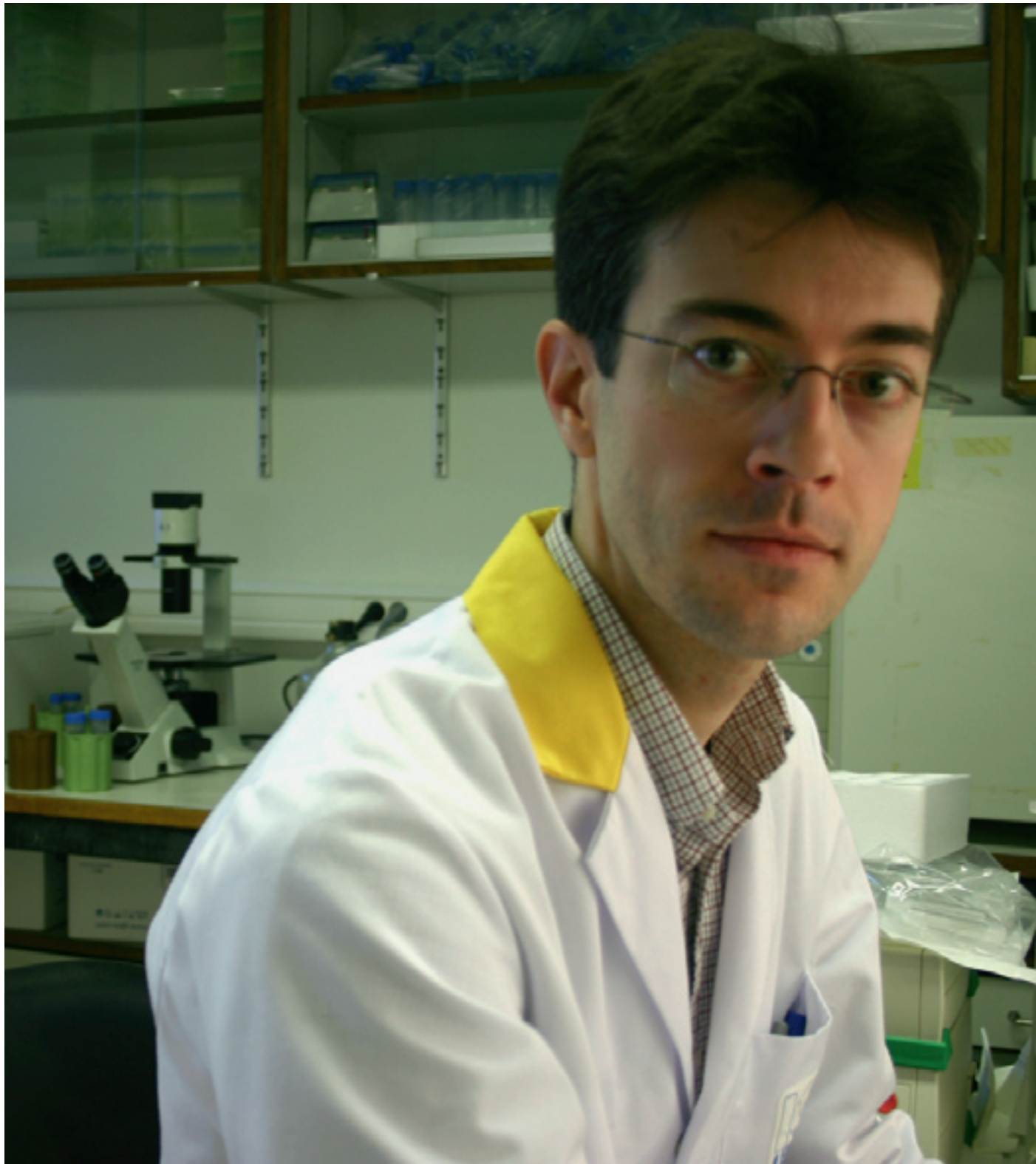




Nedda El-Asmar, p.9



Jan Cools wins €1.36 million

Hot science

Six young Flemish scientists have won a share in the EU's €3 billion bonanza

Saffina Rana

Jan Cools is a scientist at the Flanders' Institute of Biotechnology who specialises in studying bone marrow cancers, commonly known as leukemias. His research ideas have just won him €1.36 million in a competition against 8,794 of the best young scientists in Europe. He will use the funding to study T-Cell Leukemia, a rare form of cancer that develops predominantly in children between the age of two and four. It affects around 700 children in Belgium a year before they reach their 14th birthdays.

"I didn't expect to win, I thought the judges would think the cancer is too rare," he says as we walk single file to his office at Leuven University Hospital Faculty of Medicine. The long corridors are made narrow by neat double rows of small fridges numbered and stacked alongside the wall, one on top of the other. This is the face of modern science, storing the mainstay of medical research.

"To get T-Cell Leukemias, you need to accumulate at least four different cell mutations," explains Jan. "But we don't understand why you need those four types or how they work together. Because we don't understand this, it's not used for therapy and we don't have targeted therapy," adds Jan. His five-year project aims to understand what is happening, then use the information to improve the treatments for these cancers. "It would also give an insight into leukemias in general," says Jan.

Continued on page 3



Business

As China's economy booms, Antwerp port authority has launched a campaign to persuade Chinese shippers that the Scheldt estuary is the place to unload their cargos.

8



Arts

The Design Centre in Brussels hosts an exhibition of vases shaped by the flower of Flemish craftsmen. We take a look at the Flemish art of arranging flowers.

10



Active

The Dead Rat Ball has been rocking the coastal town of Ostend for more than a century. We find out what makes it the social event of the year.

12

Major trench warfare network discovered near Ypres

Tunnels from 1918 are "perfectly preserved"

Alan Hope

Archaeologists have succeeded in uncovering one of the best-preserved underground networks of tunnels used by British forces during the Battle of Passchendaele in 1918. The Vampire Dugout lies 13 metres under fields in the West Flanders village of Zonnebeke near Ieper, or Ypres as the British soldiers knew it (pronounced "wipers"). It was constructed in 1918 by the Royal Engineers, and was intended to shelter senior officers and up to 50 men. However, just as the four-month-long winter construction project neared

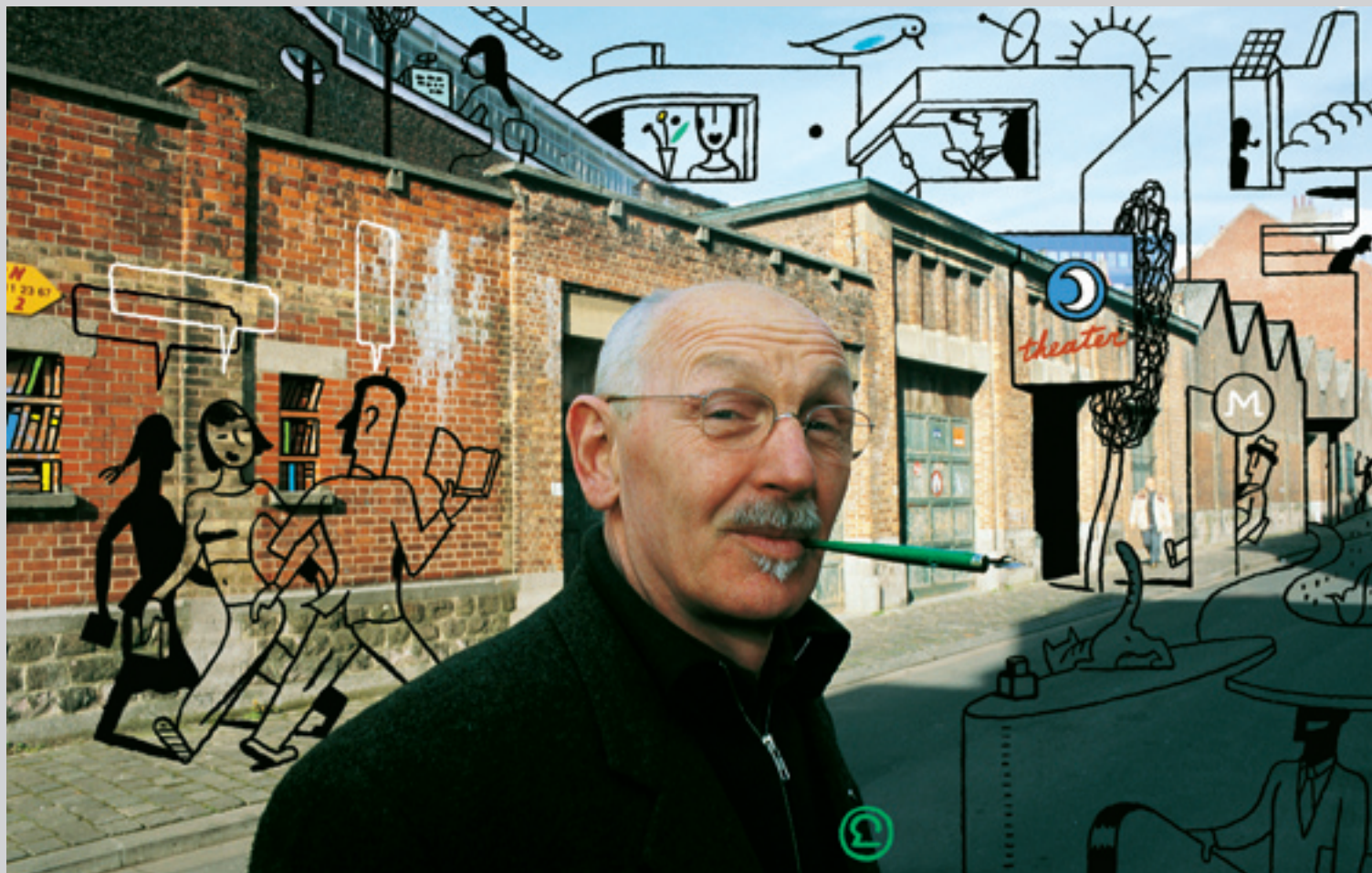
completion, Allied forces were driven back, and the tunnels fell into German hands. They were retaken at the end of the war, but were shut up and flooded without being used.

The discovery is an important one, said Dr Iain Banks, executive director of the Centre for Battlefield Archaeology at Glasgow University, which supervised the project, because the network is in such good condition. "Normally we find these things when they start to collapse and become visible," he said.

Continued on page 5

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Ever Meulen



The cornic eye: Ever Meulen

Ever Meulen captures the sheer joy of post-war life better than any other graphic artist. You may not recognise the name of this modest Flemish artist, but you have probably come across some of his witty illustrations reproduced on the cover of *Humo* magazine, *Beursschouwburg* posters and occasional *New*

Yorker magazine covers.

He was born Eddy Vermeulen in Kuurne, West Flanders, in 1946. The rubble of World War Two was still being cleared away, but the mood in Belgium was one of growing optimism. Vermeulen started drawing at an early age and studied the finer points of graphic art at the Sint-Lukas college in Ghent and later in Brussels. His career took off slowly, but he made a modest living drawing magazine covers, record sleeves and posters. By 1970 his works were appearing on the covers of *Humo* and other progressive Flemish magazines.

