



Rosas, p.10

FEBRUARY 27 2008

| N° 18

| INDEPENDENT NEWSWEEKLY

| WWW.FLANDERTODAY.EU

Erkennungsnummer P708816

Reel Jobs



A brick in the belly

The Flemish love affair with their houses

Anyone who speaks a word of Dutch knows the old saying: the Flemish have een baksteen in de maag. During the week of Belgium's largest homebuilding fair, we uncover the historical roots of the Flemish building mania

Lisa Bradshaw

It's such a cliché that it almost seems like a myth – this notion that the Flemish are obsessed with building their own homes. But experts insist it's no myth. "Of course it's true," says Johan De Coster of Mys & Boman's Architects in Antwerp. "In our culture, we want to build our own homes more than people in the rest of Europe. It probably has to do with our history; we were always in the hands of someone else."

This is in fact the most popular theory to explain the passion for building. When Belgium was finally recognised as an independent state, people were at last allowed to buy land and build houses – and they've never stopped. There is a sense that if you put it up yourself, you are fulfilling your own destiny.

So the architects acknowledge the phenomenon, but what about the academics? "Absolutely true," says Katrien Vandermarliere, the director of the Flemish

Architecture Institute. "It's an historical evolution." After the Second World War, America's Marshall Plan provided money for affected countries, including the Netherlands and Belgium. While the Netherlands, with its strict planning regulations, invested in government-built social housing, Belgium provided its citizens with low-interest loans "so that everyone could afford to build himself a home," says Vandermarliere.

Continued on page 3



Business

Vlerick management school will soon be involved in running one of China's most respected business degrees. We ask what makes Vlerick so successful.

Arts

Brussels-based filmmaker Laurent Van Lancker travelled due east, convincing storytellers along the way to carry on a tale started in Belgium. The resulting documentary is fascinating.

7

9

Active

The Ganzenrijders of Berendrecht continue a rural tradition of whacking the heads off of dead geese. We find out just why.

12

Terrorist "confesses" to Belgian murders

Abdelkader Belliraj admits killing six people in the 1980s, police say

Alan Hope

The arrest of 32 terrorist suspects in Morocco last week looks like it might provide the solution to up to six unsolved murders committed in Belgium in the 1980s. Among the suspects arrested were three who had lived in Belgium, including Abdelkader Belliraj, aged 51, from Evergem near Ghent, described as the leader of the terrorist cell.

Belliraj allegedly admitted under questioning by Moroccan police that he had committed six murders in Belgium between 1986 and 1989. They include the

assassination of the Saudi-born imam of the Brussels mosque in the Jubelpark, and his Tunisian librarian in March 1989. The death of imam Abdullah al Ahdal came shortly after he had distanced himself from the Iranian fatwa calling for the death of the novelist Salman Rushdie. Salem ben Mohamed Bahri, the librarian, just happened to be working late on that evening.

Belliraj also admitted the murder of university lecturer Dr Joseph Wybran, who was a prominent member of several

Continued on page 5

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Cement Truck

Studio Wim Delvoye



Heavy metal meets Gothic: scale model of Wim Delvoye's "Cement Truck"

Wim Delvoye knows how to stir things up. When he's not tattooing pigs in China, he's busy constructing food-guzzling machines that produce their own excrement. 'Provocative' is the word that critics most often use to describe this Flemish artist. One of Delvoye's most impressive projects in recent years was to design a scale model of a cement mixer out of ornamental wrought iron. He displayed this in various art galleries across Europe and the United States. One American critic described the style as "Gothic Revival Revised".

Some time ago, Delvoye wanted to create a full-size version of "Cement Truck" to stand on an empty square behind the KVS theatre in downtown Brussels. The regional authorities supported the idea, but local residents weren't thrilled about the idea of a Gothic filigree cement mixer in their neighbourhood. They argued that

small children would climb on top of the nine-metre structure and almost inevitably tumble off. The residents took their case to the Council of State, the highest court in the land, and won the action. So it seemed to be goodbye to the Gothic Revival cement mixer.

The plan was quietly forgotten for several years, but it's back on the agenda again. The regional authorities have decided that they can fit the truck onto a new roundabout that is being built at the far end of the long open square bounded by Arduinkai and Hooikaai. The work is planned to begin in the summer, according to Pascal Smet, minister for mobility in the capital. If all goes to plan, the truck will finally be lowered onto a plinth and lit by spotlights. "It will become a beacon in the Canal Zone," Smet said. At least, that's assuming the local residents don't object.

Derek Blyth

Cover photograph

Roel Jacobs' photo series *Isolated Rowhouses* perfectly captures the strange surrealism of the Flemish and Walloon countryside, where single houses stand in open fields, far from any neighbour. The brick houses look like city dwellings, with narrow façades, two floors and a saddle roof. The side walls have no windows, creating the expectation that other houses will eventually follow, but this never happens. The end result is strange and sad – Belgian individualism at its most poetic.

Online

www.roeljacobs.be

Flanders Today

independent newsweekly

Editor: Derek Blyth
Deputy editor: Lisa Bradshaw
Agenda: Sarah Crew
Picture research: Esther Bourrée
Prepress: Nancy Temmerman
Contributors: Marie Dumont, Stéphanie Duval, An Gyde, Alan Hope, Alistair MacLean, Katharine Mill, Monique Philips, Saffina Rana, Steven Tate, Rory Watson
Project manager: Pascale Zoetaert
Publisher: VUM
NV Vlaamse Uitgeversmaatschappij
Gossetlaan 28, 1700 Groot-Bijgaarden
Editorial address: Waterloosesteenweg 1038
1180 Brussels
Tel.: 02.373.99.09 – Fax: 02.375.98.22



FACE OF FLANDERS

The team behind Oscar-nominated *Tanghi Argentini* from left: writer Geert Verbanck, producer Anja Daelemans and director Guido Thys

Tanghi Argentini

It couldn't have been *too* surprising to Guido Thys that he was nominated for one of the world's most coveted film awards. Though it's not so often that you see a Flemish filmmaker up for an Oscar, he's already won 27 prizes worldwide. Audiences and juries alike are going crazy for the 14-minute fable, which didn't win the Academy Award last Sunday but which will lose no fans for that.

Tanghi Argentini is set in a dimly-lit office building in Ghent, where worker drones slump over their desks and walk the catacomb aisles of files and cabinets. Middle-aged André (the lawyer from *Small Gods*) begs Frans (Junior Donkers in *Katarakt*) to teach him to tango. It seems that André has met a woman on the internet with a passion for the dance, and Frans is a tango expert. "You need passion to dance the tango – fire!" Frans tells André. "I'm sorry, but your fire has gone out."

Of course André eventually convinces Frans, and the two dancing the tango together (Frans a head taller) in the office after hours is just one of the film's many moments of pure delight. *Tanghi Argentini*'s physical comedy is pitch-perfect, and its final twist is surprising and touching. When the nominations for the Academy Awards were announced, the film was soon scheduled to run in 50 US cinemas.

A bit like a Hollywood story itself, Thys found the script when he was teaching a screenwriting course in Brussels. One of his students, Geert Verbanck, wrote it as an assignment. Thys recently told a reporter that he "fell in love with it," immediately recognising the film's potential to offer striking visuals and clever dialogue. "This is really what a short film should be," he said. Recruiting two of Flanders' best actors, Dirk Van Dijck and Koen Van Impe, to play the leads clinched *Tanghi Argentini*'s appeal.

Anja Daelemans' production company Another Dimension of an Idea, which is based in eastern Flemish Brabant, produced the film. No stranger to success, this is Daelemans' second trip to LA for the Academy Awards; she also produced the Flemish short film *Fait D'Hiver*, which was nominated in 2002.

Though Flanders is a small region, it's big on short films, producing between 20 and 30 a year that make it into festivals – where they are often well received. *Tanghi Argentini* is in fact the third Flemish short to be nominated for an Academy Award: Nicole Van Goethem's *A Greek Tragedy* won the Oscar for Best Animated Short in 1986.

Though writer, producer and director were all present at the ceremony in LA earlier this week, the evening might have been most exciting for Verbanck, who can recite every Oscar winner for Best Film from 1929 to the present day.

Lisa Bradshaw



"Head up, chin out!" Ghent office workers take any opportunity to tango

TALKING DUTCH

notes on language



Geluk

Fortune favours the brave, as history has often proved. Certainly, he who dares wins. There are enough such sayings to fill the rest of this column, which suggests there must something in the idea.

I'm not one for taking risks myself, and I'm certainly not a gambling man, but I'm sorely tempted to try my luck with the *Nationale Loterij*, which is organising a Super Lotto on 29 February to mark its 30th birthday:

Lotto wordt 30 en biedt alle spelers een verjaardagscadeau: de grootste speelpot uit zijn geschiedenis. Very generous, you might think: giving a birthday present to all those who play the lottery. But in fact all it's giving is the chance to win the biggest ever jackpot of €10 million. All the same, such an amount is not to be sniffed at, so I'll try my luck.

One of the best ways to learn a language is by actually doing things in that language. So, following the instructions I have in front of me on how to fill in the Lotto form is great practice. Enticingly, the form has at the top *Misschien ben jij de volgende winnaar?* Well, perhaps I will be the next.

The instructions are clear: *kruis 6 getallen aan per rooster en laat je bulletin valideren in je Lotto-verkooppunt.* So I'll now cross six numbers per grid. Once I have done so in all 12 of the roosters, I hand in the form at a verkooppunt and pay my €6. Simple as that.

Then I see: *Maar let op* – right, you have my attention – *de klassieke Lotto-bulletins zijn voor deze trekking niet geldig.* Well, I don't have any ordinary forms, so there's no danger.

Now all I need is luck on my side and the €10 million will be mine by the end of the month. But would so much money make me happy? Would I be able to resist blowing it all? Would I carry on as usual writing these columns as if nothing had changed? Strangely, the Dutch word *geluk* means both luck and happiness.

At least I have as much chance as the next person, and, as I said above: *wie waagt, wint.* And if I do, then the envious among you could call me a *gelukzak* or *gelukvogel*, which might appear to mean a lucky bag or a lucky bird, but simply mean a lucky devil. But how will I know if I am *een gelukvogel*?

