from Maria Callas. And though she became an opera star, recording many of her roles, she will belt out the jazz of her roots next month at Bozar. Every divergent part of the concert singer, who now makes her home in Sweden, shines through in a beguiling mixture of strength and vulnerability, pitched both high and low. This concert, in which she performs with the Magnus Lindgren Quartet, is a benefit for Louvain Cooperation au Développement, which organises food and health programmes in Africa and Asia.

Dance

Brussels

KVS Bol
Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.12
FEB 16-17 20.00 Toneelhuis in Myth, choreographed by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

Kaaitheater
Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59
FEB 20 20.30 Les SlovaKs Dance Collective

Theatre 140
Eugène Plaskylaan 140; 02.733.97.08
FEB 14-15 20.30 Basso Ostinato, choreographed by Caterina Sagna (dance/theatre)

Théâtre Varia
Scepterstraat 78; 02.640.82.58
FEB 14-23 20.00 CRéHAM-Bxl in C'est vrai, choreographed by Jeroen Baeyens

Bruges

MaZ
Magdalenastraat 27; 050.33.20.14
FEB 19 20.00 Maybe Forever, choreographed by Meg Stuart and Philippe Gehmacher, live music by Niko Hafkenscheid

Leuven

Stuk
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
FEB 21-22 20.30 Volta, choreographed by Annabel Schellekens

Theatre

Brussels

Beursschouwburg
Auguste Ortstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be
FEB 16 20.30 Theater Rast and Toneelgroep in Tolken by Eric De Volder (in Dutch)

KVS Bol
Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.12
FEB 13 20.00 Toneelhuis + Walpurgis in Winterverblijf, staged by Lotte van den Berg (in Dutch)

KVS Box
Arduinkaai 9; 02.210.11.12, www.kvs.be
FEB 19 20.30 We People by Ruud Gielens, Mourade Zeguendi, Zouzou Ben Chikha and David Strosberg, staged by Gielens (in Dutch and French)

Scarabaeus Theatre
Hollestraat 19-27; 02.649.79.16
Until FEB 15 Brussels Shakespeare Society in Richard III (in English)

Theatre de Poche
Gymnasiumweg 1a; 02.649.17.27
Until FEB 16 20.30 On Theatre in On Religion by Mick Gordon and AC Grayling (in English with French surtitles, part of Europalia)

Antwerp

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
FEB 14 20.00 Concertino: Jan Kuijken, cello, Marlies Heuer, improvisation based on Marguerite Duras' L'Homme atlantique (in Dutch)

Leuven

Stuk
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
FEB 13 22.00 Make Me Stop Smoking, lecture/performance by Rabih Mroue (in Dutch)
FEB 15 21.00 You and Me Together. My First... a work in progress by and with Siegmaz Zacharias, Xander de Boer and Steven Heather (in Dutch)

Visual arts

Brussels

Algemeen Rijksarchief
Ruisbroekstraat 8; 02.513.76.80
Until FEB 16 Congo S.A/N.V., documents and photographs about Belgian enterprises in the Congo in the 19th and 20th centuries

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)

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

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.84.44
Until MAR 30 The Unreal Image: Emblems, Symbols and Metaphors, photographs by Charles Nègre, Achille Quinet, Julia Margaret Cameron, Henry Peach Robinson, James Craig Annan and many others
Until MAR 31 Image/Construction, photographs of architecture by Filip Dujardin

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

De Markten
Oude Graanmarkt 5; 02.512.34.25
Until FEB 17 Home, works by Marc De Blicke and Initia vzw

Dielegheem Abbey
Jan Tiebackxstraat 14; 02.428.71.03
Until FEB 17 Vikings! Les rois de la mer, reproductions and maquettes illustrating three centuries of the Vikings

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

Gallery Garden
Stevinstraat 206; 02.734.64.38, 0479.01.69.47, www.tonyclerkson.com
Until FEB 22 In the City, images of Brussels, Paris, London, Glasgow and Budapest by Scottish photographer Tony Clerkson

ISELP
Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70
Until MAR 22 Rue de la Comtesse de Flandre, paintings by Bernard Gaube
Until APR 5 Ceramics by Laurence Deweer and textiles by Delphine Grand'ry
Until APR 5 Serre les dents, works by François Jacob

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

Jonas Gallery
Vlaanderenstraat 35; 02.503.50.55
Until FEB 23 Photographs on canvas by Christian d'Hoir

Le Botanique
Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
Until MAR 2 Un certain regard, works by artists from CRéHAM (creativity and mental handicap)

Royal Army Museum
Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33
Until NOV A Paintbrush in the Barrel, World War One paintings, drawings and etchings by soldiers

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
Until APR 20 Onder dak in China,

2,000 years of funerary architecture and furniture from China's Henan museum

Royal Museums of Fine Arts
Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11
Until MAR 30 Alechinsky from A to Y, retrospective of work by the Belgian artist on the occasion of his 80th birthday
Until MAR 30 Quadrum: International Magazine of Modern Art, tribute to Ernst Goldschmidt, curator and publisher