His style owes a lot to Hergé's "clear line" drawings, but Meulen also found inspiration in the more whimsical drawings of America's Saul Steinberg. Obsessed with modernism in all its aspects, he cast an amused eye on a world that was filling up with streamlined cars, petrol stations and apartment blocks.

The art shop Plaizier spotted Ever Meulen in the 1980s and brought out a series of postcards with his modernist drawings. *The New Yorker* also granted him the occasional commission to draw a magazine cover. He has exhibited in London, Liverpool, Angoulême, New York, Geneva and Amsterdam. Despite the acclaim, Meulen remains impeccably modest, studiously quiet, living in Brussels with his wife and four cats. The Tweebronnen library in Leuven has given over space for an Ever Meulen retrospective. One to catch.



"Ever Meulen, De Stiel", Bibliotheek Tweebronnen, Leuven, until 13 April.

Derek Blyth

Online

www.beeldbeeld.be

TALKING DUTCH
notes on language

frietkot

You discover that the fridge only contains mouldy cheese and the freezer is empty. Hungry mouths have to be fed. What to do? Well, the simplest thing is to go to your nearest *frietkot*.

Frieten or *frietjes* – chips, or French fries to Americans, are one of the delights of Belgium. Unlike the fast food chains, *frietkoten* (literally "fry shacks") are nearly all individually owned, each with its own character. Some look like chalets, others are converted caravans and a few look as if they are permanent.

The term French fries came into English from the First World War soldiers who fought in Flanders. At that time French was dominant and so the soldiers assumed that this delicacy was French – or perhaps Flemish fries was too much of a tongue-twister.

So what makes *frietjes* so good? Most people think the secret is in the double frying, with the second frying being done to order. Potatoes are freshly chipped on site, though the *currywurst* or *burger* will usually have been bought in some chippy cash and carry.

Part of the pleasure is the meticulous way in which the chips are shaken dry in a big metal funnel before being scooped into a paper cone, or for bigger orders, into trays and then wrapped – often with a small hole for ventilation.

Frietkoten are often to be found in town squares and rarely add to the beauty of the spot. In some cases they fall foul of the planning laws. Any attempt at tidying up town squares by removing *de frietkot* will have locals up in arms. Politicians have been quick to learn that they get rid of *frietkoten* at their peril. So, an alderman in Antwerp describing plans for the renovation of *het Falconplein* as the last part of the clean-up of the *Schipperskwartier* made sure to add: "*Daarbij zal in elk geval het frietkot zijn plaats behouden.*" Good news you would think for the locals – after the works are finished the *frietkot* will definitely still be there. Clearly, he had taken the pulse of the electorate. Yet the size of the new *frietkot* has been restricted to such an extent that the owner has shut up shop. Perhaps the alderman will come to regret his promise at the time, when he added for a wider public: "*Antwerpen breekt geen frietkoten af.*"

Yes, *frietkoten* are in danger of being driven out of existence. Two Flemish towns, Eeklo and Dendermonde, are now *frietkotvrij*. Not that there is an anti-chip movement to slim down the overweight, but rather a desire to drive *frieten* indoors to be served from some hole in the wall or soulless snack bar. As one commentator puts it: "*Zij willen het buitenstaande frietkot weg.*" Then he waxes quite poetic: on winter evenings we will lose: "*dat baken van lichten, warmte en friet in de donkere nacht.*"

He then damningly concludes that towns which opt to become "*frietkotvrij*" lose much more when they pull down the *frietkoten*; they are then "*zielvrij, geestvrij, cultuurvrij, levenvrij.*"

Alistair Maclean

Online

www.vandale.be

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independent newsweekly

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FEATURE



Flemish six win top science award

Continued from page 1

The actual work takes a long time and can be quite boring, he admits. "It moves really, really slowly. What keeps you going is that once in a while, after one or two years of hard work and analysing the data, you finally find what you are looking for. It's joy. It's such a beautiful moment that you never forget," he says.

New technologies have drastically reduced the time it takes to perform certain experiments. Jan says that gene sequencing machines can produce more data than he and his team would be able to achieve in a year on their own. However, a single experiment using such a machine costs €10,000. Jan is looking forward to being able to use one. "We wouldn't be able to do it without this

award," he says.

Jan will split the rest of the award between putting a research team together, and buying consumables such as enzymes, cells and mice. The win will pay for the salaries of a post-doctoral researcher, a PhD student and a technician for five years. Jan also intends to buy a small library of 10,000 compounds which have unknown functions, to test if any have advantageous effects on cancerous cells.

The competition jackpot of €3 billion will be shared between 200 winners. The competition itself was launched by the European Research Council, an independent body created by all 27 governments of the European Union last year, to fund the most original ideas that

push back the frontiers of knowledge. It received over 9,000 entries of which 8,794 were eligible. The only criterion for success was the quality of each entrant's research project. In order to qualify for the competition, scientists had to have a place at a European university and have been awarded a PhD not more than nine years ago. The competition was judged by worldwide panels of scientists regarded as the best in their fields.

Flanders can boast six winners in the competition, each of whom will receive up to €2 million for their research projects. The Flemish Institute of Biotechnology can claim two of them. The second winner is Eva Benkova, a plant biologist of Slovakian nationality who joined the Institute last August. It was the Institute's track record that tempted her to apply for a position. "I applied for a young leaders position at the Institute because I wanted to be in a good group which was doing good science, where I could find the answers to my questions," she says.

The Institute encouraged Eva to enter the ERC competition. "I was lucky," she laughs. Eva's award-winning project will focus on how hormones in plants interact and talk to each other to cause the formation and growth of roots. "I'm happy to have won," she continues. "If I hadn't received the funding, I wouldn't have given up, but I would have had to look for it from other sources which would have taken a lot more time and energy," she says.

Eva is based at the University of Ghent and will use the award

to enlarge her team with a post-doctoral researcher, a PhD student and a technician. The rest will go towards buying a stereo microscope and consumables.

The Flemish Institute for Biotechnology brings together over 600 of the best national and international scientists to work on understanding the mechanisms behind normal development in plants and humans, and diseases such as cancers, neurodegeneration and haemophilia.

Scientists work together in 65 different research groups, split between four Flemish universities: the University of Ghent, the Catholic University of Leuven, the University of Antwerp and the Free University of Brussels (VUB). The Institute is active in helping scientists patent their discoveries which in turn brings in extra funding for their work. The Institute has also proven successful in incubating and launching spin-off companies to develop new technologies and commercialise scientific results. Last year, one of the Institute's biopharmaceutical spin-off companies, Ablynx, attracted over €75 million in venture capital.

Eva and Jan have more in common than their newly-won status as the best of Europe's brains based at the Institute. Both are also married to researchers and have young families. "Belgium is a very supportive country for moving to with young children" says Eva, "We found places in schools immediately. We struggled with the bureaucracy and volume of paperwork needed to move, but I like the atmosphere in Flanders," she continues. "People are friendly, they like to talk."

"I like the atmosphere in Flanders. People are friendly, they like to talk."

- Eva Benkova

Ann Heylighen



Ann Heylighen at the Catholic University of Leuven will work on architectural design that takes into account people with disabilities such as blindness. Her win will be spent on hiring one post-doctoral researcher, two PhD students and experts who are blind, to work with the team. "It was completely unbelievable! I had not considered participating at all but the university really encouraged me."

Gilles Pourtois



Gilles Pourtois at the University of Ghent will study how high levels of anxiety affect people's decision-making processes and cognitive functions. His win will be spent on hiring a post-doctoral researcher, a PhD student, and upgrading the brain imaging equipment at the university. "I'm super-happy! It was unexpected. I wasn't too confident after hearing that more than 9,000 had people entered."

Christian Clasen



Christian Clasen, Catholic University of Leuven will be spinning molecules of polymers using high voltage to create very long thin fibres. These tiny fibres have incredible strength and Christian will study how they can be used and incorporated into other materials. He will spend his award on two post doctoral researchers, two PhD students and high-speed imaging techniques. "I'm very happy. It came as a bit of a surprise even though after the first round there was a 40% chance of winning."

Aernout Luttun



Aernout Luttun at the Catholic University of Leuven will look at blood cells in different parts of the body. Comparing genetic profiles will help him to make new therapies for people with blood vessel problems. He will recruit two PhD students and spend the rest on consumables such as cell cultures and mice. "I feel lucky, of course. I'm very pleased with the outcome."

Eva Benkova



Eva Benkova at the University of Ghent will study how hormones in plants interact with one another to cause the formation and growth of roots. She will use the EU funding to enlarge her team with a post-doctoral researcher, a PhD student and a technician. The rest will go towards buying a stereo microscope and consumables. "If I hadn't received the funding, I wouldn't have given up," she says.

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Lost trenches found at Zonnebeke



Continued from page 1

"But this network was found from references in the regimental diary and from map references."

The exploration of the site became a race against time in 2006, when a local brickmaker applied for permission to proceed with clay extraction in the area very close to where the Vampire Dugout was thought to be buried. Flemish members of the Association for Battlefield Archaeology and Conservation (ABAC) presented the existing evidence to the agency in charge of Flemish heritage, and the exploration was approved.

Work began in early 2007 with the exploration of the site by geophysicist and "battlefield detective" Malcolm Weale, using ground-penetrating radar, sonar, metal detectors and drilling. The 13-metre shaft was finally opened after three weeks of painstaking work in January of this year, involving the removal of 60 cubic

metres of mud and clay, said Johan Vandewalle of ABAC.

According to Dr Banks, the trenches below are perfectly preserved just as they were 90 years ago. "I stood at the bottom of the shaft just last week," he told *Flanders Today*. "You've got candles, used and unused, pools of wax, empty bottles, and bullets lying where they would have been dropped by some unfortunate squaddie. It sends a shiver down your spine."

The tunnels are 1.80 m square in section, shored up with I-beams and train-rails, as well as horizontal beams. Every inch of the interior will be explored by remote vehicle to prevent damage as far as possible, and mapped in three dimensions to be recreated virtually.

The archaeologists from Glasgow will also try to determine what construction, if any, was undertaken by the Germans while the tunnels were in their possession.

Bourgeois plans to recruit "citizen diplomats"

Flanders foreign minister Geert Bourgeois is to look into the possibility of recruiting Flemish expatriates as "citizen diplomats" to help boost the region's image abroad and attract inward investment. Conventional diplomats deal with the government level and carry out essential work, said a spokesman for the agency carrying out the study, but they do not come into contact with local people and businesses. Other countries like the Netherlands, the UK and Germany already invest in "public diplomacy". Flemings living abroad have "interesting networks" and could play an important role in "putting Flanders on the world map," the ministry says. However there is no indication yet as to whether Flanders' "honorary consuls" will be reimbursed: if enough Flemings are prepared to get behind the project, the ministry said, the "necessary resources" would be made available.

Shortage of egg-cell donors is critical

A Leuven hospital has distanced itself from a plan to offer students a premium of €750 to become egg-cell donors. The Heilige Hart hospital said the person running the campaign was working on her own initiative and was not connected to the hospital's Life fertility centre. The shortage of egg-cell donors in Flanders has reached a critical point, with waiting lists of 18 months to two years. But experts warned against using young girls as donors, given the slight risk that the procedure could itself lead to infertility. Reputable centres ensure potential donors are well-informed regarding what is required of them. "If out of 100 interested women there are two who remain at the end of screening, we consider that a success," said Dr Tom Coetsier of Ghent university hospital. The Flemish union of gynaecologists (VVOG) has called on blood-donors to come forward to donate sperm or egg-cells.