Luckily, I have just noticed at the bottom of the form a final instruction: *Stem op vrijdagavond 29 februari af op "één" voor deze uitzonderlijke trekking ter gelegenheid van de 30ste verjaardag van Lotto.* So I will tune in to the Flemish TV channel *één* on Friday evening to see the draw for myself. But if I don't win, will I be able to claim my €6 from the editor? No, I must banish such thoughts: as I also said at the beginning, *het geluk helpt de dapperen.*

Alistair MacLean

Online
www.lotto.be

FEATURE

Monique Philips



The Flemish and their houses

Continued from page 1

Still, Vandermarliere admits that the Flemish home-building zeal is not just the result of post-war economic factors; it is more deeply embedded in the region. The Flemish "are individualists," she says. "They have always been governed by others – Germans, Austrians, Dutch, French. Now they are only sure of one thing – themselves. If you have your own house, it's your house, and you don't have to deal with any government in that case."

You do, however, have to deal with regional building restrictions and often strangely-shaped plots of land, particularly in urban areas. Long, narrow plots are a leftover from mediaeval cities, where your home was also often your business, and there was a specific separation between the front and the back. "It's an infrastructure that has continued," notes Vandermarliere. Land was also divided according to the way that Flemish cities developed and grew. "They were concentric with belts

around them, and transport was on the water around these belts," she explains. "The land was organised around these belts. You can see this especially in Antwerp."

So now architects have to deal with modern families living in spaces created for the urban conditions existing 1,000 years ago. Even new plots outside city centres can be small because "landowners cut up the land in the smallest possible plots in order to get more money out of it," says De Coster.

Whatever the reason, you may

be dealing with a small space and have to build up rather than out. The architectural questions, says Vandermarliere, then become: "How do you get light into these deep, deep houses? And how do you organise these three little rooms that sit one after the other?" Flemish architects have become specialised in dealing with these specific space issues in both new constructions and renovations. "We try to make the most of the space to avoid the feeling of narrowness," says De Coster, "so you feel the space is actually larger than it is. We try to be creative with stairs and with vertical perceptions. Everyone in Flanders now wants more space, he says. "Old houses tend to have small rooms. The main thing everybody wants right now is to create larger, open rooms and connected spaces."

Even when they're not building for a specific family, De Coster's firm tries to inject a little individuality into their projects. With social housing developments, for instance, "we try to create diversity within the project, like giving every unit its own private front door or building different scales of houses."

Architects are in fact required for homebuilding projects and major renovations in Flanders. They have a reputation for being easy to work with, which adds to the attractiveness of building. Herman Debbaut, a retired banker, built his home in the 1990s in the little village of Merendree, about 15 kilometres west of Ghent. "A good architect can really sense what you want and what kind of budget you'll need," he says. "Our architect understood quite well what we were asking for and refined his designs over and over, until it was just what we wanted and matched our budget. Each time, he took our input into account."

De Coster confirms that the needs of the client are the guiding force in home designs. "They always have their wish lists," he says, "and we try to work with that. From there, we try to go beyond and create extras that they didn't think of. But their real needs are the first thing we take into account when building a design."

Debbaut in fact has a *baksteen* in

the family: his eldest son also built his own home, and his youngest bought an older home and embarked on major renovations. "I like to do things my way," says Kurt Debbaut, who helped design and build the house in East Flanders where he lives with his wife and three children. "In the beginning we worked with an architect, but later on I managed it by myself. I was on the site to check on things almost daily."

That famous Flemish individuality is echoed again by Kurt's brother Bart, who, with his wife, designed and renovated their 50-year-old home. Again, an architect was required, but, once the designs were done, "we made appointments with different contractors and followed up on everything ourselves," explains Bart. "We also carried out a lot of the work. I'm really happy with what we've made of our house, especially because we did so much ourselves."

Technical know-how is rewarding but, of course, isn't required. Another reason the Flemish build their own castles, argues Vandermarliere, is because they can afford to do so. "It's in the genes of the Flemish to do their own thing and, with wealth, they can afford to be individual," she says. The region also has an abundance of craftsman with the skills homebuilders need. "In the Netherlands right now they have a big problem finding enough craftsmen," she says. "Here we have the skilled artisans that architects require for their projects."

Vandermarliere in fact worries that Flemish families are too much in love with their homes. "Cocooning is really in," she says. "I even know people who don't go on holiday because they have this big home with their own sauna. It's kind of privatising of your social life, and I'm critical of that." But it seems as if the Flemish are not going to get rid of that brick in the belly for a long time to come.

Online
www.mys-bomans.be
www.vai.be

Batibouw 2008

Now in its 49th year, Belgium's biggest building, renovation and interior finishings fair begins on 28 February. The annual event takes up 13 halls of Brussels Expo centre and brings together more than 1,000 exhibitors over its 10 days. Each hall is devoted to a speciality such as kitchens, floor and wall coverings or lighting, and retail giant Brico takes up an entire hall for do-it-yourself demonstrations.

At Batibouw, you can find out which colour paints go together, how to lay laminate, where to find antique moulding or which

outdoor furniture is the most comfortable. There are dozens of contractors vying for your attention, but perhaps even more valuable is the "advice hall", with architects and building federations helpfully suggesting that you check local building regulations in your area before you start work on that 40-metre brick tower in your back garden.

LB

Online
www.batibouw.be





A warm welcome to Belgium!

We hope your days here are happy ones.
At KBC we'll be glad to settle you in by providing you a full bank and insurance service.

Anne Marie Azijn and Leo Verhoeven, KBC Expat Advisers
expats@kbc.be • +32 (0)2 429 18 57



www.kbc.be/expats

putting people first

Terror suspect could hold key to unsolved killings

Continued from page 1

Jewish organisations in Belgium, in October of the same year in the car park of Erasmus hospital. That crime was claimed by a group calling itself the Islamic Soldiers of the Truth, a group linked to Abu Nidal which had been involved in the hostage-taking of a Belgian doctor in 1988 and the hijacking of a boat on which a Belgian family was travelling in 1987.

The identities of the other victims have not yet been revealed by the Moroccan authorities. Possible names include Samir Jah al-Rasul, the chauffeur of the Saudi embassy gunned down in June 1989, and Antanios Hanna, a Syrian diplomat murdered in Brussels in October 1987.

Belliraj still lives in Evergem with his wife and two sons. The local burgomaster last week promised victim's aid to the family if they needed it and extra security to prevent possible retaliation against the family.

Another of the 32 men arrested in Morocco is a fugitive from Belgian justice. Abdellatif Bekhti was living in Sint-Agatha-Berchem in 2000 when he took part in an armed robbery at a Brink's depot in Luxembourg.

He was sentenced to 20 years, but escaped in 2003. The robbery, produced a haul of €17.5 million which was never recovered. The money is now thought to have been smuggled to terrorists in Morocco.

The members of the group arrested also include two professors, a police commissioner and a TV journalist. Investigators found weapons including 16 handguns, machine guns and detonators. The group has been linked to the 2003 bomb attack in Casablanca which killed 45 people.

A delegation of six Belgian police officers has set off for Morocco to seek more information. They have raised doubts regarding the speed and detail of the Moroccan confessions, given that they come from someone alleged to be a cold-blooded contract killer and the leader of a terrorist cell who somehow managed to escape police notice in Belgium entirely while carrying out his crimes.

At present there is no procedure under way to have Belliraj extradited, but if that day should ever come, investigators will be aware than any confession obtained under torture would be inadmissible in a Belgian court.

Dutch and Flemish first ministers in talks

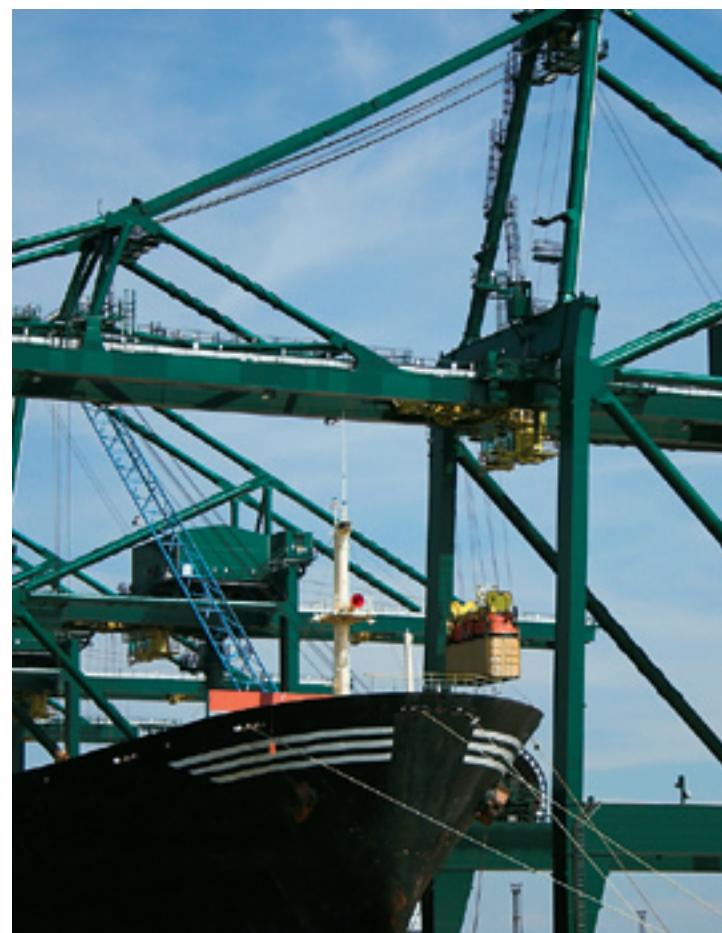


Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters last week paid his first official visit to his Dutch counterpart, Jan-Peter Balkenende, in The Hague. The two ministers had a "pleasant, useful discussion" over a number of issues of mutual concern, including the deepening of the Westerschelde – an arm of the river Scheldt which runs from Antwerp to the coast of Zeeland and which needs to be deepened to improve access the Flemish port for large container ships. In addition, Flanders and the Netherlands will exchange experiences and best-practice in an effort to reach the top five of "innovation regions" by 2020.