Sint-Gorikshallen
Sint-Goriksplein 1; 02.502.44.24
Until FEB 29 Photography & the Changing Cityscape: Brussels 1850-1880, urban development and the evolution of photography in 19th-century Brussels

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

Young Gallery/Hotel Conrad
Louisalaan 75b; 02.374.07.04
Until FEB 16 A.N.A.T.O.L.E and Inside, photographs by Katya Legendre with texts by Yann Quéfellec

Antwerp

Contemporary Art Museum (MuHKA)
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60
Until MAY 4 Santhal Family: Positions around an Indian Sculpture, contemporary art group show relating to a sculpture made in 1938 by Ramkinkar Baij, with works by Santanu Bose, Matti Braun, Calcutta Art Research, Ritwik Ghatak, Sheela Gowda, Boran Handsa, N.S. Harsha and many more
Until MAR 9 Lonely at the top: Seamus Harahan, video works by the contemporary Irish artist

Extra City
Tulpstraat 79; 0484.42.10.70
Until MAR 30 Mimétisme, group show of contemporary art, with work by Pawel Althamer & Artur Zmijewski, Elisabetta Benassi, Charif Benhelima, Lieven de Boeck and many others

Fifty-One Fine Art Photography
Zirkstraat 20; 03.289.84.58
Until MAR 8 Interiors, photographs evoking a love for places and interiors by James Casebere, Lucinda Devlin, Andreas Gursky, Candida Höfer, Abelardo Morell, Matthew Pillsbury, Kate Schermerhorn, Karl Hugo Schmölz, Hiroshi Sugimoto and Friederike von Rauch

Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten/Royal Museum of Fine Arts
Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09
Until MAR 2 Didactic show on the newly restored Rubens painting The Prodigal Son

Ghent

Galerie Jan Dhaese
Ajuinlei 15B; www.jandhaese.be
Until FEB 23 Dolores Bouckaert: Expo – Foto / video

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

Museum Dr Guislain
Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95, www.museumdrguislain.be
Until APR 27 Sick: Between Body and Mind, multimedia exhibition showcasing the links between mental and physical pain, with work by Félicien Rops, Patrik Vermeulen, Dana Wyse, Léon Spilliaert and many others

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)
Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03
Until FEB 17 Head Shop/Shop Head, Paul McCarthy retrospective 1966-2007

Don't miss this week



Vincent Events

Brilliant Europe: Jewels from the European Courts

Until 17 February, ING Cultural Centre, Koningsplein 6, Brussels, 02.547.22.92, www.ing.be/art

Say you're a 16th-century Hungarian Duchess, and a young courtier from Sweden comes to call. Just what is his noble rank? Can he afford you? A quick look at his jewellery – what he's wearing and where he's wearing it – could provide you with all the information you need. This fascinating exhibition, which ends this weekend, shows the links between European regions (before there was any notion of "Europe") through the symbolic wearing of jewellery. Strict social rules governed its use among disparate regions in a sort of unspoken law. Two hundred exceptional pieces are shown surrounded by paintings, miniatures and the exquisite jewellery boxes designed to carry them – themselves works of art.

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

Lier

Stedelijk Museum Wuyts
Florent Van Cauwenberghstraat 14; 03.480.11.96
Until MAR 2 New Collection, works by 40 contemporary artists in dialogue with old master paintings

Tervuren

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

Tongerne

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

Ypres

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

Festivals & special events

Festival Pays de Danses: new dance festival
Until MAR 1 at venues across Belgium 04.342.00.00, www.theatredelaplace.be

Brussels

Dimanches de la danse: dance festival featuring short works by artists living and working in Brussels
Until FEB 24 at Halles de Schaerbeek, Koninklijke Sinte-Mariastraat 22 02.218.21.07, www.halles.be

Festival de Danse d'Ici et d'Ailleurs:

Promenade dance festival
Until APR 5 at Jacques Franck Cultural Centre and De Pianofabriek 02.538.90.20, www.ccfj.be

Festival East of Brussels: Eastern Europe arts festival, including music, dance and theatre
Until FEB 20 at Kaaitheater and Kaaitheaterstudio's www.kaaitheater.be

Iceland on the Edge: Icelandic cultural festival, including exhibitions, concerts, theatre, dance and film
FEB 15-JUNE 15 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23 www.bozar.be

Other towns

Antwerp

Dedonderdagen #15: evening exploring new artistic fields in a crossover programme of performance, dance, music, video and art
FEB 14 from 19.30 at deSingel, Desguinlei 25 03.248.28.28, www.dedonderdagen.be

Kunstenfestival 0090: Contemporary arts festival by artists with a link to Turkey, with music, theatre, dance and film
Until FEB 22 at venues across Antwerp www.0090.be

Bruges

Bad Boys II Festival: focus on art and music of the New York School of the 1950s
Until FEB 17 at Concertgebouw, 't Zand 34 070.22.33.02

Leuven

Artefact Festival: Multidisciplinary programme focusing on capturing time and mapping the moment. Installations, concerts and performances, including works analysing the power of the media and public perception of world events
Until FEB 17 at Stuk, Naamsestraat 96 www.artefact-festival.be

MY FLANDERS

Kate Macdonald



Kate Macdonald teaches English literature to Flemish students at Ghent University. She tells us why she likes Ghent and how she stumbled upon a forgotten historical text in the university library.