Songbook from 1500s bought for €400,000

The Flemish regional government has obtained the *Antifonarium Tsgrooten*, a bound collection of 337 parchment folios of richly illuminated Gregorian music dating from the 16th century, for €400,000. The work comes from the abbey of Tongerlo, and is named after the abbot Antonius Tsgrooten, who ordered new music books for the choir in 1522 in an effort to stimulate the use of singing in the liturgy of the time. Two similar copies are housed in the British Museum. The third was owned by the de Merode family, who originally offered the book to the Royal Library. The culture ministry has a budget for this year of €3.5 million for the purchase of important artworks and cultural artefacts. The Antifonarium can be read page by page on the Internet.

Online
www.antifonarium-tsgrooten.be

Leterme hospitalised



Vice-premier Yves Leterme has left intensive care and moved to a normal ward of the Gasthuisberg hospital in Leuven, following his emergency admission last week with internal bleeding. The cause of the gastro-intestinal bleeding has still not been established, but could be related to a stomach ulcer or liver complaint. He was visited at the weekend by prime minister Guy Verhofstadt and CD&V party chairman Etienne Schouppe. He also received a visit from justice minister Jo Vandeurzen, who will take over Leterme's budget responsibilities while he convalesces.

Belgian shrimps off the menu



Sales of the Purus variety of grey shrimp have been suspended until May following a decision by fishermen to switch to other catches because of low profitability. Last year was a relatively cold summer, and shrimp stocks are lying in deeper water than usual, cutting average daily catches to 20-30 kilos. But the high cost of fuel makes it impossible for fishermen to make any profit on catches of this size. In May, they hope, higher temperatures will cause the shrimps to rise in the water, thereby increasing catch sizes. The decision leaves only five boats still operating out of Ostend, which catch other shrimps than the Purus variety.

Ghent University puts thousands of books online

Ghent university library is to digitalise 300,000 books and put them online for students to read for free, following an agreement between the university and Google, the online search giant. The collection will come online in two years, just as the library closes its doors for major renovation work. The work of putting the books online started in September, and about 5,000-10,000 titles are digitalised every month. The project costs the library nothing. "All we have to do is take the books off the shelves and blow the dust off," said head librarian Sylvia Van Peteghem.

Brussels gets more residents

Courtesy Hotel Oris



Steven Tate

Brussels Capital Region gained 15,000 residents last year, accounting for more than 20% of

Belgium's overall increase in population of 73,000, according to the Statistical Office of the European Union. For the first time ever,

Anderlecht topped 100,000 and Molenbeek-Sint-Jan accounted for more than 20% of the capital's growth – while Vorst was the only

commune to lose inhabitants. Since passing the million-resident milestone in 2003, the capital's population has continued to grow every year – in keeping with trends in Flanders. But there is a difference between Brussels and other growing cities. The population of Ghent, for example, has risen by 1,300 every year since 1997 through urban planning efforts to retain students as residents once they finish their studies. Brussels, on the other hand, is losing its Belgian inhabitants due to increased prices in the housing market – while foreign nationals coming to the capital have more than made up for the loss, according to the Brussels Region Bureau of Statistics. Seven out of ten residents in Brussels are Belgian, with nationals from France, Morocco and Italy leading the list of foreigners. Still, Brussels' population fails to make the top 100 of world cities, since most sources only count the city centre (Brussels 1000) and not all 19 municipalities of Brussels Region.

Biotech company Innogenetics cuts subsidiary adrift

Ghent-based biotechnology company Innogenetics has decided to stop pumping money into its loss-making subsidiary Genimmune. The parent company has been looking for a partner for Genimmune – which made a loss of €9.8 million in the first nine months of 2007 – but so far without success. Unless a buyer can be found quickly, 82 jobs will have to go, the company says. Genimmune was split off from the parent company in October to concentrate on the development of vaccines. The split followed the disastrously expensive failure of an attempt to develop a hepatitis C vaccine. In the meantime the parent company, whose results for 2007 are expected to show a small profit, will focus on the more successful diagnostics business, including tests to determine how suitable a drug is for a given patient. Innogenetics hopes that the announcement that it is cutting off financing to Genimmune will put pressure on potential partners to come forward in the short time that remains.

Bluetongue costs farmers €45 million

The farmers' union Boerenbond estimates that Flemish farmers have lost €45 million due to the bluetongue outbreak. The union is calling on the government to recognise the epidemic as an official disaster so that cattle farmers can receive compensation.

"Wise men" propose restructuring of higher education

Degree courses at bachelor's level which fail to attract a minimum of 80 students will be "rationalised" after 2012, according to a clean-sweep of higher education proposed last week by a panel of experts reporting to Flemish education minister Frank Vandenbroucke.

The measure covers all bachelor's degrees in universities and professional high-schools. These must attract 80 students by 2012 and 115 by 2015. If not, some courses could close, while others will be merged with other institutions. According to initial estimates, 47 courses would be affected by the first cut-off in 2012, with a further 87 failing to meet the minimum in 2015. Vandenbroucke asked the committee to come forward with plans to tackle the problem of "overlapping" in courses, where several institutions offer essentially the same course to a small number of students. Similar rules could come later for master's level degrees. In the meantime, the education minister has decided there will be no new courses offered in higher education until 2011 at the earliest, in preparation for the wave of rationalisations. The committee, chaired by Professor Luc Soete of Maastricht University, included representatives of the high-schools and universities, including the rectors of Ghent, Leuven and Brussels VUB universities.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



Price rises "tolerable" says bank governor

The purchasing power of the average Belgian family has not diminished, according to National Bank director Guy Quaden, speaking last week. Disposable income rose in 2006 and 2007 by 4.5% per annum, making a real increase of 2.5%. Quaden admitted that rising inflation of over 3% was not pleasant, but stressed that it is also "not intolerable". "There have never been so many Belgians going on holiday, or buying a new car," he said. "Consumption has gone up in line with incomes."

Mobistar declares war on fixed lines

Mobile phone operator Mobistar is to launch a new product which the company hopes will attract customers away from the fixed lines of Belgacom. The product, due to be launched this week, follows on from a pilot project called Mobistar At Home, which allowed low-cost mobile calls from a "home zone" to all fixed lines. As a result, some 65,000 households have cancelled their fixed line contracts. At present, 35% of homes no longer have a rented Belgacom line, and polls suggest another 28% would be ready to get rid of theirs if an alternative existed.

Limburg towns form united front against headscarf ban

Six municipalities in Limburg province have formed a coalition to oppose the spread of the ban on Muslim headscarves worn by municipal staff. The six came together at the invitation of Hasselt burgomaster Herman Reynders, whose municipal council later this month faces the first of a series of proposals to ban the headscarf. These have been tabled by Vlaams Belang in Hasselt, followed by Genk, Maaseik, Houthalen-Helchteren, Heusden-Zolder and Leopoldsburg. A similar proposal was last week rejected in Beringen, but other bans have been successfully passed in Antwerp, Ghent, Lokeren, Brussels municipality, Ninove and Lier. In Lier, meanwhile, immigrant organisations have suspended all official contacts with the municipality in protest at the ban.

Protesting police stop alcohol and speed checks

The Belgian roads could be more dangerous than ever in the coming weeks. The traffic police are refusing to carry out special checks on alcohol and speeding on the roads in protest at the lack of resources allocated to night-shifts and weekend assignments, the police union VSOA said. The work-to-rule will also cover police spot-checks on the transport of dangerous substances and on heavy loads. The budget for unsocial hours has been cut this year to €6 million, down from €8 million in 2007, the union said – a claim denied by interior minister Patrick Dewael. The final decision will only be taken at a "budget conclave" planned for 23-24 February, a spokesperson said.



TRANSPORT

Taking to the water

How one Flemish company is keeping trucks off the road



The motorways of Flanders could be a bit less congested in future due to a new initiative by cement producer Eternit. The company has decided to switch transportation of raw materials such as sand from roads to inland waterways. The company expects this measure will take 1,600 trucks off the roads each year.

Eternit needs vast quantities of sand to produce cladding for building exteriors and fire protection products. Both Eternit and its sand supplier Sibelco are conveniently situated on a canal. Eternit CEO André Hoste says that opting for transport by inland waterways was a logical choice. He argues that the scale of the mobility problem

in Flanders means that companies should do all they can to provide solutions. "We've been transporting cement by barge for several years. Using inland waterways to ship sand supplies means that there will be up to 6,000 fewer trucks clogging Flemish roads every year."

The sand – which is one of the basic ingredients of Eternit products – is carried by barge from Sibelco in Dessel, Antwerp province, to Eternit's plant at Kapelle-op-den-Bos in Flemish Brabant. Eternit is also examining whether other raw materials can be transported by the region's waterways.

Sibelco general manager Mark

Stulens notes that inland waterways are not a cheap option, but they fit with his company's long term goal of sustainable transportation. At present Sibelco transports half of its sand production – two million tonnes – via inland waterways. "If all the sand went by road, we would have a 1,500-kilometre traffic jam on our hands," Stulens told *Flanders Today*.

The Flemish government is keen to support any business initiatives that can benefit the environment. Flemish environment minister Hilde Crevits has paid close attention to developments at Eternit and is convinced that inland waterways can benefit the environment and make roads more civilised.

Beer brewed by amateurs wins top rating



Alan Hope

Four amateur brewers from the West Flanders village of Woesten have been named as the best brewers in the world by

the readers of the beer website Ratebeer.com. The beer from the famous abbey of Westvleteren lost top spot in the ratings to the US-brewed Oak Aged Dark

Lord Russian. The four men run Struise Brouwers in Woesten, a stone's throw from Westvleteren. They began as hobbyists, and later took over an old brewery, calling their enterprise after an ostrich farm two of them also run nearby (*struisvogel* is an ostrich in Dutch). They produce three beers: the Kloeke Blonde, the Struise Rosse, and the Pannepot.

Their first success was in Copenhagen, where their beers were sold in specialist shops and were picked up by American tourists who then spread the word back home. Even now in Belgium, their beers sell best in shops frequented by Americans, said Carlo Grootaert, one of the four. The beers are made when there is demand, and matured until they are ready to be sent out. "We won't deliver beer that isn't ready," Mr Grootaert said. "Whoever wants our drinks just has to wait."

BUSINESS FLASH



Nokia Siemens

Nokia Siemens Networks (NSN), the local affiliate of the Finnish-German telecoms equipment company, is to transfer the bulk of the activities to a new central facility in Bergen/Mons. The company is currently based at three sites in Flanders – Herentals, Diegem and Huizingen. The move, likely to affect up to 510 workers, is part of the company's plans to centralise its network activities. NSN's Belgian activities include supplying the local telecom providers and those of up to 15 African mobile phone operators.

Monte Paschi

Monte Paschi Belgium, the local affiliate of the Siena-based financial institution, is to be sold. The move follows the parent company's decision to sell its French and Benelux activities following their strong recent growth. The bank operates five local branches in addition to its central office and is one of the key players in the expat market segment.