Another area of agreement concerned plans to introduce a tax on trucks using particular roads in each other's territories by 2011, later to be extended to private vehicles. The two ministers expressed a desire to bring the Walloon government into the system, which depends on the mileage covered, despite Wallonia's preference for a one-off Swiss-style road-tax vignette. Walloon minister-president Rudy Demotte is due to make his own maiden visit to the Binnenhof soon.

The Dutch had planned a special welcome for Peeters: for the first time ever, the flag of the Flemish lion was hoisted over the Binnenhof. There was just one area of conflict: Flemish anger at the extension of the number of coffee-shops in Maastricht came up in discussions, but this is actually a matter for the federal government and so lies outside Peeters' jurisdiction. Apart from that, the discussions between the two leaders were cordial and fruitful.

FT ranks Flanders as second-best in EU for investors



Flanders is the second-best region in Europe for investors after Scotland, according to a newly-published report in *The Financial Times*. The report, titled "European Cities and Regions of the Future", analysed 75 different critieria that were judged important for international investors, such as wages, telecommunications, number of science and technology graduates and current level of foreign investment.

The study placed Scotland in prime position among EU regions, followed by Flanders, with Northern Ireland in third place and Kent ranked fourth. Wallonia came fifth in the ranking, suggesting that the southern Belgian region was becoming more attractive for investors.

The report said that Flanders gained high marks for GDP growth, inward investment levels, foreign investment deals, housing, hospitals and major infrastructure development projects surrounding the port, airport and railway. The study noted several major foreign investment projects in Flanders in recent years, including the €900 million investment in the port of Antwerp by shipping company P&O and Singapore port operator PSA, Johnson & Johnson's opening of a €68 million research centre and British Telecom's expansion of its European headquarters.

The *FT* study also looked at top cities in Europe. But Belgium scored less well here, with Brussels placed at number seven in a list of top 10 major European cities, while Antwerp gained eighth position in a list of most attractive small European cities.

Internal investigation of mismanagement at Ghent contemporary art museum



Paul McCarthy's "Mutant", 1994

Ghent's museum for contemporary art, Smak, ran up a deficit of €490,000 in 2007 on a budget of €4.5 million, it was announced last week. A large part of the loss went on the controversial exhibition by American artist Paul McCarthy, which involved the whole museum being transformed into a pirate ship. Last week the chairman of the association of friends of the museum, which runs the institution with the city of Ghent, resigned his post alleging mismanagement of funds. The deficit has led to the postponement or cancellation of several planned exhibitions. The city is to investigate allegations of mismanagement.

NEWS FLASH



Shutterstock

Leuven joins the queue for headscarf ban

Leuven could be the next city to follow the trend towards banning the wearing of "religious symbols" – in effect, the Muslim headscarf – by members of city staff dealing with the public. A proposal by Vlaams Belang was due to be voted on this week, with a chance that Leuven would follow in the footsteps of Antwerp, Ghent, Lier and Ninove – despite the fact that not a single member of Leuven city personnel currently wears the headscarf. Leuven burgomaster Louis Tobback called it "a totally irrelevant discussion".

Tow-truck companies "blackmail drivers," says transport federation

Companies operating tow trucks are "blackmailing" truck drivers involved in accidents by forcing them to pay exorbitant charges, according to the UPTR, the federation for the road-haulage industry. Tow trucks called to accidents have demanded sums in excess of €10,000 from drivers, despite the fact that the law requires the bill to be sent to the regional authorities. If drivers refuse to or cannot pay, their trucks are seized, leading to lengthy legal actions for recovery along with additional costs, the UPTR said. The Flemish government has promised to look into the federation's allegations – including the charge that companies have formed cartels to win official contracts without competing against each other, thereby pushing up prices.

Sacked VUB professor plans protest

A professor sacked by the Free University of Brussels (VUB) is refusing to go quietly and has promised to campaign to salvage his reputation, among other things by writing a book about his experiences. Frank Thevissen, professor of political marketing, was dismissed after a periodic review rated his performance as unsatisfactory, in particular because of a lack of research and publications. Thevissen, by contrast, claims he was fired because he had too high a media profile and refused to join the Freemasons. He also claimed pressure for his removal came from foreign minister Karel De Gucht, political adviser Noel Slangen and editor of *De Morgen*, Yves Desmet.



French give Belgium golden share in Suez

The French government last week granted a so-called "golden share" in the energy giant Suez to the Belgian federal authorities. But this is mainly of symbolic value and would only be used in the unlikely circumstance that the supply of electricity to Belgian customers came under threat, an analyst said. The newly-merged group Suez-Gaz de France includes Belgian electricity producer Electrabel. The golden share was announced last week at a meeting between Prime minister Guy Verhofstadt and French president Nicolas Sarkozy in Paris, and would give Belgium a veto over decisions where major national interests were concerned. The instrument is often used by governments to maintain an interest in private companies, especially utilities, to prevent, for instance, hostile takeovers. In the energy sector, its main purpose is to ensure security of power-supply.

Users lodge complaint over Belgacom's privacy abuse

Belgacom has denied charges that it breached privacy laws by using client details for commercial purposes. The denial follows a complaint to the Research and Information Centre for Consumer Organisations (OIVO), which claimed the company made customers who did not wish to receive publicity material opt out but failed to provide a contact number for them to do so. The law states in any case that customers can only be sent publicity if they opt in to the system. The complaint, which also covers clients of Skynet and Telindus, will be investigated by the Privacy Commission and the economics ministry inspectorate.

Concern over low level of savings

Belgian families are increasingly pessimistic about their chances of setting aside some money at the end of the month, according to the latest figures from the National Bank. The drop in confidence in savings – which is now at its lowest in 14 years – reflects a fall in consumer confidence in the economy in general, the bank said, due to increases in food and energy prices. However, experts say the current economic situation is not as bad as families perceive it. While the figures show that the number of pessimists exceeds the number of optimists for the first time since 1993, the actual spending patterns of families remain unchanged, with 2007 even seeing a slight increase in the amount of money saved. "In practice, things seem to be going pretty well for most of us," said Professor Luk Warlop of Leuven University. "It's true that oil and food are much dearer, and people are terribly uneasy, but in our daily lives it seems that little or nothing has changed."

New development in Lernout & Hauspie case

Two police officers investigating the fraud case against Ypres-based speech recognition technology company Lernout & Hauspie were given free hospitality by a Lebanese businessman who is a civil party in the case, it was revealed last week. Harout Khatchadourian paid for the officers' accommodation in a luxury hotel in Singapore while they were investigating the case. The revelation could lead to evidence provided by the two officers being declared inadmissible and would certainly be grounds for an appeal against any conviction.

New Islamic art gallery opens in Jubelpark

The Royal Art and History Museum in the Jubelpark in Brussels has reopened its Islamic art wing, closed to the public for the past 15 years. The new wing has 340 objects from the museum's total Islamic collection of some 1,200 pieces on display in a 50-metre gallery. The works come from countries ranging from southern Spain to northern India. They cover a wide range of styles from the seventh to the 20th-century. The exhibition is the only coherent collection of Islamic art in the Ben-

lux and includes Indian miniatures, a 14th-century sultan's helmet and a Tunisian wedding dress, as well as decorative wooden panels from a Pakistani mosque through which visitors have to pass.

Online
www.kmkg.be



Royal Museums of Art and History

Leuven opens centre on "voice use"

Leuven University is to set up an "Expertise Centre" on the use of the voice. This is essential, the university says, since increasing numbers of people are called upon to use their voices as part of their jobs – by giving presentations in the office, for instance. The speech therapy department of the university has a long history of research and teaching and, some years ago, began giving courses on voice-training for teachers. It now wants to extend that expertise to the business world and will offer courses on training and techniques of vocal production, care of the voice and interactive communication training. There are even classes for those who need a loud voice in their work, such as tour guides, gym teachers and market traders.



Education minister investigates school safety after stabbing

Flanders education minister Frank Vandenbroucke has ordered a study of the system whereby "security teams" are used to ensure safety in Dutch schools, following the latest fatal stabbing involving school students in Flanders. Last week a 16-year-old student stabbed another in the back at an Antwerp school, shortly after being released from a young offenders' institution in Mol. Dutch schools have security teams that advise on policy, as well as a central contact number for reporting violent incidents. A delegation from the education ministry will visit the Netherlands in March. Vandenbroucke also promised to look into a proposal to install three "bridge-builders" to help young people from offenders' institutions to reintegrate into the school system.

Correction

In our issue of 13 February describing an alleged racist incident in Bruges, we referred to an Auschwitz survivor as "the youngest survivor of the Polish extermination camp". We accept that this was a clumsy and potentially misleading formulation in that the camp was a Nazi construction in occupied Poland which in no way involved the Polish people.

Want to know the latest developments in the Belgian government crisis? Or are you just curious to keep up with the hot topics that are being discussed in Flanders? The online version of *Flanders Today* has added a new Press Room section that provides daily breaking news stories in English based on a selection taken from the Flemish press.

Online
www.flanderstoday.eu

Chinese whispers

Vlerick management school goes global

Derek Blyth

First it was Russia. Now it's China's turn. Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School has moved into Beijing to take over the joint running of one of China's most respected business degrees. Following 18 months of negotiations, Vlerick will begin working on the programme in October of this year.

The degree, known as Bimba, was set up 10 years ago as the first joint international MBA degree programme approved by the Chinese government. It has been managed up until now by the China Centre for Economic Research (CCER) at Beijing University and a consortium of US business schools, with the degree being awarded by Fordham University in New York.

Justin Yifu Lin, director of CCER and one of China's most influential economists, visited Vlerick recently to talk to prominent Belgian industrialists about his country's economic progress. He explained that the Flemish

school had been selected because of its reputation for quality, brand image and closeness to Brussels.

The director added that Vlerick has a strong track record in forging relationships between institutions in different locations. In 1999, the Ghent-based Vlerick school created a joint MBA programme with the University of Leuven and, in 2006, set up a third English-language campus in St Petersburg which now boasts some 600 graduates.

Vlerick's chairman Louis-Henri Verbeke said that the school was determined "to make the programme the best in China, so that we can compete with any international programme in the world."

The degree course, which is taught in English, is available as a full- or part-time option. The new agreement has been signed for a five-year period, although both partners hope that it will become a longer-term arrangement.