What are you working on at the moment?

I'm teaching English literature and British culture to first-year students at Ghent University, which includes poetry and an introduction to the English theatre. I'm also teaching a survey course to second-year students, which gets them to study popular classics from Edward Lear to Nancy Mitford.

Where do your students come from?

Most of them are Flemish, mainly from West Flanders. The majority go back to their parents' homes at the weekend. Ghent is a typical Belgian university town where Thursday is the night for going out and everyone heads home with their laundry in a rucksack on Fridays.

Do the students speak good English?

The Flemish students speak superb English. Students from Wallonia are less good. I'm always impressed by the Flemish students' language abilities. They're quite capable of having a complex discussion on *Little Britain* in English.

What's Ghent like as a university town?

It's a wonderful place to work. The university is very strong in languages and literature. And the administration is extremely efficient, once you work out what needs to be done.

The Flemish authorities are keen to attract more students to spend an Erasmus year in Flanders. Does your department attract many foreign students?

We get some, but not many. Literature students have to study two languages, rather than other humanities subjects like history, which can make it difficult for some foreign students who come from a different university system. But the Erasmus students who come here seem to integrate quickly and have a good time.

What's your special research area?

I did my PhD on John Buchan and edited the *John Buchan Journal* for 11 years. I started reading Buchan at school, because I was in one of the first cohorts of girls to enter a former boys-only school, and the library was stuffed with 'books for boys', including masses of Buchan and Biggles. At university I kept finding fascinating things in his fiction and life. I don't think I could stop researching him; the things I find are too interesting.

Have you a favourite Buchan novel?

I'm continually drawn back to *Mr Standfast*, which was one of the first novels written about the First World War after it ended. There is so much social history in that novel, reflecting realities of wartime living as well as the adventurous bits with the hero in disguise. It's a great thriller, and an impressively many-layered novel about war.

Are there any links between Buchan and Flanders?

He wrote a 24-volume history of the First World War which included a lot of detail on the fighting around Ieper in West Flanders. When I started to work at Ghent three years ago I found a rare Dutch translation of some of this work in the university library, which had been compiled from different parts of Buchan's histories by someone unknown, an 'A. Callewaert', to make a Flemish history of the fighting around Ieper. It was published in 1916, and was clearly meant for the locals to read, since very little was being published about the war in Flemish at the time. Buchan apparently gave his permission for the translation to be made, but nothing else about this book or Callewaert was known: it was a real mystery.

Have you solved the mystery?

I did a lot of research, travelling to Paris and Nancy to check archives and printing records, but I only found out the identity of the translator when I was talking to the director of the document centre at the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ieper. He had just come across a reference to Callewaert and the translation in a diary of a local man, so the mystery was finally solved. Callewaert was the

local priest. I want to write up my research, to set out the whole story, but I haven't found anyone to publish it yet.

Did Buchan spend any time in Flanders during the war?

He was a war correspondent for *The Times* and probably visited Ieper in 1915, or in 1916 when he was working for General Haig as a writer of military communiqués. Long after the war, he wrote his novel *A Prince of the Captivity*, in which the hero is a British spy behind enemy lines in Belgium, disguised as a Flemish peasant. Buchan's descriptions of Flemish sound plausible, but he got his geography hopelessly wrong.

Buchan achieved an enormous amount in his lifetime. What was his secret?

He wrote over one hundred novels, biographies and histories, and was a total workaholic, with a highly disciplined working schedule. He dabbled in so many areas, and he had an enormous number of contacts in the Establishment. He was a real networker. But he also lived at a time when you could be successful in a number of different areas, and it was considered normal to be a Member of Parliament, a publisher, a company director, a novelist, and a historian, all at the same time. People who attempt all that nowadays are heading for a fall, but in Buchan's day it was merely the sign of a productive and useful member of society. I find his production rate intimidating, because most of it was very good: he rarely wrote a bad novel.

Interview by Derek Blyth

online
www.english.ugent.be

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

how it all adds up in Flanders

€144 million

Cost to the Belgian economy of traffic jams, according to Eddy Peetermans of the Flemish road traffic centre. He calculated that one truck caught in a traffic jam for one hour costs some €50, while a car costs €10. The number of lost hours was estimated at nine million, with 15% attributed to trucks.

€2.8 billion

Amount spent last year in Belgium on medicines where the cost was partly reimbursed by health insurance funds. The insurance funds paid out some €2.3 billion, while patients covered just over half a billion, or 20% of the costs. The cost of health care is rising in Belgium because people are using more medicines.

26%

Percentage of Belgian internet users who were victims of a computer virus over the past 12 months, according to figures released by the European statistical office Eurostat. The average rate for the European Union is 23%, Eurostat says. Some 12% of Belgians refuse to shop online because of safety fears.

BiotechSpecialReport HasseltFashionMuseum ParanormalFair BioLock FrietKot StruiseBrouwers EnglishTheatreofBruges

next week in Flanders Today