Godiva

Godiva, the Brussels-based chocolates company, recently acquired by the Turkish Ulker company, is to open up to 50 stores a year over the next three years. The new outlets are expected in China, Japan, Korea and the Middle East.

Option

Option, the Leuven-based telecoms developer, is for the first time to sell a plug-and-play device for mobile phones to the general public. The company, long a supplier of mobile phone producers such as Nokia, Motorola, Ericsson, has developed a new range of products that allow customers to surf the net from their portable telephone.

Nestlé

Nestlé, the Swiss food group, is to transfer its European pension funds to Belgium thanks to the attractive fiscal status of pan-European funds in this country. According to the local pension funds association, more than 10 large companies are considering a similar move.

UPS

UPS, the local affiliate of the US-based transport and express courier company, is planning to set up a network of drop boxes shortly. The move follows the recent EU decision to liberalise postal services by 2011. UPS operates a fleet of 160 trucks with 750 employees locally.

KBC Securities

KBC Securities, the affiliate of Flanders' largest financial institution, has been criticised by the Dutch financial markets authorities for manipulating the shares of its competitor Fortis in 2005.

Brussels Airport

Brussels Airport is to invest €17 million to develop a terminal for low-cost airlines using parts of the now-obsolete former terminal building that was phased out in the 1990s. The new facility, to open in April next year, will be able to accommodate six aircraft simultaneously. Some 22 low-cost flights currently operate daily from Brussels Airport where they represent only 3% of the total traffic. The move, expected to bring an additional traffic of up to four million passengers a year, is being carefully monitored by EasyJet which has already expressed an interest in flying to Brussels.



Brussels Airport

TECHNOLOGY

The end of the key

A Flemish business takes the lead in biologically-based security systems



Local businesses are installing fingerprint recognition systems

Lisa Bradshaw

Standing on my stoop struggling to find the keys at the bottom of my purse once again, my mind went back to a bed & breakfast in West Flanders where I had recently stayed. One swipe of your finger, and you're inside the place.

This is thanks to NetBizz, a security systems company that operates out of Kortrijk. Owned by brothers Guy and Yves Carpentier, Bio Lock uses fingerprinting technology to create digital locking systems. You just run a finger (or

thumb) down the sensor to input your print, and you'll be able to get into your home or business without keys or security cards. "You don't need a key in your pocket anymore," says Guy Carpentier (who also owns the aforementioned bed & breakfast). "You can't lose it, you can't copy it, you can't give it to someone else."

Those last two are important for the hotel industry, for instance. The biometric locking devices come with software that allows the user to assign a certain lock to a certain fingerprint for a specified

period of time. There are no keys or electronic key cards to lose or to copy, increasing a hotel's security against theft.

Similar advantages can be found in corporations where employees have access to specific areas only. The system can be set to keep records of entries. "It's proof that a certain person came in at a certain time. With a card, you can always claim that somebody else used it. With your finger, you can't do that," explains Carpentier. And the systems are connectable to the internet. "If you have a company

with factories in Japan, the United States and South Africa, you can scan the fingerprint of your new manager, and he can open anything he needs to across the world." For normal households, the NetBizz systems keep you from locking yourself out or from worrying that your kids will lose their keys. You can add and delete fingerprints at any time.

At first NetBizz ordered parts from overseas and put the systems together themselves here. Now they are able to import whole units, which they match to software and train electricians to install. They can usually adapt any existing alarm system to work with their control systems and add in some fun features, like assigning personalised preferences – such as lighting or music – which begin when your fingerprint hits the pad.

NetBizz has been in business four years now and is the only company of its kind in Flanders. It's always a challenge to convince people to switch technologies, but Carpentier says they are starting to make some progress. "There is a hotel in Paris that is now using digital systems to open its doors, and Volvo has announced that they want to make cars with digital recognition. You also find it in laptops now." The cost of installing the bio lock systems varies widely according to need, but a household version generally starts at €500.

Carpentier feels their company is simply getting an early foothold in an industry that is inevitable. "Within five years, you are

going to have fingerprint systems everywhere to start your car, to open your door, to enter your safe – because it's easy," he says. The company is now looking into technology based on face recognition.

Those who see their fingerprints forever in the hands of hotel managers across the world need not worry – at least with NetBizz. The fingerprints are translated into codes, so your fingerprint itself is not actually recorded anywhere in the system.

Online
www.bioblock.be

China calling

Port of Antwerp bids for Chinese business

The Port of Antwerp wants to increase its profile in China in a bid to attract more of the growing trade from the Far East to the Scheldt docks. Chinese companies have up until now chosen Rotterdam over Antwerp as their favourite entry point to Europe, but the port authorities believe they can persuade ships to steer a course for the Scheldt estuary.

The port is making its bid under the slogan "Antwerp, fastest route to Europe", focusing on the relatively congestion-free motorway network, where Rotterdam sits at the heart of one of Europe's most congested regions.

Luc Arnouts, the new commercial director of the Port of Antwerp Authority, argues that Antwerp offers several advantages to Chinese companies. "In contrast to Rotterdam, Antwerp is likely to be congestion-free until at least 2013," he says. "It also has a high level of productivity at the terminals."

The port authority will create a China team with five full-time employees. In addition, Arnouts says he already has 80 visits to China planned over the coming six months.

The port has also embarked on tentative talks with the port of Rotterdam on a possible pipeline to handle chemicals between the two ports. A 100-km pipeline already connects the two ports to transport crude oil. A major chemical firm is involved in discussions.

Online
www.portofantwerp.be



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DESIGN

Polishing the silver

The Belgian Designer of the Year is a master of metals. Just don't ask her if they are Middle-Eastern inspired

Wolf & Wolf



Steven Tate

Nedda El-Asmar defies categorisation – much like her exquisite creations for French luxury brand Hermès, Swedish tableware maker Gense and Germany's famed porcelain company Villeroy & Boch. Working mostly in silver, stainless steel and pewter, the stylish smith has carved a place for herself in a world historically dominated by men – upending assumptions in sensual metalwork and glass pieces that are as contemplative as they are seductive. You'll find a wonderful sampling of the work in the exhibition *Nedda El-Asmar: Verleidelijke eenvoud* (Seductive Simplicity), currently at Ghent's Design Museum.

Named "Belgian Designer of the Year 2007" by the Kortrijk Interior Design Foundation, *Week-end Knack* and *Le Vif/L'Express*, El-Asmar was born in Aalst in 1968 of a Flemish mother and a Palestinian father. She studied at Antwerp's famed Royal Academy of Fine Arts – the same school where Dries Van Noten, Ann Demeulemeester and other world-famous Flemish fashion stars got their training.

But El-Asmar was more fascinated by bling than frocks, so she started out studying jewellery design. From there, she segued into silver-smithing. Following gradua-

tion, she left the continent to get her MA in goldsmithing, silver-smithing, metalwork and jewellery at London's Royal Academy of Art.

Even before finishing her studies, El-Asmar could call herself an award-winning designer: Britain's Royal Mint and Levis were among the first to recognise her talent, launching a career that has been rich in recognition, as well as commissions. "I see working for a company as a challenge," she says. "Of course, I have to

respect a company's image – but I also have to find myself within it. When I finish a piece, I have to recognise my style in it – even if it's a commissioned work."

El-Asmar lent her expertise early on to legendary French tableware maker Puiforcat, whose eponymous designer had designed his last collection in 1938.

El-Asmar breathed life into a dormant brand, with warm yet iconic pieces that are what she calls "seductively simple".

Since then, she has won awards in France, Scandinavia and, of course, Belgium. She finds inspiration from various sources: the form of a tea leaf sparked her imagination, resulting in the sleek, award-winning "Appetize" set of forks and spoons, which will soon be available in a set of full cutlery. The Welsh wedding tradition of a groom carving out a "love spoon" to offer his bride was El-Asmar's inspiration for her own "lovespoons", which fit one into another to form a rosebud.

Given her atypical (for Belgium) family name, some might expect exoticism to figure into her work, but El-Asmar doesn't trade in cultural clichés: if you're looking for Middle-Eastern motifs, look elsewhere. "If I carried my Flemish

mother's last name, no one would even ask me whether my father's heritage mattered in my work," she says. The question gets asked often, as her weary, well-rehearsed patience makes evident. Indeed, no one asks Philippe Starck if his inflatable

chairs, plexiglass lamps and décor for boutique hotels are products of the Frenchman's

Teutonic heritage and New York fashion designer Ralph Lauren regularly appropriates tweedy Englishness for his label. Look at the buildings of architect Zaha Hadid, and you'll be hard-pressed to find any traces of her native Iraq. So national origin and heritage are red herrings when it comes to design today. The one work that El-Asmar has created that might be considered Middle Eastern-influenced is "Narghile", a water pipe in pewter – but that award-winning piece was commissioned by the French company Airdiem. "And there was one coffee set that was inspired by Islamic architecture," she remembers.

The Belgian silversmith does work for companies from her homeland: Royal Boch, Fibru and de Ster all draw on her talents. All of her other work has been commissioned by foreign companies. Still, she remains based in Antwerp, her studio set up in her house. "With the internet and communications, there is no need for me to be physically in Paris or London." Being a satellite operation has afforded El-Asmar a freedom that those toiling in those capitals don't have. "Because those cities are so expensive, if I were living there I would have to

Based on a Welsh wedding tradition: "lovespoons"

take on whatever job presented itself to make money to survive."

By caring more about her work than her profile, El-Asmar has been able to control how she plays the game – although she would counter that she isn't even playing. "I don't have a grand master plan. I have no problem working on exclusive pieces," she says, "but I'm also open to working with an entity like Ikea. It's the feeling I get from the company that matters. If I don't enjoy a working situation, then it's not worth it."

Between conjuring up deluxe vases, champagne buckets and assorted tableware for high-end companies, El-Asmar teaches jewellery design and metalwork at her alma mater in Antwerp. She balances a practical approach with encouraging creativity. "When I finished my studies, I saw that I could really make a living doing this," she remembers. "There's a difference between creating a one-of-a-kind piece and actually being able to produce even a small run of the item."

And there is also a difference between an artist and an artisan. Nedda El-Asmar manages to be both.

Nedda El-Asmar: Verleidelijke eenvoud, until 27 April, Design Museum Gent, Jan Breydelstraat 5.

Online

www.nedda.be
<http://design.museum.gent.be>



Don't forget the porcelain: El-Asmar's "Tea for Two"

Blooming talent

The Flemish flair for flower arranging



Shine on: Leo Aerts' industrial vase

Derek Blyth

It's strange and, indeed, almost an eco crime, but we like to buy freshly-cut flowers to put in vases. This is especially true in winter, when the fields outside are barren, and we need something to remind us of summer. This means flying cut flowers half way across the planet, causing untold tons of toxic emissions, and contributing almost inevitably to global climate confusion. But we do it anyway, because we need to do something to lift the winter gloom, and nothing works quite so well as a single orchid sitting in an elegant vase on the dining table.