Vlerick is in charge of designing the MBA, monitoring the quality of the curriculum and ensu-



China calling: Vlerick will soon be running a programme in Beijing

Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School



To Russia with love: Vlerick's campus in St Petersburg

ring marketing, faculty staff and recruitment. Many of the courses will be taught by Chinese faculty members, who will eventually be involved in teaching Vlerick programmes worldwide.

The Chinese connection is seen by Vlerick as a key strategy to help export firms based in Belgium to get to grips with the complexities of Chinese business. The school plans to teach courses in Ghent/Leuven that will introduce managers to Chinese business culture as well as developing marketing skills and providing practical advice on setting up supply chains across an unfamiliar country.

Professor Verbeke insists that Vlerick is not planning to export a European-style MBA to China.

The aim is to learn from the Chinese experience and design a high-quality Chinese MBA for a global market.

The Flemish school was recently ranked by the *Financial Times* as one of the 100 best business schools providing a full-time MBA programme. Many of Belgium's leading managers and CEOs have at one time studied at Vlerick.

online
www.vlerick.be

EUROPE'S REGIONS

Closing the gap

Van den Brande calls for new forms of cooperation

Luc Van den Brande, the former Minister-President of Flanders and now President of the European Union's Committee of the Regions, last week met Danuta Hübner, the EU's commissioner for regional policy.

At the meeting, Van den Brande called for closer cooperation between European states, organisations and regional authorities. "We need to have new forms of cooperation between different levels of government to provide an answer for the complex problems we face today," he said. "None of the existing levels of government – including the European – is in a position to offer a solution on its own."

The meeting was the first concrete evidence of Van den Brande's resolve to create a new partnership in which different bodies worked towards common goals (see *Flanders Today*, 13 February 2008).

Around 33% of the EU's annual budget – a total of €41 billion – went towards regional policies. Several projects in Flanders receive part of their funding from the EU, including a scheme to raise school standards in Antwerp province and a project to expand an industrial estate at Lommel while respecting the environment.

DB



Regions raise their voice: Luc Van den Brande meets Danuta Hübner

Virtual me

How a Leuven company takes shopping to a new level



Virtual vision: Dirk Callaert

Stéphanie Duval

Fed up with undressing in changing rooms whenever you want to buy new clothes? The Leuven company Eyetronics has come up with a 3D scanner that allows customers to record a virtual version of themselves and use it to assemble a new wardrobe.

The Eyetronics story began 10 years ago when Marc Ploesmans, a civil engineer, set up a company specialised in three-dimensional techniques. Its main innovation was to develop a technique for obtaining 3D information from a series of two-dimensional photographs. In September 2001, Dirk Callaert, another civil engineer, sold his micro-electronics company and joined Eyetronics.

"When I joined the company, I couldn't have predicted the catastrophe of 9/11. Unfortunately, this meant we had to wait until December until we were able to travel to the states", says Callaert. Once the two entrepreneurs finally reached the US, they didn't waste any time.

In just two weeks, they managed to meet representatives from all the big Hollywood film studios. Most of them were sold on the idea from the start. "The possibilities in the film industry are virtually endless," explains Callaert.

After a few years, the business associates decided that the movie world was a little too unpredictable for their taste, so they started to explore the gaming industry. "Our technique is revolutionary in that it doesn't create new characters for games but turns real life people into virtual reality figures."

The complex technology of 3D figures became more popular with the arrival of "game engines", which are more powerful and able to process data much more quickly. The new 3D scanning method meant that movie stars, singers and sports celebrities only had to stand still for a couple of minutes while a 360° picture was taken of them. Thanks to this sophisticated technology, Eyetronics landed a contract in 2006 with the US baseball league. The Leuven company now has an exclusive deal for

producing virtual versions of baseball players.

But Eyetronics does more than scanning the stars. "In the medical world our techniques can be used for plastic surgery," explains Callaert. "We can take before and after pictures, which are turned into a three-dimensional version of the patient, to monitor the changes in his or her body." The scanning method is already used by the Flemish firm Infraligne to help clients lose weight and track their progress in 3D.

Eyetronics has now teamed up with Dzine, a Flemish company from Kortrijk which specialises in graphic engines and ICT applications, to apply 3D technology to the world of fashion. By incorporating a 3D scanner in clothing shops, customers can create a virtual version of themselves. This means that they won't have to go to the trouble of trying on new outfits or compare different combinations. They can do so online or on a computer in the shop itself.

This doesn't mean the end of real shops, although it will allow them to make some much-needed structural changes. A shop can save money on renting space and displaying clothes by creating an online catalogue. That means staff have more time to help customers because they don't have to sort out the clothes.

Eyetronics has set up a joint venture with Dzine called DNA Interactif Fashion. The aim is to develop new ideas in "i-fashion" and "e-styling". In future, customers who want to buy a new pair of glasses might be able to see how the new frame fits their face, and people going to the hair salon can preview their new hairdo before it's too late to change.

online

www.eyetronics.com

Homage to Catalonia



for EU regions to be granted greater legislative powers. Bourgeois believes this is an essential step to close the gap between Europe and the citizen. **DB**

Flemish minister for foreign policy Geert Bourgeois has signed an agreement with the Catalan government in Spain to develop closer ties between the two regions. Speaking in Barcelona, Bourgeois argued that both regions could benefit from cooperation in areas like science, business and environmental policy.

Catalonia was recently granted greater autonomy, allowing its government to sign international agreements. Both Catalonia and Flanders are keen

End start-up subsidies, expert says

The government is not helping small start-up businesses by giving them subsidies at the outset, according to the director of the Research Centre for Entrepreneurship attached to the Brussels-based higher education institute EHSAL. Johan Lambrecht said subsidies gave the impression that starting a business was easy. "And that kills enterprise," he said. The government would do better to help failing businesses by making it easier for them to stop. This would be better for both individuals and the economy. "More closures leads to more new businesses," he said. "That's been shown by research in various countries." At present, failing businesses are "left out in the cold," leading to psychological, financial and legal problems.

Alan Hope

BUSINESS FLASH



Shutterstock

Icos Vision

Icos Vision, the Leuven-based world-leader in vision technology (specialised in inspection systems for the semiconductor and electronics assembly markets), is to be taken over by the Californian KLA Tencor for some €315 million. Icos shares leapt 60% when the news was announced last week.

Duvel-Moortgat

Duvel-Moortgat, the Breendonk-based beer group, has offered €4.5 million to take over the bankrupt Liefmans brewery, known for its fruit-flavoured brews and its Oudenaarde production facilities.

Brussels Airport

Brussels Airport has the best punctuality record out of Europe's 27 main airports, according to the European Airlines Association. Only 16.9% of the flights were delayed on departure compared to an average of 22.7%. London Heathrow, with delays affecting 35.5% of all flights, has the worst record.

Belgacom

Belgacom, the country's leading telecommunications supplier, is to spend €185 million to take over the Dutch Scarlet telecoms company, which specialises in internet, mobile technology and data services in the Netherlands and Belgium. The deal strengthens Belgacom's position in the key DSL and broadband fields.

Ford Genk

Ford Genk, the production affiliate of the US car group, is to hire 192 additional workers to cope with increased production. The Genk plant assembles Ford's Mondeo and the S-Max and Galaxy MPVs.

ENI

The Italian energy group ENI is the latest candidate to consider a bid for Distrigaz, the Belgian gas importer and distribution company. Distrigaz has to be sold by its parent company, the French Suez group, as part of its merger with France's Gaz de France.

Flanders Technology

Flanders Technology, the high-tech fair launched in Ghent in the mid-1980s, may be revived as part of the "Flanders in Action" programme announced recently by Minister-President Kris Peeters. The technology fair was created by the Flanders government to encourage local entrepreneurs to embrace new technologies and innovation.

Fluxys

Fluxys, the Belgian gas distribution company, is to shelve its project to set up a 300 million cubic metre underground gas storage depot in partnership with Russia's Gazprom. The facility was initially proposed for a site near Poederlee in Limburg, using a geological fault.

Exki

Exki, the fast-food group specialised in healthy products (which uses a carrot as its logo), is to open five new outlets in France, one in Milan and two in Luxembourg. In addition, four more stores will open in Belgium later this year.



Exki Antwerp

A likely story

From the Flemish coast to Vietnam – a filmmaker records a story as it travels across the world

Lisa Bradshaw

Remember that game when you were a child where you start a story and the next person has to continue it and so on and so on? Laurent Van Lancker was probably very good at that game.

Born in Brussels to a German mother and a Flemish father, Van Lancker went to film school in Belgium, studied social anthropology in London and then headed east across the continents. He travelled extensively and lived for a time in Vietnam, where he worked in the film industry. This helps to explain the end of his new movie *Surya, from eloquence to dawn*, which begins in Belgium, travels east through nine countries and ends in the furthest-away land of Southeast Asia – what Lancker calls “the end of the world”.

A Belgian woman of Vietnamese origins begins a story beside the sea on the Flemish coast. She talks of a man called Nero, who must leave a tower – the only home he has ever known – in search of his destiny. His mother sends him, explaining, “they are expecting you”. Then you find yourself in Slovakia, where a young gypsy woman continues the story, and then on to Turkey, where minstrel singers pick it up from on board a boat floating down the Bosphorus. The course of Nero’s adventures reflects the values of cultures, and Van Lancker’s camera records each country in blurring waves of colour and motion.

“I wanted to show the link between all the different cultures,” explains Van Lancker “and that together we can create a story, something imaginary.” The director in fact places great importance on the imaginary and its absence from modern life. “People talk more and more, and there’s a lot of ‘communication’. There is this flow of information, but it’s more

informative than imaginative,” he says. “Imagination is a very important aspect of humankind because you create your world not only out of reality but also out of dreams. When you create your own world, you are actively making sense of your life.”

This we see in the storytellers in Lancker’s film. Together with his partner, Florence Aigner, he researched which countries maintain oral traditions and sought out performers. The couple were surprised by some of the turns the story took: in India, a singing storyteller has the hero change his name to Surya (meaning “sun”), so he can claim his own identity. In Syria, the hero is given gifts, which the later storytellers have to decide how best to use.

“We kept asking ourselves, ‘where is this going to go?’” says Van Lancker. “Everyone was so happy to play the game.” And the performers kept in touch with the filmmakers as they travelled east. “Everyone wanted to know what happened next,” says Van Lancker.

The storytelling methods characteristic of each country are as interesting as the story itself. In Syria, an elderly man sits in a café surrounded by attentive men smoking water pipes. He’s written his part of the story down; his huge book is in one hand, a sabre in the other. In Kurdistan, shadow puppets play behind a soft screen, while in China a group of young rap artists carry on the story in the streets. Van Lancker remembers that in Nepal they were riding buses to take the story to mountain Shamans, but they were so taken with the singing groups that entertained them in the bus that they ended up giving the story over to one of them.

All along the way Van Lancker and Aigner capture simple moments of beauty: fluttering fabrics, food, dirt roads or child-



Surreal images and the sounds of storytelling in *Surya, from eloquence to dawn*

ren on beaches. Extreme close-ups and blurred lensing give an impression of a place more than a treatise on it. Sometime you’re not even sure which country you are in. “We wanted to put spectators in the mood of storytelling rather than in the culture of the countries,” Van Lancker explains. “I like to do participatory anthropology rather than observational. Visual anthropology shouldn’t be making films *about* people; it should be making films *with* them. *Surya* is not a film *about* storytelling, it’s a film *like* storytelling.”

The tradition for storytelling in Vietnam is the lullaby, and the final chapter of the story is appropriately serene and somewhat haunting. “We ended up with a story containing all the elements of a classic epic with battles, magic, memory, longing – all the cross-



cultural archetypes came through,” says Van Lancker. “I didn’t know it would be like that. But we were very, very happy with the story in the end.”

Surya, from eloquence to dawn opens at Actor’s Studio in Brus-

sels on 27 February, showing with Dutch and French subtitles. On 4 and 5 March it will be shown with English subtitles.

Online
www.polymorfils.be

FILM FREAK

Happy Together



A beautiful façade hides a crumbling interior: Ben Van Ostadde and Bien De Moor

Geoffrey Enthoven’s last film, *Vidange perdue*, followed the exploits of a cranky old man dealing with the slights of an atheist society with a kind of light-hearted warmth. The Flemish director has taken a much darker turn in *Happy Together*, a nervously-captivating look into the lives of the Flemish bourgeois that opens this week across Flanders.

Martin (Ben Van Ostadde) has the perfect life: a beautiful wife, a well-paid job, two glowing children. He plays golf at the weekend, owns a palatial home in the upscale suburb of Sint-Martens-Latem and has just purchased a holiday property in Tuscany. The most serious problem in Martin’s life is his sassing teenage daughter.

Then Martin discovers that his banker has run away with their

money for the house in Italy. It’s a blow they could weather, but, uh-oh, in his never-ending quest for more power and money, Martin has become involved in a pharmaceuticals scheme that has gone terribly wrong. And so he goes from respected businessman to jobless national scandal in the course of a day.

Happy Together examines pride in the face of despair and the desperation to keep up the façade families so carefully construct. Martin is, indeed, encouraged by the well-meaning to keep bad news at bay. “It’s not the intention that you tell your wife everything,” advises his best friend Pete (Eddy Verheyen), as he lies to his own family about his health problems. Enthoven knows how to set the mood: from the first scene to the

shocking conclusion, there is a beautiful tension in the camerawork and occasional sounds of thunder in the background, despite perfectly sunny days. Bien De Moor is brilliant as a wife who can’t seem to get a grip on her own husband anymore, while TV actor Van Ostadde effortlessly embodies the middle-aged man who keeps a smile on his face while his insides give way.

Happy Together takes an extreme approach to the outcome of a family whose lives are falling apart. But you can’t help leaving thinking that’s it’s all perfectly possible, which is the movie’s most successful – and most chilling – aspect.

Lisa Bradshaw

DANCE

The axis within

Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker gets back to pure dance in *Zeitung*



Saffina Rana

Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, arguably Belgium's favourite contemporary choreographer, brings her latest work to the stage in March, following a première in Paris. Originally from Mechelen, De Keersmaeker has been challenging audiences with her explorations of movement and music for just over a quarter of a century. In the process, she established the internationally-renowned dance

troupe Rosas, the acclaimed dance school PARTS and a repertoire that is guaranteed to draw crowds at home and abroad.

Her new piece, *Zeitung* (*News-paper*), features nine dancers from Rosas and the pianist Alain Franco, who plays on stage as part of the performance. While the dancers move around him, he performs 26 pieces by Bach, Arnold Schönberg and Anton Webern.

"I looked for ways to give shape to the concepts on which their

music is founded," De Keersmaeker explains in a statement about her intentions for *Zeitung*. "[It's] an attempt to shed some light on the time span between Bach, Webern and the present – Webern as a reflection on Bach, and vice versa. Two directions in time."

She goes on to explain that the choreography and music grew from two separate points, which were then gradually brought together. "Where they intersect, there are points of harmony. At

times their combination throws the harmony off balance."

In this new work, De Keersmaeker has put aside the more theatrical devices she has used in the past, such as film projections or recitations. While these tactics created layers of emotion and meaning alongside the choreography, they frequently polarised audiences expecting to see familiar or formal patterns of dance.

With *Zeitung*, the choreographer wanted to go back to the simplicity of the body in dance – "A body as two spirals revolving around a central, vertical axis," she explains. "I am interested in the body as millions of cells which arrange themselves according to specific laws. And especially in the question: which laws, which patterns are revealed?"

This interest in patterns is a constant in her work and an immediately recognisable signature. "I have always been greatly inspired by geometry, by the absolute abstraction of certain laws," she says.

In *Zeitung* these laws are contrasted with the highly-concrete physical presence of the nine dancers, each with his or her own physicality. "All these bodies are bearers of personal experience from which we then generate material, which is then again transformed into a document, a written choreography."

But you don't need to be a mathematician or a musicologist to appreciate the show. While all the theory is clearly important in the creative process, the experience of watching Rosas dancers interact with the music is a sensation you feel before you have time to analyse it.

De Keersmaeker's work often features dancers going from rest into motion with idiosyncratic moves. A crowd of bodies will move across a stage in a seething chaotic mass only to suddenly scatter into a line of geometrical shapes. Fragmented groups of two or three dancers can come together running at speed, intersect, then run away. The movement is sometimes childlike with stamps and kicks, sometimes complex with elegantly controlled twists and contortions. It's mesmerising and full of opposing tensions between the forms, the music and the dancers themselves.

Zeitung, 6-8 & 11-15 March, Kaaitheater, Sainctelettesquare 20, Brussels. Tickets from 02.20.59.59 or www.kaaitheater.be. Also staged in Bruges and Hasselt in April and in Leuven, Ghent and Antwerp in May.

Online
www.rosas.be

CLASSICAL NOTES

Coffee and classical

Ut Pictura Musica shows Brussels what a classical music shop should be

Would you like to flesh out your classical CD collection? You could try Amazon or brave the crowds and browse through the Fnac's ever-dwindling music section. But a savvier and infinitely more enjoyable solution would be to visit Ut Pictura Musica, a new record shop in Brussels' Zavel district.

Actually, "record shop" fails to describe the atmosphere of this tiny boutique which takes up the ground floor of a beautiful 1832 townhouse and is opulently decorated with antique armchairs, carpets and sleek black-and-white photos of musical instruments. A hi-fi system on which CDs can be played and a gurgling coffee machine in the corner complete its cosy feeling.

"The shop is like an extension of people's living rooms," says Pablo Garcia, the young Spanish violinist who runs Ut Pictura Musica. "They come and browse,

they chat, they sit down to listen. They often stay an hour or more. It's like with food – some people enjoy fast food, others prefer to take their time to savour a meal."

Filled with wonderful music all day long, the shop also celebrates the visual arts ("Ut Pictura Musica" is an allusion to the Latin poet Horace's quote "Ut pictura poesis" – "Painting is like poetry"). Garcia sells a few luxury art books by Italian publisher Franco Maria Ricci, and the CDs are displayed, jackets facing outward, on dark-brown wooden shelves along the yellow walls. Each was issued by one of the three record labels owned by Belgian company Outhere: Ricercar, which specialises in early music; Fuga Libera, founded in 2004, which is much more eclectic, if loosely focused on Belgian musicians; and Alpha, a gorgeous label that started up in France in 1999 and was bought up last year by Outhere. Altogether, they

cover a vast repertoire from the Middle Ages to the music of today, with some world music and jazz thrown in.

The three labels' combined catalogues tot up around 250 CDs – a far cry from larger shops which frequently offer dozens of versions of the same work, leaving shoppers dizzy and confused. "If someone comes in asking for something with Glenn Gould or

Maria Callas, they'll kindly be directed elsewhere, as we don't sell any," says Outhere CEO Charles Adriaenssen, who came up with the idea for the shop.

More often than not, though, they'll linger on and turn their choice to other fine, if much more obscure choices: gentle suites by the 17th-century French composer Marin Marais, for instance, played on the viola da

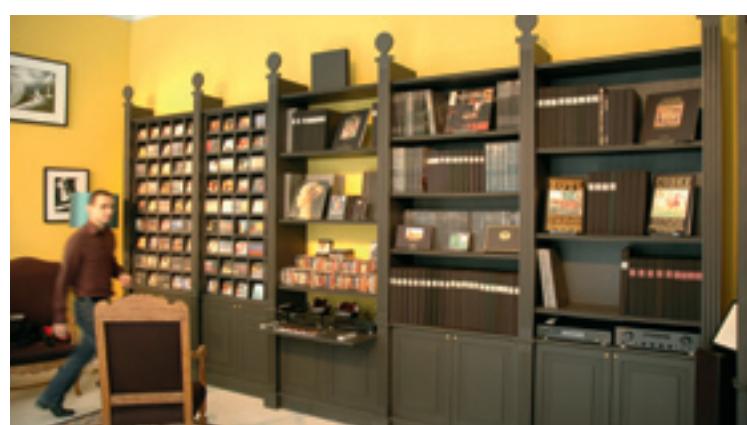
gamba by Belgian Sophie Watilhon (who died recently), or ethereal songs by Fauré by baritone Jan Van der Crabben and pianist Inge Spinette.