The Flemish have long had a distinguished tradition in creating artistic flower arrangements. Jan Brueghel, son of the famous Pieter Brueghel, was known as "Flower Brueghel" because he turned out endless paintings of fastidious flower arrangements. Displaying precious flowers like tulips became an art in 16th-century Antwerp



Rough edge: Bart Bacarne's concrete vase

and has survived to this day in sophisticated flower shops like the ones on the Kouter in Ghent and Kasteleinsplein in Brussels.

The state of floral art in this country can be gauged in a new exhibition at the Design Flanders Gallery in downtown Brussels. *Flower Power* assembles a collection of vases by 26 designers who have put considerable creative thought into the proper way to show off exotic flowers.

Some of the vases are superbly engineered structures designed to support the delicate flower stems, like Rembrandt Jordan's fragile silver vases. Others achieve their effect by the use of sensuous materials like pottery or metal, such as



Natural beauty: Sylvain Willenz's bamboo containers

Leo Aerts' sleek industrial vases. You might be inspired by Sylvain Willenz's natural bamboo vases, or take a fancy to Hugo Meert's playful clay designs. Then again you might be amused by Bart Bacarne's displays of fragile plants in rough-hewn concrete.

The designs may be catering to a frivolous taste, hardly worthy of serious attention, yet these contemporary vases have enormous suggestive power, especially when they are displayed in perfect lighting conditions, against clean white walls, in a hushed design gallery.

Until 13 April,
Design Flanders Gallery,
Kanselarijstraat 19, Brussels

Online
www.designflanders.be

Stage struck in Brussels

Professional English theatre in Flanders is elusive, but a new troupe is taking the stage in the capital

Lisa Bradshaw

From the avant-garde warehouse spaces to the splendid KVS in Brussels, theatre-going in Flanders is a rich and rewarding experience – if you speak Dutch or French. Professional English-language theatre has never gained a foothold, even though multi-cultural Brussels serves as the EU capital.

There have been two attempts at professional English theatre – in Ghent and in Bruges. Both are currently in limbo. "The main thing against us was time," says Clare Allen, one of the founders of The English Theatre of Bruges, which hosted professional theatre companies from Britain last year in the beautiful old cinema Zwarte Huis. The ambitious programme of 18 shows was well reviewed, and the audiences responded enthusiastically – but there weren't enough people in the seats. With two million English-speaking tourists coming to Bruges every year, The English Theatre thought they had a sure audience, but "it took longer to take off than we thought," says Allen.

The English Theatre soon realised that tourists didn't really come to Bruges to go to the theatre. Still, when Allen stood on the nearby Markt with a signboard, "our audience numbers went way up," she says. But the city authorities in Bruges chased her off the popular main square and wouldn't grant her a permit to hold a sign there. In addition, the group could not get the city to list their shows in any tourist information or even to hang up posters in the tourist office. To get a professional theatre company off the ground, says Allen, "the city has to be behind you. Sadly, in our case, the City of Bruges did not exactly bend over backwards to help us out."

The English Theatre is now taking a break to look for a new venue, as it cannot any longer afford the space in the Zwarte Huis. They hope to be up and running again sometime and to stage some of their own productions.

Brussels, though, seems like a more obvious choice for a successful professional English theatre company – yet there has never been one. Past attempts have all failed, and there is one very good reason: "Professional theatre companies

are all very well subsidised," explains Allen. "In Belgium, you cannot get funding if your organisation is not in one of the national languages." This view echoes that of the amateur English theatre companies in Brussels – which, in the absence of any professional troupes, are flourishing.



Audience needed: the critically-acclaimed British troupe 1927 presented *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* for The English Theatre of Bruges

"Professional theatre is alive and kicking, of course – the West End appears to be doing very nicely," says Paul Davis of the English Comedy Club, one of six amateur theatre groups in Brussels. "But even then you'll find that they are heavily dependent on subsidies, sponsorships and donations. All of this could be replicated in Belgium, of course, but I think it is perfectly natural that most subsidies from Belgian cultural organisations should be directed towards local language events."

Fair enough. But there is one granting programme that could help change the climate, and Accent Productions, which plans to be Brussels' first successful professional English theatre company, is hanging some hopes on it. BreXpat, sponsored by the King Baudouin Foundation, funds projects that bring expats and Belgians together. This is also the goal of Accent Productions, and one reason they think their company will go beyond the first season. "To reach a higher level of quality, we want the Belgian public to participate in this," says Michel Didier. "We are looking to address more Belgians."

Didier and his wife, Liz Merrill, founded Accent Productions and will stage its premiere performance in a couple of months. Merrill, an American, worked in New York television production before moving to Brussels seven years ago. She's directed projects for amateur theatre groups, particularly for the American Theatre Company, where she also served as president. The pair will hire professional actors and technicians for a production of Edward Albee's *The Goat or Who is Sylvia?* in April at La Comédie Claude Volter. Of the play's four actors, two are English, one American and one Belgian.

Didier, who is French, hopes to appeal to both the Dutch- and French-speaking communities and that a breXpat grant will open doors to funding from the local language groups. He says Accent's solid business plan and communications strategy should also help them to succeed where no other such efforts have before. They also did their homework, talking to many professional companies in Belgium before launching. In any case, Accent is already looking to the future. "We have our next three shows lined up already," smiles Didier.

Have a space for The English Theatre Company to perform in Bruges? Contact Clare Allen on 050.61.31.20 or clare@tematema.com.

Online
www.tematema.com
www.theatreinbrussels.com

NEIGHBOURHOODS

Street of dreams

The Design Museum brings newcomers into Jan Breydelstraat; the rest of the street makes them stay



Pick up a bunch of tulips at Papaver

Lisa Bradshaw

You know you've found a place worth finding when you spend half a day in a street that only takes 10 minutes to stroll down from one end to the other. Ghent's Jan Breydelstraat is a treasure trove of shops, canal views, eateries, friendly merchants and one reliable burst of flowering colour, even in the winter. You heard it here first: you will not find a better street in Ghent on which to while away an afternoon.

Most people's first encounter with the street involves a visit to the Design Museum, which moved into the 18th-century Hotel de Coninck more than 80 years ago, making it the oldest current tenant of Jan Breydelstraat. Others moved in, drawn by the street's excellent location, linking the city's Castle of the Counts with the Graslei/Korenlei quays. Breydelstraat also boasts the city's oldest original wooden façades.

The street is anchored at one end by the large Kloskanthuis, with its beautiful hand-made lace and linens, as well as jewellery and silver products. At the other end, near the castle, is the unendingly interesting Ghent Marine Gallery, which stocks marine and airplane objects. It's a marvellous shop to browse in and offers a hundred little surprises – don't miss, for instance, the hot air balloon models, which come in three sizes and are priced modestly enough to hang in a kid's room for a colourful, whimsical touch.

On one side of the store, amid globes and vintage posters, are the less expensive models of ships, such as the "HMS Victory" and the "Amerigo Vespucci". On the other side are the pricier limited editions, like the 1955 Chris-Craft Cobra speedboat, a large model "with interior leather and made piece-by-piece completely by hand in France," explains gallery

owner Mario Van Riet. He opened the shop 13 years ago but lives on the Flemish coast, where he races speedboats.

In between these two worthy establishments on Breydelstraat lies an abundance of riches. Antiek Claude Demeyer specialises in crystal chandeliers. Zora Design does window decors – rich fabrics beckon from their own windows. Galerie Lingier stocks oils by early 20th-century Belgian artists, as well as modern paintings and sculpture. Phulkari carries jewellery, sheer scarves and old books. What's wonderful about Breydelstraat is the lost-in-time feel, cultivated by the style of the shops. Garderobe, for instance, may have shiny, new jewellery, but it leaves the cracks in its vintage tile floors.

This is certainly true with The Fallen Angels, one of the jewels of Breydelstraat. There are actually two shops under the name, one run by Isabelle Steel and the other

by her daughter Ganesha Vancoillie. The daughter runs the "newer" side of their collections of vintage and collectable merchandise – from after the Second World War up until the 1970s. Her mother stocks collections from the pre-war period. Vancoillie was born and grew up amid the merchants of Jan Breydelstraat; her mother still lives in a house above the shop.

The Fallen Angels is packed from floor to ceiling with historical culture. Steel knows her trade and buys only the best in antique dolls, stuffed toys, tin toys and religious sculptures that kitsch fans would die for. In one cupboard she has early 20th-century cameras next to 19th-century porcelain figures. Another small case contains nothing

but her daughter Ganesha Vancoillie. The daughter runs the "newer" side of their collections of vintage and collectable merchandise – from after the Second World War up until the 1970s. Her mother stocks collections from the pre-war period. Vancoillie was born and grew up amid the merchants of Jan Breydelstraat; her mother still lives in a house above the shop.

When you're ready for a rest on Breydelstraat, the best of the less-expensive eateries is the Brooderie, right across from the Design Museum. Its light wood decor and beautifully-tiled floor is an update on the old Flemish wood interior, and its menu of fresh soups and snacks is varied. The coffee drinks are especially good, and maybe they'll even let you take yours outside to a little unexpected square of grass and benches with a magnificent view of the canal and the city's medieval Vleeshuis, or meat hall.

The Brooderie is also a bed & breakfast with very reasonable



Savour the Silk Road at Steppe & Oase

ing but old communion cards. There isn't an inch in the shop that doesn't hold some precious, delicate relic of decades past.

Steel specialises particularly in postcards, as evidenced by dozens of albums and at least 100 long boxes, labelled according to subject: "Limburg", "Antwerpen I", "Cinema, male artists". There are tens of thousands to sift through (though some of them are only available to serious collectors). When I was there, a man came in looking for old postcards of Bridget Bardot. He found them. Steel gets a lot of fashion students, too, searching for illustrations of past styles. Some of the most fascinating – and funny – are a line of sweetheart postcards from and for soldiers, always with a pink hue. There are also a number of hand-made postcards from the World War periods. All of these only cost a few euro each. Make sure to buy something so you can see her operate the antique cash register.

The Fallen Angels shops are a big draw in Ghent, appealing to both locals and tourists – and the occasional famous person. Last summer, they saw Sean Lennon

prices for the location. Also on the street is the three-star Hotel Gravensteen, a 19th-century mansion completely renovated in its original Second Empire style.

Nearby, Steppe & Oase, which stocks ethnographic objects and textiles from the famous "silk road" between Rome and China, has actually become better known for its owners' hospitality than its merchandise. Every spring and summer, they serve little bites and tea in their fabulously green back garden.

For a higher-end dining experience, The House of Elliot is a Ghent classic. Based on the British TV series of the same name, it is completely decked out in 1920s style and includes a gallery of mannequins with period clothing. In the summer, you can sit outside in the back right on the canal.

On your way home, don't forget to stop at Dulce for hand-made chocolates and at Papaver Bloemen en Planten for a bouquet of flowers. The only shop to spill out onto the cold street in the middle of February, it serves as a reminder that summer is not far away.



Hunt in The Fallen Angels for collectables

Samba at the Seaside

The Ostend ball that no one can afford to miss



Party by the sea

Steven Tate

Don't be scared off by the name. The spirit of "Le Bal de Rat Mort" gets lost in the translation. In English, the Dead Rat Ball might seem, at best, to be a celebration for exterminators, at worst a shindig for sickos. Instead, this more than a century old tradition is the social event of

the season in Ostend. Last year, 2,500 people turned up to the Pirates of the Caribbean-themed ball, partying in the five rooms of the famed Ostend Casino Kursaal. Classical music, as well as jazz, big band and top 40 beats catered to different musical tastes, keeping the crowd grooving. And all for a good cause – proceeds from the

event go to local charities such as the Salvation Army and organisations to help the handicapped.