That's when the advice of the shop assistants, who are all professional musicians, comes in handy. "We try to find out about the customers' tastes and personalities," says mezzo soprano Laurence Regout. "If they can't stomach the sound of the harpsichord, I'll know better than to suggest Gustav Leonhard's William Byrd recording." Her number one personal favourite? "Cavalieri's *Lamentations* by the Poème Harmonique," she says. "The voices are just superb."

Marie Dumont

8 Bodenbroekstraat, Brussels, 02.256.77.32

Online
www.fugalibera.com



FASHIONISTA

Absolutely Fabuleux

Most people relax on holiday, but Kaat Blommaert gets inspiration for more work. "A few years ago, my husband and I were abroad, lounging on a beach somewhere, and the idea came to me." After 18 years running a beauty parlour, the Grimbergen-born Blommaert decided to dip her toe into fashion, launching a series of tank tops that combine casual comfort with timeless style.

The result is a collection selling in more than 100 high-end stores worldwide, from the Parisian cradle of cool Colette to Tokyo fashion temple Isetan. She dubbed her line Le Fabuleux Marcel.

"It's a play on words," says Blommaert, noting that the French and Flemish word for "tank top" is also a man's name. Thought to have originated from the couture of the famous French boxer Marcel Cerdan, the "marcel" became a fashion icon in Europe, popularised first in the 1930s by French actor Jean Gabin in the classic film *La Bête humaine*.

"I wanted to do a Brussels interpretation on what some consider the quintessential French garment," explains Blommaert. "Gabin had made the tank top French, just as Marlon Brando had made the T-shirt American in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. I thought it would be fun to add some Belgian flavour."

The collection takes its cue from Blommaert's Brussels identity, with model names like "Ket", which is *Brusseler* for "dude", and prints extolling the deliciousness of Belgian waffles. The self-taught designer aims to celebrate traditional, classic taste without being stodgy. "I want every piece to look like something you would have found in your grandparents' closet," she says. "It's a wardrobe basic – something to build your look around."

Still, the retro aesthetic does dip its toe in irony – just as granny's lace curtains or gramps' bowling ball bag can seem quaint to the modern sophisticate. But Fabuleux Marcel never crosses the line into kitsch: the mens, womens and childrenswear, despite the label's extravagant name, are straightforward, unfussy and practical (like all the best grandparents).

Since starting in 2005, Blommaert has branched out into T-shirts, shorts, underwear and loungewear, although the tank top remains the focal point of the label. She produces the Marcel range in Portugal with Portuguese cotton: the results are slacker chic tanks, polo shirts that epitomise an effortless cool, collegiate v-neck jumpers that hint Republican reprobate and flirty undies with the label's name printed saucily on the seat.

Blommaert's lack of a design-school pedigree is not uncommon



Go out, stay in, get wet: you can do anything in the Flemish-designed Marcel, the piracle of trashy chic

in the world of fashion: Giorgio Armani started out as a window dresser, Ralph Lauren never studied fashion, and Tom Ford studied architecture. But, while those men all have drive to conquer the world

through fashion, fragrances, home interiors and more, Blommaert is not eager to exploit her label to the point of ubiquity. She doesn't rule out expansion in the future, but "I'm more concerned with getting

each garment right," she says. "The cut, the finish, the quality: right now, doing sunglasses and perfumes and handbags doesn't interest me." Fabulous is as Fabuleux does.

Steven Tate

Le Fabuleux Marcel is available at *Essentiel* in Antwerp and *Privé Joke* in Brussels

Online

www.fabuleuxmarcel.com

FLANDERS EYE



Patrick De Spiegelaere

De Spiegelaere took press photography out of the middle ages," said fellow photographer Michiel Hendryckx. "It blossomed like never before." Almost one year ago, the 45-year-old Flemish photographer Patrick De Spiegelaere died suddenly of a brain haemorrhage. He left behind tens of thousands of photos of his work for *Knack*, *De Standaard* and the non-profit organisation *Vredeseilanden*, which regularly sent him on assignment to Africa and South America.

But it was at *De Morgen* where De Spiegelaere got his start, when, in the early 1980s, he transformed Belgian media photography. Together with a handful of others, he created what came to be known as *De Morgen fotografie*: an eye for the human condition and a contrast of subjects that required the viewer to consider things differently.

In the 1990s, De Spiegelaere travelled throughout Europe's major cities and created the *Street* series. As in this photo, he occasionally focused on people's legs, sometimes crossing streets, occasionally sticking out of mini skirts or from behind a phone booth. Starting on February 29, Antwerp's *FotoMuseum* offers the first retrospective of the photographer since his death, curated by Piet Piryns, his colleague at *Knack*.

Lisa Bradshaw

Patrick De Spiegelaere, 29 February – 8 June, *Fotomuseum*, Waalse Kaai 41, Antwerp

online

www.fotomuseum.be

The goose riders

Towns and villages north of Antwerp carry on an old tradition to mark the arrival of spring



Marc Maes

Gansrijden or "goose-riding" might not be everyone's idea of a good time, but it's big in the villages and districts north of Antwerp, like Berendrecht, Zand-

vliet, Stabroek, Lillo, Hoevenen and Ekeren. On Sunday, 9 March, crowds will gather in Hoevenen, north of Antwerp, to support their local delegates during the annual Keizerrijden, the climax of five

weeks of tough competitions.

So what is Goose-riding? It basically involves tearing off a goose's head while horse-riding at full speed under a gallows. This curious sport has its local roots back in the 19th century, when farms to the north of Antwerp brought the horses out of the stables at springtime and farmer's sons, farm hands and country boys competed against each other. The oldest goose in the pond was caught, killed and hung upside down. The "king" – the rider who successfully tears off the goose's head while riding under the gallows – invited his fellow riders to a huge feast, with roast goose on the menu.

Goose-riding has some similarities with the "gander-pulling" practised in the United States in the 1800s. It's even said that, before his famous presidency, Abraham Lincoln acted as an umpire during one of the contests in the 1830s.

Local archives reveal that goose-riding was organised as a contest for the first time in 1898 in the village of Oorderen as part of the local carnival. Oorderen, like Oosterweel and Wilmarsdonk, disappeared in 1965, a victim of the extension of the Port of Antwerp.

Today, goose-riding is practised by *maatschappijen*, or associations, in Berendrecht (De Nieuwe Gans), De Oude Gans), Zandvliet (Veteranen and Jonge Ruiters), Lillo (De Ware Gans), Hoevenen (Koninklijke Gansrijdersmaatschappij) and Stabroek (Koninklijke Ganzenrijders Stabroek). The Antwerp district of Ekeren saw the revital-

isation of the goose-riding association De Lustige Gans in June of 2006. Goose-riding, traditionally a men-only event, saw the creation of the first female organisation, De Vrije Gans, in 1994. In the Netherlands, near the German border, the *Gawstrèkkers Grevenbicht* have their own goose-riding traditions.

Each of these associations counts 150 to 200 members, according to Frans De Schutter, chairman of the Polderbond, which coordinates the North Antwerp goose-riding associations. "Given the historic origin, most groups only take the male members into account," he explains, "as goose-riding dates from the time when farmers and their hands used to compete – no women allowed."

With each association organising its *koningrijden* (internal competition) around the carnival weekend, goose-riding reaches a climax during the annual Keizerrijden. That's when the kings of the last three years from each association meet in a contest for the "emperor's crown and mantle", attracting a crowd of thousands to the local square.

"One of the main misconceptions about goose-riding is that the goose is alive," explains De Schutter, "I can assure you that living geese were never used in the Antwerp polder communities. We had animal rights group GAIA protesting here without cause a few years ago."

Goose-riding is all about local community life, competition and

festivities. Sponsors and spectators are invited to "donate money to the gallows", says De Schutter. This generates several thousand euros for spending in local cafe's and supporting the closing festivities. "The biggest differences between this and other sports competition is that this event welcomes riders from ages 16 to 70 and that the participants and public share the same spirit. [Winning is] a matter of strength but also being at the right place at the right time," De Schutter adds.

The Keizerrijden takes place this year in Hoevenen, home to the 2007 emperor. On 9 March, riders will leave their villages in the morning, accompanied by brass bands, heading for the big parade that precedes the actual contest. Members of the various participating associations flock together dressed in their respective outfits. A team of experts standing near the gallows monitor the condition of the goose and the gallows before the first rider sets off at around 15.00.

Some three hours later, one of the kings finally pulls off the goose's head (after the net that reinforces the animal's neck has been torn to pieces by previous riders). The crowd goes wild, the bands begin to play, people start chanting and the "emperor" is carried around on the shoulders of his fellow riders.

Online

<http://users.pandora.be/ganshoevenen>

Get Flanders Today in your letterbox each week

Want to keep in touch with Flanders?

Simply fill in the subscription form below and send it to:

Flanders Today

Subscription Department

Waterloosesteenweg 1038 – 1180 Brussels – Belgium

Fax: 00.32.2.375.98.22

Email: subscriptions@flanderstoday.eu



The newspaper version will be mailed to subscribers living in Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany and France. Residents of other countries will receive a weekly ezine.

Name:

Street:

City:

Postcode:

Country:

e-mail:

Tel:

Privacy policy: We fully respect Belgian legislation on the protection of personal information. The data we collect will only be used for distribution of publications and will not be disclosed to any third parties without express consent.

We create

ShapesTM



We create Shapes

Your body is your temple, and it needs to be tended to in the best manner possible. It is the finest and most valuable instrument ever created, but it also has to harmonize with the inner you. We believe in exercise that shapes and strengthens both body and soul.

World Class Health Academy Brussels
Renaissance Hotel, Rue du Parnasse 19
Phone: +32 2 551 59 90

Fitness Center Diegem
Pegasus Park, De Kleetlaan 5b-5c
Phone: +32 2 300 57 00

Fitness Center Berchem
Belpairestraat 20
Phone: +32 3 292 96 00

Health Academy Antwerp
Gerard le Grellelaan 10
Phone: +32 3 259 75 05

www.worldclass.be

WorldClass[®]

Classical & new music**Brussels**

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

FEB 29-MAR 2 20.00 Belgian National Orchestra conducted by Walter Weller, with Frank Peter Zimmermann, violin: Berg's Concerto To the Memory of an Angel, Bruckner's Symphony No 3
MAR 2 11.00 Trio Horta: Jongen, Brahms, Martin
MAR 3 20.00 Maurizio Pollini, piano, and the Schlagquartett Köln, conducted by Beat Furrer: Schönberg, Berg, Nono

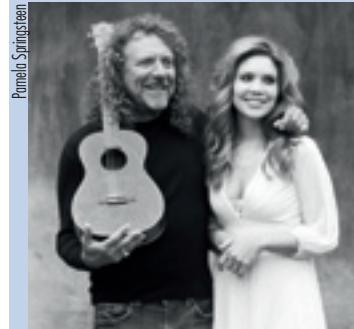
Chapelle des Pères Servites de Marie
Washingtonstraat 29
MAR 2 16.00 Bertrand Cuiller, harpsichord and virginal: D Scarlatti, Fandango

De Munt
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39
FEB 29 12.30 La Monnaie Chamber Music Ensemble: tribute to Rossini
MAR 5 20.00 Petra Lang, mezzo-soprano; Charles Spencer, piano: Brahms, Wagner, Wolf, Mahler

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,
www.flagey.be
FEB 29 12.30 Anches Hantées Quartet: Strauss, Debussy, Dvorak, Brahms, Glass, Lecuona, Khachaturian

Gemeentehuis Ukkel
J Vander Elstplein; 02.343.30.63
FEB 29 19.30 Ian Degen, bass-baritone; André Grignard, piano: Brahms, Schumann

Kapel van de Miniemens
Miniemensstraat 62; 02.507.82.00,
www.minimes.net
FEB 27 20.00 Huelgas Ensemble, conducted by Paul Van Nevel: Lassus, Gombert, Manchicourt, Binchois, Tinctoris, Regis, de Orto

Get your tickets now for...**Robert Plant and Alison Krauss**

11 May, 20.00, Vorst-Nationaal, Victor Rousseaualaan 208, Brussels. Tickets from 077 37 38 39 or www.sherpa.be

Queen of the most successful collaborations ever in the genres of rock and bluegrass, the Robert Plant/Alison Krauss album *Raising Sand* debuted at number 2 on the American Billboard pop chart last autumn before winning a Grammy last month for its hit single "Gone Gone Gone (Done Moved On)". Now the two respective icons are on tour, and you'd be wise not to miss it. Krauss, whose popularity shot up after her appearance on the soundtrack of *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, collaborates regularly, but at no time has her fiddle-on-fire style of American bluegrass been so eloquently accompanied than by the former Led Zeppelin front man. Together, they highlight the mammoth strengths of the other.

Musical Instruments Museum

Hofberg 2; 0900.28.877
MAR 2 11.00-15.00 Astoria concerts: Pianofolia concert series by 15 pianists

Protestantse Kapel

Museumplein; 02.332.06.66
MAR 5 20.00 Andreas Staier, harpsichord: Bach, D Scarlatti

Royal Music Conservatory

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.507.82.00
FEB 28 20.00 Belcea Quartet: Haydn, Britten, Beethoven
MAR 1 20.00 Les Agrémens, conducted by Guy Van Waas, with Michael Schmidt-Casdorff, flute; Marjan de Heer, harp: Gossec, Mozart, Kraus, Haydn
MAR 4 20.00 Kuss Quartett with Sharon Kam, clarinet: Lassus, Kurtág, Stravinsky, Webern, Benet, Dow and Brahms

Antwerp

Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28
FEB 28 21.00 Vlaams Radio Koor, conducted by Johan Duijck, with Inge Spinette, piano: Brahms' Ein Deutsches Requiem (London version)
MAR 2 15.00 Huelgas Ensemble conducted by Paul Van Nevel: Lassus, Gombert, Manchicourt, Binchois, Tinctoris, Regis, de Orto

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
Concerts at 20.00:
FEB 28 Akademie fur Alte Musik and Collegium Vocale Gent, conducted by Marcus Creed: Handel's Brockes Passion
MAR 5 20.00 Le Poème Harmonique, conducted by Vincent Dumestre: Pergolesi's Stabat Mater, Durante's concerto No 4, anonymous Neopolitan Tarantella

Bruges

Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02,
www.concertgebouw.be
Concerts at 20.00:
FEB 28 Hakan Hardenberger, trumpet; Colin Currie, percussion: Bortz, Norgard, Maric, Takemitsu, Andriessen, Jolivet
MAR 4 Andreas Staier, harpsichord: Bach, D Scarlatti sonatas

Ghent

De Bijloke
Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2, 09.269.92.92
MAR 1 20.00 Belgian National Orchestra, conducted by Walter Weller, with Frank Peter Zimmermann, violin: Berg's Concerto To the Memory of an Angel, Bruckner's Symphony No 3

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: Brahms' Ein Deutsches Requiem (London version)

Opera

Brussels
De Munt
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39
Until MAR 12 La Monnaie Symphony Orchestra & Choirs in Wozzeck by Alban Berg, conducted by Mark Wigglesworth, with Dietrich Henschel/ Werner Van Mechelen, bass-baritones, Claudia Barainsky/Solveig Kringelborn, sopranos

Dieleghem Abbey

Jan Tiebackxstraat 14; 02.428.71.03
MAR 1 14.30 Tomino Carlino, tenor; Marie-Christine Helbois, soprano; Alexandre Papazolakis, piano: opera extracts and songs by Bellini, Verdi, Donizetti, Bizet, Poulenc

Jazz & blues**Brussels****Archiduc****Dansaertstraat**

6; 02.512.06.52
Concerts at 17.00:
MAR 1 Valve with Bai Kamara Junior
MAR 2 Jef Lee Johnson Trio

Beursschouwburg

Auguste Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50,
www.beursschouwburg.be
MAR 1 18.00 Määk's Spirit/Määk's Salon, music and film

Brasserie de l'Union

Sint-Gillisvoordeplein 55; 02.538.15.79
Every Sunday until MAR 16 Carson Barnes & friends

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193-195;
02.733.13.78
FEB 27 20.30 Fabien Degrise Trio
MAR 1 18.00 Natacha Wyts Quartet
MAR 5 20.30 Ruocco/Sintaine/Rassinfosse Trio

Le Grain d'Orge

Waversesteenweg 142; 02.511.26.47

FEB 29 21.30 Les Daddy's Girls**Sounds Jazz Club**

Tulpstraat 28; 02.512.92.50,
www.soundsjazzclub.be

FEB 27 22.00 Chamaquiendo, salsa**FEB 28** 22.00 The Singers Night**FEB 29** 22.00 Koen Decauter & Christophe Astolfi Quartet**MAR 1** 21.00 Brussels Rhythm'n Blues**MAR 3** 22.00 Master Session**MAR 4** 22.00 Tuesday night orchestra: Big Band**MAR 5** 22.00 Caribe Con K – Los Soneros del Barrio**The Music Village**

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
Concerts at 20.30:

FEB 27 22.00 Andy Houscheid Trio**FEB 28** 22.00 Varia Quintet: a tribute to Astor Piazzolla**FEB 29** 22.00 Bart Defoort Quartet with Nathalie Loriers**MAR 1** 21.00 The New Orleans Roof Jazzmen**MAR 4** 22.00 Ensemble Concert (Poland)**MAR 5** 22.00 Marcelo Moncada Space Quartet**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

MAR 2 15.00 Jack Million Band: In the Mood for Swing**Bruges****De Werf**

Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29

MAR 4 20.30 Tutu Puaone Quartet**MAR 5** 20.30 Josse De Pauw & Corie van Binsbergen Ensemble**Pop, rock, hip-hop, soul****Brussels****Ancienne Belgique**

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24

FEB 29 19.00 Bota@AB: The Tellers, Coem, Ideal Husbands, Soy Un Caballo**MAR 1** 20.00 Digitalism + Waxdolls**MAR 3** 20.00 Stereophonics**Beursschouwburg**

Auguste Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50,

www.beursschouwburg.be
FEB 28 20.30 Dick Black

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89

MAR 1 23.00 Batbox World Tour: Miss Kittin, Pierre All Night Long**Koninklijk Circus**

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15

MAR 4 20.00 Eels**Le Botanique**

Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32

Concerts at 20.00:

FEB 27 20.30 Le Loup**FEB 28** 20.30 Mobil + Psykick Lyrikah**MAR 2** 20.00 Islands**VK Club**

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07

Doors open at 19.30:

FEB 28 20.30 Dead Meadow + Kinski**Vorst-Nationaal**

Victor Rousseaualaan 208; 0900.00.991

MAR 3 20.00 Tokio Hotel**Antwerp****Lotto Arena**

Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060

MAR 2 20.00 Queens of the Stone Age**Sportpaleis**

Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060

MAR 1-8 20.30 Soulsister**Ghent****Handelsbeurs**

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01

MAR 5 20.00 Dirty Dozen Brass Band**Vooruit**

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 09.267.28.28

MAR 5 20.00 Arid**Kortrijk****De Kreun**

Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44

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
 Until APR 12 A Shimmer of Possibility, photographs by Paul Graham

De Elektriciteitscentrale European Centre for Contemporary Art
 Sint Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.44
Until APR 27 No Borders [Just N.E.W.S.], works by 29 young European artists

De Loge Architecturmuseum
 Kluisstraat 86; 02.649.86.65
Until 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 Photographique Contretype
 Verbindingslaan 1; 02.538.42.20
Until MAR 9 Oog in oog, photographs by Andreas Weinand

Fondation pour l'Architecture
 Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.80, www.fondationpourlarchitecture.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 Brufaut, Peter Callebaut and many others

Goethe Institute
 Belliardstraat 58; 02.230.39.70
Until APR 17 Fotopräts, 50 photographs by winners of the Chamiso Prize

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

Jacques Franck Cultural Centre
 Waterloosesteenweg 94; 02.538.90.20
FEB 29-MAR 23 Spirales, drawings by Aurélie Thiolat and Huis clos and photographs by Catherine Lambermont

Koekelberg Basilica
 Basiliekvoordeplein 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)

L'Usine Gallery
 Dekenijsstraat 40; 02.344.52.45
Until MAR 9 Réfractaires, photographs by Jean-Charles Delange

Maison du Folklore et des Traditions
 Eikstraat 19; 02.514.53.97
Until MAR 24 L'Art et l'Abeille, painted bee hives in 18th- and 19th-century Slovenia