The first-ever Bal de Rat Mort took place in 1898. Two years before, a group of Ostend revelers had gone to Paris to take in some entertainment, and found themselves at a cabaret not far from the famed Moulin Rouge.

Like English pubs, "a lot of cabarets have strange names," says Ostend resident Maurice Quaghebeur. "The Black Dog, Crazy Horse... and the cabaret that gave our ball its name." The 1896 partygoers returned from Paris inspired by the exotic dancers, infectious music and ribald revelry. They decided to bring some Gallic glamour into the society scene back home – and, thus the Bal de Rat Mort was born.

The creators of the Flemish celebration were members of the Circle Coecilia, a charitable society created in 1862. The society became the Royal Circle Coecilia 50 years later by order of King Albert I, and, over the years, the group has included esteemed Ostend residents such as the artist James Ensor. At first, its philanthropic endeavours focused on helping widows and orphans of fishermen lost at sea and other impoverished families.

Maurice Quaghebeur carries on the tradition as a member of the society, and says that its efforts not only aid those less fortunate through funds raised by the Royal Circle's activities, but they are also important in preserving the local heritage. "Whether people attend or not, events like the Bal de Rat Mort are essential parts of Ostend," he says.

Over time, the Royal Circle was joined by the Confraternity, an organisation of politicians, aristocrats and other important people in Ostend, in hosting the Bal de Rat Mort. This year, the ball cele-

brates its 110th anniversary with the theme of Samba Carnaval in Bahia. "South American music, dancers – the full ambiance of Rio," promises Quaghebeur. People can come in formal dress, but Quaghebeur says that it is far more fun to throw yourself into the spirit of the evening by dressing according to the theme. It is also more lucrative: cash prizes totaling €8,000 are awarded to the best-dressed, most gorgeous and so on, with a competitive edge added to the festivities. But, given the bracing breezes off the North Sea, many might skip the skimpy costumes associated with the balmy Brazilian festival.

Although the event marks the highlight of the Royal Circle Coecilia's agenda for the year, the 350-member society – composed of prominent men in the Ostend community – remains active with monthly game nights, summer barbecues and weekend excursions. But the ball is the event no one misses. When asked what costume he might be wearing this year, Royal Circle president Quaghebeur is coy. "I haven't made up my mind yet," he says. He probably just doesn't want us stealing his idea.

Le Bal de Rat Mort, Saturday, March 1, 9 pm, Casino Kursaal, Monacoplein, Ostend, telephone 059.70.11.99. Tickets €30 each.

Online
www.ratmort.be

FAIR

In the stars

Want to cut crime in the cities? A paranormal fair tells you how

Looking for a "brain machine to help stimulate creativity"? Then look no further. Two halls, three auditoriums and one exhibition hall have been booked for the seventh edition of the ECO-Therapeutica/Paranatura Fair. More than 200 exhibitors are coming to Leuven from the Benelux, Germany and France. They will be there to address matters of the mind, body and spirit. So if you are looking for a yoga teacher, massage therapist, Feng Shui specialist or lifestyle coach to get your well-being in order, you know where to go this weekend.

There are actually two separate sides to the fair. The ECO-Therapeutica segment deals with new treatments and homeopathy, along with traditional remedies used to deal with ailments and conditions that are more commonly treated with pharmaceuticals. Alternative approaches to health such as aromatherapy and phytotherapy are gaining credibility among a sceptical public. Disciplines such as Bach's flower therapy, foot reflexo-

logy, acupuncture, shiatsu and other treatments will be explained by experts in the field.

As part of the "Consciousness, Art & Science" exhibition, lectures will be given on topics such as "The Effects of Transcendental Meditation on Preventing Violent Crime in Washington, DC". And there will be demonstrations by The Institute of Noetic Science, a body that researches the powers and potential of consciousness using photographs and videos of water crystals.

The other side of the fair is handled by Paranatura, the non-profit organisation that holds paranormal fairs throughout the year in Flanders. Aura-reading, chakra-alignment and psychometry (the art of divining someone's past and future through holding an object belonging to the person) will be explored by practitioners, alongside with readers of tarot card, palms, tea leaves and crystals.

A recent visit to a Paranatura sponsored fair at the Flanders Expo in Ghent proved that

it's not only hippies and mystics interested in numerology, astrology and other arts. Grannies, young couples pushing strollers and groups of teenage girls and boys were all eager to have their fortunes told. "It's a cool way to spend a Sunday," said 17-year-old Irene, who was eager to find out from one tarot reader whether she should stay with her boyfriend – or start seeing his best friend. "I don't really put too much stock in it," she said, divulging that, as a Libra, she often finds it hard to make decisions. Despite her denials, a little psychic push was all she needed to decide to stick with her boyfriend.

Irene and her contemporaries will be out in full force this weekend, given Leuven's status as a university town. If you happen to stop by, it's worth noting a few rules about seeing a reader: (1) talk as little as possible – someone reading your tarot or palm should see the truth without your volunteering details; (2) if the reader can tell your past or present, his or her

readings are probably solid for the future (although if they say, "you were in an accident as a child" and you have a scar on your face that indicates just that, they get no points; and (3) just as meteorologists get weather forecasts wrong, a reader can give a bad reading: they're only telling you what conditions look like for the future. And remember, as Shakespeare wrote,

"It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves".

ECO Therapeutica/Paranatura, February 23-24, 10 am to 7 pm, Brabantia, Leuven.

Online
www.paranatura.be





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Beursschouwburg

Auguste Ortstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be
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Bozar (Paleis voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
FEB 21 12.30 Filip Suys, violin; Jean-Michel Charlier, clarinet; Catherine Spileers, piano; Gabriel Mourey, poet: Stravinsky, Khachaturian, Milhaud. 20.00 Liege Philharmonic conducted by Petri Sakari: Sibelius' Symphonic Poem op 112, Bruckner's Symphony No 6
FEB 22 20.00 Hilary Hahn, violin; Valentina Lisitsa, piano: Franck, Mozart, Ysaye, Ives, Brahms
FEB 23 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 (050.84.05.87)
FEB 24 11.00 Lavinia Meijer, harp: Dussek, Kuhne, Byrnes, Caplet, Patterson, Salzedo

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39
FEB 22 12.30 Archino Quartet with Michel Poskin, violin: Webern, Dohnanyi

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be
FEB 22 12.30 Kryptos Quartet and soloists from the Muziekkapel Koningin Elisabeth
FEB 23 20.15 Vlaams Radio Orkest conducted by Stefan Asbury, with Jan Michiels and Inge Spinette, piano; Gert

Francois and Bart Quartier, percussion: Bartok, Ligeti
FEB 24 11.30 Luiza Borac, piano: Liszt, Schubert

Kapel van de Miniemen

Miniemenstraat 62; 02.507.82.00, www.minimes.net
FEB 24 10.30 Chapelle des Minimes Ensemble conducted by Marc Collet, with Marie de Roy, soprano; Joelle Charlier, alto; Joris Bosman, tenor; Conor Biggs, bass: Bach's cantatas BWV 13, 33
FEB 26 20.00 Ensemble Artaserse with Philippe Jaroussky, counter-tenor; Nuria Rial, soprano: Handel, A Scarlatti
FEB 27 20.00 Huelgas Ensemble conducted by Paul Van Nevel: Lassus, Gombert, Manchicourt, Binchois, Tinctoris, Regis, de Orto

Musical Instruments Museum

Hofberg 2; 0900.28.877
FEB 24 11.00 Ronald Van Spaendonck, clarinet; Barbara Doria, piano: Schumann, Lysight, Debussy

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11
FEB 20 12.40-13.30 Hans Ryckelynck, piano: Bach, Busoni, Jongen, Chopin

Royal Music Conservatory

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.507.82.00
FEB 25 20.00 Patricia Kopatchinskaja, violin; Dol Gabetta, cello; Henri Sigfridsson, piano: de Falla, Sibelius, Ginastera, Shostakovich
FEB 28 20.00 Belcea Quartet: Haydn, Britten, Beethoven

Antwerp

Amuz

Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28
FEB 22 21.00 Mezzaluna with Paul O'Dette, Renaissance lute: Flemish polyphony and Italian dances
FEB 24 15.00 Ensemble Quintus: Spanish, English and Italian Baroque music
FEB 28 21.00 Vlaams Radio Koor conducted by Johan Duijck, with Hilde Coppe, soprano; Jan Vandercrabben, baritone; Jan Michiels and Inge Spinette, piano: Brahms' Ein Deutsches Requiem (London version)

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
Concerts at 20.00:
FEB 22 Blindman & Blindman Junior (4X4), 20th anniversary concert
FEB 23 Jerusalem Quartet: Haydn, Wiesenberg, Borodin
FEB 24 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 (050.84.05.87)
FEB 28 Akademie für Alte Musik and Collegium Vocale Gent conducted by Marcus Creed: Handel's Brookes Passion

Bruges

Concertgebouw

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02, www.concertgebouw.be
FEB 21 20.00 Mezzaluna conducted by Peter Van Heyghen, with Paul O'Dette, lute: Franco-Flemish chansons by Petrucci
FEB 28 20.00 Hakan Hardenberger, trumpet; Colin Currie, percussion: Bortz, Norgard, Maric, Takemitsu, Andriessen, Jolivet

Ghent

De Bijloke

Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2, 09.269.92.92
FEB 21 20.00 Vlaams Radio Orkest conducted by Stefan Asbury, with Jan Michiels and Inge Spinette, piano; Gert Francois and Bart Quartier, percussion: Bartok, Ligeti
FEB 23 20.30 Jean-Guihen Queyras, cello: Bach's cello suite No 1 BWV 1007, No 4 BWV 1010
FEB 24 11.00 Jean-Guihen Queyras, cello: Bach's cello suite No 3 BWV 1009, No 5 BWV 1011. 15.00 Jean-Guihen Queyras, cello: Bach's cello suite No 2 BWV 1008, No 6 BWV 1012

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01
FEB 23 20.00 Film concert: Happy End, animation by Hans and Geert op de Beeck (Bel 2007) with Ictus conducted by Georges-Elie Octors: music by Georges Asperghis (in French and English with Dutch surtitles)

Leuven

30CC Schouwburg

Bondgenotenlaan 21; 016.20.30.20
FEB 27 20.00 Vlaams Radio Koor conducted by Johan Duijck, with Hilde Coppe, soprano; Jan Vandercrabben, baritone; Jan Michiels and Inge Spinette, piano: Brahms' Ein Deutsches Requiem (London version)

Ostend

Ostend Kursaal (Casino)

Monacoplein; 070.22.56.00, www.sherpa.be
FEB 22 20.00 I Solisti del Vento conducted by Paul Hillier: Weill's Berliner Requiem, Milhaud, Stravinsky