Museum van Elsene
 Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.22
FEB 28-APR 27 Black-Paris, Black-Brussels, 100 years of African, West Indians and Afro-American culture in Paris and contemporary works by black

artists living in Brussels

René Magritte Museum
 Essegemstraat 135; 02.428.26.26
MAR 1-JUNE 30 Dromen van EEN toekomstwereld (Dreaming of a Future World), paintings and drawings by the Belgian artist Edmond van Dooren

Rodolphe Janssen Gallery
 Livornostraat 35; 02.538.08.18
Until MAR 29 Scenarios, photographs by Sam Samore

Royal Army Museum
 Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33
Until JUNE 29 (H)erkenning! 175 jaar Leopoldsorde en Nationale Orden, an exhibition on the oldest Belgian order

Royal Library
 Kunstberg; 02.519.58.73
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 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

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 MAR 30 Photography & the Changing Cityscape: Brussels 1850-1880, urban development and the evolution of early photography in 19th-century Brussels

Stadhuis
 Grote Markt; 02.279.43.50
Until MAY 18 Slovenian Painting after 1945, works by some 50 contemporary artists

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 famous series of films

Verhaeren Gallery
 Rue Gratié 7; 02.662.16.99
Until MAR 2 Confrontations, photos by Robert Askenasi
 Lisboa, photos by René Thirion
Until MAR 5 Corpus et Terra, photos by Daniel Bastin and Jean-Paul Antoine

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, with works by Santanu Bose, Matti Braun, Calcutta Art Research, Ritwik Ghatak, Sheela Gowda and many others

Extra City
 Tulpstraat 79; 0484.42.10.70
Until MAR 30 Mimétisme, group show of contemporary art, with work by Paweł 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

Fotomuseum
 Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00
FEB 29-JUNE 8 Patrick De Spiegelaere, retrospective of the late Flemish photographer (1961-2007)

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 Verleidelijke eenvoud (Seductive Simplicity), silver and ceramic works by Nedda El-Asmar, Belgian Designer of the Year 2007
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

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

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

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, including Louise Bourgeois, Raoul De Keyser, Jan Fabre, Arshile Gorky, Jan Hoet, Panamarenko, Luc Tuymans, Andy Warhol and many others

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

Leuven
Tweebronnen
 Rijkschoolstraat 49; 0497.64.94.52
Until APR 13 De Stiel, retrospective of drawings 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

Don't miss this week



Wozzeck

28-29 February and 4-12 March, De Munt, Muntplein, Brussels.
 Tickets from 070.23.39.39 or www.demunt.be

Hailed as one of the most important operas of the 20th century, Alban Berg's first work for the stage tells the gruesome tale of a simple soldier who, humiliated by his peers, murders his unfaithful girlfriend before killing himself. The score is a harsh, brutal affair that combines screaming sounds and grating dissonances with moments of intense lyricism. Bizarrely, it all manages to be quite beautiful, and even the least adventurous audiences are usually pinned to their seats from beginning to end. This compelling production is helmed by a top-notch British duo, stage director David Freeman and conductor Mark Wigglesworth, with the extraordinary German baritone Dietrich Henschel in the title role. He's taking turns with Belgian Werner Van Mechelen, while sopranos Claudia Barainsky and Solveig Kringelborn share the role of his girlfriend.

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
Until APR 20 Paintings, video and photographs by Helmut Stallaerts

Ypres

In Flanders Fields Museum
 Grote Markt 34; 057.23.92.75
Until MAR 30 Oorlogsgesluijde: 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

Batibouw: international building trade, renovation and decorating fair
MAR 1-9 at Brussels Expo, Heysel 02.474.89.81, www.brusselsexpo.be

Festival de Danse d'Ici et d'Ailleurs:

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

Festival of poetry and French chanson:

from the Middle Ages to the present day, includes exhibitions, workshops, concerts and a competition
Until APR 19 at La Maison du Livre, Romestraat 28, and other venues 02.543.12.20, www.lamaisonduivre.be

First Museum Night Fever:

Concerts, bodypainting, performances, VJs, DJs, guided tours and other festivities in seven Brussels museums

MAR 1 19.00-1.00 + afterparty at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23 02.512.77.80, www.museumnightfever.be

Iceland on the Edge: Icelandic cultural

festivals. 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

K-RAA-K Festival: One-day music festival including classical, rock, punk and psychedelic guitar, as well as film screenings

MAR 1 at Les Brigitines and Recyclart www.kraak.net

Miouzz.com: comedy/music/ improvisation by the Extincteurs
Monthly until JUNE 24 at Espace Delvaux, Gratèsstraat 3; 02.663.85.50

Other towns

Antwerp

Antwerp Classic salon 2008: classic car fair
MAR 1-2 at Antwerp Expo, J Van Rijswijkstraat 03.260.81.22, www.antwerpexpo.be

Stomp: the world-famous dance/ percussion show

MAR 1-2 at Stadsschouwburg, Theaterplein 1 077.37.38.39, www.stadsschouwburg

Ghent

Blue Note Records Festival: The traditional summer jazz festival goes indoors for the first time in the new complex at De Bijloke. Line-up includes Gianluca Petrella, Cecil Taylor, Stefano di Baptiste, Kryptos Quartet and Steve Kuhn trio & Sheila Jordan
FEB 28-MAR 2 at Muziekcentrum, De Bijloke, Jozef Kluyvensstraat 09.269.92.92, www.bluenoterecordsfestival.com

Sjacherbeurs: fair for buying, trading and selling antiques and second-hand

MY FLANDERS

Ann De Greef

Ann De Greef is the director of GAIA, Global Action in the Interest of Animals. We ask her about Belgian law and her encounters with stubborn farmers.

When did you join GAIA?

I started GAIA 16 years ago. Back then in Belgium, there were organisations that dealt with abandoned pets and placed them in homes, but there was no group that addressed issues such as animal transport, livestock breeding and welfare of animals that were not pets.

Are Belgians cruel to their animals?

People were unaware, and groups like mine raise awareness. I've been conscious of animal welfare since I was 12, when I heard a pig being slaughtered. I grew up outside Leuven, and my grandfather raised pigs. Once you hear an animal being slaughtered, it stays with you forever. I decided then and there to be a vegetarian. Then as I was growing up, I started reading books by people like Peter Singer, who wrote *Animal Liberation*. I started to be concerned not just with the cats that lived in our house but with all animals.

Are animal rights laws in Belgium national or regional?

Animal welfare is a federal responsibility, but the regions have to agree on any proposed legislation, which is tricky. The Walloons agree on banning fur farms because there aren't any in Wallonia, but the Flemish baulk at this because they have fur producers. The Flemish agree on banning forced feeding of geese to make *foie gras*, but the Walloons refuse because it's a business in Wallonia. Meanwhile, public opinion is often far ahead of legislation – so Belgians can be anti-fur and anti-*foie gras*,

but the laws are slow to catch up with them.

How does Belgium compare to other countries in its treatment of animals?

Somewhere in the middle. We're not as advanced as the UK and Scandinavia, but we're a lot better than France, Spain and most of southern Europe.

How is GAIA different from PETA, the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals?

To my knowledge, PETA is more focused on awareness campaigns, while GAIA actually sits in on advisory groups with farmers, the government, supermarkets and zoos – anyone dealing with animals or what animals produce.

ness raising is very important. We have the same goals, just different strategies.

Other than free-range eggs, what other successes have you had?

We had a part in banning the castration of pigs without anaesthesia. Most people aren't aware of how animals are treated, so we show them behind the scenes – which gets the public concerned. Even if you eat organically-grown meat, it can be slaughtered in ways that are unnecessarily cruel – if slaughter can ever be less cruel. Sometimes, the industry and farmers are easy to work with: in 1998, there was a European ruling that veal fattening pens should be banned by 2008 – but farmers had largely met the deadline five years

“Most people aren't aware of how animals are treated, so we show them behind the scenes – which gets the public concerned.”

We not only push for legislation, but we also follow up to make sure that the laws are being enforced. Our campaigns and discussions have contributed to most eggs sold in supermarkets being free-range today. We're on the same page as PETA regarding most things, but we don't work with celebrities to get our message across – because celebrities can be fickle. I'm not discounting what PETA does because I think conscious-

ago. But other times, farmers stall a regulation banning battery farm chicken cages should go into effect in 2012, and already some farmers in Poland, France, Belgium and southern countries are complaining that the change will bankrupt them. This was decided in 2000, and even then there were discussions about it long before. And the farmers say they are unprepared and that it will ruin them? Forgive me if I have no sympathy.



You meet with farmers – isn't that a bit like sleeping with the enemy?

Some animal rights proponents would never sit down at the table with someone who raises animals for food. But I have to think that when I die, will I be feeling good about never having compromised and always having stayed true to my principles while never saving one animal or making one animal's life better? No compromise, unfortunately, means no action, and we are an action group. We have to make things happen. Of course, it can be frustrating talking to animal farmers because they are against anything that's going to cost them more money, which is often the case when you implement changes to protect animals.

GAIA would like all livestock farmers to stop breeding animals for food. But if that were to happen tomorrow, how would the farmers survive?

By farming vegetables and fruit. Vegetarians eat, too – we're no different from the general public in having to eat to survive. There is a market to serve. I eat dairy products, and there are ethical ways to farm dairy cows. All the changes that GAIA wants to happen probably won't come about in my lifetime, but at least we've made a start.

Interview by Steven Tate

online
www.gaia.be

THE LAST WORD

what they're saying in Flanders

Flanders in space

“I'll call home now and again.”

Frank De Winne
astronaut
following the announcement
that he will spend six months
on board the ISS space station
in 2009

Changing world

“Our old, trusted world is changing totally – and this process has been going on for the past 30 years”

Rik Coolsaet
author of *De Geschiedenis van de Wereld van Morgen* (The History of Tomorrow's World)

Death in Brussels

“We are printing more death notices all the time”

Maureen Jordens
Spokesperson for the charity
Collectief Straatdoden, announcing 32 deaths of vagrants in 2007, the youngest aged 25

**VlaamseFrietjes FotoMuseum Tow
ersofFlanders FrankDeWinne Fil
ipDujardin GeoffreyEnthoven**
next week in Flanders Today