Opera

Brussels

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39
FEB 26-MAR 12 La Monnaie Symphony Orchestra & Choirs in Wozzeck by Alban Berg conducted by Mark Wigglesworth, staged by David Freeman with Dietrich Henschel/ Werner Van Mechelen, bass-baritones, Claudia Barainsky/Solveig Kringelborn, sopranos

Ghent

Vlaamse Opera

Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02, www.vlaamseopera.be
FEB 22-24 La Strada adapted from Fellini's film. Conducted by Koen Kessels, staged by Waut Koeken with Jeannette Fischer, soprano, Richard Salter, baritone, Yves Saelens, tenor

Jazz & blues

Brussels

Archiduc

Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52
Concerts at 17.00:
FEB 23 Jazzfact + Philip de Schutter
FEB 24 Olivier Cima Quartet

Brasserie de l'Union

Sint-Gillisvoorplein 55; 02.538.15.79 (every Sunday) **FEB 24, MAR 2, 9, 16** Carson Barnes (saxophone) & friends (0487.59.71.96)

Espace 53 Jazz Lounge

Jubelpark 11; 02.732.22.87, www.espace53.be
FEB 22 21.00 The Andy Smeets Band

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193-195; 02.733.13.78
Concerts at 20.30:
FEB 21-23 Octurn, Magic Malik & Nelson Veras **FEB 27** Fabien Degryse Trio

La Brocante Thoumas

Blaesstraat 170; 02.512.13.43 (every Saturday) **FEB 23, MAR 1, 8, 15** Carson Barnes (saxophone) & friends (0487.59.71.96)

Le Grain d'Orge

Waversesteenweg 142; 02.511.26.47
FEB 22 21.30 Les Excello's, blues

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50, www.soundsjazzclub.be
FEB 21 Jean-Francois Maljean invites... **FEB 22** Charles Loos & Stephane Mercier Quartet **FEB 23** Gilles Repond Quartet **FEB 25** Master Session **FEB 26** Da Romeo Band **FEB 27** Chamaquiando, salsa **FEB 28** The Singers Night

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
Concerts at 20.30:
Until FEB 23 Tribute to Roger Van

Haverbeke: **FEB 21** Remember Oscar... **FEB 22** Ali Ryerson-Steve Houben & the New Look Trio **FEB 23** Ali Ryerson & the New Look Trio **FEB 25** Nicolas Simion Group **FEB 27** Andy Houscheid Trio **FEB 28** Varia Quintet: A tribute to Astor Piazzolla

Theatre Saint Michel

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

Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
FEB 29 20.00 Uitende, jazz improvisation by Bik Bent Braam

Borgerhout

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.235.04.90
FEB 24 20.30 Domino Quartet

Rataplan

Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
FEB 22 20.30 t-unit 7

Bruges

De Werf

Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29
FEB 22-23 20.30 Brussels Jazz Orchestra

Pop, rock, hip-hop, soul

Brussels

Beursschouwburg

Auguste Ortstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be
FEB 28 20.30 Dick Black

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89
FEB 23 23.00 Clink Label Night: Camera, Tim Xavier, Tony Rohr. Electric Art Presents: (TBC), Sam Ostyn, Trish Van Eynde

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsststraat 81; 02.218.20.15
FEB 21 20.30 Jean-Louis Aubert

Le Botanique

Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
Concerts at 20.00:
FEB 24 The Sweet Cut + Vinicio Capossela **FEB 26** Bobbie Peru+ Black Francis **FEB 27** Le Loup **FEB 28** Mobil + Psykick Lyrikah

Phoolan Bar

Luxemburgstraat 43; www.phoolan.be
Monthly FEB 21-JUNE 12 18.00 Petra Jordan

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
FEB 22 21.00 Caspa + New Flesh + Grimelock

Theatre 140

Eugène Plaskylaan 140; 02.733.97.08
FEB 23 20.30 Dick Annegarn with Barnabe Wirowski and Jean-Pierre Soules

VK Club

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07
Doors open at 19.30:
FEB 21 21.30 Sean Kingston **FEB 27** 21.30 Collie Buddz **FEB 28** 20.30 Dead Meadow + Kinski

Ghent

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01
FEB 21 20.00 Pere Ubu

Leuven

Het Depot

Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
FEB 22 20.00 Quantic Soul Orchestra with Noelle Scaggs

World, folk

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
FEB 26 20.00 Taraf de Haidouks

Espace Senghor

Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40, www.senghor.be
FEB 22 20.30 Selim Sesler (Turkey)

La Tentation

Laekenstraat 28; 02.223.22.75
FEB 23 20.00 Centro Galego de Bruxelas presents Noche de Carnaval, dance, music, fancy dress competition and Spanish food

Nekkersdal Gemeenschapscentrum

Emile Bockstaellaan 107; 02.421.80.60
FEB 28 20.30 Rusty Roots

Stekerlapatte

Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81, www.stekerlapatte.be
FEB 21-23 21.30 Le Cirque des Mirages (France) **FEB 28** 21.30 Zongora (Eastern European music)

Théâtre Molière

Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00, www.muziekpublieque.be
FEB 22 20.00 Juan Carlos Caceres' Tango Negro Trio + Monica y Dante **FEB 27** 12.30 Broodje Brussel: N'Faly Kouyate, kora (Guinea)

Sint-Pieters-Woluwe 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 music

Antwerp

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00, www.zuiderpershuis.be
FEB 21 20.30 Prins Rama Varma (southern India) **FEB 23** 20.30 Kora Jazz Trio (West Africa) **FEB 27** 20.30 Aygun Baylar (Azerbaijan)

Dance

Brussels

De Pianofabriek

Willem Tellstraat 61
FEB 22-23 Sus Scrofa (lat.), choreographed by Karin Vyncke **FEB 24** Sus Scrofa (lat.), choreographed by Karin Vyncke

Hallen van Schaarbeek

Koninklijke Sinte-Mariastraat 22; 02.218.21.07
Until FEB 22 20.30 Solo, choreographed by Philippe Decoufle

Kaaithheater

Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59
FEB 23 20.30 Zoo in Puzzled, choreographed by Thomas Hauert, music by Zefiro Torna ensemble: Cordier, Dufay, Desprez, Danckerts, Harvey, Holliger
FEB 26-27 20.30 I/II/III/IIII, choreographed by Kris Verdonck

Théâtre 140

Eugène Plaskylaan 140; 02.733.97.08
FEB 27-28 20.30 Kubilai Khan Investigations in Gyration of Barbarous Tribes, staged by Frank Micheletti, hip-hop (Mozambique)

Théâtre National

Emile Jacqmainlaan 115; 02.203.53.03
FEB 26-MAR 1 Chambre blanche, choreographed by Michele Noiret

Théâtre Varia

Scepterstraat 78; 02.640.82.58
Until FEB 23 20.00 CREHAM-Bxl in C'est vrai, choreographed by Jeroen Baeyens

Leuven

Stuk

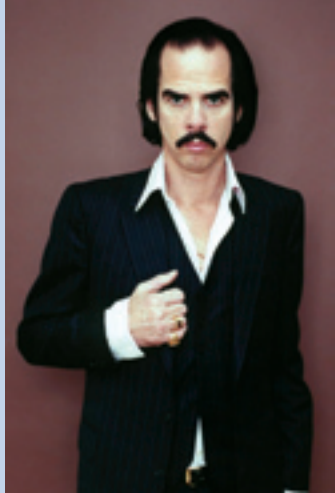
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
FEB 21-22 Volta, choreographed by Annabel Schellekens
FEB 26-28 Move Me Festival – Fathers & Sons: Compagnie Virgilio Sieni in Osso. Repeater, choreographed by Martin Nachbar

Theatre

Brussels

Beursschouwburg

Get your tickets now for...



Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds

1 May, 20.00, Vorst-Nationaal, Victor Rousseaulaan 208, Brussels. Tickets from www.vorstnationaal.be

Nobody delivers musical horror with quite such an undisturbed distance as Nick Cave. Even when the Australian crooner allows the frenzy of his rock-&-roll performance to take over his otherwise cool exterior, he always knows on which end of the piano he's left his cigarette. A long-time resident of Britain, his 1970s punk has melted into the brooding lounge rock of his later years, and an obsession with American roots seeps out the edges. Albums such as *The First-born is Dead* and *Murder Ballads* should have prepared you for Nick's latest, much of which you will hear at the concert: *Dig, Lazarus, Dig!!!*

Auguste Ortstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be
FEB 24 15.00 Theatergroep Max in Het geheven vingertje (in Dutch, for children 10 and over)

Antwerp
deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
FEB 27-28 20.00 Troubleyn in De Koning van het plagiaat, staged by Jan Fabre (in Dutch)

Leuven

30CC Schouwburg
Bondgenotenlaan 21; 016.20.30.20
FEB 22 20.00 That Night Follows Day, written and staged by Tim Etchells (in Dutch)

Visual arts

Brussels

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

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

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
Until MAY 18 Treasures Old and New from Wallonia: a Curious Land, 12th to 16th-century paintings, sculpture, tapestries and religious objects

Centre Albert Marinus
Karrestraat 40; 02.762.62.14
Until FEB 28 Hans Christian Andersen, a selection of art works related to the writings of the Danish author

CIVA
Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.71, www.civa.be
Until MAR 9 MAXXI Museum Rome: Zaha Hadid Architects, models, photographs and video presenting Rome's future Museum of Art for the 21st century

Crown Gallery
Hopstraat 7; 02.514.01.23
FEB 23-APR 12 A Shimmer of Possibility, photographs by Paul Graham

De Loge Architectuurmuseum
Kluisstraat 86; 02.649.86.65
FEB 26-SEP 28 Belgie/Belgique 58, architectural and decorative forms at the time of Belgium's 1958 World Fair, with drawings, photographs, models, posters and furniture

deBuren
Leopoldstraat 6, www.deburen.be
Until MAR 21 Afghanistan 2007, travel photographs by Pieter-Jan De Pue
Espace Architecture La Cambre Flageyplein 19 ; 02.642.24.50
Until FEB 24 European Supermarket: 50 Years, from the opening of the first self-service store in Belgium in 1957 to the construction of supermarkets all over Europe

Espace Photographique Contretype
Verbindingslaan 1; 02.538.42.20
Until MAR 9 Oog in oog, photographs by Andreas Weinand

European Centre for Contemporary Art
Sint Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.31
FEB 22-APR 27 No Borders [Just N.E.W.S.*], works by 29 young European artists

Fondation pour l'Architecture
Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.80, www.fondationpoularchitecture.be
Until APR 20 Landscapes of Architecture: 150 years of Belgian architects' drawings, with work by Joseph Bascourt, Albert Bontridder, Victor Bourgeois, Renaat Braem, Gaston et Maxime Brunfaut, Peter Callebout, Alban Chambon and many others

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

Goethe Institute
Belliardstraat 58; 02.230.39.70
Until APR 17 Fotoporträts, 50 photographs by winners of the Chamisso Prize between 1985 and 2007

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

Jacques Franck Cultural Centre
Waterloosesteenweg 94; 02.538.90.20
Until FEB 24 Ce champ isolé au fond de mon esprit, multimedia group show by members of Brussels' Club Antonin Artaud

Jewish Museum of Belgium
Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63
Until FEB 24 Sarah and her Brothers. The Kaliskis, a family of artists, witnesses of history

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

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

La Fonderie – Brussels Museum of Work and Industry
Ransfortstraat 27; 02.410.99.50
Until MAY 4 Tout feu, tout flamme! La révolution du chauffage, history and evolution of home heating

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

Les Brigittines
Korte Brigittinenstraat; 02.506.43.00
Until FEB 23 Affetti, la derive des sentiments, video installations by Boris and Aliocha Van der Avoort

Royal Army Museum
Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33
Until JUNE 29 (Re)connaissance, 175 ans d'Ordre de Leopold et des ordres nationaux belges
Until NOV 30 A Paintbrush in the Barrel, World War One paintings, drawings and etchings by soldiers

Royal Library
Kunstberg; 02.519.58.73
Until AUG 24 In de ban van boeken, Belgian book collectors, 1750 to 1850

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
Until APR 27 From Gilgamesh to Zenobia, highlights from the

museum's collection of ancient art from the Middle East and Iran plus 12 masterpieces from the Louvre

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

Silken Berlaymont Hotel
Karel de Grotelaan 11-19; 02.231.09.09
Until APR 25 Dreams in Dreamland, photographs by Michael Chia, winner of the Silken Photoplate Award 2008

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 early photography in 19th-century Brussels

Tour & Taxis
Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49
Until MAR 23 It's our History!, multimedia exhibition on the development of the EU and the lives of European citizens since 1945
Until JUNE 1 Star Wars, interactive exhibition with artwork, costumes and objects from the Star Wars films

Verhaeren Gallery
Gratesstraat 7; 02.662.16.99
Until MAR 2 Confrontations, photos by Robert Askenasi. Lisboa, photos by Rene Thirion

Antwerp Contemporary Art Museum (MuHKA)
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60
Until MAR 9 Lonely at the top: Seamus Harahan, video works by the contemporary Irish artist
Until MAY 4 Santhal Family: Positions around an Indian Sculpture, group show of contemporary art relating to a sculpture made in 1938 by Ramkinkar Baij

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
FEB 21-MAR 22 on performance nights 35m3 jonge architectuur: noA, architecten, (An Fonteyne, Jitse van den Berg and Philippe Vierin), Belgian architecture

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 interior spaces by James Casebere, Lucinda Devlin, Andreas Gursky, Candida Höfer, Abelardo Morell and others

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

Provinciehuis Antwerpen
Koningin Elisabethlei 22; 03.240.50.11
Until MAR 22 In Memo Mara. Pol Mara 1920-1998, retrospective of the late Antwerp artist

Ghent Design Museum
Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99
Until APR 27 Challenging the Chatelaine, contemporary objects by 78 international designers
Until APR 27 Seductive Simplicity & Clair-obscur, works by Nedda El-Asmar, Belgian Designer of the Year 2007



Huelgas Ensemble

27 February, 20.00, Kapel van de Miniemen, Miniemenstraat 62. Tickets from 02.507.82.00 or www.bozar.be (Also at Antwerp's Amuz on 2 March, www.amuz.be)

Hainaut produced a fine breed of composers during the Renaissance: Roland de Lassus, Johannes Ockeghem, Gilles Binchois, Nicolas Gombert, Johannes Tinctoris and many others grew up and worked in the towns of Mons, Tournai, Nivelles and Saint-Ghislain before hitting the roads of Europe. Belgian Paul Van Nevel is a renowned early music specialist, much of whose life so far has been devoted to bringing their rich and strange polyphony back to life. Together with his Huelgas Ensemble, he'll perform a selection of their most beguiling works. In Brussels, the concert forms an echo of sorts to the Bozar exhibition *Treasures Old and New from Wallonia*, curated by Laurent Busine.

Until APR 27 Times through Teaware, 100 years of Taiwanese tea culture
Until APR 27 20 years Theo-design, colourful and eccentric eyeglass frames by Bruges designer Patrick Hoet

Galerie Jan Dhaese
Ajuinlei 15B; www.jandhaese.be
Until FEB 23 Dolores Bouckaert: 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

Provinciaal Cultuurcentrum Caermersklooster
Vrouwebroersstraat 6; 09.269.29.10
Until MAR 30 Quebec in vorm, works by designers represented in the collection of Quebec's National Fine Arts Museum

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)
Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03
Until MAR 16 The Hands of Art, George Wittenborn's collection of drawings, collages and photographs of artists' hands

Hasselt Modemuseum
Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.23.96.21
Until OCT 31 Looks. Mode 1750-1958, 200 years of fashion history

Leuven Tweebronnen
Rijschoolstraat 49; 0497.64.94.52
Until APR 13 De Stiel, retrospective by Belgian artist Ever Meulen

Lier Stedelijk Museum Wuyts-Van Campen & Baron Caroly
Florent Van Cauwenberghstraat 14;

03.480.11.96
Until MAR 2 New Collection, works by 40 contemporary artists in dialogue with old master paintings

Menen De Steiger Cultural Centre
Waalvest 1; 050.40.31.20
Until MAR 16 Architecture show with works by prize winners of Actuele architectuur in West-Vlaanderen 2007

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

Waregem BE-PART
Westerlaan 17; 056.62.94.10
FEB 24-APR 20 Paintings, video and photographs by Helmut Stallaerts

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

Municipal Museum Ieperleestraat 31; 057.21.83.00
Until JUNE 1 Twilight of the Gods over Ypres, Ypres pictured by photographers Leontine, Maurice and Robert Antony (1893-1930)

Festivals & special events

Brussels Cotton Candy Club: burlesque, music and dancing
FEB 23 20.00 at Autoworld, Jubelpark 1 www.CottonCandyClubBrussels.com

Iceland on the Edge: Icelandic cultural festival. Pure Energy is the tagline for the many activities including exhibitions, concerts, theatre, dance and films
Until JUNE 15 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23, www.bozar.be

MY FLANDERS

Wilfried Schwabe

Wilfried Schwabe is a contemporary German artist who lives in Flanders. We ask him why he settled here and how it is inspiring his work

What brought you to Flanders?

I settled in Everberg, near Sterrebeek, in May 2003. I've felt a special attraction for Flanders since I was a teenager. I used to read books by Felix Timmermans, the Flemish novelist. I particularly liked *Pallieter*, the story of a joyous Fleming of gigantic appetites, and his novel about the elder Pieter Bruegel. We moved to Flanders because we're a multilingual family, speaking English, German and Russian at home. We wanted to live in a country where none of our own cultures and languages would dominate and inhibit one of us. Flanders in this respect is quite unique. Besides, German is an official language in Belgium, so I feel quite at home here. We encounter new cultures while holding onto our own. Language is no barrier in this respect. Being German, I understand a lot of Dutch, which is useful when I go to the Flemish town hall, and they speak only Dutch.

Why Everberg? Why not Brussels?

Our family – my Russian wife and our 18-month-old son – came to Belgium from Moscow. We chose Everberg because our best friends lived there, and we wanted to be nearby. It was a welcome change after the concrete environment of Moscow. We enjoy living in the countryside while still being close to Brussels.

How would you describe your style of painting?

My style is best described as Abstract Symbolism. I want to

draw the viewer into a new world of dreams, colours and stories. I take a theme or topic that interests me and turn it into a story on canvas using realistic elements mixed with naïve art and abstract symbols. While I lived in the United States, I painted batiks [patterns made with dye on textile] based on American Indian motifs. Back in Germany, I created my first series of abstract symbolist paintings in oil. When I moved to Moscow, I began to draw inspiration from Russian images, often connected to the Orthodox Church but also the Russian avant-garde of the early 20th century.

How do you begin a painting?

Most of my Moscow paintings were done first in watercolours on paper. Nowadays I make only very small, rough pencil sketches. When I put a new canvas on the easel, I prime it with a solid layer of paint – always a dark colour like brown or blue. This will hold the picture together as the painting develops. I never paint directly on a white canvas. This is an old technique used by the great masters like Rubens, Vermeer and Rembrandt.

Your house is full of your works. There are even paintings in your son's bedroom where you might expect a poster of *The Simpsons*. Does he like your work?

I have always had my oil paintings in my son's room – from the beginning when he was still in his cradle. When he was a baby, he could look at the pictures for hours



Wilfried Schwabe with a 2007 painting of his grandparents based on a 1908 wedding photograph. His grandfather was killed in the First World War. "The red on my grandmother's dress symbolises the poppies worn by people in memory of the war dead."

as he was totally fascinated by the colours. He is now six and able to explain to us why he likes his dad's pictures: "They are so colourful, and they always tell a story". He is a very creative boy, which is not surprising since he has practically grown up in an art gallery.

What's your next project?

Le pays avec les ciels gris et bas is the theme of a new series of paintings. I've already done the preliminary sketches depicting the stormy sea, ships, castles, masks, fields and coal mines. In each painting there will be an image of low grey clouds over Flanders. Again these paintings will combine realistic features

with some abstract symbols representing human emotions. The ideas are already very clear in my head.

Are you glad you moved here?

Very. We are in love with Flanders. We have developed a wonderful circle of friends. Many are expats like us. They come from Switzerland, Russia, Ukraine, Germany, Spain and Britain. We all enjoy the freedom of movement and languages. The countryside around us is lovely. Local people are extremely friendly. It's not at all like the anonymity of a big city. Here we know our neighbours and

talk to the postman. And each autumn the local farmer delivers the new apples to our door. I have wandered quite a lot in my life. I was born in Bohemia – now Czechia – and grew up in Düsseldorf. I lived in the US, Germany, Belgium, Britain and Russia. In my view no other place offers such a friendly multi-linguistic environment as Flanders.

Interview by Derek Blyth

Online

www.wilfriedschwabe-modernart.org

THE LAST WORD what our readers are saying

Unfailingly worthwhile

As an Englishman who has lived in Ghent for 30 years and as a Dutch-English translator who has no problem reading Dutch, it looked as if *Flanders Today* was going to be rather superfluous to requirements. But in fact, having read it since issue No 2, I have found it unfailingly worthwhile. In my case perhaps not so much because it is in English, but because it presents a concise but moderately in-depth picture of what is going on in Flanders. My particular interest is culture and the arts, and they are certainly well-served. There is one aspect which I find especially gratifying, which is that the writing does not give the impression of someone on the outside looking in, as might so easily be the case in a publication of this sort, but rather that the journalists are simply telling us about the place they live. In addition, the writers strike an agreeable tone that encourages one to continue reading. So, all in all, congratulations are in order – well done!

Gregory Ball, Ghent

Internationalism is the key

I have been three or four times in Antwerp for academic and teaching reasons. I have seen Flanders Region growing constantly. Today, I had the opportunity to read the 6 February 2008 edition of *Flanders Today*, and I found it easy reading and very interesting. One of the reasons for Flanders success is, I think, because there are people from other countries that contribute to its development in all fields. In science, for instance, there is a quiet and silent scientific researcher who is working on the development of a very simple kit to detect multidrug resistant *Micobacteria tuberculosis* which cause tuberculosis. This scientist, Dr Juan Carlos Palomino, works in the Micobacteriology Unit at the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp and heads a massive EU project on tuberculosis. This type of project helps to give Flanders Region a worldwide dimension.

Dr Luis Guevara

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